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THE LEFTOVERS

Issue #50

Spring 2024

Remembering Jeff Rubin

Donald Bastin



Jeff Rubin, with wife Norma and County Supervisor, John Gioia
Photo courtesy of the office of County Supervisor John Gioia.

It was with shock and sadness that we learned of the passing of Jeff Rubin, president of the Pinole Historical Society. Jeff passed away on February 10th at the age of 73. Jeff was passionate about the history of his adopted hometown of Pinole. He was dedicated to the task of conveying that history to its residents and the larger community.

Jeff Rubin was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1950. After graduating high school, he attended Bradley University in Illinois, receiving a B.A. in Journalism. He spent much of his professional life in writing and speaking; these skills were very useful as a member of the Pinole Historical Society (PHS). Jeff joined the board of the historical society early in 2008, and was elected president in 2015. During his time on the PHS board, Jeff edited and wrote for the society's newsletter and co-authored the book: *Images of America: Pinole*. He was lead author of an additional book on Pinole's history: *Pinole Through Time*. But perhaps more than anything else, Jeff dedicated his energy, time, and passion to the idea of the creation of a real museum for the town he loved. This was also the dream of the society's board and its membership. The dream was born in 2005, with a house-move.



Photo display in Kaiser Hospital, Pinole. The hospital was built on ground where the Faria House once stood

The following information is taken directly from the Pinole History Museum website. Minor revisions have been made to add clarity and place text in the past tense. Website Link: <https://pinolehistorymuseum.org>

RELOCATION OF THE FARIA HOUSE

In 2005, the city relocated the Faria House, a farmhouse built around 1880 and one of the city’s most historic and beloved buildings, from its location near Interstate 80 to downtown Pinole, and dedicated it as a site for a museum.

The city purchased it from the Faria sisters — Dolores, Deanna, and Margaret — a decade previously.

For more than 20 years several Pinole City Councils declared their intent to create a museum in the Faria House, most recently in 2016.

These past councils raised expectations in the community that a museum would be located in the Faria House.

Many citizens and the Pinole City Council, which had dedicated the historic Faria House as a site for a museum, shared the society’s goals.

The Pinole History Museum (PHM) board was formed in 2017. Jeff Rubin served as PHM

Board President. The PHM board has raised more than \$80,000 toward a museum— a staggering amount considering that fundraising activities were suspended in 2020 and 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Two hundred and forty citizens attended the Pinole History Museum fundraising dinner in 2019. With a gradual return to social events post-COVID, one-hundred fifty four tickets were sold for the 2023 fundraising dinner.

Pinole community members have clearly and emphatically demonstrated their support for a museum every time this matter has come before the Pinole City Council.

Between 2018 and 2020, the city paid Interactive Resources, an architectural firm, approximately \$100,000 for renovation plans and a cost estimate for the Faria House project, specifically for its use as a museum. That’s the actual language in the service contract. The city’s intent was clear.

Furthermore, in 2020 the city presented the Pinole History Museum board with a “Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperative Agreement” that included lease terms. The board approved it with two changes and sent it back to the city for consideration.

The city council did not discuss it further and did not approve funding to renovate the Faria House.

RENOVATION OF THE FARIA HOUSE APPROVED/RESCINDED

On June 7, 2022, the council approved hazard remediation and renovations of the Faria House to create a lower-level office and upper-level warm shell — a partial renovation. The council that year had not decided for what purpose the Faria House would be used.

In February 2023, along with a new mayor, a council majority rescinded its allocation to renovate the first floor of the Faria House and assigned the funds, more than \$400,000, to other projects.

Jeff's last posting on the Museum website contained the following thoughts:

People, families, and communities are shaped by history. If their stories are not told, if their history is not preserved, their stories and their history become something else — forgotten.

A majority of the Pinole City Council is unwilling to renovate the Faria House for any purpose, including a museum. The council is considering selling this historic home. It's unfortunate the value of a museum to the city is not recognized.

Long struggle

It's been a long struggle to establish a history museum in Pinole. While we had hoped we'd be open by now, we're resolute in seeing our mission to fruition.

Until the Pinole History Museum gets a home, we will tell our city's stories and bring its history to the community through our newsletter, talks to community groups, collaboration with schools, special events, several Facebook pages, email blasts to our members and friends — and anything else we can think of.

Editor's note: At the city council meeting held on March 7, 2023, the council voted 3-2 in favor of discussing the issue of selling the Faria House at a future meeting. Council Member Norma Martinez-Rubin (Jeff's wife) and council member Toms voted against the motion to do so.

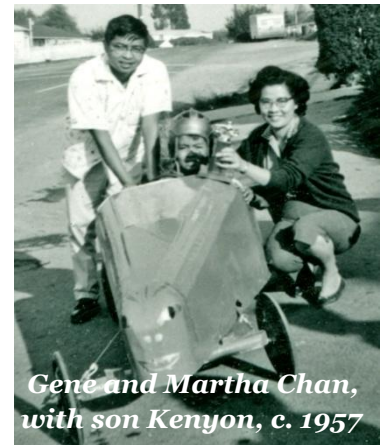
At the time of this writing, the city of Pinole had notified affordable housing developers of the Faria House availability for sale, a step required of public agencies by the state's "Surplus Land Act" when disposing of public property.

While recent City Council majorities have not supported the use of the Faria House as a museum, the dream will take on a new form. Jeff Rubin would passionately insist.

El Sobrante Pioneer passes away at 102 years and 266 days *Steve James*

El Sobrante lost one of its most prominent citizens on April 1, 2024. Martha Chan was 102 years old and lived in the Seattle, WA. area, where she moved many years ago to be near her son Kenyon. Martha and her husband Gene owned and operated Manor Market in El Sobrante for 36 years, beginning in 1952. They sold the store in 1988. The market was a focal point of our part of El Sobrante. The Mom-and-Pop store everyone used.

In 1952 the Manor Market area was booming with kids, as well as her own children Darlene, Kenyon, and Darrow. It seemed like Martha knew all of us. For those of us



Gene and Martha Chan, with son Kenyon, c. 1957



Cub Scout Den #6. Steve James is middle kid, kneeling.

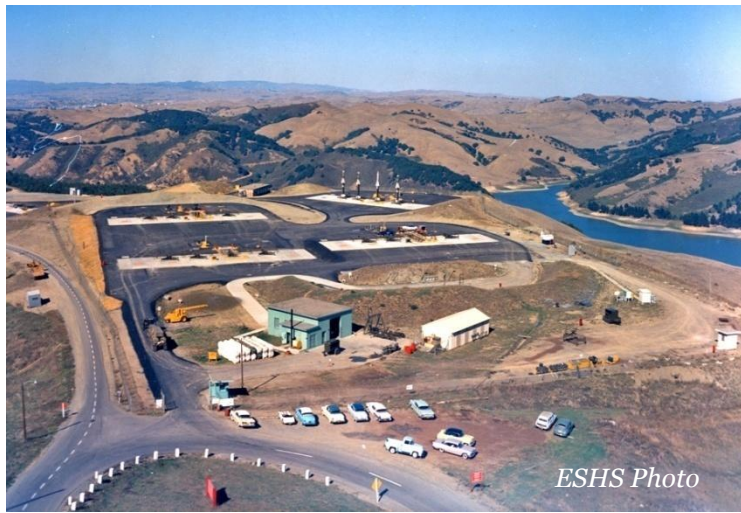
who grew up in the Manor Market area around El Sobrante #1 Elementary School. Martha was

part of our world. She was our Cub Scout Den Mother. We bought candy from her after school or on the weekends. She organized and was the president of the El Sobrante Mom's club. If there was an event in our area of El Sobrante she was involved. As we all grew older, she held a special place in our memories. She was a great lady, Mom and friend. May she rest in peace.

The Cold War in our hills *D. Bastin*

Visitors to our History Center often are surprised to learn that our local hills were once the site of a missile base, designed to fend off attacks by Soviet bombers. The image at left was taken in the late 1950s, and shows one such base atop the San Pablo Ridge, overlooking the San Pablo Reservoir. The base was activated in 1955 and deactivated in 1963

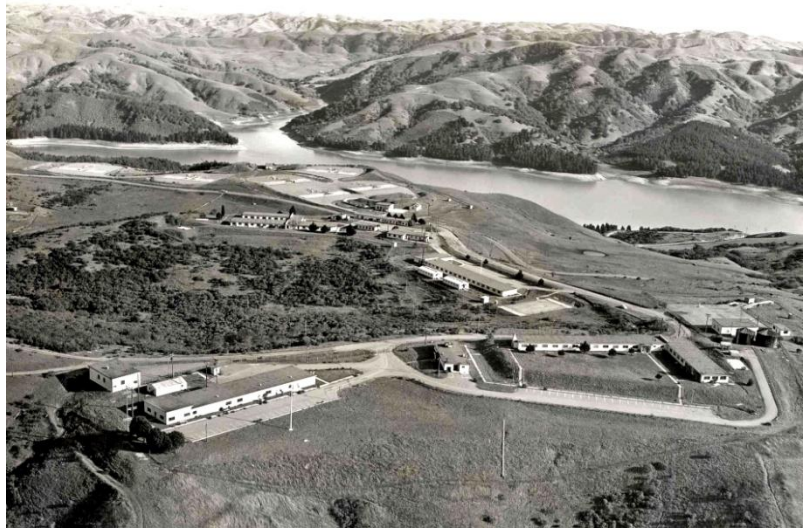
Many such bases were constructed all over the country during



ESHS Photo

the 1950s, and were generally referred to as Nike missile bases, as the principal weapon employed was named Nike, after the Greek goddess of victory. At this time, the Soviet Union had not yet developed a sophisticated arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) so it was the relatively slow-moving bomber that was the Nike's target. The era of the Nike was short-lived, as the missile's range was limited and the growing challenge of the ICBM meant that the need to be located near a metropolitan area was no longer an issue. Thus these bases were deactivated in the 1960s.

The Nike site on San Pablo Ridge was larger than most (there were a total of 12) in the San Francisco Defense Area; it actually consisted of two sites: SF-08 (San Pablo Ridge) and SF-09 (Berkeley). Total area was around 135 acres. Manning the base were elements of both the army and the state national guard. Families lived here full-time. The color image at the beginning of this article only shows the launching pads and related facilities, but here we see more structures, mostly housing for families and guards.



The site on San Pablo Ridge incorporated 6 missile batteries of 4 missiles each, for a total of 24 anti-aircraft missiles. The missiles at this site were designated Nike-Ajax, and they were the first of three Nike variants; the second and third variants were designated Nike-Hercules and Nike-Zeus. The latter versions were much more sophisticated than the Ajax.

The above 3 images courtesy of the California State Military History and Museums Program, at: www.militarymuseum.org



Currently, few people are aware of the existence of the Nike base in our community's past. But the base was not unknown to the old-timers. According to John Matteson, who grew up in El Sobrante (he was the son of Charles Matteson, the chief of the El Sobrante Fire Department), Ed Banducci, owner of Ed's Tavern, "used to have big spaghetti feeds and invite all the guys down for free spaghetti." This was recounted in a local history book, *El Sobrante Recollections*, published in 1984 by the local Rotary Club. *(More history of the Nike site in our next issue)*

El Sobrante Trailer Parks

Roxy Miravalle

I was tasked to find some information on James Brusie (who went by the name of Russell) and his starting/founding of the trailer park, then known as

The Independent
Thu, Apr 21, 1960 ·Page 8

Trailer Unit Sets Meeting

SAN PABLO — California Trailer Park Assn. Unit 23 of Contra Costa County will hold its regular dinner meeting next Tuesday, April 26, at 7:30 p.m. at Buzz Dyer's Chuck Wagon, San Pablo and Wall Aves., El Cerrito.

Russell Brusie, newly elected president, operator of the El Sobrante Trailer Lodge, will preside and will select new committee chairmen.

the Victory Trailer Court at 4556 Appian Way. Although I didn't find anything

specific mentioning him starting the trailer park, what I did find was an article that mentioned he was the owner of the El Sobrante Trailer Lodge at 4556 Appian Way. In an earlier article, his property on Appian Way was listed as "J.R. Brusie Poultry Ranch." I also found several other articles on his political and community activities.

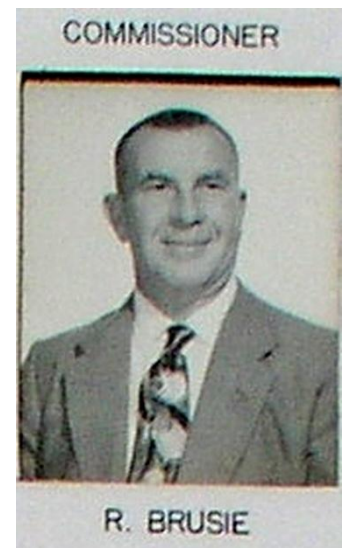
One July 1946 article mentioned Russell being elected president of the El Sobrante Firemen's Association, and later serving on the board of fire commissioners in 1947. At a meeting of the California Trailer Park Association (CTPA), Unit 23 of CoCo County, he was elected president on April 21, 1960. And in March 1961, he was

installed as president of the Western Mobile Home Association. He was re-elected as chairman of the El Sobrante Board of Fire Commissioners in January 1965, and later served on the Contra Costa County liaison committee to study much needed civil service benefits for fire fighters. The list of Russell's involvement with the local community in one capacity or another is a lengthy one.

In reviewing all these articles about Brusie and trailer parks, I discovered there was more to just being the owner or manager of a trailer or mobile home park than previously thought. Meetings of the CTPA were held monthly and owners of local trailer parks, court and camps attended to discuss policies and other topics related to maintaining a trailer park and the safety of its residents. At one meeting, the city of San Pablo issued a booklet pertaining to mobile home living. The booklet listed the location of the mobile home parks, not just in

The Independent
Wed, Feb 03, 1943 ·Page 14

FRESH RANCH EGGS, 50c a dozen in your container at the ranch. J. R. B. Poultry Ranch, 4556 Appian Way, El Sobrante.



San Pablo but their standing from a national level. The mayor and members of the city staff pledged assistance to trailer park operators in requesting a committee be appointed to meet with officials to study ordinances and other matters pertaining to their industry and to establish a policy regarding these trailer parks. The meetings were also essential in educating members that, as owners, mobile homes are regarded as multiple dwellings, and what role the parks play in shouldering their share of taxes.

At these meetings as many as 10 trailer park/mobile homeowners were represented. However, that was just a small number compared to how many trailer parks existed locally between the 1940s and the 1960s. San Pablo had a large number, including Richmond, El Cerrito and El Sobrante. Although it may not seem apparent today, there were several El Sobrante trailer parks that no longer exist.

Today, there are only about 3 trailer parks left in El Sobrante out of all the ones I discovered in old news clippings. They are: Frontier Mobile Home Park, 2990 San Pablo Dam Rd; El Sobrante Mobile Home Park, 4556 Appian Way; and Creekside Mobile Home Park (aka French's Trailer Park), 4661/4695 San Pablo Dam Rd.

Note: The large-scale use of trailers and trailer parks for residences developed in urban areas as a response to housing shortages during World War II. In the San Francisco Bay Area, trailers had a significant role in meeting the housing needs of thousands of families. Trailers and trailer parks were not readily accepted in all communities in the region, some of which had a concentration of defense-related industries to which large numbers of workers migrated. Wartime trailer parks operated by the federal government served as models for the large mobile-home parks that evolved during the 1960s and 1970s. [Source: [jstor.org/stable/214256](https://www.jstor.org/stable/214256)]

The following are ads for former trailer parks in El Sobrante with their address and what is on the site today, (including a link to an assessor's map of that area).

El Sobrante Trailer, 3826 San Pablo Dam Road [The Pedaler Bike Shop, formerly Mechanics Bank]

<https://gis.cccounty.us/HTML5/assessorPDF/420p15x0.pdf>

Elkhorn Trailer Camp, 3510 San Pablo Dam Road [Plaza Sobrante]

<https://gis.cccounty.us/HTML5/assessorPDF/420p13x0.pdf>

The Independent
Mon, Jan 17, 1944 ·Page 15

Trailer Space
ELKHORN TRAILER CAMP
\$16 Month
Modern and Clean
3510 Dam Road
Richmond (2-5)

Lewis Trailer Camp on San Pablo Dam Rd. (location unknown)

Martinez News-Gazette
Wed, Sep 09, 1942 ·Page 3

The children, Richard Kennedy and a younger brother, sons of J. Kennedy of the Lewis Trailer Camp on San Pablo Dam road, had been bitten while the family visited in Fresno. After their departure, the animal was discovered to be suffering from rabies.

Vallejo Times-Herald
Fri, Jul 09, 1943 ·Page 14

TRANSFERRED! PRICED FOR quick sale, \$5,850. Must sell immediately my lovely modern 2-bedroom home, licensed trailer court in conjunction, electric meters, all modern conveniences. Income over \$200 month. 3826 San Pablo Dam Road, Richmond. 54-j9-15x

The Independent
Mon, Feb 01, 1943 ·Page 13

Trailer Space for Rent
Victory Trailer Court
4556 Appian Way, El Sobrante
1200 sq. ft. trailer site—enough for good size Victory garden surrounding each unit. Ground cultivated with garden tractor free. Bus service to all shipyards by the door. Good grocery store across the street.
Price \$5 Per Week



Members of Pioneer Families Visit the History Center

On Friday, March 26, the History Center was treated to a visit by four members of local pioneer families. From left to right we see Andrew Skow, Kris Skow, Richard Oliver, and Kit Skow. The Skow family has roots dating back at least to 1899, when Soren Skow and his wife Anna Rasmussen (immigrants from Denmark) settled on leased property now covered by the waters of the San Pablo reservoir. It was on this property that Soren founded the S.P. Skow & Sons Dairy, which was later named the Richmond Farm Creamery when the business relocated to a site along Clark

Road, ahead of the rising waters of the reservoir.

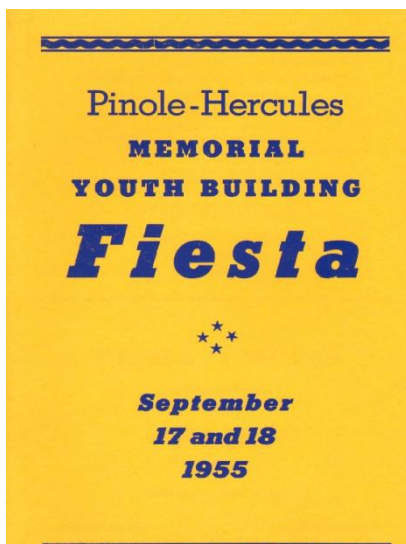
By comparison, John Oliver was a relative newcomer when he purchased an existing business in El Sobrante in 1943. This became Oliver’s Hardware, which is still going strong, the business now overseen by grandson Richard.

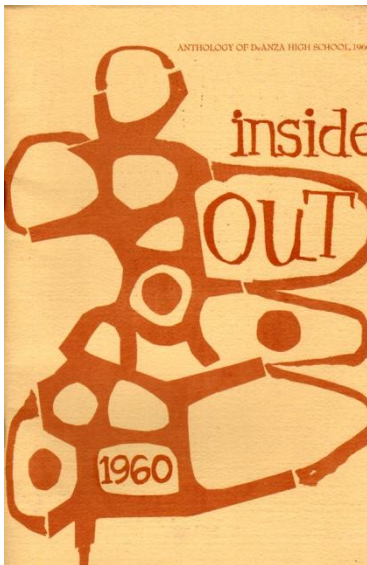
The Skow and Oliver families became linked with the marriage of John’s son Bill (Richard’s father) to Patsy Skow, in 1948. It is to the Oliver family in particular that we are indebted to the many photos that we have of early businesses in the area and in particular, to many photos of the volunteer fire department, where members of the Skow family served the community for many years.



New Acquisitions:

This booklet, published in 1955 and donated by Emil Munkres, was published by a committee dedicated to construction of a building “in memory of the local boys killed in World War II and Korea”. The group was sponsoring a “fiesta” to take place on September 17 and 18, 1955, to raise money for this effort. In the booklet is contained the names and addresses of many local businesses , including many located in El Sobrante. From this source, we learn that our local Clancy’s Bar had just opened.





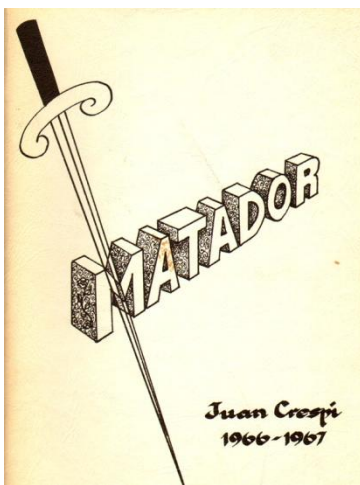
Art and poetry booklet, published by the Argonauts of De Anza High School, 1960. Contains artwork by prominent cartoonist Joel Beck. Donated by Sharon Miller

The Leftovers is published quarterly. Articles for publication are encouraged, as are comments. See e-mail address below.

The El Sobrante Historical Society is a formal nonprofit organization, and donations may be tax-deductible. We are dedicated to the preservation and display of the history of the community of El Sobrante. We depend on our members and local residents for the information, artifacts, and photographs that make up the society's collection. Become a member and help out! It's free and simple. Just visit the website, at elsobrantehistoricalsociety.com.

Visit us on **Facebook**:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ElSobranteHistoricalSociety/>



1st yearbook issued by Juan Crespi Junior High School, 1966-1967. Donated by one of the teachers, Myra Silverman

Mission Statement

To promote the awareness and appreciation of El Sobrante Valley history through preservation and education, and chronicling of the community's heritage for current and future generations.

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Donald Bastin: President; Historical Researcher and writer. Newsletter editor.

Roxanne Miravalle: Vice-President; Historian and Writer; Genealogist.

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Emil Munkres: Director; Historian.

Visit us on-line at:

www.elsobrantehistoricalsociety.com

Questions, Comments, and other communication? Send to:

ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM



Menu from the Royal Palace Restaurant, which operated in El Sobrante from 1999 until 2022.

Address: 3550, Ste A, SP Dam Road.

This is now the home of Paradise Indian restaurant

Donated by Editor