

A WOMAN'S PLACE
A Personal Journey
in the Changing Santa Clara Valley

GRACE ANDRIOLA PURPURA

Grace Andriola Purpura
2364 Stokes Street
San Jose, CA 95128
408-971-7588

Campbell Adult Center
City of Campbell
Memoir Writing
Ann Thompson, Instructor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1 California Dreaming	4
CHAPTER 2 Callas, Soldiers and Toddlers	6
CHAPTER 3 On the El Camino Real	8
CHAPTER 4 Teaching in the Valley of Heart's Delight	11
CHAPTER 5 The Future is Now	15
CHAPTER 6 A Lesson for the Teacher	18
CHAPTER 7 Education for Girls?	19
CHAPTER 8 Raising Teenagers in the Seventies	20
CHAPTER 9 The Times They Are A'Changin'	22
CHAPTER 10 Coming Into My Own	26
CHAPTER 11 Mayor Susan Likes Art	30
CHAPTER 12 The Feminist Capitol	31
NOTES	35
BIBLIOGRAPHY	37

INTRODUCTION

Much of the local history of the Santa Clara Valley was written by women working for the San Jose Mercury News. Society editors announced the births, deaths and marriages of the local community, and their chatty, first hand eyewitness accounts were preserved in print. If they did not write them down to share them, the stories would have been lost forever. These stories hold an interest for us. They give us the color and feel of a time and place. They are history. I have researched online to get my facts and have interviewed friends and family to get their perspective. My memoir writing class in Campbell gave me valuable input with early drafts. I thank my teacher Ann Thompson for her support and invaluable help in finding my voice. I want to thank also, my sister, Jessie Purpura, and my daughters, Marina, Diana, and Valerie Andriola, who encouraged me and gave me inspiration. This is my story of the Santa Clara Valley as I saw it through more than fifty years, from the time in 1953 when my family and I first arrived in California, to the present at the turn of the twenty-first century.

In the Romance languages, the words history and story are the same word and have the same meaning . . . *historia* in Spanish, and *la storia* in Italian. History or story can have different points of view, depending on who does the telling.

I am compelled to write this story, as there are few of us left, who have seen the Valley's changes from its agricultural base to the great technological and international center it is today. If not written down for the new generation to read, I fear we are in danger of forgetting our heritage and culture.

"You mean, when they named Blossom Hill Road, the name was not just pulled out of the air?" asked my young friend. "There were really blossoms there?" she asked.

"Yes, my dear, there really were blossoms there - - as far as the eye could see."

I.

CALIFORNIA DREAMING

I was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1929, the oldest of three daughters born to Carmela and Michael Purpura, immigrant parents from Palermo, the capitol city of Sicily. I came to California in 1953, by way of Boulder, Colorado, where I spent a year attending the University of Colorado on a graduate scholarship.

I received my bachelor degree from the City University of New York in Brooklyn, where I lived. It was not common for women to get a higher education in those days. Women were expected to marry and raise children. An education was not needed for this, it was presumed.

My parents were not against higher education, and said that if we got a scholarship, they would allow us to study. My sisters and I got scholarships and were the first women in our family to get degrees. We became teachers.

I met my future husband Salvatore Andriola at the University of Colorado in Boulder. He was finishing a degree in economics. We married in San Bernardino, in the summer of 1953, at the home of his brother, Dr. Joseph Andriola,

A year before, my younger sister, Jessie, married in Brooklyn and left to live in Los Angeles with her husband, Max Block. She was the first to settle in California.

Eleanor, my youngest sister, in her senior year at the City University of New York, was recruited to teach school in Oxnard, CA. After she graduated in 1953, she moved to Oxnard, CA.

My parents decided to pulled up stakes too, and in 1953, we were all in California.

It was a dream come true, as growing up, we constantly heard stories of my father's aunt, uncle, and cousins, in the late nineteenth century, who came from Sicily and settled in California, in the Fresno area. Doing well in agriculture, they considered planting citrus trees,

but decided against it as they did not want to compete with Sicily, the main supplier of lemons and oranges to the world. Instead, they grew grapes, and shipped them back east.

My father had never forgotten his visit to California during the twenties, and promised that someday, we would go to California. By 1953, we were all happy in California, happy with optimistic hopes for the future.

II

CALLAS, SOLDIERS, AND TODDLERS

After we married, Salvatore and I moved to San Francisco, where we quickly found jobs with the State Department of California at the Civic Center. Evenings, we ushered at the War Memorial Opera House on Van Ness Avenue.

Up until the time I came to California, the only time I saw Calla lilies, was in a florist's glass case, under refrigeration, in Brooklyn. I saw them again in a wedding photo of my Aunt Eleanor, carrying them as a bride.

I had also seen them in a painting by Diego Rivera at the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

There was something sacred about calla lilies. I was in awe of their beauty.

When I saw them again, to my great astonishment, they were growing in the backyard of my very first apartment that I shared with my new husband in San Francisco!

World War II had recently ended in 1945. People came from all over to work and settle here. It was hard to find a California native. Soldiers who had been stationed in California during the war, decided to stay, get married and raise a family. People put their energies to peacetime living. They believed in the American dream and worked hard to raise their families. With benefits from the G.I. Bill, veterans bought new homes., while others took the opportunity to go back to school.

Schools were on the drawing board, being built as fast as possible to meet the growing demands of the post war population boom, which was called the baby boom.

After a year of living in San Francisco, my husband was drafted and went to Fort Ord in Monterey, for basic training.

I was teaching in Daly City from 1954 to 1955. When the school year was over, I joined my husband in Italy, where he was stationed with the Allied occupation forces. I was expecting our first child. Nevertheless, a jeep came to my house every day to pick me up. Teachers were needed day to day at the Camp Darby Army school for dependent children. Marina, our first child, was born in a military hospital near Livorno (Leghorn).

When my husband's tour of duty was over, we returned to California and settled in Los Angeles, close to my parents. I was expecting my second child, Diana.

I taught in the Los Angeles High Schools for three years, when our third child, Valerie, arrived. Salvatore was at UCLA, working on his Master's degree and had a small stipend as a teaching assistant in the Romance Languages Department. Salvatore also taught part time at Los Angeles City College.

III

ON THE EL CAMINO REAL

After a few years in the Los Angeles area, we returned to Northern California. Salvatore and I purchased a small old farm house on two and a half acres on the El Camino Real in Sunnyvale, on what was once part of an apricot orchard. Beside the house, there was a small cottage, which we rented, and four small, attached units in the back, which formerly housed migrant farm workers .

My neighbors were the Barnhills, a Christian family from the mid west, who owned the Starlight Motel. The Barnhills taught us to cut and can apricots and make apricot turnovers. My daughters decided to put a small table out on El Camino Real where motorists could stop to buy a bag of their apricots for a quarter.

The Giustis lived in a ranch house on the other side, an elderly Italian couple. They had a flower garden in the front yard and an overgrown vegetable garden in the back, which was bordered by abalone sea shells and graced with a birdbath and a fishpond made of cement, decorated with inserted, broken ceramic tile of many colors.

We were having a recession in the late fifties. Thousands in the Bay area had lost their jobs. Lockheed Martin cut off hundreds of their space systems jobs, and laid off hundreds of workers.

I could not find a teaching job and did substitute teaching in the Fremont High School District of Sunnyvale. Salvatore stayed in Los Angeles to work.

One night, a large Mexican family came, in a broken down truck packed and overflowing with their belongings . . . father, mother, and several children. Tired, cold and hungry, they begged me to let them stay in the back units. I hesitated, but feeling sorry for them, I let them

stay. They moved into the units and taught us a lot about humanity. . . . their sweetness under adversity, their appreciation of the smallest things, their songs, their food, and their language. I learned to make *papas con chorizo* (home style potatoes mixed with spicy sausage), rolled in a floured tortilla, which my children loved. They sang a *corrido* about President Kennedy's assassination that took place November 22, 1963 - - - *en el triste veint' y dos de noviembre*.

The children of the farm workers were playmates to mine. Though I lived in a small house, I was "*la senora de la casa grande*."

Across the street, the Olson family had acres of cherry trees and sold them at their stand on El Camino in front of their orchard. One day, me and my young children went walking, exploring the neighborhood. Hot and perspiring under a fierce sun, we walked to the cherry orchard seeking shade. Finding comfort there, we started picking and eating the fruit. To my embarrassment, Mr. Olson came out to confront us. I apologized, offering to pay him for the cherries we had consumed. He graciously refused and let us go.

In the early days of the fifties, my family traveled Highway 101 from north to south, and south to north, and east and west. We went from the San Francisco Bay Area to Mendocino and to Oakland and Berkeley in the East Bay. We grew familiar with the Santa Clara Valley long before we finally settled here.

Highway 101 was not completed yet. It had stretches of road where you had to drive on dangerous, narrow two lane roads, and through rural areas, Highway 101 went through towns like Gilroy, where we could stop for home made ice cream. Highway 101 formed part of El Camino Real, the King's Road, which from the Spanish-Mexican days, was the highway connecting all of California.

When the supermarket, Food Giant, bought their property in Hollywood, my parents, Carmela and Michael, moved north and settled first in Santa Clara and then San Jose.

In San Jose, my parents built their home, planted lemons, fruit trees, flowers, and a vegetable garden. A particular trumpet flower tree delighted my father, “Look, Carmela,” he exclaimed, “*i campane di Palermo!*, the bells of Palermo!

They grew to love the excellent climate and the productive abundance of the Valley of Heart’s Delight. The perfume of orange blossoms (*‘a ‘zzagara*) and of flowering fruit trees was intoxicating, reminding them of Sicily. The blossoming trees around Blossom Hill Road in the springtime, extended as far as the eyes could see. Tourists from San Francisco rode the Blossom Train to Los Gatos to see the trees in bloom in the spring. For family picnics, a trolley ran crosstown from Santa Clara Street to scenic, rugged Alum Rock Park.

The top soil of the Santa Clara Valley was one of the richest and deepest in the world, deep with the run-off from surrounding hills. It was no wonder the French, Italians, Chinese and Japanese came to farm the land. Agriculture thrived.

The abundance of the land led entrepreneurs like Del Monte, the Bisceglia Brothers, the Gangi Brothers and others to establish canneries for preserve tomatoes, apricots and other foods. Trucking and shipping firms run by the De Vincenzo family and the Di Salvo family, grew, employing many people.

IV

TEACHING IN THE VALLEY OF HEART'S DELIGHT

By 1967, I was 38 years old and my girls were preadolescent. Salvatore's work with the State of California took him away from us and we were separated more than we were together. My marriage did not survive. In 1968 I filed for divorce and in 1969, it became final. I was forty, the first in my Catholic family to be divorced. I didn't know how to balance a check book. I had no credit without my husband, though I was a head of household. It was a time of awakening for me.

Lonely, disillusioned, and unfulfilled, I decided to attend San Jose State University to get my master's degree. It was my third attempt - - the first attempt in Colorado, thwarted by my husband's needs, the second at UCLA, by my children's needs.

This time, I was determined to succeed, and I did. I received my Masters degree in June of 1969. In September, I was hired to work in the Alum Rock School District. When I went to work at Sheppard Middle School in San Jose, acres of almond trees and fruit trees still surrounded the schools of the area.

Further south from the district office, a holding tank for cows was located on several acres on White Road near Story. A corral enclosing a herd of black and white cows faced the street.

Fresh cheese could be purchased at the Alum Rock Cheese Company, and newly laid eggs could be bought further north at the Olivera Egg Ranch near Piedmont Road.

Every spring, I bought eggs and cardboard egg boxes for the school children to decorate for Easter.

Baby chicks could be ordered through the post office, and it was a delightful and cheerful

experience to see and hear them while picking up your mail.

It was good to be alive in the springtime!

A drive-in on White Road let you pick up your milk and other small items without having to get out of your car. Milk was 33 cents a quart, bread was 24 cents a loaf and round steak was \$1.30 a pound. 1

The average salary in the seventies was \$7,564 a year. 2

Vaqueros, or cowboys on horseback, roamed the green pastoral fields of the East Hills where subdivisions now exist.

I came to the District to teach art at Sheppard Middle School. After three years, I taught the sixth grade. When bilingual education was started, I taught the bilingual first and second grades and the Kindergarten.

I was assigned to team teach Kindergarten with Ebe Frasse (Elizabeth) at Dorsa School. She graciously gathered all the material she could to help me get started, as I knew nothing about teaching in Kindergarten. She became a lifelong friend.

Ebe was the daughter of Mary Cribari Frasse and Irvin A. Frasse. of San Jose. Her father, an attorney, came from an early San Jose family who lived on the Alameda. Her mother, Mary Cribari Frasse, was the daughter of one of the pioneer winemakers of San Jose, Benjamin Cribari. Benjamin Cribari had come to America from Italy to seek a better life, with his wife, Josephine, and their son. After two years of hard and dangerous work in the Colorado mines, he came to California in 1902, with his family, and settled in Morgan Hill. Two more sons and four daughters were born to them, a total of seven children. They soon bought a few acres in South San Jose. 3 The four men of the family, humble and reserved, worked the land by manual labor, hoeing and planting vegetables and putting in vines. 4

The four daughters graduated high school, and went to San Jose Normal School - - in

those days, San Jose State College was a teacher training school. Ebe followed in the steps of her mother, Mary, and graduated from San Jose State, going into teaching at Alum Rock, where I met her. 5

Other local vintners were the Mirassou Winery, located north of the Cribari Winery off San Felipe Road, and the Paul Masson Champagne Cellars of Saratoga. The Los Gatos Novitiate also produced grapes and had their own production in the Los Gatos Hills.

Convinced that California soil could produce wines comparable to the best of France and Italy, the vintners started with a few acres, worked the soil and planted stock. Their neatly rowed vineyards, yielded a bountiful grape harvest every season from ancient vines.

Paul Masson entered many international wine tasting competitions. After winning first prizes, the whole world knew about the Paul Masson Champagne of California.⁶

In the Paris Wine Tasting of 1976, California wines won over French wines in a blind taste test. California wines had arrived. 7

Time brought change. Many winemakers went out of business during Prohibition. But Paul Masson, always the consummate businessman, found a way to sell medicinal champagne in the United States. 8 The Los Gatos Novitiate Winery sold wine “for sacramental purposes only.”

Prohibition was soon repealed.

Cribari Wines still hold a commanding presence in the business of wines. But the land that belonged to the Cribari family near Evergreen College, is now a gated development called The Villages, with street names like Cribari Knolls, Grenache Court, Chenin Blanc Lane, Riesling Way, Fume Blanc, Beaujolais and Cribari Lane. 9 Ebe, retired, lives there in her town house.

On Story Road, near McLaughlin, the Emma Prusch Ranch was donated to the city by Emma when she died, as a park for the people to enjoy. Activities for the children are planned,

and community members can work on their garden plots, cultivating flowers and vegetables.

Ebe and I took our classes there on many field trips to see live farm animals in a working ranch.

We also took the children to the many pumpkin farms on North Capitol Avenue, every year for Halloween. When the District had no transportation money for buses, Ebe and I had pumpkins delivered to the Kindergarten yard, and we made our own pumpkin patch there rather than give up this experience for the children.

V

THE FUTURE IS NOW

When you said you were going to “the city”, in the fifties, it was understood you meant San Francisco. That changed. The population of San Jose grew, surpassing that of San Francisco. Where the morning commute on the freeways went from San Jose to San Francisco, the traffic pattern reversed itself, as San Franciscans commuted south to their jobs in San Jose as the whole silicon industry began to evolve.

Highway 280 was under construction,. When it was finished, it took me ten to fifteen minutes to get across town from Campbell, where I lived, to East San Jose, where I worked.

From an agricultural community nicknamed “Prunesville” for its prune trees brought by the French, to an industrial complex with its canneries and heavy farm equipment manufacture, San Jose, was again, a city in transition. This time, the valley changed to being the world’s center of computer research and aerospace development. San Jose became a big city, but retained its friendly, small town atmosphere.

Santa Clara County, once the Valley of Heart’s Delight, was now Silicon Valley, and San Jose, along with Palo Alto, Santa Clara, Sunnyvale and Mountain View vied with one another to be its capitol city.

The stimulating ambiance of the period and the unprecedented flowering of creativity in the Santa Clara County area created new ideas in science, art, music and social philosophy. It spoke to the frenetic climate of American society and to the world at large.

It was an era unlike any other time in American history. An explosion of creative genius, and unprecedented innovative works, rocked the world in the sixties and continued into the seventies. A veritable revolution was ignited.

The population of Santa Clara County grew. Technicians were needed for new jobs. The engineers and intellectuals came, seeking homes and sending housing prices through the roof. Between 1950 and 1970, the population increased from 95,280 to 445,779. Today it is over one million. 10

A large percentage of professors teaching at Stanford University and the University of California at Berkeley, were Nobel prize winners. William Shockley, co-inventor of the transistor, won the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1956. He founded Shockley Semiconductor Laboratories in Santa Clara Valley and recruited twelve young scientists dedicated to the use of germanium and silicon for transistors - - - his "Ph.D. production line." However, his management style and disenchantment with pure research, caused the eight young scientists to leave the company and start companies of their own.

After a variety of vacuum tube-based computers, the debut of the microprocessor in 1971 by Intel, called the 4004, resulted in many different computer companies appearing, which began developing their own microprocessors and microcomputers. Companies such as Compaq, Commodore and Apple started during this period.

Fairchild Semiconductor, at the cutting edge, created some of the innovative technologies that would push the entire field forward. 11 Fairchild also introduced what has become a distinctly "Californian" style of management, complete with casual clothing and a laid back atmosphere. 12

College boys and young men known as "geeks, became the newly affluent. Though technologically brilliant, it was said they couldn't get a date in real life. If you saw them in the street in their unkempt blue jeans and long hair, sometimes tied in a pony tail, you would never know by looking at them, that they were millionaires, driving Rolls Royces and living in million dollar mansions.

Young, single, with no wife or children to go home to, they worked long hours, and tried to replicate in their work place, the feel of a “laid back” college dormitory; a relaxed environment where food and comforts were available. They created a business environment that was a home away from home- - - eating, getting exercise, showering, and taking a nap at will. 13

Steve Wozniak, had a street in San Jose named after him, Woz Way. With Steve Jobs, the “discoverer of the future”, he was one of the founders of Apple. Together they created the first truly personal computer, working in Jobs’ family garage. At the conclusion of the decade, the first home personal computer, by IBM in 1981 appeared on the market, 14 and computers increased their role from professional and business machines to personal home use as an entertainment and educational tool.

With the advent of the Internet, intercommunication made the world a smaller place. Greater and faster access to information than ever before was developed, not just for individuals, but for financial, medical, educational, and governmental organizations as well.

VI

A LESSON FOR THE TEACHER

The 1970's underwent some profound changes. First, a Vice President and then a President resigned under threat of impeachment. The Vietnam War continued to divide the country. Increased immigration followed passage of the Immigration Act of 1965, which reformed an earlier policy that favored western Europeans. People from Third World countries came in search of economic betterment, or to escape political repression.

When I was a girl in Brooklyn, my grandmother, an immigrant from Palermo, Sicily, told me that a women's place was *in casa o in chiesa* - - at home or at church. My sisters and I were told that "a lady's name is in the paper three times: when she's born, when she marries, and when she dies." We were taught to be humble and not draw attention to ourselves - - - our place was behind the scenes, supporting the menfolk. We were not to draw attention to ourselves. What would people think ? "Don't be bold or provocative or playful. Stay in the background." This is a hard lesson to unlearn. Apparently, we were not the only ones who believed women should be invisible.

A student of mine, a lovely and talented Mexican American girl, drew a beautiful contour drawing in black ink, of a young woman's face in thoughtful repose. She was planning to submit it to a poster contest my class was entering. My previous students had won prizes for their art work, so they were motivated. I guided her carefully through the steps, working on the message she would print on it. One day as I advised her, she refused to go on with her design, saying, "You do it if you want." Stunned, I asked her why this change of heart?

"I don't want to enter the contest. My boyfriend doesn't want me to."

We succeeded in finishing the poster, but I never forgot that lesson.

VII

EDUCATION FOR GIRLS?

My father, an officer and graduate of the Royal Naval Institute in Italy, maintained that higher education was not necessary for girls. They would marry and raise children. But he respected education and let us know, that if his daughters were bright enough to continue on scholarship, he would not oppose an education for them. So his three daughters all went to college on scholarships.

My mother taught us obedience. She showed us by example, that her job as a woman, was to selflessly serve others, namely her husband and children. But she supported the wishes of her daughters to go to the University. She had pain of her own.

When she was in the sixth grade in Sicily, the nuns of the convent where she was educated, pleaded with her family to allow her to continue her studies. They would gladly pay her expenses. Her family refused, saying that she was needed at home to help support the family. My mother dutifully obeyed and had to stop her schooling.

When she came to America, she loved this country for the new personal freedom and the new voice she found in herself. She lived vicariously through her daughters.

VIII

RAISING TEENAGERS IN THE SEVENTIES

I found myself turning into my mother, with some differences, of course. As a single mother, my mission was to raise three daughters, including being a part time taxi service for them, and hold a job, be a cook and housekeeper, and if time and energy allowed, manage to do my own creative work as well.

When I went to graduate school, social movements, particularly the antiwar movement, were highly visible on university campuses. I witnessed professors and students at San Jose State marching in protest against our involvement in Vietnam, tear-gassed by the police attempting to stem the demonstrations.

These events trickled down to the high schools in the seventies when I was raising three teenagers of my own. My life with them was filled with giggles and tears, screams and hysterical laughter, insubordination and rebelliousness. These moods followed each other in rabid and unpredictable cycling. In spite of the crises and raging hormones they were experiencing, I tried to be understanding and patient.

The Vietnam war and the scandal at Watergate was in the news. The social fabric of our society was changing with the youth taking charge. Music was leading the revolution.

One gray drizzly day, I was driving home from school and saw in the distance a couple of girls standing on the overhang, holding a large white banner with a peace sign painted on it.

These kids, I thought, what they won't do, I chuckled to myself. As I drew closer, they seemed familiar. I realized that these "kids" were my own two daughters! And that banner they were holding was none other my own new Queen sized bed sheet, now ruined with India Ink!

I braked and drove off at the nearby exit and pulled up along side them.

“Get in the car,” I screeched, “You’ll get pneumonia standing out there in the rain!”

The girls got in quickly.

Funny how my feelings did an about face. You’d think it was I who was having mood swings.

IX

THE TIMES THEY ARE A' CHANGIN'

My daughter, Marina, a gentle, soft-spoken young woman, formed part of the student body government in Campbell High School. Regarding a student proposal to hold a school assembly where concerns over the war could be voiced, she talked to her Principal. He, at a loss to know how to reply to such a request, promised that if she could collect 500 signatures, they could have the assembly. It was the democratic process, after all.

With the help of fellow students, the signatures were gathered and presented to him. To their surprise, they were refused the assembly.

This did not sit well with the students. They arranged for a walkout the next day, and the student body gathered peacefully on the front lawn, refusing to go to class.

The chaotic events of the sixties, including social change and the war in Vietnam, were destined to continue in the seventies, with the growing disillusionment of government, the advances in civil rights, the increased influence of the women's movement, and a heightened concern for the environment.

I was teaching school on the east side of town, when I was called to come to Campbell High School for a parent-principal conference. I was called because my daughter, Marina broke the dress code and came to school in blue jeans.

It was not the first time she battled with policy. Previously she objected to taking home economics, a graduation requirement for all girls. The boys had no such requirement in order to graduate. Marina had accumulated enough units, she argued, more than enough to graduate. And she already knew how to cook.

Was the District practicing gender discrimination? Were they saying that the only option

a girl had was to become a housewife?

Marina risked graduating with her class, but she won her argument. She graduated in 1974, succeeding in changing the graduation requirements for all girls.

This time, Marina was being called on the dress code. Marina maintained that the acceptable miniskirt that the girls wore were impractical in freezing weather. They were too revealing. Pants covered better and kept you warmer.

I sat and waited in the principal's office and watched my daughter and her principal debate the issue, quietly.

It was the classic paradox. "What happens when an immovable object meets an unstoppable force?"

An impasse. A pause and then a miracle!

The principal said, "OK, Marina, you can wear pants . . . but no blue jeans!"

Oh, good! a breakthrough, I thought. This ordeal is almost over and I can still make it to my class on time! I looked at the time. It was nearly eight o'clock in the morning. Good thing I advised the office yesterday that I might be a little late. I started to gather my things to leave, but stopped in my tracks when I heard my daughter speak.

"No," my daughter said.

No? What? Marina, how could you? I thought, my mind racing. Compromise, Marina, so I can leave and get to work!

"No, I am not a hypocrite. I intend to wear blue jeans," said Marina.

I had mixed feelings. I was proud of my daughter for speaking her mind with such integrity. She really had the courage of her convictions. But how hardheaded can she be?!

I was brought up on compromise. It was the democratic way to do business, after all.

I remembered my own battle with my father, as an art student wearing "dungarees."

They were not the designer jeans of today, but loose fitting work pants. They enraged my father when he saw them, as he thought work pants inappropriate for young women. (He also hated the idea that I wanted to be an artist.)

But dungarees were very practical for the messy job of oil painting on canvas, and I continued to wear them in art school where my father couldn't see them!

Getting back to Marina, the meeting was concluded without anything being settled. Needless to say, I got to work late, with the Vice-Principal covering my class.

Marina was always very creative and artistic in her dress. In Junior High School she and her friends were suspended for a day when they showed up wearing granny dresses and old ladies shoes they bought from the thrift store.

Another of Marina's cutting edge creations, was a pair of cutoff jeans, made into mini shorts, worn over purple ballerina tights with a sweater. She was quite the sight, with her long light brown hair, in this "far-out" ensemble, riding her ten-speed boy's bicycle, the first girl in the neighborhood to have one. Marina invented fashion and flair that other girls copied.

A girl ahead of her times, we saw the same style years later, in the pages of the haute fashion magazines of the day.

The experience with her high school underground newspaper helped her. When Marina grew up, she worked for the Santa Cruz Good Times newspaper and later started a paper of her own, called Sonoma Style. When she married, her high school principal came to her wedding to wish her well. Apparently, he was very proud of her.

The fashion influence of the hippy of the sixties, was mainstreamed in the seventies. Bellbottom pants, hip huggers, colorful patches, hot pants, platform shoes, earth shoes, clogs, T-shirts, and gypsy dresses graced the scene. Women were fashionable in everything from ankle-length grandmother dresses to hot pants and micro-miniskirts.

The men sported shoulder length hair. Nontraditional clothing became the rage. Leisure suits for men were in vogue, and the California laid-back style was copied all over the world.

Many of the "radical" ideas of the sixties gained wider acceptance in the new decade, and were mainstreamed into American life and culture. Amid war, social realignment and presidential impeachment proceedings, American culture flourished. The events of the times were reflected in the music, literature, entertainment, and even the fashion of the seventies

X

COMING INTO MY OWN

In the eighties, I was appointed a California Mentor Teacher to train young teachers, in addition to my own classroom of children. I prepared workshops in children's literature, art for the seasons, picture books, and global education.

The Bay Area Global Education Project, sponsored by Stanford University trained master teachers in diversity, international interdependence, conflict resolution, geography and cooperative learning. I was accepted into their summer training seminar, and was trained to give education workshops, passing on the knowledge, skills and methodology we acquired.

On a Fulbright grant, we went sent to China and Korea to write curriculum. Later in the eighties, with continuing international training at the Hoover Institute at Stanford, I was in a group of fifteen California teachers sent to Latin America, to study diversity and the educational system of two diverse Latin American countries, Argentina and Equador. I enjoyed the team building techniques we developed, passing them on to colleagues and children alike.

When I retired from teaching, in 1991, after almost forty years of teaching, I planned to continue my personal career as an artist, which I left behind to support my children as a single mother. Now grown with lives of their own, I set about discovering parts of myself that lay dormant. I began to be active on the art exhibition scene, and my work became familiar in the Santa Clara Valley, with shows at the Triton Museum, ICA (the Institute for Contemporary Art), the Works gallery and MACLA (Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana). I was also active with fundraising for nonprofit organizations, donating a work to each arts organization every year for their auctions and fund-raisers.

I saw Blanca Alvarado at a community event. I had met her previously at a school function. A member of the Alum Rock community, she lived in a modest house in the neighborhood. She had a tiny shop on Alum Rock Avenue, where she worked as an accountant helping the community, mostly Mexican Americans, file their income tax. Married to a local Spanish community radio announcer, she had four bright attractive children. When she divorced, she went on welfare and then back to school, to learn new skills with which to improve her economic situation.

Blanca invited me to her grassroots political campaign meeting in her office. Her family and friends were busy stuffing envelopes there. I joined them. A neighborhood walk in the precinct was planned. After attending meetings and getting the feel of activism, I was asked to walk the precinct with her. Blanca took one side of the street and I took the other, knocking on doors, reminding people to get out the vote and to vote for Blanca Alvarado, and handing them leaflets. A shy, former welfare mother, she was running for the city council, the first Hispanic ever to run for office.

I knew the District well, I worked and lived there. I was familiar with the community's needs. After several hours, we finished. Pleased with me, Blanca asked me why I didn't run for office?

"No," I responded. "I am an artist. I have the soul of an artist in the body of an ordinary woman. I need to do my creative work."

Blanca was the first Hispanic candidate in the city, and she succeeded in being elected to the city council. Later, she became vice-mayor under Susan Hammer, and still later, was elected county supervisor. When approached for a Washington post, she declined in favor of staying and serving her local community well.

While on the city council, Blanca remembered me. She recommended me for the opening

of fine arts commissioner.

Susan Hammer, the Mayor, long an active supporter of the arts, a previous Board member of the new Museum of Art, and a prime mover of the Repertory Theater, (now named the Phil and Susan Hammer Theater, in honor of her and her husband), appointed me to serve on the commission for two terms.

It was thrilling to be part of the rise of the arts organizations in San Jose, to be part of the Arts Task Finding Force, and to see projects come to fruition.

To attract the kind of intelligentsia and professional people essential to the city's research industries, it had to have a cultural life. It had to have a night life for entertainment.

The cultural scene kept people coming to San Jose, rather than to other cities. The arts attracted tourists. They were needed to attract people to come and stay in the hotels, eat in the restaurants, and spend their money here. The arts were essential to a viable and thriving community.

With support for the cultural life, San Jose witnessed the growth and resurgence of the arts and arts organizations - - - the San Jose Opera of founder Irene Dalis, native of San Jose and Metropolitan Opera star, the San Jose Repertory Theater, the American Musical Theater the San Jose Ballet Theater (originally partnering with the Cleveland Ballet, to share expenses), the San Jose Symphony, and Los Lupenos de San Jose the Mexican folkloric dance company, founded by Susie Cashion of Stanford University, after winning a Fulbright to study dance in Mexico. Los Lupenos became one of the jewels in the crown of San Jose's arts organizations, still active forty years later,

My daughter Valerie started with Los Lupenos as a child of twelve, and by fifteen was a seasoned dancer, teaching regional folk dance classes at San Jose City College on Saturdays.

San Jose saw the rise of the Children's Theater, where my daughters performed at the

Center for the Performing Arts, the rise of the Jazz Society, the Flamenco Society, the South Bay Guitar Society, the Ahbinaya Company of Indian Dance, the Chamber Music Society, the San Jose Museum of Art, the Poetry Society, and the long awaited and exciting Tech Museum of Innovation, designed by Ricardo Legorreto of Mexico City.

XI

MAYOR SUSAN LIKES ART

Susan Hammer always attended fund raisers with her husband Phil Hammer. They own a couple of my art works which they bought there. At a recent auction at MACLA, Susan Hammer got into a bidding war with Father Jose Rubio, a young priest from St. John Vianney Church, and the Sacred Heart Church. He was an avid art collector and a musician who played classical music on his grand piano. He also owned a couple of my pieces.

The mayor and the priest bid against each other. The money was going for a good cause, supporting MACLA, a nonprofit that supported artists with exhibitions, and supported the community and the children with classes in art, photography, theater and poetry.

The auctioneer at MACLA ranted on. The price of my piece went up, up, up - - - to a four digit number. The audience, entertained, followed closely, their heads moving back and forth, back and forth to follow the bidders. Then, the bidding stopped. A silent pause. "Going once, going twice, --- Sold!"

The gavel went down hard. "Sold to Susan and Phil Hammer!"

XII

THE FEMINIST CAPITOL OF THE NATION

Women, minorities, and gays increasingly demanded full legal equality and privileges in society. Women expanded their involvement in politics. The proportion of women in state legislatures tripled. Women surpassed men in college enrollment in 1979. However, the rising divorce rate left an increasing number of women as sole breadwinners and forced more and more of them into poverty.¹⁶

The women in the Silicon Valley's political life is a story of unmistakable progress.

As the population boom continued, pro-development became a dominant theme in city government. Pro-development led the City to secure premium strips of land, by annexing large pieces of land away from the county and other competing cities.

I remember my father, Michael Purpura, resisting annexation to the city and leading the neighborhood landowners in a dialogue against City Hall. . He owned several parcels in the Burbank area, which was then a part of the county, and was called the mayor of the Buena Vista neighborhood for his leadership, humor, and ability to dialogue with rich and poor alike.

Annexation to San Jose resulted in a controversial land-grab, which strained municipal services and gave birth to the antigrowth and environmental movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁷

In 1962 the first antigrowth grassroots campaign challenged City Hall for the first time in its history. Local neighborhood organizations supported the anti-incumbent platform, resulting in the election of the first councilwoman, Virginia Shaffer.

Shaffer's success and the success of those following her can be traced the city's failure to provide adequate municipal services to the growing population, from water, police and fire

services, schools, pollution, and the continued loss of open spaces and parks.

Homeowner and neighborhood groups, largely comprised of activist homemakers, spearheaded slow-growth and smart planning, and they opened the door for women in politics.

The next generation of women office holders launched their political careers by endorsing slow-growth and smart planning.¹⁸ In the early 1970s, Bay Area women, and particularly South Bay women, made giant inroads into politics. This, combined with the success of other female candidates across the U.S., led a number of national magazines to run stories on the role of women, feminism, and politics.

Janet Gray Hayes became the first elected female mayor in the United States of a city of 500,000. Mayor Hayes remembers being taken as someone's secretary at a meeting of mayors, when she was first elected to the office. Her political success represented a watershed for female office holders in the U.S., and in San Jose this key victory opened a floodgate for female participation in almost every level of California government, from the Mayor's office to the California Assembly, and eventually Congress. ¹⁹ When Mayor Hayes took office, the downtown was a blighted area of the homeless and disenchanted of society. In an effort to clean up the neighborhood, Janet Gray Hayes went downtown and personally spoke to the wayward ladies of the night, in the city's effort to improve all of the lives of its citizens.

Susan Hammer, who ran Hayes' reelection campaign in the seventies, soon became mayor herself. She was called by her first name. . Because of her economic achievements for the City of San Jose, Clinton courted her for an advanced post in Washington, but she decided to stay closer to home. ²⁰

Another trail blazer, Susan Wilson was the third woman elected to the City Council, and became County Supervisor. She was a mentor to other women candidates. Her experience living under segregation in Gonzales, Texas, had an enormous impact on her development as a social

activist and as an office holder in the City Council and the County Board of Supervisors.

These three matriarchs of the local feminist movement formed a tight political network, and led to San Jose being called the feminist capitol of the nation. 21

Zoe Lofgren, another former San Jose City councilwoman and County supervisor, was elected to serve in the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.

Dianne McKenna, former mayor of Sunnyvale, served on the County Board of Supervisors. McKenna made clear her opinion that women have an important role to play in politics; that they bring different values and qualities to the political process. In her experience, she found that women will take a difficult position, taking a side of courage on an issue . . . “When push comes to shove,” she said, “I tend to find the women willing to stand up and say, “No, this is the right way to go, even though it was a difficult position.” ” 22

The contributions of South Bay Area women is significant to society and its improved quality of life. Their stories document the rich history of female political activism in the region and in the U.S., a story of strength, perseverance, and commitment to issues of gender, race, social equality and the environment. 23

Though women are in the workforce in large numbers today, women’s full potential to contribute to the economy and the region are as yet untapped. Women are struggling with real pressures that impede their ability to participate and advance. Their shift from unpaid home and community work to paid employment brings new challenges about how to care for family and community in the new economy. 24

The Chinese say that women hold up half the sky. Personally, as a woman, living in this time, I find myself gratified and fulfilled. I have seen many of my dreams come true. I am a mother, grandmother and a great grandmother. In all my years, I have touched many lives. Many lives have touched mine. I go in peace, knowing I have done my best to make a positive

difference in the world. I have found inspiration from the lives of those that came before me. My hope is that the ones that follow, will find some inspiration from mine.

We've come a long way. Yet, there is a long way to go, to insure that women, and all people, are provided with the inspiration and tools to contribute and share in society's bounty.

NOTES

1. Lone Star College- Kingwood Library, Texas, edu/decade/American Cultural History, 1970-1979.
2. Ibid.
3. Cribari Family, <http://www.santaclararesearch.net/SCBIOS/cribari.html>
4. Ebe (Elizabeth) Frasse interview, March 30, 2011, and in many conversations shared as friends and colleagues in the Alum Rock School District in San Jose, from 1970 to the present. Ebe graciously gave me a tour of the Villages when I visited her home in the nineties.
5. Ibid.
6. Stephen Scordelis, Selling a Name, How Paul Masson Marketed his Label to the World and Became the Champagne King of California, 2011Pioneers of Santa Clara, http://www.californiapioneers.com/essay_contests/2011_EssayContest Winner
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ebe Frasse, and a tour of the grounds of the Villages.
10. City of San Jose Population Data, <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/planning/data/population/>
11. Fairchild Semiconductor, <http://www.pbs.org/transistor/background1/corgs/fairchild.html>
12. Interview with Peter Kacensky, Lockheed Martin's Advanced Technology Center for Solar and Astrophysics,. peterkacensky@comcast.net, April 5, 2011.
13. Ibid.
14. A History of Cults:A Trail of True %20Cults%20Magazine%20Article.webarchive, Forbes.com

15. Storming Politics: San José Women in the “Feminist Capital, 1975-2006,
http://works.bepress.com/danelle_moon/19
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. San Jose, Feminist Capitol of the World, Online Archives > Home > San José State
University, Special Collections and Archives
20. Unfinished Business: Women in the Silicon Valley Economy, April 2001,
http://www.3gf.org/wsv_highlights.pdf

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Forbes .com, A History of Cults: A Trail of True Believers,

<file:///Users/grace/Desktop/Forbes.com%20-%20Magazine%20Article.webarchive>

Matthews, 95-103; Janet A. Flammang, “Female Officials in the Feminist Capital: The Case of

Santa Clara County,” *Women’s Political Quarterly* 38 no. 1 (March 1985), 38-41;

Trounstein & Christensen, 99-101.

Storming Politics: San José Women in the “Feminist Capital, 1975-2006,

Santa Clara County History, 1922 Genealogy, Eugene T. Sawyer, sfgenealogy.com

San Jose State University. Director SJSU Special Collections & Archives

November 2006

Scordelis. Stephen , Selling a Name ; How Paul Masson Marketed his Label to the World and

Became the Champagne King of California, Sanata Clara County Pioneers, Contest

Winner, 2010

The Trailblazer, Quarterly Bulletin of the California pioneers of Santa Clara County, Pat Loomis,

Gone Fishing, September 2010, Vol.51, Number 3, p.8.

Trounstein, Philip J. and Terry Christensen, *Movers and Shakers: The Study of Community*

Power (St.Martin’s Press, New York, 1982), 79.

Cribari Family,

<http://www.santaclararesearch.net/SCBIOS/cribari.html>

Fairchild Semiconductor.

<http://www.pbs.org/transistor/background1/corgs/fairchild.html>

Lone Star College- Kingwood Library, Texas, American Cultural History, 1960-1969

<http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade60.html>

1960-1969http://works.bepress.com/danelle_moon/191

Lone Star College- Kingwood Library, Texas, American Cultural History, 1970-1979.

<http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade70.html>

Pioneers of Santa Clara County Annual History

http://www.californiapioneers.com/essay_contests/2011PIONEERS_EssayContestRules

http://www.californiapioneers.com/essay_contest

http://www.californiapioneers.com/essay_contests/june_2010/PDFs/StephenScordelis.pdf

San Jose, Feminist Capitol of the World,

San Jose State University Library Special Collections, Home Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library,

California collection

Online Archives > Home > San José State University, Special Collections and Archives.

Unfinished Business: Women in the Silicon Valley Economy, April 2001,

http://www.3gf.org/wsv_highlights.pdf