

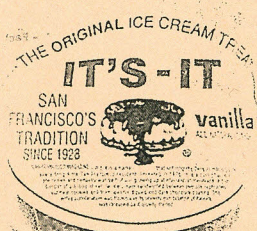
THE TATTLER

JOURNAL OF DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM & ARCHIVE

GREETINGS FROM PRESIDENT MARK

This September marks a sad event in both San Francisco and Bay Area history. It was fifty years ago this month that we lost Playland at the Beach. It was our own Coney Island and entertained and provided a needed distraction to hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of individuals and families for almost six decades. While much has been debated as to the condition and safety of the amusement park in its final years, what is absolutely indisputable is that when the decision was made to demolish it, a vital part of our collective history and ourselves was lost forever and never to be replaced.

In 2018, we presented a program on Playland. It received many ovations and was one of our most widely attended meetings of all time. At that gathering we showed the only definitive documentary of which we are aware, *Remembering Playland at the Beach*, by Petaluma filmmaker Tom Wyrsh, who reflected on the film and shared his own remembrances. I am happy to say that Tom will join us once again to show and discuss his documentary. Originally, we had hoped to co-present a more comprehensive program with the Western Neighborhoods Project of San Francisco, which I've previously mentioned. However, due to unanticipated logistical and staffing issues on their end, they felt the need to withdraw at this time. It is still our hope to collaborate with them on a future project sometime in 2023. We also hope to have Jim Smith, author of *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Early Years* and *San Francisco's Playland at the Beach: The Golden Years*. Jim no longer lives in the immediate area and has had some recent health issues, so he will join us if possible. Due to the length of the film, possible number of speakers, and question and answer period, **we will begin this meeting at 1:00 pm rather than our usual hour later.**



Please make a note. As a bonus, the Guild has purchased a limited number of It's-Its, the famous ice cream sandwich originally conceived at Playland

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SEPTEMBER IN-PERSON LECTURE AND MEETING

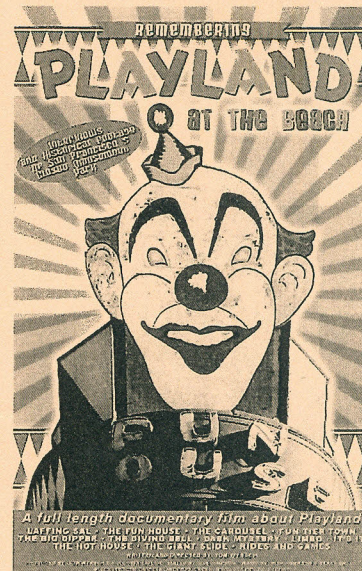
**Sunday, September 18TH
1 pm**

(one hour earlier than usual!)

**Merced Room, Westlake Park
Pacelli Gym**

Tom Wyrsh

**Presents his documentary film
*Remembering Playland at the Beach***



**Attendees are asked to be fully vaccinated.
This venue allows space to social distance.
Lots of free parking – refreshments**

Thanks to: Hostess Annette Hipona and refreshment donors Emily Chan and Judy Hnilo.

in 1928, at a discount from the company headquartered in Burlingame. Each attendee will be entitled to **one while supplies last**.

You might remember that the Guild has a collection of unknown origin of professional images of Playland taken during its final days and hours. Our museum and archive is in possession of beautifully mounted vintage black and white photographs of the amusement park taken just before and during demolition, and which we will have on display at the meeting. Most, if not all, of these images have never before been displayed publicly. Please join us as we share our collective memories.

Tom Wyrsh is a producer of numerous documentaries, including *Sutro's: the Place at Land's End; The Cliff House and Sutro Heights* and of course, *Remembering Playland at the Beach*. DVDs will be available for purchase at the meeting. Tom's web site is www.garfieldlaneproductions.com. Many a Daly Cityite visited Playland at the Beach over the years. It was THE recreation spot for families from all over the Bay Area. Our own little slice of heaven. The film will showcase the predecessor of Playland--that's right it started life under a different name--and take us all the way through its ignominious end, which came about abruptly in the summer of 1972. You will learn why the land, once the park was bulldozed almost overnight, was forced to stand vacant for the next decade, with a decree from the City and County of San Francisco that no development of any kind occur over the next ten years. If you have any memorabilia from Playland and are inspired to share it with us at the meeting, please do so. A final note: the Playland Not at the Beach museum in El Cerrito, which had the single largest collection of Playland memorabilia anywhere, lost its home and closed forever a few years ago. The entire contents were auctioned and are now scattered throughout the country. However, you can still visit the museum and view its fantastic former collection on their website, which is still operational--www.playland-not-at-the-beach.org. As Bob Hope would say, "Thanks for [all] the [wonderful] memories!"

On August 9 the museum hosted a belated celebration of the life of Georgette Sarles for about 20 invited guests of the Daly City-Colma Chamber of Commerce. It was the idea of Felicia Leong, CEO of the chamber. She wanted to remember her friend of many years and the past CEO of the chamber, and thought it would be fitting to have it at the museum given that the Guild was gifted a great many artifacts by both the Marignac and Sarles families, including the iconic Georgette's of Westlake glass sign that originally graced the beauty shop of almost 60 years. A reminder that we have a great many artifacts

from Georgette still uncatalogued and in boxes due to space limitations. Much of the Georgette Sarles' collection is available for viewing upon request when visiting the museum. Finally, due to two of our longtime docents being on indefinite leave because of Covid health concerns, we are struggling to staff the second Tuesday and second and third Saturdays of the month. At this time, we are scrambling to cover those days. If you have an interest in becoming a docent on any of those days, please let me know at either president@dalycityhistorymuseum.org or calling the museum, 650-757-7177. Please note that we are looking for one or more people who would be willing to docent on an ongoing basis. No prior experience necessary. We would train you with the understanding and expectation that you would then staff the museum on your own, though you certainly would be welcome to bring a spouse and/or friend with you.

Thanks to each of the board for recently cleaning the museum and gardening in both the front and rear of the building. Member and gardener Fred Stevens donated dahlia plants which were planted by Dana Smith and now blooming in the frontage of the museum in a bouquet of colors. Thank you! (Note: John Daly once tended a dahlia garden at the Top-Of-The-Hill.)

OUR THANKS: Greg Kennedy volunteered his time and truck to move a large and very sturdy storage shelving unit donated by Mark Weinberger (Greg is our neighbor just up Mission Street at Occidental Power, 5982 Mission. His grandfather was Fire Chief Elmer Kennedy); thanks to Mark Weinberger for his herculean efforts to secure our It's It. Vaughn Jones donated a commemorative magazine on John Madden; Dennis Fisicaro donated various commendation plaques from the Daly City Food Pantry; Perkey Ramroth donated 2 boxes and two albums of Doelger documents and photos and files on notable people including John Marchbank.

REMEMBERING MARILYN OLCESE

Jason Olcese: "I'm sorry to say Marilyn passed away on July 13. Dementia symptoms had increased for her. She was moved to a memory care unit where she rested for the last two and half months. She is laying in rest alongside her brother Alan Olcese at Holy Cross mausoleum. She is survived by her brother Tillio ||, my father, who is still living, he is the older sibling of Marilyn and Alan, my brother Tillio ||| and myself Jason. She has a great niece Gabriela Joyce Olcese my brother's child. His partner is Marta de Leon. They live in Reno Nevada. Marilyn was born in 1945 and lived in
Cont'd pg. 3

Daly City her whole life. She grew up on the family pig farm in the foothills of Daly City. I don't recall too much of her early years. In the 80's through 2001 she managed her brothers waste business. Marilyn also managed family properties which included buildings on top of the hill at Daly City, Burlingame and SF for over 30 years.

Around 2005 she bought a second home in Sonoma. The Sonoma home was a quick getaway for her. Marilyn was never married. She has no children. She always had a pet dog. She had many friends and enjoyed company. She liked to eat at Westlake Joes and the Chick N Coop.

A young Marilyn



Please ask for donations in her name to be sent to the Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive. Thank You, Jason Olcese" (Marilyn's Nephew)

Marcus Gonzalez: "I remember Marilyn working the hospitality table at our Guild lectures, along with Eleanor Charleston. Clearly, she and her family will be remembered for their long and lasting influence in this area. Near Westmoor High, there is an Olcese Court, and the Olcese Trust Building still stands on Mission (home of the Chick- n-Coop and other businesses). I've heard that Westmoor was built on the site of one of the Olcese farms. [A 1905 photo shows a vast field of cabbage on the Olcese Ranch at the current site of Westmoor HS, looking down to Mission Street and the multistory Jefferson Elementary School.]

Dana Smith: "I feel fortunate to be one of the people who got to know Marilyn. She was a very unique and artistic person who like me loved dogs, family, gardening, cooking and decorating her home. Marilyn's family are Genovese Italians, immigrating from the Genoa region on the Mediterranean in Northern Italy. I know she spoke Italian and was proud of her heritage. She was a fantastic Italian cook who was famed for her mushroom risotto. I enjoyed meals at her home which

were memorable for anyone lucky enough to attend. Her dining room had a large vintage dining table that could fit a large group. She set a marvelous table with creative centerpiece and beautiful China and silverware. Hutches in the room displayed her vast China collection, which included pig figurines. A dear friend helped her hostess... you were waited on like royalty.

I am an artist, and Marilyn was an artist in my mind with her creative home decorating, stylish dressing, and somewhat theatrical presence. She had a memorable voice, which always reminded me of Lauren Bacall. Her tea table at one of the Colma Historical Association teas was in my mind the most memorable. The centerpiece was a blooming cherry tree and Marilyn was dressed in a brocade Chinese sheath with a flamboyant pink hat. All items and favors on the table continued the Asian theme. She met friends regularly for coffee and socializing at a local café. I expect she had a loyal following.

In a moment of sharing, Marilyn told me how she was the caregiver for her brother Alan, how difficult that was, and how much she missed him. She recounted as a girl working with her uncle in the Olcese flower nursery near City Hall. It was still producing dahlias until fairly recent times.

Marilyn was a longtime Board member and volunteer of the History Guild joining the Gillespies, Betty Schultz, Marian Mann and Russ Brabec docenting at the Mini Museum, which used to be located in the basement of the Serramonte Library.

I hate to say goodbye to such a great lady!"

Editor's Note: I'm a fan of the PBS show "Finding Your Roots," which discovers family genealogy. How did we come to be in this time and place... in Daly City? I started with my own "Immigrant Story" from my grandparents on my mother's side, who immigrated from the Ukraine at the beginning of the 20th century. I invite others to submit their stories. I'm waiting for my neighbor Ben Cecilia to put together his family history, beginning with his grandfather who was in the Bataan Death March in WWII. This edition, Board member Algis Ratnikas and his wife Florence our contributing their remarkable story.

IMMIGRANT STORY: ALGIS RATNIKAS & FLORENCE MONZASCH

Germany's attack on Poland on September 1, 1939, soon led Russia to occupy Lithuania. On Sept. 28, the Boundary and Friendship Treaty between the USSR and Germany was supplemented by secret protocols to amend the secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of Aug 23. Among
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other things Lithuania was reassigned to the Soviet sphere of influence. On June 15, 1940, the Soviet Red Army invaded Lithuania. On June 14, 1941, the Russian secret police gathered up some 40,000 men, women and children and exiled them to Siberia in cattle cars. This was the first of many shipments. On June 21 war broke out between Germany and Russia and German forces soon entered Lithuania.

Life under the Russian occupation was brutal. The German occupiers were a bit kinder, except for the unfortunate Jewish population, which was quite large. The events of the Holocaust are well documented elsewhere.

In July 1944, Russian forces pushed the German army out of Lithuania. Rather than face another Russian occupation many Lithuanians followed the German army south. These were mostly young people coming of age, intellectuals, and anyone fearful of a 2nd Soviet occupation. My mother (21) and father (22) were among the thousands who fled their homeland and settled in refugee camps following the end of WW II in 1945. Most of these people had expected to return home, but the Soviet occupation of the homeland prevented this. This story is very common for refugees from Latvia, Estonia, and other Eastern European countries.

My mother and father met in 1946 at a dance at their refugee camp in Munich. I was born there in February 1947. A sister soon followed in August 1948 and another sister in January 1950. Refugees in the camps had organized themselves by language identity and established educational and sports programs while waiting passage to western countries. Refugees from the camps were eventually dispersed mostly to Australia, Britain, Canada, and United States. Part of the process required either a guaranteed job and/or sponsorship by a third party. In the case of our family the story goes that my father got a guaranteed job picking tobacco in North Carolina. We arrived in America on February 16, 1950. The guaranteed job fell through. My father had a classmate, already settled in Detroit, who assumed sponsorship. Thus, we soon boarded a train for Detroit. Unlike many refugees we had arrived by airplane. I was three and remember the sound of the airplane engine waking me from a deep sleep. I looked out the airplane window and saw a very large women standing below. It was indeed the Statue of Liberty and forever after I was attracted to strong women. During a train stop on our way to Detroit my mother asked my father to go out and buy some milk for the kids. She handed him an empty pitcher that they had used back in the refugee camp. Dad soon

returned with a bag of groceries and the pitcher which was empty. My mother cried out that he forgot the milk. Father quickly explained that here they do not fill pitchers with milk and pulled out a bottle of milk from the bag. Mother was embarrassed and in anger flung the pitcher out the train window, or so the story goes. Years later she regretted tossing that beloved pitcher.

We settled in Detroit and there I grew up deeply involved in the local Lithuanian community. In 1969 I graduated from the Univ. of Michigan with a degree in cell biology and received a draft notice on the same day as my degree arrived by mail. The war in Vietnam was not to my liking. Canada was very close. I ultimately opted to enlist for 3 years and served as a laboratory technician, one year in Colorado and another year in Germany. A delayed enlistment option, a bout with spinal meningitis in basic training, a second term in basic training, and an early out put me back home in the spring of 1972. My interest in science had waned, but not my interest in art, literature, and music. I enrolled in a master's program in humanities at Wayne state Univ. in Detroit and during that program created a paper-based timeline to help in my studies. The roll of paper, spread fifteen feet along our basement wall, fell apart after months of erasures and additions. It was an interesting project, but the media was not quite right.

Following graduation, I found myself working at a Detroit rubber factory pressing out, among other things, gas masks. Saving a thousand dollars, I departed Detroit with a girlfriend to South America and then on to San Francisco. I settled in Chinatown near Portsmouth square at a residential hotel with rooms for \$50/month. My friend continued her travels to Sweden.

In San Francisco I began hanging out at the newly opened Café Babar at 22nd and Guerrero, run by an acquaintance from Detroit. Here in 1977, I met a young lady from New York. She was an artist teaching art to young children at the nearby St. James school. Her father Leon was a Polish Jew. At age 17 he had escaped the Warsaw ghetto, was captured by Russians, and sent to labor in Siberia. His parents, sisters, brothers and all their children were murdered in Auschwitz. In Siberia Leon cut trees during the daytime and slept with Husky dogs at night as temperatures dropped below freezing. He worked alongside political prisoners, who had spoken out against Stalin; intellectuals, who had had written about the dictatorship; as well as Jews, Gypsies and others sent to work at the camps. After a few years a sympathetic Jewish doctor was able to contrive papers for a few young men, including Leon, which allowed them to escape south to Uzbekistan, where many Russians were hiding from

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the oncoming German army. There Leon met Vera at a malaria clinic.



Here is a photo of me (Florence) feeding chickens at the DP Camp (displaced persons /refugee camp) outside of Munich. Behind me are the German Army Barracks where we lived. It was very raw and basic.

When the war ended Leon and Vera were allowed to wait at the Gunzberg Refugee Camp near Munich, where in 1948 their daughter Florence was born. In 1951 the family was allowed to entry to the United States. They settled in NYC. In the words of Florence: "There are no words to explain what coming to America meant for these refugees. They literally kissed the ground saying, 'God Bless America.' A life of exile and persecution cannot be explained. The trauma it imprints on survivors cannot be measured. It is monumental and never forgotten. It is impossible for those who have never struggled with prejudice and persecution to understand. Such wounds last generations. Keep that in mind every time you meet an immigrant. That is what America should forever be."

Florence moved to San Francisco around 1975. Our backgrounds bound us together and we raised one daughter. 15 years later we moved to Daly City. During this period personal computers became available and by 1996 software enabled me to re-establish my timeline project. In 1998 I posted "Timelines of History" to the Internet and have continued the project to this day. Our grandchildren, a boy (6) and a girl (3), now live in the Boston area. They are calling for us to move there.

References: www.timelines.ws

For additional reading:

"Thought We'd Be Back Soon: 18 stories of refugees 1940-1944" by Dalia Cidzikaitė, Dalia Stakė Anyasas, Laima Petrauskas VanderStoep. (2017)

<https://www.amazon.com/Thought-Wed-Back-Soon-1940-1944/dp/6098120277>

"God Give Us Wings" by Felicia Prekeris (2013).

<https://www.amazon.com/Give-Wings-Felicia-Prekeris-Brown/dp/1484189124>

"Between Shades of Gray" by Ruta Sepetys (2011)

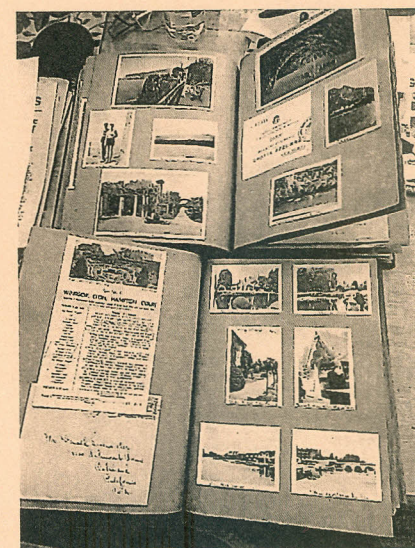
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Between_Shades_of_Gray

Do you recognize this Daly City landmark?



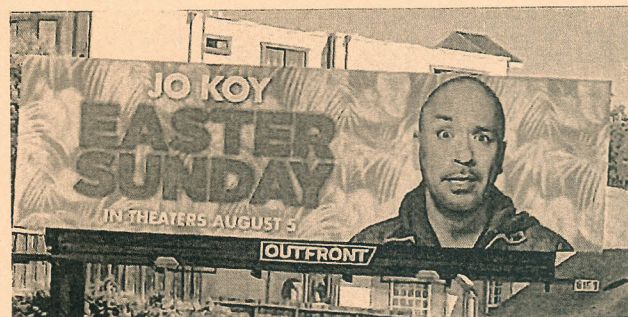
If you come down Guadalupe Canyon Parkway (west bound) before you reach JFK school, to the upper right is a rock formation known in the area as Indian Head Rock. Photo: Michael Rochetta

We recently received a donation from Emily Gest of two photo albums formerly owned by John Daly's granddaughter Frances Bishopric. We are thrilled with these new acquisitions and will be including information in a future *Tattler*.



NEW MUSEUM VOLUNTEER

We are lucky to have a new volunteer at the museum. Julien Jimenez-Montano. Julian is a lifelong resident of Daly City and a recent graduate of SFSU with a BA Degree in anthropology. Julien commented, "I am interested in learning more about museum curation and I would love to get more involved with sharing the history of this city." Board docents are busy putting his talents to good use.



Filipino stand-up comedian Jo Koy stars as a man returning home for an Easter celebration with his riotous, loving family. The movie was made in Daly City and celebrates Filipino-American culture. Jo Koy was given a key to Daly City. This billboard is currently on Mission Street at the Colma border.



**DALY CITY HISTORY GUILD MUSEUM
& ARCHIVE**

6351 Mission Street Daly City, CA 94014

650/757-7177

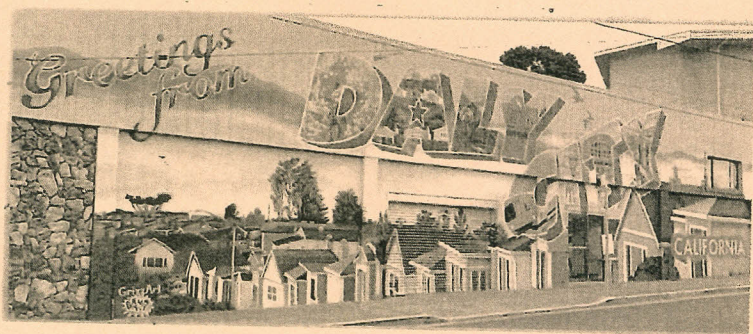
OPEN TUESDAYS AND SATURDAYS NOON – 3 PM



Please visit us on Facebook at "Daly City History Guild Museum & Archive"

www.dalycityhistorymuseum.org

FIRST CLASS MAIL



Just around the corner from the museum on Hillside Blvd. Jefferson High School's GrizzArt Club completed their first mural. The recently-completed mural is the result of a collaboration between community member Victoria Magbilang, project funder Dragonfly Community Arts, and the Bay Area Mural Program (BAMP), who worked with the GrizzArt students and their advisor Suzanne Koehnlein to design and paint this new Daly City landmark. Daly City Mitsubishi and building owners Donna Curusis and Patricia Herriott, gave heir support to the project.

GUILD OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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

Ken Gillespie (1924-2011), President-Emeritus, Bunny Gillespie (1926-2017), Secretary-Emerita, Grace and Marcus Gonzalez 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
**(dana@vikingsmith.net) I would love to hear your
immigrant story!**

After this September meeting, the next lecture/
meeting will be held in January