

JOURNAL OF THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY - COLMA

GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

Welcome back after our summer hiatus. The board hopes that everyone had a good and restful summer break. Several years ago we had David Schooley, founder of San Bruno Mountain Watch, address the Guild. We felt it was time for another update as to all things San Bruno Mountain, so David will once again join us for our fall meeting to let us know about the present state of the mountain. He will brief us on the native flora and fauna, development and potential development, and recreation opportunities available for all of us who care about preservation of this precious community resource that is surrounded by Daly City, Colma, Brisbane and South San Francisco on all sides.

For those of you who joined us at our May meeting you had the opportunity to hear from General Manager Donna Otis, who lectured on the history of the Lake Merced Golf Club. She was a delightful speaker who explained the history of the club, which traces its roots back more than 90 years. At the end of the evening and while accompanying her to her car, Donna very graciously extended an invitation to our membership to tour the clubhouse at a date and time to be determined. In order to include as many of our members as possible, and with her agreement, we're waiting to schedule the tour after announcing it here in the *Tattler*, so that the most folks who are interested are able to participate. While no date has yet been selected, it most likely will be a weekday, either late morning or early afternoon. Donna will make the decision. For those who are interested in taking the tour, please email me at president@dalcityhistorymuseum.org or call the museum at 650-757-7177 and leave a message. Email is preferable but a phone message is fine for those who don't have email. Please include your name, the number in your party, and your phone number. We already have a few members included who indicated their interest at the May meeting. **Please respond by September 30.** Shortly thereafter I should know the details for the tour, and will then pass them along. This should be a great field trip for one and all.

Cont'd pg. 2

HISTORY EVENING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH

7 PM

101 Lake Merced Blvd., Daly City
Doelger Center Cafe

AN EVENING WITH DAVID SCHOOLEY



David Schooley is the founder and remains a current board member of San Bruno Mountain Watch. He is an environmentalist, activist, artist, and poet. For over 40 years he has dedicated his life to the preservation of San Bruno Mountain, leading mountain tours for people of all ages. Spend an inspiring evening with David when he will share the long fight to protect the mountain and the state of this local natural resource today.

"A lot of us grow up in cities and don't realize that we are from the earth. It all starts with getting people involved and re-awakening their understanding that we are part of the planet. That's why it's so important to start with kids; making them see that something small, like a creek, is such a special thing when you start looking into how it fits into the bigger picture."

- David Schooley

YUM! Thank you to our gracious Hospitality Chair **Annette Hipona** and her convivial assistant **Grace Gonzalez**. Refreshments will be provided by **Judith Christensen, Dana Smith, and Annette Hipona**.

Last April Darold 'Dick' Fredricks of San Bruno died at age 82 after a long illness. He was a longtime historian of local lore in his community and a good friend to the Guild over the years. He generously allowed the *Tattler* to reprint a number of articles from his weekly history column for the *San Mateo Daily Journal*. Dick wrote the definitive history of San Bruno for the Arcadia Press Images of America series, which is a great read and visual delight. In addition to his love of history, Dick had been a science teacher at Westmoor High School for many years--my teacher Freshman year--though was long retired. His obituary commented, "He had a large personality, believed in lifelong learning, loved science and history and had a passion for passing that knowledge on to anyone who would listen."



Shortly before he passed, Dick donated his personal collection of slides with images of Colma and Daly City to the Colma Historical Association, which in turn passed along the Daly City images to the Guild. Rich Rocchetta has begun to inventory and catalog the Fredricks collection and there are sure to be many outstanding

images. Our appreciation is extended to both the Colma Historical Association and wife Margaret and the Fredricks family, to whom we also express our sincere condolences on their loss.

READERS COMMENTS ON THE HOBO BEARTRACKS

Note from the Editor: The last edition of the Tattler recalled the hobo Bear Tracks who lived in DC in the 50s and 60s. Rick Baily and Ed Larious visited the museum and shared stories about this legendary hobo. Two attendees at the May meeting commented that Bear Tracks was not a Native American. Tattler readers responded with the comments below. Thank you all for your interest and input. Remember, I appreciate comments on items in the Tattler; just email me at director@dalycityhistorymuseum

Dana, as always, it was great reading the most recent issue of the *Tattler*, and your contribution of reminiscences of Bear Tracks, and of hopping the train. As you asked, I'll share a couple of memories.

Our family moved in 1954 to Niantic Ave. Duggan's is adjacent to our backyard, although in 1954 that area was known by all as, simply, "the dumps"... a smelly, rat-infested, garbage-strewn pit. We kids never played

anywhere near the dumps, nor near the RR tracks, on our parents' orders, but nevertheless the stories of this hobo (we used that word, not having a clue what it meant) nicknamed Bear Tracks were numerous. There were never any horror stories about him, he was just a neighborhood character in those parts and we were generous in embellishing the stories about him.

The other incident I'll share is tragic, and I know you'll understand when I decline to use names. In 1975 I was helping a couple prepare for their wedding when the RR in Daly City came up in one of our conversations. The groom told me that he had a younger brother who was killed as a result of hopping the train in late summer 1958, just after his brother and friends had graduated 8th grade from All Souls, where I was later assigned for 6 years and where I had the story confirmed. They used to hop the northbound train in the Orange Park area, ride to Colma for a few hours of horseback riding at one of the large ranches in the area more or less where the DMV and DC City Hall are now standing. Then, knowing the train's timetable they would walk back to the tracks for the return trip in the afternoon. They would wait on the steep bank that rises up from the tracks to the Holy Angels schoolyard and on hearing the train whistle would charge down the bank - where the train had by then picked up quite a clip. They of course needed to time everything to the second when they'd jump on. The groom's brother jumped up, grabbed the train car's ladder, and then instantly let go, falling off and suffering fatal injuries. The conclusion was that the train had been out in the sun for hours and the metal was super-heated. The others raced back up the bank to the closest building, the Holy Angels convent, where the police, fire and ambulance were called... Not long after I happened to be chatting with one of the Irish nuns who used to teach at Holy Angels, who coincidentally was one of the Sisters who was in the convent on that horrible day So, Dana, those are my contributions, though regrettably the second incident that I'm recalling is not a happy one. I know from my future 6 years at All Souls (1979-85) that the train tragedy is seared into the memories of the old-time All Souls folks.

Fr. Joe Gordon

Dana, I enjoyed the Bear Tracks story very much. He was a little before my time on the department but I remember hearing about him. I also noticed that his name was found quite often in the arrest logs of the day--always with a different occupation listed: vagrant, transient, hobo or my favorite- "Citizen of the World." He managed to get arrested for public intoxication twice on the same day, more than once. According to some DCPD old timers his first name was Henry. Back when such things were still legal he was often booked as a "bed for the night" and given a shot of whiskey to calm

his nerves upon being released in the morning, along with a chit for breakfast at Webb's. When the new jail at Civic Center opened he was a frequent customer. The state of the art facility had cameras and intercoms in each cell. An unnamed officer, seeing Bear Tracks was a guest in the drunk tank, decided to try out the intercom. Officer X: "Bear Tracks! This is the Lord!" Bear Tracks: "Oh, they have a drunk tank up here too?!" During the winter, BT would be charged with public intoxication and Judge Becker would give him a six month jail sentence, for humanitarian purposes.

Gary McLane (former DC Police Chief)

Dana, the reflection below is from my brother, Pat Wille, a former Daly City resident. I would also like to add that to my knowledge "Bear Tracks" never caused any trouble in the neighborhood. *Ray Wille*

Re: Bear Tracks, I remember him. I'd always say hello, when I'd see him. I used to ride my 20" bike on the RR right-of-way. I felt sorry for him. He was harmless. I think Mom called him a gentle soul. I do remember when he died. It was ruled death by natural causes. I also remember the pool hall [Red Carpet Pool Hall], which I frequented with Rick Radiotes when I was in 8th grade. (No, I did not tell Mom.) *Pat Wille*

OTHER HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Colma Historical Association: Fundraising Dinner. Saturday, September 19th at 4 pm. at the Colma Community Center, 1520 Hillside Blvd. \$40 each for a menu that includes: BBQ tri-tips, roasted potatoes, antipasto, bread, green salad, wine, coffee and sodas. 650-757-1676

Cypress Lawn Heritage Foundation:

Lecture Series (FREE): All lectures begin at 2 pm at the Cypress Lawn's Reception Center, 1370 El Camino Real, Colma. Light Refreshments.

Sept. 20 - *Rasputin: Toppling the Russian Empire*, Michael Svanevik. **Oct. 18 - *101 Tombs to Check Out*,** Douglas Keister.

Walking Tour Schedule (FREE): Scheduled tours are held on Saturdays and start at 1:30 pm near the Noble Chapel (located on Cypress Lawn's East Gardens), except where noted. Light Refreshments.

Sept. 19 - *Who's Who in the West Gardens* (Meet at Reception Center), Docent: Terry Hamburg. **Oct. 17 - *Gargoyles, Foo Dogs & More: Cypress Lawn's Unusual Memorials*,** Docent: Terry Hamburg. **Oct. 31 - *Visiting San Francisco & Peninsula High Society at Cypress Lawn*,** Docent: Michael Svanevik.

City of Daly City Filipino-American History Month Celebration - Sat., Oct. 10th 11 am - 4 pm, Pacelli Event Center, 145 Lake Merced Blvd. Free. History, food, vendors, entertainment.

SEARCH FOR THE BLONDE

MURDERESS - An Infamous crime on San Bruno mountain

Editor's Note: Bob Calhoun, Daly City resident, author, and pop historian, has contributed several articles to past editions of the Tattler. Bob comments, "a revelation that my mother was a suspect in one of the most brutal murders in San Francisco history sent me on a journey through lurid local lore for lost family history." The following is excerpted from his story.



My mother, Jackie Calhoun (left), around the time Bay Area police suspected her of a murder committed by Rosemarie "Penny" Bjorkland (right).

My mother only talked about the murder sparingly. My mother loved to gossip, and the murder was her juiciest story by far, but it was different. It was serious... My mom spoke of growing suspicion among this clique of suburbanites as the murder investigation dragged on. "You started to suspect everybody—friends, neighbors," she said... I always meant to write an article or even a novel out of all that backyard paranoia, but I never thought of asking my mom to retell the story of the murder until it was too late.

... My dad, Leo Calhoun, is in good health, but he's pushing 80. I asked him about the murder while we were having lunch. The murder happened when my mom and dad lived on Guttenberg Street in Daly City, not far from where I live today. August Norry was dumping some lawn clippings on Mount San Bruno, a hillside covered with eucalyptus trees on the southern edge of San Francisco. Norry ran into a young woman with a gun. She asked him if he was up to a little target practice. He said yes, not realizing he was the target. She shot him several times for no reason at all. My dad gave me the names and places that I didn't have before, but then he dropped a bomb. "You know, your mother was questioned in the murder investigation," he said. "She matched the suspect's description," he explained. "A blonde was seen leaving the scene of the murder in Norry's car. Your mother was blonde, and we lived next door to the Norrys back then... when we went to Augie's memorial on Mission Street, you could see binoculars or camera lenses being poked through the

Cont'd Pg. 4

blinds of the office across the street from the funeral home," my dad recalled. "They were watching everyone."

I put my skills as a researcher and journalist to piecing together the story of the murder the way I should have when my mom was still alive. I dug through online newspaper archives, yellowing clipping files kept by local historical societies, and aging spools of microfilm... August Norry had an Errol Flynn mustache and a mess of dark, slicked-back hair in the one headshot I could find of him that kept cropping up on so many lurid crime web sites. He was a former Arthur Murray dance instructor and a onetime minor league pitching prospect. After failing in a tryout with the San Francisco Seals, Norry became a self-employed gardener mowing lawns at the Lake Merced Golf Club not far from his home in Daly City, which he shared with his new bride, Darlene. On Monday, Feb. 2, 1959, Norry made the papers in the worst possible way when his "bullet-torn, blood-spattered automobile" was found "abandoned on a lonely 'lover's lane'" according to the *San Mateo Times*. The car was ditched on the 300 block of Peoria Street in Daly City, eight blocks from my parents' house at the time.

The next day, the *San Mateo Times* headline blared "POLICE HUNT BLONDE IN MULTIPLE SHOT MURDER" with the kind of overwhelming typeface usually reserved for things like the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Crowding the paper's masthead into a corner was a gruesome photo of Norry's corpse lying in a patch of weeds on the downward slope of Mount San Bruno... In the lower, right-hand corner, way below the fold, a much smaller cover-line reads, "Trio of Rock 'N' Roll Fame Die in Crash." August Norry almost pushed the deaths of Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, and the Big Bopper—the day the music died—to page five.



VICTIM'S BODY FOUND—San Mateo County Sheriff Earl Whitmore, left, and Daly City Officer Dave Johnstone examine body of August Norry, 28, found on a peak on the

Crocker estate yesterday. Norry, a landscape gardener, had been shot 16 times. In rear, back to camera, is Chief Deputy Sheriff Walter Moore. (AP Wirephoto)

Norry was shot 18 times with a 38 Special, a six-shooter. That means the killer emptied the revolver once, reloaded, kept going, and reloaded again. A "good-looking blonde" driving a car that looked like Norry's almost ran over a 12-year old kid playing on the hillside on the day of the shooting... While the eyewitness description led the police to my mother, they were also figuring my dad for the crime.

... Sheriff's Inspectors Eugene Stewart and William Ridenour continued the search for the blonde "revenge slayer." The murder investigation dragged on for six weeks. The killer was finally revealed through more banner headlines on April 16, 1959. Her name was Rosemarie Diane Bjorkland. Her friends called her Penny. She was 18 and blonde. She lived in her parents' house on Oliver Street in Daly City, four blocks parallel to the houses on Guttenberg Street... The sheriffs were able to track her through these cheap, homemade bullets bought from an auto mechanic out in Colma... Sheriff Whitmore sweet-talked a confession out of her at "a quiet family restaurant" in San Carlos called the Doll House. "For about a year, or a year and a half, I've had the urge to kill someone," she said. "I wanted to see if I could commit a murder and not have it on my conscience." She could. "I've felt better ever since I killed him," she confessed.

The papers dubbed her with names worthy of a pulp fiction villain. She was the Urge Killer or the Blonde Murderess. The wire story was strange enough to get picked up by papers as far away as Mobley, Mo. and Pottstown, Pa. The *San Francisco Chronicle* devoted nearly a full page spread to a celebrity-style profile of Bjorkland with glamor shots flanked by lingerie ads. *The Times Tribune* out of Palo Alto called her "plump and pretty."

Bjorkland was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to life in prison on August 6, 1959. "This was a willful, wanton killing," Superior Court Judge Frank B. Blum declared. Bjorkland served just seven years of her sentence before being released and fading into obscurity.

APPRECIATION AND NEWS

Thanks to: Mike Wilson, recent city retiree from the risk management department, for donation of documents and ephemera. Tidbit: his uncle Frank Clark was Doelger's construction foreman. Carol Kipperman from Roseburg, Oregon for rodeo photographs (pictured in this issue); Dave Powell for donations/loans of award certificates, a badge and nameplate from his late mother, former Councilwoman Jane Powell; and Shirley Plank for a Susan B. Anthony school yearbook 2014-2015. Thanks also to Michael Rocchetta who has taken on a big project to collect, catalogue, and scan all our *Tattlers* from the Cont'd pg. 5

very beginning and, eventually, add these documents to our website. Algis Ranikas is continuing his efforts to upgrade our technology, and Judith Christensen shared financial recording methods with our neighbors at the Colma Historical Association. Maureen O'Connor has been elected by the Board of Directors of the Colma Historical Association to be the next President of the organization, following the long and illustrious service by respected local historian Pat Hatfield. Maureen has been mentored by Pat, and has a track record of successful fundraising as a chair of the Colma Annual Tea. Pat will continue as a volunteer. Recent visitors to the museum included participants in the Memory Care Café, a social club for people with memory loss and their care partners. Architecture Professor and photographer Adam Elstein from the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn spent time doing research with our Doelger archives. He teaches a class in suburban culture and architecture. Our museum is included in a new book, *Historical Gems of the San Francisco Bay Area*, listing 200 museums and historical locales in the Bay Area. Dana Smith has been working as a volunteer consultant with Hae Won Ritchie of Daly City to finalize new interpretive signage at the Mussel Rock Open Preserve. We have been waiting for 38 years, since the archaeological dig of the Ohlone village site in 1977, for some public acknowledgement of the importance of the site that was regrettably used as a garbage landfill until it was forced to close by the state as an environmental hazard in 1977. "Hae Won has done a superb job. I can't wait until the signs and other improvements are installed," Dana commented.



Opening of the Little Brown Church Museum in Pacifica

Culminating 15 years of volunteer effort, the Pacifica Historical Society held the grand opening of their new museum at the Little Brown Church on Saturday, August 22nd to appreciative crowds. Renovation of the 1910 building is a story of perseverance and dedication. Museum exhibits feature Coastside Surfing, the Ocean Shore RR, Portola Expedition and the Discovery of SF Bay and the Building of the Tunnel. The museum will be open on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 1-4

pm. 1850 Francisco Blvd (at Salada Ave), Pacifica. Info: 650/359-5462. A great afternoon outing!

Exhibit interpreting Spanish exploration of the area



WHO WAS LARRY ITLIONG?

The farm labor movement in California during the 1960s was more diverse than people realize. Among the leaders was a Filipino-American named Larry Itliong who has been largely forgotten by history...

that is until now. Under a bill recently signed by Gov. Jerry Brown, October 25th, 2015 will be the first observation of the statewide "Larry Itliong Day."

Itliong led the Delano Grape Strike of 1965 and despite a history of Chicano/Fillipino lack of unity, Itliong reached out to Cesar Chavez and the two joined forces creating the United Farm Workers of America. Chavez became President and Itliong became Vice-President. He had only a sixth grade education when at age 14 he immigrated to the United States in 1929 and soon joined his first strike in 1930. He taught himself about law by attending trials.

GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Mark Weinberger, President 650/757-7177
 president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org
Richard Rocchetta, Vice-President
Dana Smith, 2nd Vice-President/Museum Director
Judith Christensen, Treasurer
Algis Ratnikas, Secretary
Directors: Michael Rocchetta, Marcus Gonzalez

Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus
 Bunny Gillespie, Secretary-Emerita
 Annette Hipona, Hospitality Chair

Board meetings are held as necessary and are open to the membership. Please contact Mark for further information.

History Guild of Daly City/Colma is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. Memberships begin at \$25 per year. Support your local history!

Tattler Editor & production: Dana Smith

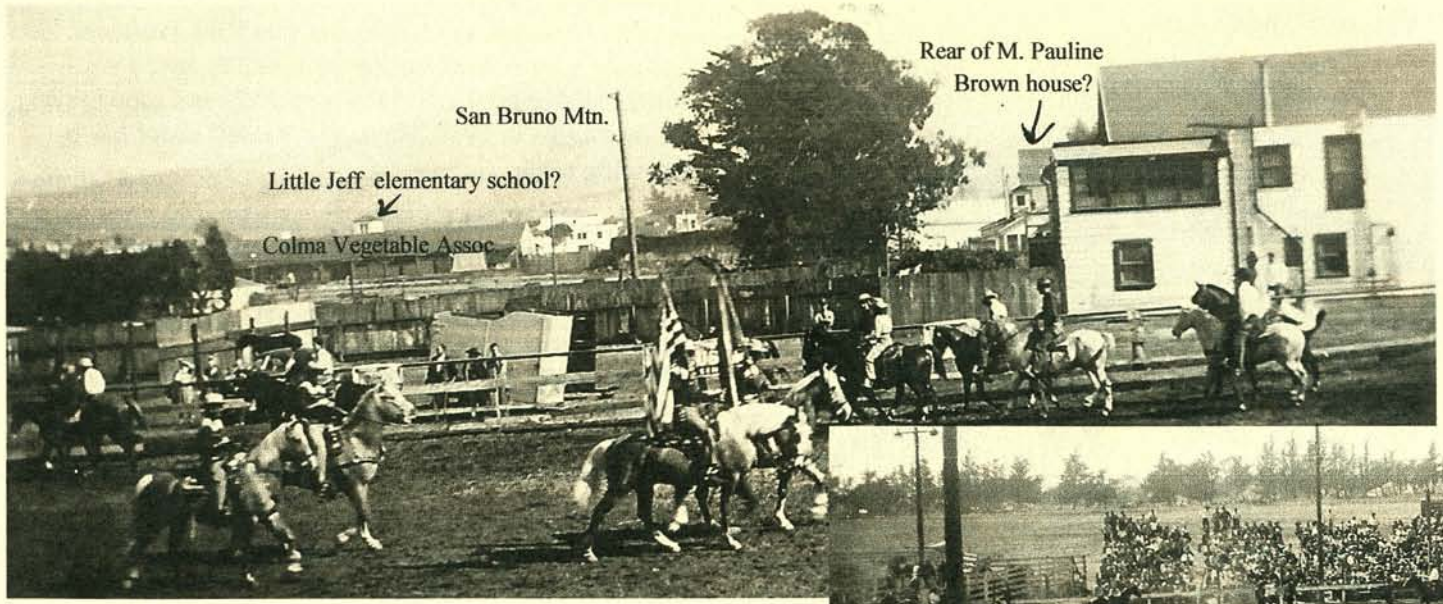


THE HISTORY GUILD OF DALY CITY/COLMA

DALY CITY HISTORY MUSEUM
 6351 Mission Street, Daly City, CA 94014
 650/757-7177
 Current Hours: Tuesdays and Saturdays from noon to 3 p.m.

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www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org

FIRST CLASS MAIL



RODEO MEMORIES

Share your memories: director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org , send a note to the museum, or call Dana directly at 650-892-2166.

Do you remember the rodeo grounds at the NE corner of Washington Street, circa 1944-1954?