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THE LEFTOVERS

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Summer 2021

We're Open!

On Saturday, May 8, the El Sobrante Historical Society History Center opened its door to the public for the first time.

Editor



Opening day, May 8, 2021. From left: board members Emil Munkres, Steve James, Lyle Miller, District 1 Supervisor John Gioia, and board president, Donald Bastin. Missing is our Vice-president, Roxanne Miravalle, who was unable to attend.

We are now regularly open Saturdays, 10 am – 4 pm. Also open by appointment:
Contact us at: eshistory@gmail.com



Among the many visitors we had that day was Kenyon Chan, shown here, standing by the produce scale customers used in Manor Market, owned and run by his parents Gene and Martha Chan. From 1952 until 1986, the market served as business and home for the family. The market is still operating, with new owners at the same location on Manor Road. Incredibly, Martha is still with us, having reached her 100th birthday this July. Along with Kenyon, Martha has donated many artifacts and documents to the El Sobrante Historical Society. She was very active in both scouting and PTA, and we now have her extensive records that help

us to tell the story of those groups in El Sobrante in the 1950s and 1960s.

Kenyon attended De Anza High School, and had donated many items that he kept from those days. He graduated in 1966, along with our treasurer, Steve James; they knew each other well and have remained fast friends over the years. Here Kenyon is standing by his school sports jacket, which he received for his participation in basketball and swimming. Kenyon is quick to point out that he does not consider himself to have been an athlete, but he remembers fondly his days at De Anza. This school jacket is, at present, the only one that we have.



Kenyon retired recently as Chancellor at the University of Washington, in Washington State, capping a brilliant career in education; most of

the years that he served as Chancellor were with the campus in Bothell. The De Anza class of 1966 can rightly claim Kenyon as one its most successful and accomplished graduates. He is now living in the Bay Area and we are proud to have him as a member of the El Sobrante Historical Society.



We had a steady stream of visitors throughout the day. Some knew that there was an historical society in town, but not that we had a space set aside for us. Others, especially those who have joined our society and have been receiving our newsletters (electronically), knew that a history center existed, but were

surprised and impressed by our collections and displays. One benefit of the pandemic is that we have had a lot of time to think about our displays and put them up in what we think is an intelligible and attractive way. We were pleased to find that our visitors liked what they saw.

As you may be aware, we share the Fahden House with the Friends of the Library, whose mission is to support the activities of the El Sobrante Library, particularly, the programs aimed at children. They do this primarily by selling used books that have been donated to them. They, too, were open for business on May 8. As the pandemic was still a high concern, the book sale was held outside on the plaza behind the library. The



The Friends had a great day, and the sales generated a significant contribution to the library. However, the effort in moving the heavy boxes of books from the building to the plaza was just too much to rely on as a regular happening. We are therefore happy to report that, with the lifting of the Covid restrictions, sales will now be held regularly in the Fahden House. All the books have to be organized and shelved, but sales are expected to begin sometime in September. In addition, we are informed that the library has provided a bin for library patrons to drop off their donated books, within the library itself. This will solve a long-standing problem concerning donations.

We have now been open for around two months, every Saturday, from 10 am until 4 pm. The number of visitors has been low so far, but seems to be gradually growing. If you have not been to see our



center, please drop by when you have a chance, and tell your friends. We are now also open by appointment during the week. Just contact us at: eshistory@gmail.com. If you are a teacher and would like to bring your class for a tour, this may be the way to go. Just remember that our space is small, and groups must be limited in size to about twelve maximum. But there is a nice space behind the library, with a native garden and a small park (the Children's Reading Garden), if the group needs to be broken up.

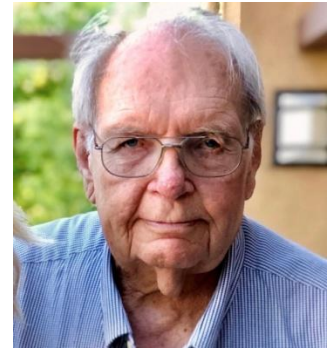
The late Nancy Fahden (above) who used our building for many years as an office while she served as the first woman on the Board of Supervisors, would be happy to know that her office space is being used to showcase the history of part of the district that she represented.

Remembering: Donald Lester Skow

1933 - 2021

Emil Munkres

Donald Skow was born and raised in El Sobrante, where he grew up and worked at his Skow family's Richmond Farm Creamery on Clark Road. In the late 1940's and early '50's, he was one of the many milk truck drivers at the dairy delivering milk all over El Sobrante and Richmond.



Donald's father, Lester, delivering milk, 1920s

Just a few months ago, I had a good long telephone call with Donald. He described growing up at the house that his father, Lester Skow, had built in 1929, on San Pablo Creek Road (now 4430 San Pablo Dam Road) near Clark Road. The old San Pablo Creek Road back then was just a two-lane dirt road with very little traffic. As a boy, Donald and his friend would sit on the porch of his house with a big pile of stones at

their side. Every time a car went by, they would move a stone from the left to the right side of the porch. This could go on for hours!

Another subject Don described in detail were the very strong smells coming from the "huge hog ranch" at the end of Bruno Road. The stench would cross San Pablo Creek, mixing with the odors emanating from a large chicken ranch on the Dam Road. Whew! Donald said he could never forget it!

Back in the '30's and 40's Donald said everyone knew just about everyone in El Sobrante. Going along Dam Road, it seemed that in every other house lived someone who worked for the Skow's dairy. Donald's grandfather, Soren Skow, originally operated his dairy on land leased from the Warneke family. This land is now covered by San Pablo Reservoir. The Skow family was forced to move their dairy operation to Clark Road due to the construction of the dam. Donald confirmed to me that the old Warneke house and dairy were carefully disassembled and then reassembled at the new site. Donald's cousin Leslie had the unfortunate job of straightening all the thousands of bent nails from the original house - to be re-used in its reconstruction. This job took weeks! Donald also confirmed that the rebuilt home is still standing at that same location at 65 Fable Court, just off of Clark on the old dairy site. Who knew?! This could possibly be one of the oldest houses still standing in El Sobrante.



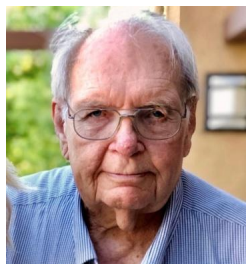
Grandfather, Soren Skow, working on new home on Clark Road, early 1920s



It was a pretty great conversation. Unfortunately, Donald didn't get a chance to come out and visit the El Sobrante History Center as he had planned to, but he was happy to be able to share some of his unique recollections of his younger days in El Sobrante.

In Memoriam

Remembering those who have passed



Donald Lester Skow [1933-2021]

Grandson of Soren Skow (Skow Dairy/Richmond Farm Creamery)

<https://obituaries.tridentsociety.com/obituaries/walnut-creek-ca/donald-skow-10238634>

Nicholas Carayanis [1933 - 2021] (Nick & Marie's Deli)

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/eastbaytimes/obituary.aspx?n=nicholas-carayanis&pid=198485120>



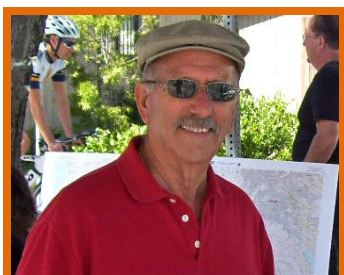
Salvatore (Sam) Peter Lesti [1930 - 2021] (Sam's Dog House)

<https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/eastbaytimes/obituary.aspx?n=salvatore-peter-lesti-sam&pid=198271084>

Above are links to published obituaries of Donald Skow and two additional “pioneers” of El Sobrante history who passed away recently.

Nicholas Carayanis, born in Greece, immigrated to the U.S. at the age of 18, and moved to El Sobrante in 1961; here he spent the rest of his life. Married to his wife, Marie, for 60 years, the couple jointly ran a local business, Nick and Marie’s Deli and Catering, for 30 years.. Marie is still active in the local Chamber of Commerce.

Salvatore (Sam) Peter Lesti, along with his brother, Ray, was a local barber for 25 years. After retiring as a barber, he opened Sam’s Dog House, which is still in business in downtown El Sobrante.



We also take this opportunity to remember one of our very own, Maurice Abraham, who passed away almost two years ago. Maury was one of the founding members of our society; he loved El Sobrante, his home town, and was passionate about preserving its history. He is sorely missed.

He is seen here at the El Sobrante Stroll in 2012.

While no Stroll is planned for this year, we hope to see its return in 2022.

New Acquisitions:



We are indebted to Tom Gomez, for the donation of this denim jacket worn by his mother (Claudia Pitt) or perhaps by his aunt "Joanie," while they performed and competed in equestrian events around the Bay Area or

in their own Pitt Arena (about where the Mechanics Bank is today). The Sobrante Riders were very active in the 1950s and 1960s. This jacket is a Wrangler "Blue Bell," dating from the 1950s and features a "cowboy cut" with six elastic bands on the inside to keep a tight fit; it is in excellent condition. It will be displayed alongside the saddle once owned by Claude Pitt, father of Claudia.



El Sobrante Petrified Wood

Donated by Ron MacLean, this pretty piece was

found (along with others) on family property just off the San Pablo Dam Road. Most examples of petrified wood are at least several million years old, and probably older. So this artifact is by far the oldest in our collection.

Rancho Lumber Ash Tray

This little gem was donated by Gregg Moore, a former County Sheriff deputy. This is the second Rancho Lumber ash tray that we have acquired, and the design is substantially different from the first. Rancho Lumber was in business in the 1950s and '60s.



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 elsobranthehistoricalsociety.com.

Visit us on **Facebook:**

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

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.

ESHS Board of Directors

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

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

Steve James: Treasurer; Membership and Communication Secretary; Researcher/writer.

Lyle Miller: Secretary; Community Liaison; Researcher/writer.

Emil Munkres: Director; Historian.

Visit us on-line at:

www.elsobranthehistoricalsociety.com

Questions, Comments, and other communication? Send to:

ESHISTORY@GMAIL.COM