

VOL. 47 NUMBER 4

December 2, 2006

PIONEER LUNCHEON

Saturday, December 2, 2006 at Noon

The Drying Shed 402 Toyon at McKee Road
Take the McKee exit off of I-680 towards the hills to
Toyon Avenue, turn left to 402 Toyon

Reservations MUST BE MADE before

Sunday, November 26, 2006

*Call 408 554-7587 to make reservations
and luncheon choices by name
before Sunday, November 26, 2006.*

Fresh Garden Salad, French Rolls and Butter
with A CHOICE OF Homemade Meat Lasagna,
Vegetarian Lasagna or Chicken Teriyaki
Chef's Dessert • Coffee or Tea

*By Popular demand, **THE BANJO BAND**
will play for us again!*

The Authors of all 12 Santa Clara County Books published by
Arcadia Press have been invited to bring books to sell!

Plan ahead for your Christmas shopping!

LEONARD MCKAY 1921-2006



Photo by Bob Johnson

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Leonard's printing plant, the Mercury Herald Newspaper, The Farmers Union and the Workingman's Store were all located within spitting distance. Being neighbors, we all knew each other. In those days, after the War, in the fifties and sixties, and later, we used to have lunch with Big John McEnery, our esteemed former Mayor's father. Dick Barrett and Harry Farrell of the Merc, the two printers, Leonard and Theron Fox, among others, came as their schedules allowed. We discussed the politics of the day and other amusing events. We told tales. It was at those almost daily events that Leonard was able to whet my appetite for local history! We remained friends all these years.

Several months ago Leonard took me on a tour of his old stomping grounds in Los Gatos. The Seikman ranch where he worked as a youngster, the ranch house still stand-ing, past the old McKay residence on Loma Alta, now remodeled and up-graded, up

into the hills where he used to roam. We drove into the old J.H. Pond place and looked at how it had been developed. He was having so much fun that I didn't want to remind him that we were really on our way to go see George Kennedy. Eventually we wound back down to the flats and got back on 17. We then proceeded on to the District Attorney's offices.

Leonard had a set of opium scales. He had seen one like it on the Antiques Road Show, but the expert had missidentified the object. Leonard needed to know if indeed his was used in the opium trade. So he called on his friend George. Would George please ask the crime lab to check and see if there was opium residue?

George gave us a tour of his offices, showed us the pictures hanging on the walls, explaining those that we couldn't identify; it was grand. I certainly hope that who ever takes George's place will keep the identity with the past. After all, Kennedy is the last DA who knew and was part of the old community. Only a few weeks ago, Leonard called to tell me that he had received the scales back and the answer was YES! There was opium residue in the pan of the scale! So Chris, be careful. We don't want you or the girls picked up for dealing!

Some years ago, when the time was ripe, after I was no longer wet behind the ears, after I gained a little maturity, Leonard asked me to join him in the Pioneers. I did so with the proviso that he would guide me and not leave my side. Now, what will the Pioneers do without his sage advise and leadership?

His guidance will stand the Pioneers well. We have all learned from Leonard. The Pioneers will survive because of his teachings. The things that we cannot replace are his stories. Ah Toy, no, I mean, AH, his stories. His humor! At the last Pioneer's luncheon, he told one of his vignettes that was a repeat. When I reminded him, he said, "... it makes no difference, these folks are so old that they won't remember that I told that story before!" But, Leonard, they will remember your stories, even if they were repeats. You never told the same story in the same way. Each old story became a new story. So we looked forward to each of the tales, even if they were repeats. Who knew of San Francisco dumping rubble from the earthquake in San Jose without you telling us?

That the new downtown shopping mall there by the old train station was built on that debris? Without your blogs, how would we have known that Donaldina Cameron and a Miss Culbertson were the founders of Ming Quong? Originally it was a home for the young girls brought from China to work in the houses in San Francisco, then expanded to needy Chinese children.

You reminded us or enlightened us, you taught us. One of our younger members wished that you had been her history teacher - "I would have paid attention," she said.

Thank you Leonard for all that you have given to this community. The Pioneers thank you for your leadership and advise. We already miss your red Clamper shirt and tall hat. Say hello to Clyde and Austin, and be sure to tell Clyde that his shovel will indeed have a choice place of honor.

One of Leonard's dreams was to have a home for the Pioneers; a place that could be a headquarters, a place to house and show the belongings and gatherings that have come into our possession over the years of trying to live up to the Pioneers' mission.

His vision is almost complete. It stands there in the Paulson House. Leonard toured the house just two and a half weeks ago and was pleased. He noted the workmanship and the dedication to excellence in the restoration performed by the crew from Case Swenson's Santa Clara Valley Corporation and the contribution made by Barry Swenson in planning this wonderful new headquarter structure for the California Pioneers of Santa Clara County. Thanks to Barry and Case, but without official sanction, the front door is open. Thanks to Alida and her great crew, some of Miss Jackson's furniture is in place for all to see. Several paintings are on the walls. Come and enjoy this wonderful restoration!

In addition we are now assured of the landscaping. Barry Swenson, our new Honorary Member, told me that he would cover that project. Maybe not until January or February.

The house still needs several things: we need an angel for the book shelving in the Library-Office. We need carpets. We need another angel to cover the janitorial expenses. We need two period hanging chandeliers and a period hall light.

The work that our co-chairs of the house committee, Bob and Bev Fisher, has been wonderful! Their selection of the drapes, the overseeing of the details, and general management has taken such a

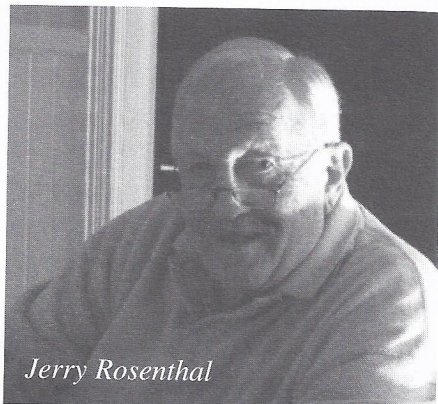
load off of my shoulders that I do believe that I shall be able to continue as president. Marylou von Rotz has taken her duties as Docent Leader to heart and provided docents to lead the many visitors through the Paulson House on Leonard's Memorial day. Wow!

And thank you to all the others, unmentioned, who jumped in to help when needed! Without you, our wonderful new headquarters could never have been completed!

Dan Sturgis will take over managing the final items of the upgrade of the Paulson House.

Mary Lou Lyon has is our new Historian!

Thanks Dan.



Jerry Rosenthal

LEONARD MCKAY 1921-2006

By Eric A. Carlson

JOLLY CAPTAIN BRIGGS stood guard in front of Leonard McKay's tiny shop, Memorabilia of San Jose, at 250 West St. John St. (The original redwood Captain Briggs graced San Jose cigar store sidewalks from 1872 to 1936.) Leonard sometimes laments the name of his business, "Memorabilia is too long and nobody can spell it." And the location, a gnat's ass from being under Highway 87, is not calculated for foot traffic. "I've only had one customer in two weeks, and that was a burglar," he quipped. A short time ago, Leonard gave Captain Briggs to the Print Shop at History San Jose.

Leonard was born in San Jose on October 21, 1921.

The family moved to Los Gatos shortly thereafter. While attending Los Gatos High School, he sought out and interviewed John Steinbeck. After reading the interview to his class, his teacher snatched the paper from his hand and tore it into shreds. Many Californians, during the Depression, were not happy with writers who championed the cause of "Oakies" and "Arkies"—who were seen as invaders. Leonard was asked to visit the Dean of Discipline for a pep talk on California patriotism. Not one to shy from

controversial themes, Leonard's next report was on the Lupin Lodge Nudist Camp. Once again, his report became confetti.

During World War II Leonard was a liaison pilot for artillery observation. After the war he worked for Pan American Air before joining the family business in 1953. Smith & McKay Printing had come about in 1919, in the annex of the old St. James Hotel—a collaboration of Leonard's step-grandfather, grandmother and father. The location was 96 Almaden Blvd., facing St. John on one side. Dave McKay, Leonard's son, continued in the family tradition until his death.

Leonard has written three books on local history and published fourteen. His contributions to San Jose are more than can be described in this short column, but include receiving the Outstanding Citizen of San Jose award in 1979 for his work on the Peralta Adobe and Pellier Park. Poor old Pellier Park. Leonard's face scrunches up a bit when you mention it. He put a lot of heart into that project--only to see it turn to rack and ruin.

In 1998, while reading the immensely entertaining *A Postcard History of San Jose*, by Leonard McKay and Nestor Wahlberg, I noticed a phone number and address listed on page ii, for a store named Memorabilia of San Jose. I drove downtown for a visit and a veritable El Dorado lay in wait for me... of things San Jose and historical. Although Leonard had sold off many of his history tomes, there were still poignant San Jose postcards to thumb through and various other historical gems to gawk upon. Leonard was distressed when the city made him close down the Memorabilia

Recently, Leonard regaled me with an amazing story of a trip to Australia. His wife's purse had come up missing in a Sydney restaurant, and as Leonard dutifully wended his way toward a police station to file a report, he was lovingly accosted by a drunken Australian in search of a boon companion. The man took hold of Leonard and commenced dragging him into a pub (Leonard is a pretty big guy to be dragging around). In the act of resisting, Leonard's arm swung backward and struck a Sydney policeman, knocking the officer to the ground and nearly rendering him unconscious. Leonard recounted that as he and another officer were lifting the stricken man to his feet, the drunk gamely continued pulling

Leonard, and the two officers, toward the pub door. When an Australian wants to have fun, there is no stopping him.

Naomi, Leonard's second wife, used to say, "Leonard can't tell a simple story." Leonard does go into a bit of detail when answering questions, often wanting to go back in time to root causes. Before he is done answering, you may have forgotten what your question was. Final Note No. 2: Whether Leonard bears some resemblance to Jolly Captain Briggs... I cannot say.

FAREWELL TO THE SEANCHAÍ FROM SAN JOSE INSIDE

Leonard McKay 1921-2006

The most revered member of Celtic society in ancient Ireland was the seanchaí, or "storyteller"-the man who carried the sum total of tribal knowledge in his memory and recited variations of colorful legends created by the ancestors to carry kernels of truth and information from one generation to the next. Leonard McKay was our seanchaí. History, lore and legend-and the "creative elaboration" thereof-were his stock in trade, having learned the craft from his acknowledged predecessor, Clyde Arbuckle, in the old-fashioned way.

Leonard knew that history was a lot more than a list of "big happenings." For him, a true populist, it was the stuff of everyman's everyday existence. All knowledge worth knowing was stored away in the stories of those billions of lives lived by ordinary people all over the world-not kings and queens, dictators and presidents, or celebrities and heroes. Like the Hindus, he saw all life and history as part of an infinite flowing continuum, a sacred river of endless depths to immerse himself in and explore. That's where I like to think of him now; he has just moved on ahead to a different part of the river and we'll catch up with him later.

Leonard touched my life as few have. I come from a family of storytellers, mostly of the tall tale variety, so I felt an immediate connection to him when we introduced ourselves to each other at the San Jose Athletic Club one morning nearly seven years ago, right after I moved here. The first thing he told me was his story of the downtown fireman whose manhood was cut short by a jealous

wife a la John Wayne Bobbitt. That was it; I was hooked. Since then, I have spent hundreds of pleasurable hours listening to him tell his stories, hearing some of them many times but never the same way twice.

Nobody was happier than me when Leonard agreed to contribute a weekly column to our rapidly growing website, San Jose Inside.com. Suddenly, we all felt we really had something worthwhile going, and Leonard's following on our site was enormous. I have been a professional publisher, writer and editor for a long time, but I have never had more fun than I had working with Leonard on his pieces every week. Lately, we have been talking about finally getting his book, "The Seamy Side of San Jose," up and running; he would write it and I would edit it. I thought we could do it in no time. And, even though I make my living doing that kind of work, I was going to do it just for the fun of it because I figured the stories and the comradeship with my remarkable friend was worth more than any amount of coins and paper with pictures of dead presidents. I don't know what Leonard left behind of this project, but I still hope it can be done. In the meantime, his archive of stories on San Jose Inside will be there for his legion of fans to read and comment on any time, any day.

Leonard was not high tech. His home was his hard drive and he lived amongst his database of files, books, documents, scraps of paper, photographs and paintings. He did his research the old-fashioned way, and he had everything he needed to supplement the encyclopedia he had packed away in his head. I was always trying to trip him up on something just for the fun of it and never could, though I did come close. One day several months ago, I'm editing one of Leonard's columns for San Jose Inside where there is a passing reference to a man with a common name, but the spelling is odd.

"Aha!" I think in my evil Snidely Whiplash editor's voice, "I have really caught Dudley Do-Right McKay out this time and have him in my clutches, nyah ah ahhhh."

So, I gleefully call up Leonard and I read the sentence and say, "Are you sure you spelled the name right? I have never seen such a spelling."

"I think it's right, but hold on and I'll check it," says Leonard.

He puts the phone down and, for a couple of minutes-while I sit snickering like a bad schoolboy smugly convinced that I have stumped the master-I hear faint humming, mumbling, cursing, and then the thud of a book landing next to the phone receiver, the flick of pages and, I swear, the sound of a finger tracing a straight line down a page and then stopping in its tracks. Leonard picks up the receiver and says, "Yep, it's OK, Jack, I just found it."

"Found it? Found it where?" I ask.

"In the 1928 San Jose phone book," he says.

"Jeez, Leonard, how many old phone books do you have?"

Oh, I got 'em all-all the way back to Alexander Graham Bell," he tells me.

"But... I don't understand. Why did you look in 1928?"

"Well," he says, "I'll tell ya; that fella went broke in '29-lost everything-and by 1930 he didn't even have a pot to piss in."

"I am sorry to hear that," I say, "the poor guy."

"Aw, hell, Jack, don't feel too sorry for him. Last time anybody saw him was in '31 down on Post Street, comin' outta Big Tit Mary's place with a cat-eatin'-shit smile on his face, so he must've picked up a coupl'a bucks somewhere."

While I was trying to stop laughing and crying at the same time, he never skipped a beat and said the one thing that I have heard him say hundreds of times-the one phrase that I will always remember him for as long as I live, a personalized variation of his favorite words in his own unique voice, the voice of our seanchaí:

"Hey, Jack! That reminds me, did I ever tell you the story about ...?"

Posted by Jack Van Zandt on Monday, October 23, 2006 at 04:00 AM

A LETTER FROM RICK HELIN

Dear Jerry,

I had a strange feeling you were going to tell me this as soon as I saw your email. It was an eerie feeling, as I suspected he wasn't feeling all that well at our Pioneer Board Meeting last week. He seemed distant and preoccupied. That is why I really wanted to make sure there was someone who could keep a good close eye on him when he came home from his hospital stay.

There is always much sorrow in our heart when anyone passes, however, Leonard was not just “anyone”. We will all experience a much greater measure of sadness due to his passing. Include me in Leonard’s personal entourage; those who fell under his spell these many years. It must have been the result of that mischievous grin or from the sporadic twinkle in his eye. But this loss is assuredly much more than just a fallen comrade... we have lost an historical landmark who faithfully anchored this community to the land of our fathers and our mothers. He was a treasure chest filled with historical wonders and someone we frequently called upon to act as our conductor while we travel from our recent past and toward our future. No words can ever aptly express that deep a loss.

Rick Helin

From the back of the printed handout at the Memorial for Leonard was one of his favorite lithograph, which seems fitting



Free at Last!

No more clients - no more worries
No midnight oil nor fevered hurries.
Gone are deadlines, times my own
Not haunted by the telephone.

I've turned my back on ink and paper-
FREE AT LAST to dance and caper!

TOURING WITH THE CALIFORNIANS, SEPTEMBER, 2005

Rose Crimi Muench — Tour Director

Marie Rider — Phone Reservations and Cancellations: (408)
251-7887 M-F a.m.

Beverly Fisher — Treasurer: 3435 Yuba Ave, San Jose, CA
95117-2966

Pauline Hawkins Luncheon Registrations

REGISTRATION FOR WINTER TRIPS begins at the December 2 luncheon, 10:30 a.m. at our new location at the Drying Shed Restaurant. Checks are preferred or exact cash. Preference is given to California Pioneers members to register at the luncheon. Non-members and guests may sign up starting December 11. Members may register absent members after the luncheon, so that members present have the opportunity to register first.

PHONE RESERVATIONS or CANCELLATIONS: call Marie Rider. After reservations are confirmed, send check payable to The Californians to Beverly Fisher.

PICK-UP POINT: Valley Village, 390 North Winchester Blvd., Santa Clara on Dolores Avenue.

DAY TRIPS

NOVEMBER 16, 2006, THURSDAY CROCKETT and PORT COSTA

A descriptive narrative appeared in the September Trailblazer.

Because of a long wait list, we will have two buses. The first bus will go to Crockett first, then luncheon at 11:45 a.m., and lastly to Port Costa. The second bus for later registrants will go to Port Costa first, then Crockett, and lastly luncheon at 1:45 .

Depart: 9:00 a.m. Return: 4:30 p.m Cost: \$43

DECEMBER 8, 2006, FRIDAY CHRISTMAS TEA at the AINSLEY HOUSE

The Ainsley House, our own local treasure, is a 1925 Tudor Revival home built for Campbell canning and fruit growing pioneer J. C. Ainsley. A native of England, he must have felt at home with the curved roof lines simulating the thatched roofs of his homeland. The home originally stood on his estate at Hamilton and Bascom Avenues, now occupied by the eBay world headquarters. In 1990, the house was moved on rollers to its present site in downtown Campbell. In keeping with the English tradition, the house is surrounded with English gardens, and the rooms are fur-

nished with 1920's furniture. The home will be beautifully decorated for Christmas. It is most appropriate to partake of an elegant afternoon tea with finger sandwiches, scones and jam, and dainty sweets. We will also have a docent tour of the home, and visit the boutique for some unique holiday shopping.

Depart: 12:00 p.m.

Return: 4:30 p.m.

Cost: \$ 41

JANUARY 25, 2007, THURSDAY ARTISTS' VIEWS of CALIFORNIA

The beauty of the California landscape has inspired artists to capture its variety in photographs and paintings. We will have the opportunity to see some of these scenes of California in two exhibitions at the Society of California Pioneers galleries on Fourth and Folsom Streets in San Francisco. Guides will take us through one floor of rare photographs by pioneering photographers from the early days of statehood through the 1930's. Another floor will display a new installation of 30 paintings: "California Between the Wars" from 1918 to 1936. We next go to an included brunch at Sears Restaurant on Powell Street, famous for its stacks of 18 small Swedish pancakes served with lingonberry jam and accompanied by two eggs, bacon, sausages, fruit cup, and coffee or tea. Sears is an old-time restaurant started in 1938 and filled with historic pictures and memorabilia: a must-see San Francisco experience. Finally, we return to the new de Young Museum to see two exhibits - one is titled "California Expressions" featuring paintings in oils and watercolors of California scenes. The other is a 60 year retrospective of sculptures by noted Bay Area artist Ruth Asawa, "Contours in the Air." On our return to San Jose we will stop at the Federal Court Building on Second and San Carlos Streets to see Asawa's moving bas-relief panels, over eight feet wide, depicting the departure of Japanese-Americans in World War II to the relocation camps, and life in the camps.

Depart: 9:00 a.m.

Return: 5:30 p.m.

Cost: \$48

MARCH 15, 2007 THURSDAY MARTINEZ and the JOHN MUIR HOME

Following our Crockett and Port Costa tour we continue our exploration of the Carquinez Straits with a visit to Martinez at the eastern end of the straits. Martinez is named for Don Ignacio Martinez, the recipient in 1824 of a 17,000 acre land grant in the Alhambra Valley. Martinez became the major crossing to Benicia via a private ferry service. During the gold rush of 1849, it became the quickest route to the gold fields. Ferry service continued until 1962 when the Martinez-Benicia Bridge opened. Martinez became the Contra Costa county seat in 1851 and prospered as an agricultural center with wheat fields and orchards, and also as

a fishing center with canneries. Later petroleum refineries and chemical plants expanded the economy. John Muir, the famed naturalist, made his home in Martinez from 1880 until his death in 1914. We will visit the Martinez Historical Museum in a two-story Victorian home and take a docent-led walking and driving tour of downtown Martinez. Our included lunch will be a family style Chinese feast at the Sunflower Gardens near the museum. Lastly, we will tour the John Muir home.

Depart: 9:00 a.m. Return: 5:30 p.m. Cost: \$39

EXTENDED TRIPS

DECEMBER 30, 2006 - JANUARY 3, 2007

NEW YEAR'S EVE in NASHVILLE

(Talbot Tours). A document party for participants will be held Tuesday, December 19, at 2:00 p.m. at Rose Crimi's home, 1289 Martin Avenue, San Jose. R.s.v.p. to Rose at (408) 293-0896.

MARCH 30 - APRIL 6, 2007 CANYON COUNTRY

(Collette Vacations) Experience the natural wonders of our Southwest by exploring the three great National Parks: Grand Canyon, Zion and Bryce. Enjoy the beauty of man-made Lake Powell, formed by the Glen Canyon dam, and the unique formations in Monument Valley featured in many Western movies. We will also visit Sedona, and enjoy a ride along the red rock formations of Oak Creek Canyon. Our tour ends with two nights in Las Vegas. Cost: \$1849 per person, including RT air fare from San Jose to Phoenix and return from Las Vegas. Deposit is \$100 and final payment is due January 27, 2007. Optional trip insurance is \$120. Brochures are available.

MAY 30 - JUNE 9, 2007 RHONE RIVER CRUISE and PARIS

(Collette Vacations) Cruise on the Saone and Rhone Rivers in southern France. Visit Lyon France's second largest city and Burgundy's wine country; ride a 19th Century steam train through the Crèche region past arched bridges, chateaux, and beautiful landscapes. Visit Van Gogh's Arles, Avignon's Papal Palace, and 11th and 12th Century churches. Our cruise ship is the MV Princess de Provence, with all outside cabins. Our first two days are in Paris at the four-star Hotel Chateau Frontenac. We tour the Palace of Versailles and Paris with time to see the Louvre and d'Orsay museums. Cost is \$4495 or \$4795, minus \$50 discount, which includes RT airfare, four meals in Paris and all meals aboard ship, four shore excursions, driver, guide and shipboard gratuities, port charges and taxes, and all transfers. Brochures are available.

We may offer a New England *Fall Colors* tour in October, 2007.

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