

# THE TATTLEER

## JOURNAL OF DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

### GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

I wanted to let folks know that we had a very popular September meeting. The audience, which drew about 70, enjoyed our Remembering Playland at the Beach program. We hope to see this many friends at all our future meetings. A reminder that there will no longer be a November membership meeting; as attendance is always extremely low in that month, we have chosen to eliminate it. Our next meeting will be our annual birthday celebration on Sunday, January 27 @ 2:00 pm. We are still working on a speaker and program for that meeting.

This mailing marks the start of our fall campaign for 2019 membership renewal. Please continue to support our museum and quarterly membership programs by your timely return of the enclosed envelope. If it is within your means, we ask that you consider renewal at a slightly higher level of membership. Whatever feels right for you is very sincerely appreciated. It is only through your generosity that we are able to keep the doors of the museum open. A friendly reminder that we receive no city nor other governmental funding, but are very grateful for the long term use of the building that houses our museum. Therefore, we are dependent upon you, our membership, for the means to pay our insurance, utilities, supplies, archiving materials, occasional refreshments, and perhaps our most recent and greatest expense: the brand new exhibit of vintage oversized iconic images of Daly City that adorn the upper walls of the main room. This totaled almost \$9,000, and was created and curated by a professional firm specializing in such installations. This is our first new major exhibit since we installed our timeline exhibit in 2014. Your membership dollars at work!

### RECOLLECTIONS OF THE PHILOSOPHY STORE By Ray Wille

*Note: Guild member Ray Wille sent in this contribution in response to a mention of the Philosophy Store in the last edition.*

Being a lifelong resident of Daly City, I remember the Philosophy Store, which was in my neighborhood. As I recall, it was pretty much a full-service grocery except I  
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## NEXT GENERAL MEETING AND LECTURE

OUR ANNUAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION ON

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 27,  
2:00 PM.**

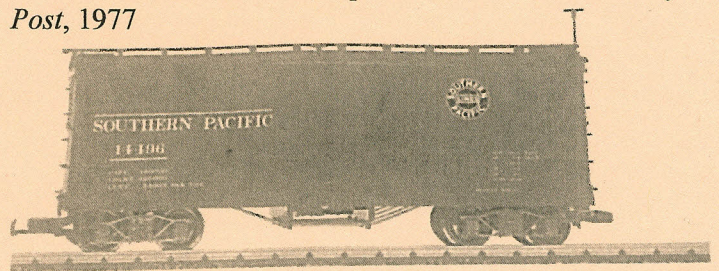
DOELGER CENTER CAFÉ

We are still working on a speaker and program for that meeting.

### THE GREAT TRAIN PULLOUT

By George Kirschubel

as Told to Frank LaPierre, reporter for *The North County Post*, 1977



The spur track that runs parallel with Junipero Serra Boulevard in Daly City had become a nest of hobos. Every boxcar parked on the siding was occupied and all a passerby could see were long johns (underwear) waving in the breeze from clotheslines. There was the smoke of cooking fires rising in the air, and the smell of Mulligan stews cooking over fires.

Suddenly, a Southern Pacific Railroad Co. switch engine came along and hooked onto the first boxcar. The long line of boxcars that had been overlooked by SP for months was rediscovered. It was a most peculiar sight to see the long underwear flapping as the boxcars were pulled from the area.



think it didn't have a butcher shop part. You could purchase bread and milk and cold cuts and canned goods there, as well as fruits and vegetables. There was a nearby butcher shop around the corner on Mission St. The Philosophy Store was located at 31 Hillcrest Drive across from the intersection with Vendome and Mission Circle. The proprietors were George and his brother, Louie, Nick. They lived in the residence above the store. A nephew, Nicholas, also worked in the store, and made home deliveries to customers. Later, another relative, Chris, worked there. Nick was actually an alias. Their real surname was Sola, and they were Greek. Perhaps the name "Philosophy Store" was chosen to reflect Greek philosophers. We just called it Nick's, but the sign on the front of the store read Philosophy Store. Also, Philosophy Store was the name on the calendars they gave out to customers every year. I think the calendars also had the name Sola listed as the proprietors. They had 2 trucks. One was an early 1920s vintage Chevrolet about ¾ ton size with a canopy, and, I think, open sides. George used this to drive to the produce market in San Francisco very early in the morning to purchase produce for the store. He parked it in front of the store with the front of the truck facing Mission Circle. The other truck was a 1935 International ½ ton pickup used to deliver groceries to customers' homes. Nicholas gave me a ride in it once. There was a metal hatch in the sidewalk in front of the store that opened to reveal an elevator to the basement used to load inventory into the store. The store had wooden floors and counters. The counter by the cash register had stools that resembled bar stools. Customers would sit there and give the cashier a grocery list or verbal requests, and the cashier would gather the groceries and bring them to the counter. If you wanted lunch meat like bologna or Salami or Veal Loaf, there were large sausages of these hanging on hooks. These were never refrigerated, and apparently had enough preservatives that they didn't have to be. Over many years, we never became ill from eating the lunch meat. They had a slicer to cut these into thin slices that dropped onto waxed paper. Then they wrapped the waxed paper with butcher paper and tied it with string. After tying the 1<sup>st</sup> knot, the customer was asked to put his finger on the knot while the cashier completed the double knot. All of the groceries were put into paper bags. There were no plastic bags then. In those days, clerks and customers handled groceries and money without washing hands in between, but this was pretty much standard practice at the time. The only concern would be with fruit or vegetables, but customers could wash the fruit at home before eating it, and the vegetables while preparing dinner. This part is probably still a normal practice today. Those were different times, but people were not ignorant. There were no electronics or UPC scanners. The cash register was mechanical or electrical and made a ker-ching sound. Initially, the customer's bill was added using pencil and paper with carbon paper for the receipt. Later, they obtained a

mechanical adding machine where they keyed in amounts, then pulled a lever. It printed out the numbers on a paper tape. You could purchase groceries on credit, then pay your bill when you cashed your payroll check. After the Philosophy Store closed, the building was occupied by the Hillcrest Upholstery Shop for a while (1980s). Next door, on the downhill side, there was a private residence that was well below grade of Hillcrest Drive. Next door to that was Cliff Pettigrew's Daly City Garage. Today, all 3 properties are occupied by the Hillcrest Garden Apartments at 35 Hillcrest Drive.

Ray Wille



Typical grocery store from the early 1900s

## ***Creature Features* Has Risen from the Grave**

How a low-budget monster-movie show kept the Bay Area strong.

*Note: Guilder Bob Calhoun has published several books and is a frequent contributor of offbeat subject matter to the SF Weekly. (excerpts from SF Weekly, Oct. 1, 2018)*

**By Bob Calhoun**

**Faux-dungeon in KTVU's Oakland studios** was packed with a guy dressed as Darth Vader, a furry in a donkey suit, and various fans and family members all gathered to watch as the two hosts of ***Creature Features*** — adman **Bob Wilkins**, who started the show in 1971, and journalist **John Stanley**, who took it over in 1979 — toasted each other with Champagne. The mood seemed festive on that late August afternoon in 1984, but it was more like a wake. ***Creature Features***, the top Bay Area monster-movie show from when that really meant something, had been canceled, and no letter-writing campaign could save it. The TV taping that brought these well-wishers here was going to be its last. After that night's lackluster movie, ***Lemora Lady Dracula*** (1973), rolled to its poorly lit climax, Wilkins

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observed, "This is the saddest night since they took *Bowling for Dollars* off Channel 5"...

In the 1970s, when TV viewers were a captive audience for local broadcasters, the Bay Area's weekend TV schedules were crawling with monsters. Independent stations took already decades-old fright flicks and repackaged them with their own hype. There was *Chiller Diller*, *Monstrous Movie*, *Ghoulie Movie*, and KNTV out of San Jose went the extra mile by making an intern in a white gorilla suit boogie to "The Monster Mash" on *Monster Matinee*.

Despite the gorilla, it was *Creature Features* that set the high-water mark for homegrown TV weirdness with its mix of bad movies, comic irony, and community programming for misfits...

The connection to *Creature Features* is still so powerful for the younger Boomers and older Gen Xers who stayed up late enough to watch it that there are now two different attempts to revive it: one anchored by the fez-topped **Al Omega** and the other by a washed-up rocker character called **Vincent Van Dahl**. Both have traded off a Saturday night time slot on KOFY TV, and, since this is 2018 and not 1975, both are locked in trademark disputes accompanied by Facebook flame wars.

... "I have fond memories of being on that show," recalls **George Takei**, a frequent guest on *Creature Features* where he and Wilkins discussed *Star Trek* alongside topics like mass transit and architecture. "It's people like Bob with his regular show who helped to build the large audience for science fiction that we have today."

... the bespectacled Wilkins had the bemused look of a guy who took a wrong turn on the way to his local Toastmasters meeting and ended up crashing the weirdest party ever. With its contrarian streak still intact before the techie gold rush, the Bay Area loved him for this. **With his dry wit and a sense of irony that was ahead of its time**, Wilkins developed his shtick of having no shtick at all in Sacramento at KCRA Channel 3... Program director Tom Breen noticed that Wilkins got more than a few laughs at company parties and tapped him to introduce *Attack of the Mushroom People* (1963), a Japanese phantasmagoria that's probably best viewed on brown acid.

... At KCRA, Wilkins assembled several of the sight gags he'd later bring to *Creature Features*, such as the yellow rocking chair and the motto "**WATCH HORROR FILMS KEEP AMERICA STRONG,**"

which hung behind him on the set and which is now at the heart of the legal dispute between the two current *Creature Features* hosts.

... When Breen moved to KTVU in 1970, he soon convinced Wilkins to bring the bad movie formula that worked at KCRA to the Bay Area's larger, hipper, and way more stoned audience with a new show called *Creature Features*. Now owned by Fox, KTVU in the 1970s was a locally sourced dream factory that produced many fond childhood memories with *Romper Room* and *Bits & Pieces* starring Charlie and Humphrey, a puppet horse and dog who dispensed moral lessons during afterschool commercial breaks.

... *Creature Features* joined KTVU's pantheon of local TV favorites on Saturday, Jan. 9, 1971, with a showing of *Horror of Party Beach* (1963), a surf-rock horror flick with fish monsters that look like they have a dozen hot dogs crammed into their gaping maws.

... While Wilkins didn't wear a cape or fangs, he was still surrounded by plenty of creepy props. Nelson Wong assembled the *Creature Features* set for each week's shoot..."the coffins that were used were real coffins that they actually got from some mortuary."

... Besides Wilkins' quips at his movies' expense, *Creature Features* was also known for its guests, ranging from local weirdos who built robots in their garage or knitted a sweater big enough to fit King Kong, to stars like Christopher Lee and the casts of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*.

### **San Francisco Chronicle writer John Stanley being interviewed by Wilkins.**



[Joan Scroggs, camera operator] "This type of show drew a certain number of — for want of another name, I would call them cult-type people... he drew more and more people from the crowd over in San Rafael that were working for a guy named George Lucas — you may have heard of him. They helped build [Industrial Light & Magic] and the *Star Wars* thing."



Wilkins also encouraged local filmmakers to send in their short films. Although Scroggs thought most of these movies "were pretty bad," she was "blown away by *Bambi Meets Godzilla* (1969), a minute-and-a-half cartoon with a fawn munching on foliage before getting flattened by a giant lizard.

... Wilkins even paired the aggressively derivative potboiler *Nightmare in Wax* (1969) with a rebroadcast of Richard Nixon's 1952 Checkers speech, in which Tricky Dick saved his political career by extolling a small dog named Checkers after being accused of pocketing gifts from Republican donors. "My series deals with fantasy and science fiction — things that are make-believe and unbelievable," Wilkins told the *Chronicle* in 1977. "In my estimation, the 'Checkers Speech' qualifies on every count."



At *Creature Features*' height in the mid-1970s... Wilkins was so successful for KTVU that the station added him as a weatherman on *The 10 O'Clock News* in 1974 — despite his complete lack of experience in meteorology.

Wilkins was done with the weather after his initial two-year commitment, but his TV empire kept growing. In 1977, KTVU expanded *Creature Features* to three shows a week, with a movie on Friday nights and two on Saturdays. Wilkins also taped another horror show for KTXL Channel 40 in Sacramento, and there was *Captain Cosmic* (1977-80), a weekday afternoon kids show on KTVU in which Wilkins wore a satin superhero suit and presented Japanese monster shows... with a clunky robot sidekick called 2T2.

But when the heavy workload started taking its toll on Wilkins, he decided to step down from television and go

back to the advertising business... [wife] Sally Wilkins says, "He was exhausted... We now know he got Alzheimer's at age 50. He died at 76" [in 2009].

Airing on Saturday nights at 10 p.m. on KOFY TV, the current *Creature Features* is ... the passion project of Jeff Bodean, who took a modest fortune from co-founding software companies Micromat and Outspring, and bought a small Santa Rosa TV station in 2014 that's now called North Bay TV... When Bodean got the idea to bring back *Creature Features* on his station, he reached out to Tom Wyrsh, director of the *Creature Features* documentary *Watch Horror Films Keep America Strong* (2008), and the man entrusted by the Wilkins family to maintain Bob's legacy.

*Note: Tom Wyrsh was the Guild's well received guest speaker presenting his documentary Remembering Playland at the Beach at our September meeting. Thanks to Bob Calhoun for allowing this excerpt in the Tattler. The full article goes on to detail the current warring versions of Creature Features and their escalating legal battles. When Wilkins retired from the show in 1979, San Francisco Chronicle writer John Stanley took over until the show ended in 1981. Bob Calhoun's full article can be found at: <http://www.sfweekly.com/topstories/creature-features-has-risen-from-the-grave/>*

## A HOUSE THAT SLOWLY VANISHED



By George Kirchhubel  
as Told to Frank  
LaPierre, reporter for *The North County Post*, 1977

George Rehaune was a man I would say in his forties when all this occurred. He owned a little shack that stood on stilts, not unlike some of the other homes in the low lying areas of Daly City. It was furnished with all the necessities of life, including plumbing.

George had decided to enter the Pyle Bunion Derby, a hike that started in San Francisco [Los Angeles] and was supposed to end in New York City. Somehow Pop Brown had heard about this and he approached Rehaune with an idea. "George, I heard you're going to walk to Cont'd



New York. Now George, you know the minute you leave some kids will be around and they'll see your

house empty and they'll probably break all your windows. If you want, I'll live in your house and take care of it while you are on that hike."

As it turned out, Rehaune was one of the few who completed the trip. When he got to New York, he wrote Pop that he had met some friends from Germany and he would stay on the East Coast for the winter. It just so happened that particular winter turned out to be a cold one for Daly City. [1928]

One day as I was walking a string of greyhounds (racing dogs) I happened to pass by the house Pop was living in for Rehaune. I stopped as I observed Pop working tearing down the back porch of the house. I asked him what the matter was. "What is it Joe? Termites?" I asked. He answered, "Can't you see I'm getting firewood." I reminded Pop that just down the street was a whole park full of trees that could be cut up for firewood. Pop answered, "I should go all the way down the street when I got all the firewood I need right here?" I shrugged and walked off.

As I daily passed by the house during that long cold winter, I watched as Pop gradually chopped down the porch. Next came the siding, then the studs. When the bedroom had disappeared into the stove, it was the furniture's turn. When the house had no more wood left, Pop sold the stove and curled up beneath the front stairs of the house... all that was left. Pop had an old greyhound dog to snuggle up and keep him warm.

Spring came to Daly City and so did Rehaune, looking for his house. He was speechless when all he found were the front steps and an otherwise vacant lot.

*Note: George Kirchhubel was a bar keeper on Mission Street known for his great story telling.*

**THANKS** – to Guild board members for refreshments at our last general meeting in September: **Marcus (and Grace) Gonzales, Dana Smith, Algis Ratnikas, Judith Christensen, Michael Rocchetta, and Richard Rocchetta.** **Michael Rocchetta** is busy scanning more recent *Tattlers* for inclusion in our Website. You can find an archive of *Tattlers* from way back to the 1980s at [www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org](http://www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org). **Dana Smith** has been replanting and mulching the front landscape area of the museum, where we had sunflowers,

dahlias (donated by Guild member **Fred Stevens**) and new perennial flowering bushes during summer and fall. Thanks to **Judith Christensen** for coordinating an exchange mailing with the Daly City Public Library Associates which helped us add a dozen new members.

## THE BUNION DERBY

*Editor's note: I followed the hint in the Vanishing House story to find out more about the footrace in which Daly City resident George Rehaune participated.*



Bunioneers passing through a town.

Sports promoter and some would might say con man Charles Pyle is best remembered for what he called C.C. Pyle's First Annual International Transcontinental Foot Race from Los Angeles to New York. Correctly figuring the race would be murder on the runners' feet, someone dubbed it the Bunion Derby. The name stuck. Pyle's race began March 4, 1928, when 199 men left a starting line intending to run across the country—from Los Angeles to New York City—in pursuit of \$25,000 prize money.

The media—newspapers, radio, film crews—flocked to cover the race as it traveled from town to town and state to state, but soon became bored of the daily drama of seeing men run across deserts and mountains and through sandstorms, snowstorms, and thunderstorms (not to mention racers frequently getting hit by cars), the sportswriters complained that once a runner had a 50-hour lead on a competitor, everyone could easily guess who would probably win. Pyle provided meager rations and housing along the way, while he attempted to collect sponsoring town donations along the way. A raunchy carnival with sideshow, band, and female dancers followed the runners.

The Bunion Derby lasted 84 consecutive days. Frequently, racers were running—and walking, staggering, and crawling—35 miles in one day. Near the end of the race, they were averaging 60 and 70 miles. 55 men finished the race, with ten winning prize money. Apparently, Daly City resident George Rehaune, owner of the "Vanishing House" was one of the 55 men finishing this grueling race, although he did not win prize money.





**DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM  
& ARCHIVE**

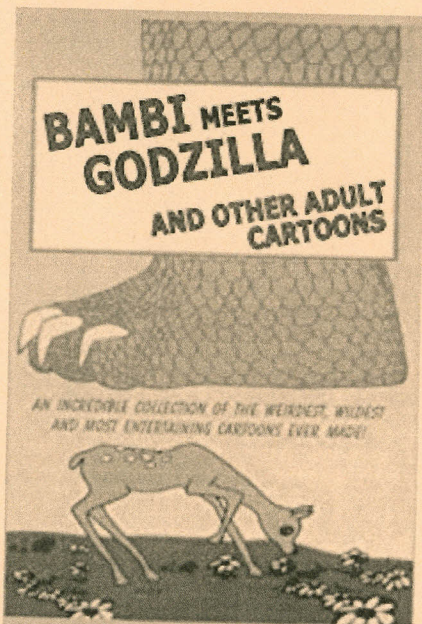
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[www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org](http://www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org)

**FIRST CLASS MAIL**



**Bambi Meets  
Godzilla**

(1969) is a cartoon created entirely by Marv Newland. Less than two minutes long, the film is a classic of animation; it was listed #38 in the book The 50 Greatest Cartoons (1994) as selected by 1,000 animation professionals. The

opening credits scroll over an animated image of the character Bambi serenely grazing while the Call to the Dairy Cows from Rossini's opera William Tell (1829) plays in the background. After the credits, Bambi looks up to see Godzilla's giant foot coming down, squashing him flat (set to the final chord of The Beatles' "A Day in the Life" slowed down to half speed).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXCUBVS4kfQ>

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Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus, Bunny Gillespie (1926-2017), Secretary-Emerita, Grace and Marcus Gonzales and Annette Hipona Hospitality Crew

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

**Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive is a  
501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization  
Memberships begin at \$25 per year.**

**Tattler Editor & production: Dana Smith,**  
director@dalycityhistorymuseum.org

**It's time to renew your membership. Thank you!  
Remember, the Guild is an all-volunteer  
organization, so 100% of your donations are used for  
programs, publication, maintenance and  
enhancements to our museum.**