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2020

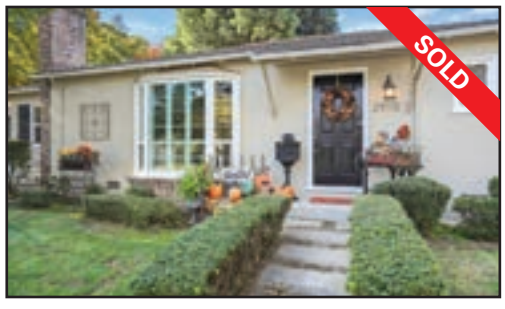
Year in Review



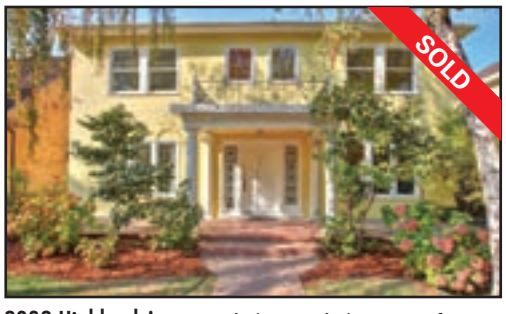








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2020 Year in Review

Land Park News

A year ago, I made the resolution to see things with clear 20/20 vision with the new year and to treat my little world with the most kindness I could give. Little did I know that the coronavirus I had heard about on the other side of the world would turn into a full-blown pandemic.

In these unprecedented times, we have seen death, unemployment, under-employment, growing homelessness, social unrest. Whether a pandemic, a natural disaster or any other traumatic event, the community always comes together. "It's Us. It's always us. We're in this together. Etc." The rallying cries for humanity's survival.

I hope you enjoy some highlights from this year's Ledger, and here's to a happy new year and the health of the city.





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Families Stay Connected Under Social Distancing

By Devin Lavelle

It is really hard being home with kids 7 days a week. We can talk to them about why they can't see their friends at school, but they don't really understand. Even if they do, it doesn't do anything to burn off the massive amount of energy they wake up with each morning.

COVID-19 has brought out so much good in humanity. Neighbors helping neighbors. Strangers helping strangers.

One of the really cool things that we've seen is people finding ways to connect creatively, while staying safely socially distanced.

We have seen great chalk art, in front of homes, in the parks and along the canals. It's a fun, uplifting thing to see while walking around the neighborhood with our kids.

Local moms groups and Nextdoor have been full of art projects. Children made shamrock decorations to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, which their parents then hung on their doors or front windows. Families could then walk around the neighborhood, getting some great fresh air and exercise, while looking to spot these fun decorations. Next up were flowers which celebrated the start of spring!

Families went on bear hunts around the neighborhood. Families that weren't scared could enjoy the beautiful day (and possibly circumvent wavy grass, rivers, mud, our wonderful urban forest and so forth) and find stuffed bears placed in the windows for neighbors to enjoy. We saw a bear wedding, a bear dressed as a bunny, even Chewbacca! All, of course, with a shiny wet nose, big furry ears and big googly eyes! As Sacramentan Rowna Lopez says, "The Bear Hunt has given families the chance to do something fun together and bring camaraderie in the community!"



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Alone Together: Closed Facebook Support Group for Mental Health Issues

By Monica Stark

Alone Together, a closed Facebook support group for mental health issues, has been started by Laura Bemis, local photographer and co-founder of "Journey of Hope Exhibit," the annual collaborative project that pairs writers with local artists to share stories of hope and recovery.

The group is for anyone who experiences a mental health challenge due to the isolation from the novel coronavirus. Bemis said she's keeping the group by either invitation or special request to ensure some sense of confidentiality. "If somebody wants to get into it, they can get into it. It's not open to the public so not everyone can sit and browse to read what's written," she said.

Bemis said the shelter-in-place ordinances have increased her depression because by helping others, she helps herself. "For me, the reason why I started it was because I have depression as one of my problems to deal with challenges. To keep me so I don't get depressed I get very involved in the community and I help other people with mental health challenges," she said.

Social distancing and health mandates can also be triggering for people with obsessive-compulsive disorder. "They are told they are to wash their hands and use sanitizer, that could be very strenuous because they already have that disorder and (the mandate) compounds it." She also explained that those who suffer from anxiety can be suffering more with all the latest coronavirus apocalyptic news. "A lot of people don't have anywhere to go or call to talk to somebody about it because it's such a personal thing and people don't want to share that they are hurting in that way."

Bemis started this group and has 12 members so far. Every now and then somebody will ask if they can join.

Each day, Bemis posts a photograph she's taken as a sort of conversation starter. Topics range from pretty flowers to the five sheep brought in to mow down her grass. As she writes on the page: "Even though we are in isolation we can still find beauty."

She said the requirements are pretty basic – that you be at least 18 years old, appear to have a lived experience of a mental health challenge, or are a caregiver with serious mental illness and be willing to share and participate in the group. "We're not asking anyone to prove their mental illness but if want to share this is a safe environment for that," she said. Bemis hopes to offer a Zoom or FaceTime session where members can login and join in on fun activities like coloring or art. "It's not group therapy," she said, "But, I'm looking for people to lead those things – someone who wants to do a craft or something online."

Keep Taking Out, Please!

By Devin Lavelle

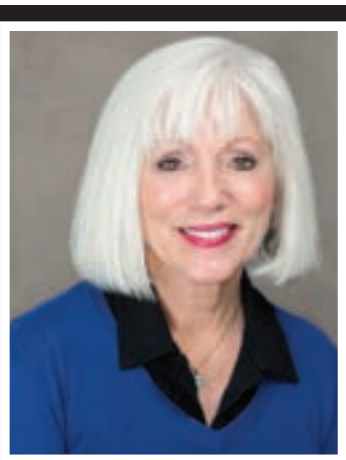
We continue living under the fear and limitations of COVID-19 and have turned life on its head. It's a scary time, but we've had good news that the curve seems to have flattened significantly. Still, many of our friends and neighbors have gotten sick, some have even died. Our hearts go out to everyone who is suffering from this terrible virus.

Our hearts also go out to everyone who has been hit by the economic crash. One of the most vulnerable local industries remains our local restaurants. Restaurants are an important part of our community. They are a place to relax, enjoy time with family and friends, to gather with community. They express the diversity of our community. They give flavor to our local culture. Almost all of our local restaurants remain open with limited hours.

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LAND PARK

This Land Park cottage has been owned by the original family since 1945. There is a large entry, spacious breakfast room with a charming fireplace and a copper hood, beamed ceiling and stained-glass windows. Original cabinets in kitchen, tiled counters and newer white appliances including a dishwasher, cooktop and built-in oven. The water heater and HVAC were recently replaced. There are new engineered wood floors throughout. The formal living and dining rooms have shutters on windows. Living room has additional fireplace with built-in sconce lighting, plus a single French door to patio and backyard. There are two bedrooms (one larger) with two closets and a large bathroom between these rooms. Large yard with beautiful mature dogwood trees, a two-car garage with a built-in closet. Additional storage building behind garage. **1615 8th Avenue • $605,000**



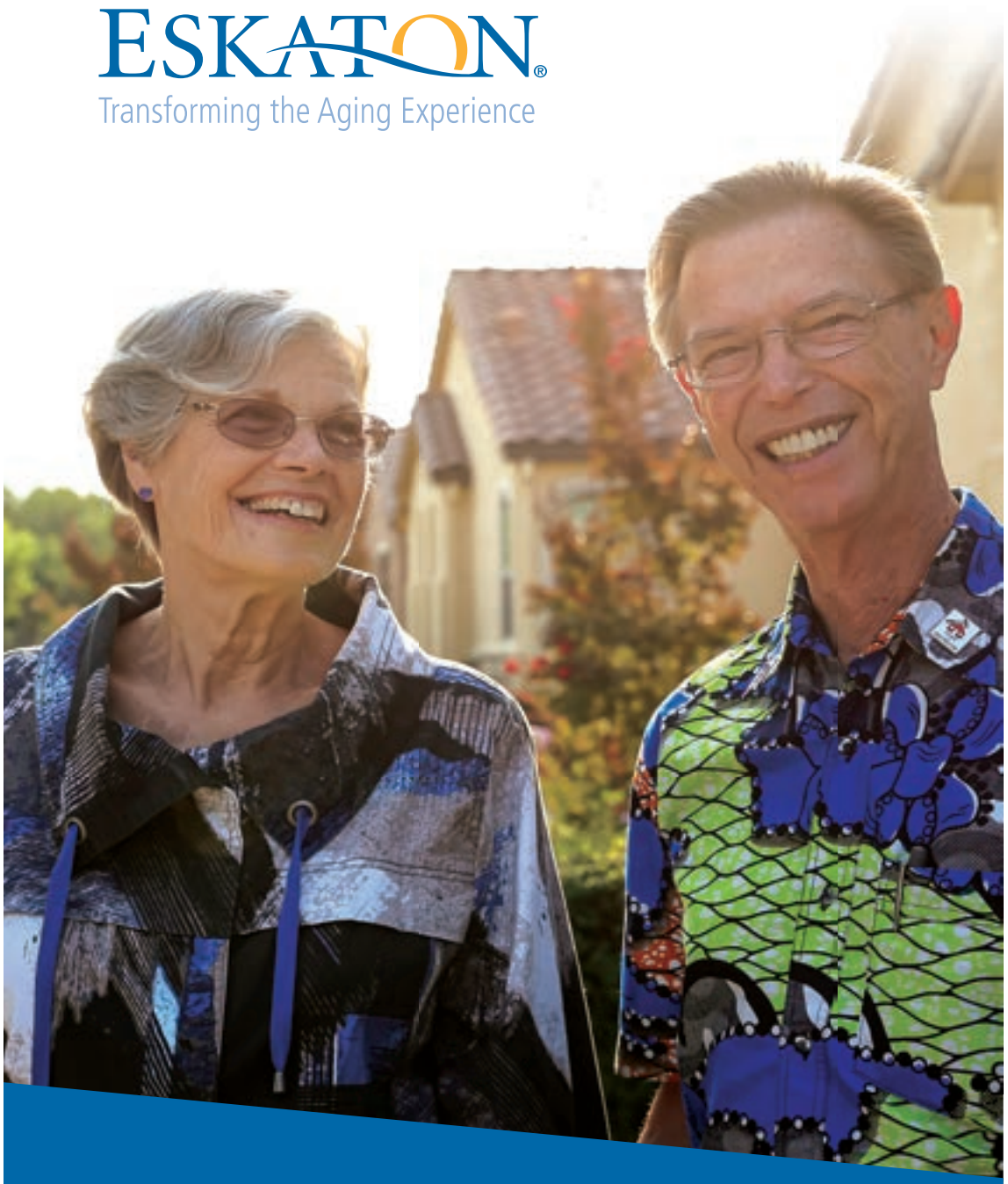
LAND PARK

Old World Charm is showcased throughout this beautiful Land Park Tudor. Vintage fixtures and hardware, Portuguese tiles, beamed ceilings and random plank floors have been treasured and preserved by the homeowners. Amenities include 3 bedrooms, 3 full bathrooms, 3 fireplaces and a 3-car garage. Both the formal living and dining rooms have beautiful original built-in cabinetry. Spacious kitchen has wood cabinets, tiled counters and built-in appliances. The upstairs study has built-in office cabinetry and a French balcony with a copper awning. The upstairs master bedroom has a spacious walk-in closet with separate water closet and master bath. French doors open up to a large brick patio for outdoor dining with friends. The private yard has a lemon, orange and camellia trees, a fountain, all accented by a vintage city street lamp. Lots of storage in home and garage. A Real Gem! **2761 13th Street**



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A Changing Landscape: Former Cemetery Garden Volunteers Express Frustration with City's Vision for Cemetery Grounds

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

Changes in the appearance of the Sacramento Historic City Cemetery's landscaping has some former cemetery garden volunteers expressing their frustrations.

This cemetery dates back to 1849, the year of the city's founding.

Jennifer Holden, one of the former volunteers of this cemetery's gardens, referred to changes in the cemetery's landscaping as a "reckless use of public property against the wishes of the public."

"About four to five years ago, the city of Sacramento announced the Broadway (Vision) Plan," she said. "About the same time, city parks staff came into the cemetery to say they were removing all the plants to the outer edge of the cemetery where there was no water. This was tantamount to saying they were going to destroy the cemetery gardens."

These referenced gardens are the historic rose garden, the native plant demonstration garden and the perennial plant garden.

Holden additionally shared her opinion about pruning that has been performed on plants at the cemetery, causing a different appearance to the place.

"Some plants won't survive the pruning," she said. "And given that the original intention stated by city parks staff four years ago was to remove the gardens, it's now looking like the prune job is in preparation for eliminating the gardens altogether by digging the plants out after being pruned to a small enough size to be removed."

Anita Clevenger, former curator of the cemetery's rose garden, said she prided herself in helping to create an attractive garden in the cemetery.

"I just love the whole aspect of it being a public garden in such an appropriate historic setting," she said. "I felt that the cemetery and the old roses were a perfect complement to one another.

"In Victorian times, they wanted (cemeteries) to be garden spaces in places that they would visit, places with beauty. Cemeteries were the first public parks in America. That park-like setting (at the old city cemetery) was very important to me. What I loved was having something that was a gift to the public, which I felt it was."

Clevenger, who is a master gardener, recalled the city's new vision for the cemetery, which led to a drastic change in the appearance of its landscaping.

"There were years of (the city) directing and us trying to change that direction," she said. "They wanted all of the arbors (removed). We had many climbing roses and big roses that were supported on pieces of rebar and other ingenious ways. They wanted that all taken down – no support.

"They wanted nothing arching from plot to plot. They wanted all plants removed, so they could see cemetery monuments from every direction approached. (That) really means you don't have big plants."

Clevenger added that the volunteers formed a technical advisory committee to create a compromise between the volunteers' vision for the cemetery's landscape and the city's vision for that property.

see CEMETERY page 5



Cemetery

continued from page 4

"It was founded (in) September 2017, but we didn't actually approve the horticultural guidelines until April 2019," she said. "But they never were implemented. We worked on them and they never changed a thing. And by then, they had implemented that volunteer agreement that imposed a gag order on volunteers. And it said no volunteer could lead another volunteer, which was really directed at people like me. I was by then the curator of the garden. I had taken over for Barbara Oliva, (who died in 2015)."

Clevenger mentioned that she refused to sign the volunteer agreement.

"We had to not speak to the press or speak to the public or even post on (social) media (about the gardens)," she said. "I couldn't sign it. Ultimately, I finally said, 'Well, gosh, I guess I will (sign it), if you say it really isn't a gag order.' But by then, it was too late. I was no longer approved as a volunteer. And a lot of the cemetery volunteers left over that volunteer agreement, as well as just a sense that we weren't appreciated. Our efforts weren't wanted."

Dr. Bob LaPerriere, a founding board member of the Old City Cemetery Committee, told this publication that he was never contacted by the city for his thoughts on the drastic change to the cemetery's landscape.

"I probably have more continuous experience with the (old city) cemetery over the last 35 years, and nobody ever talked to me when they (redeveloped the landscaping)," he said. "I don't know if any of them walked through it in the 1970s and early 1980s to see how horrible it was at that point.

"There was nothing to really draw people in, nothing to really memorialize those who are buried there." LaPerriere, who first visited this cemetery in 1972, shared the following statement, which addresses his frustrations.

"There has been a continuous attempt to beautify the cemetery, but unfortunately this has been compromised the past several years," he wrote. "Such beautification is a requirement to draw people into the cemetery. I think it is unlikely that our cemetery would (have been placed) on the National Register of Historic Places (in 2014), if it looked like it did in 1985. And the city had little to do with its improvement for the first 25 years of the committee's work.

"And it is puzzling to me that there is so much concern about the horticultural aspect, forcing so much pruning and removals, as the cemetery gained its historical designation before all this occurred."

LaPerriere specifically commented on the cemetery's rose garden.

"The rose garden was a major attraction and draw for thousands of people, and it has received two international awards," he wrote.

"It is truly unfortunate that the rose garden and the perennial plant area (Hamilton Square), that have attracted thousands to the cemetery, are losing their beauty," LaPerriere added. "Our city cemetery is unique and dissimilar from many others, so I do not think guidelines from them can necessarily be applied to ours."

Tony Ulep, city parks supervisor, stressed that the issue between some of the volunteers and the city dates back several years.

"I've been telling the volunteers for four or five years that you cannot have trellises go from one plot to another plot, because we have to keep within the period of significance," he said. "The period of significance is from 1849 to 1962 (when the last public plot was sold).

"Whatever happened between those years, that's appropriate. But the rose garden wasn't established until 1992. So, we're talking 30 years later."

Ulep said that the "fight" pertains to wording in the cemetery's National Register of Historic Places designation.

"We can't really say a rose garden; it's a collection of roses," he said. "When the national register was submitted, the preservation director at the time missed that title on the national historic register.

"That's where the fight is. We're talking about doing an amendment, which is going to be costly to the city to go ahead and change that." Ulep added that the city hired consultants who told the city how the cemetery's landscaping should appear, based on the plot sizes.

In further addressing the trellises, Ulep mentioned that a city supervisor told him that any structure on city property that is

see GARDERN page 6

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Garden

continued from page 5

more than 6 feet tall needs to have a permit.

"He mentioned that roughly whatever it is high, a third of it needs to be in the ground, needs to be secure," he said. "So, if you have a 9-foot trellis, at least 3 and a half feet should be cemented. Even then, he goes, 'You're talking 200 to 400 pounds, depending on the height of that trellis that's going to be on top of that coffin.' When you start irrigating, eventual, with that weight, that coffin is going to cave in."

Ulep noted that on two occasions within the past seven years, trellises at this cemetery have fallen over.

He added that Clevenger was not receptive to his explanation of the trellises as presenting safety concerns.

Ulep mentioned that the volunteers do not have the final word on what is planted at the cemetery.

"Under the Sacramento city code, 12.68.060, the cemetery manager has full say of what's planted and what cannot be planted, and the volunteers go around that and they plant what they want," he said.

"So, now we're actually getting somewhere to (say), 'Hey, that's not allowed, this is allowed.' They don't like it."

Ulep also spoke about the "volunteer agreement," in which Clevenger mentioned.

"What happened was all those volunteers, if they're going to volunteer on city property, they have to become city volunteers," he said. "Not all volunteers at the old city cemetery are city volunteers. Some are old city cemetery volunteers. (Changing that status is done so) they are covered through workmen's comp.

"That's the only thing we wanted them to sign, so they can agree (with the basic) rules. But what happened is the city historian, before Marcia Eymann, let them do what they want."

Asked about the current appearance of the cemetery, Ulep responded positively.

"Before, it was covered (with) vegetation," he said. "You couldn't even see the headstones. You had to walk around. And so, this is my problem from a landscape standpoint or a gardener standpoint is that we put too big of a plant in those plots.

"When you have a 10-foot by 10-foot plot, that's not a whole lot. We start putting two or three roses in there and they grow into shrubs, about 4 (feet) or 5 feet in width, you can only put two in there, or maybe three before there's no more room left."

Ulep concluded that despite their differences, both parties have something in common.

"We all want the same result," he said. "We want that cemetery to look good, but in the same breath, we want to maintain (the) historic nature of it. And that's what's going on is these folks are altering the gardens to whatever they want (them) to be.

"The (city's) preservation director comes and tells me that's not appropriate for the time era (for the historic district). I go, 'If that was the case, then we should have never put this on the National Register.'"

(*Editor's note: Clevenger wrote the LPN after the above article appeared in the paper and stated that volunteers always signed city volunteer forms. The issue was the punitive, restrictive, cemetery-only volunteer form that staff imposed in early 2019, which included a gag order, she wrote. Her message continues as follows:* "Volunteers are unaware of any trellises falling over in the past 7 years. City staff ignores the Cemetery Master Plan, which states a vision of a historic cemetery, museum, and gardens. This vision is reflected in the listing in the National Register of Historic Places, which identifies the rose garden as a contributing feature. Until, and if, the listing is amended, the staff is under a legal obligation to protect the gardens on the same basis as other features of the cemetery. The consultants, whose expertise is monument preservation (not historic landscapes) have recommended removing non-historic vegetation (pre-1962) as well as turf and covering the ground with decomposed granite and mulch. This will make the cemetery a barren, lifeless place once again, which is not city policy, what the public wants, or required by preservation standards of rehabilitation, which are what apply to the cemetery. The staff has continued to assert that it is a cemetery, not a garden. Why can't it be both?")

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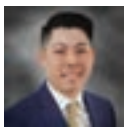


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"Oops": Raley's Iconic Neon Sign Came Crashing Down, But Have No Fear, It's OK

By Monica Stark

As Raley's on 4850 Freeport readied itself for the big move next door, the iconic neon sign came down with a crash on Feb. 3, 2020. Some took to the internet exclaiming "Rest in Pieces". And down the street, Land Park Ski and Sports responded to the incident in jest on their sign with one word: "Oops". Meanwhile, Raley's addressed the community via social media: "Have NO FEAR, the sign is okay!" They said the script on Raley's logo was impacted, but the letters are fine... despite the pictures. In partnership with Western Sign Company, Raley's rebuilt and refurbished it using the original elements to maintain the integrity of the historic sign, according to an official statement. The iconic "Rx" had already been removed and was unaffected. According to SacMod (Sacramento Modern)'s 2016 Sacramento Mid-Century Modern Home Tour guidebook, Freeport Boulevard has historically been a commercial corridor and contains many of Sacramento's beloved neon signs, which contribute to the streetscape's authentic and vintage character. Electrical Products Corporation was located at 2101 28th St. and designed the Raley's sign as well as many other favorites in Sacramento, including Sam's Hofbrau that was located at J and 17th streets, the original Tower Records "dancing kids" sign atop Tower Cafe, "Jugglin' Joe" from Gunther's Ice Cream and the Hollywood Hardware hammer on Freeport Boulevard.

Distance Learning Proves Successful for St. Robert Catholic School

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

Faced with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and school closures, local schools have turned to distance learning to educate their students. And one of the city's first schools to offer this mode of instruction was Hollywood Park's St. Robert Catholic School.

Exactly one month prior to Sacramento City Unified School District's April 13, 2020 shift to the distance learning program for all of its schools, St. Robert replaced their physical classrooms with their virtual, internet-based classroom instruction program.

With the families' association with St. Robert Parish, COVID-19 has also affected in-person church services. The congregation last held services in their church building on March 18, 2020.

Two days earlier, St. Robert began its distance learning instruction.

Samara Palko, principal of this pre-kindergarten through eighth grade school, noted that the process of transitioning to distance learning was advanced through a collaboration of teachers and parents.

"At (that) time, our teachers had not been trained in distance learning, so what really happened was best practices and excellent teaching strategies kicked in and a lot of collaboration," she said. "There were a lot of staff members that knew a little bit more about technology and how to use and facilitate it for distance learning.

"There were also some parents that were able to help us as their (work) positions are in those tech fields. So, with the teachers that had some background knowledge, and the parents that had some background knowledge, they were able to (collaborate)."

Palko described St. Robert students as having an advantage in the process of integrating into the distance learning program.

"Every student has been exposed to technology at St. Robert and every student signs an agreement of proper usage at St. Robert," she said. "So, when this went home, students already had some background knowledge on how to use the device and they had already used these programs in the classrooms in a variety of ways."

In preparation for the transition to online learning, every household that did not have a Chromebook or computer was lent a Chromebook. The school lent out about 35 Chromebooks.

Ninety percent of the families already had access to the internet, while the other families acquired access to available free internet service.

During their first week home, St. Robert teachers began using the online services, Google Classroom, SchoolSpeak and Zoom, to work with the school's students, which number about 220.

Because of the absence of the in-person classroom experience, teachers are dedicating more of their days to students, Palko said.

Also similar to the in-person classroom experience, students turn in homework assignments. But a different approach is their use of Google Classroom to turn in assignments. That medium is also used for teachers to send assignments to their students.

Because St. Robert understands that homework assignments can cause undue stress for the students during this stay-at-home order, the students are not penalized for turning in homework assignments late.

Palko mentioned that in converting their lessons to online instruction, the school's teachers had to restructure their curriculum to utilize the most essential information.

"Basically, teachers broke it down to essential, what's suggested, what are things kids could do other than math, reading, (English, language, arts)," she said.

Palko also noted that religion was maintained in the curricu-

see ST. ROBERT page 8

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continued from page 7

lum, since St. Robert is a Catholic school "first and foremost."

"Everyone is still working 100% to make sure that we're meeting the needs of the students and of their families," she said. "(That achievement) is very vital to St. Robert Catholic School.

"So, I think what we're doing is authentic and it's true to our mission and it shows that we are family, because we really do care."

Local Family to Say Goodbye to 67 Years on Yale Street

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

An era is nearing its end for the Gee family, longtime residents of one of the city's shorter lengthened streets: Yale Street.

Yale Street runs parallel to and just north of Broadway, from 10th Street to Riverside Boulevard.

After accumulating 67 years of memories on this street, the family has decided to sell their home at 1021 Yale St.

Joy J. Gee, who moved from the home last month, mentioned that her brother, Roy, owns the house and is preparing it for sale. She added that the home already has potential buyers.

Joy, who is a local artist, noted that she was not in the financial position to keep the home in her family.

"The family is selling the home and we couldn't afford to take it over, and we need to move on," she said.

But for Joy, moving on does not mean forgetting about her family's long history on Yale Street.

Because she moved into the 1021 Yale St. home when she was 1-year-old, her experiences at 1021 Yale St. date back to the earliest memories of her life.

Joy said that her family moved into the home in 1952 through the assistance of her great-uncle, W. Fong Yue.

"My great-uncle, Mr. Fong, he helped us get into that house, because we didn't have any money or anything," she said. "We're related to (Fong) by marriage, because his wife, Mrs. Fong, was a Wong (and) my mother, (Toy Fung Wong, is) a Wong."

Joy added that her great-uncle was a very notable man.

"Mr. (W.) Fong Yue was a community leader," she said. "He was a diplomatic ambassador to Taiwan."

Fong's former, Southside Park area house – known today as the Fong Mansion – is currently operated as the Inn & Spa at Parkside, at 2116 6th St.

Also of significant importance in Joy's family ancestry is her grandfather, Kee Gee, who she said was the first of her family to immigrate to the United States.

"I knew him for about five years and then he passed," she said. "He was born in (the 1800s)."

Prior to moving to their Yale Street home, the Gee family was residing in Broderick, a town that is now part of the city of West Sacramento.

In addition to Joy and Roy, the Gee family then consisted of their father, Feung Toon Gee, and their siblings, Joan and Joyce.

Feung Toon and Toy Fung, who were both immigrants from China, gained their American citizenship in 1965.

Joy's father came to the United States in about 1939, and was followed by her mother and brother in 1951.



Joy said that members of her family came to America under "paper sons" papers that they purchased in China under the surname, Hom. Her father was known as Norman Hom.

"Hom was our surname until there was a statute of limitations," she said. "Five years, you could go to a lawyer and have you legally, without repercussions, change your name back to your true surname.

Returning to her memories of her early life on Yale Street, Joy spoke fondly about her public schooling years in Sacramento, when she attended William Land School (now William Land Elementary School), Lin-

see FAMILY page 9

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Family

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coln Junior High School and Sacramento High School. She also received instruction in Chinese language and culture as a child at Chung Wah School during afternoon hours, after attending public school.

Joy specifically recalled the ethnic diversity within her elementary school. Her junior high school was also an ethnically diverse institution.

When she was about 10 years old, Joy worked her first job as a tomato picker and sorter in an agricultural field in Yolo County.

Among the people Joy recalled as her neighbors on Yale Street were Sam Pannell, who would later become a longtime Sacramento City Council member, and Maria Vasquez.

Joy also remembered a Japanese family with the surname, Honda.

"Lucille and Yasuo Honda, they were in the internment camps, but when they were out, they bought that house next door to us in that wonderful bungalow to the east of us (at 1027 Yale St.)," she said. "I grew up with Wayne and Marsha and Vicky Honda.

"Anyway, there was a slew of kids that grew up right down the street from me."

Joy added that the ethnic diversity of her street's residents also included two black families. The Herbert Smith family was one of those families.

"Mrs. Smith was (one of her) Girl Scout (leaders)," she said. "The other lady across the street, Mrs. Blanks, was my other Girl Scout leader."

Also among Joy's memories is the construction of the W-X Freeway.

"The freeway came in and knocked my cousin's house out," she said. "She grew up on a little street called Howell (Avenue). They had the best Halloween candy (at that house), but anyway."

Joy eventually graduated from Sacramento High School in 1968, and then headed to Sacramento State College – now California State University, Sacramento – where she earned a bachelor's degree in art 1973. Four years later, she earned a bachelor's degree in fine arts from Art Center College of Design.

With her education and experience in art, Joy built a notable career as an artist and an art instructor.

Before her recent move to midtown Sacramento, Joy spent about the past 15 years living in her childhood home on Yale Street, which now includes various historic homes, six town homes and a small, retail center. She resided in that home with her husband, David Conrad.

Joy told this publication that her former home and street have a history that dates back more than a century.

Research for this article shows that Yale Street dates back to the early 1910s.

While Yale Street is not listed as an existing street in the 1912 city directory, the 1913 directory lists six addresses on that street.

Two of the houses – at 2003 and 2005 Yale St. – are identified as vacant, while the street's original four houses are mentioned as the homes of grocer Alfred Schaden (2011), attorney Will J. Carraghar (2015), advertising agency owner John W. Morshead (2020) and Herman Stuckstede (2021), who managed A.P. Scheld & Co., a local dealer in wholesale and retail liquors.

The 1914 city directory lists 13 Yale Street houses, of which five were vacant.

Among the newly listed residents in that directory was the Rev. Henry C. Funk, pastor of the First English Lutheran Church, in Sacramento. He began living at 2005 Yale St. as early as January 1913.

Some early references to the street recognize its name as "Yale Court."

One such reference – a 1920 Elliott & Huston real estate advertisement published in the Oct. 2, 1920 edition of The Sacramento Bee – invites potential homebuyers to check out the "Yale Court bungalows: The best home buys in Sacramento."

Excerpts from that advertisement read: "One of the most reliable builders in Sacramento built these homes and stands behind them with a positive guarantee as to workman ship and material. The price of these homelike bungalows is $5,250.00 for 5 rooms and $5350.00 for 6 rooms, and is based on building costs one year ago. It would cost $500.00 more to duplicate them today."

Joy mentioned that as the day approaches when her family will no longer own a home on Yale Street for the first time in nearly seven decades, she is maintaining a positive outlook.

"I'm embracing the future and the present," she said. "It's been hard, but I think life is what you make of it. Considering the history and the background of what my people, my family and other generations (experienced), I feel that I'm very lucky, and there's more to come."

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‘Listening Chair’ is Longtime Balshor Family Treasure



By LANCE ARMSTRONG

A chair that is estimated as being about a century old sits in a small office inside Land Park’s Balshor Florist.

To most people, it appears as a basic, old, wooden chair of little value.

But those who know this chair the best tell a different story.

They recognize it as the “Listening Chair,” and speak of it as a special place to sit and talk about whatever is on their minds.

Marie Balshor and her late husband, Al, who founded the business in 1950, accumulated hundreds of hours in that small office, speaking to regular clientele and first-time visitors of their florist about non-florist related topics.

Individuals have sat in the old chair while sharing a wide range of personal details about their lives, and receiving free advice from Al and Marie, whose interest in their customers has extended well beyond selling flowers.

Since Al’s death in 2015, Marie has continued to spend time with customers as they sit in the chair, which has been located in the same spot in the florist’s small office at 2661 Riverside Blvd. since 1974.

It was in December of that year that Al’s mother, Grace (Secco) Balshor, died at the age of 92, and the chair made its way to the florist shop from Al’s childhood home at 315 U St.

During an interview with this publication last week, Marie, 91, spoke about the chair in a sort of revered manner.

“Many people have sat in that chair and told many stories, and we’ve listened to those stories,” she said. “And there’s something magical about that chair, because people that sit in that chair and have problems, they just open up about whatever is bothering them.”

She added that there have also been many occasions when people have sat in the chair and spoke about pleasant experiences and simple, everyday moments in their lives.

“The chair is available for anybody who wants to come in and just sit down,” Marie said. “There are many people who I just invite into the chair that I see there is a need, especially funeral people, if I see they’re up to it. I just give them words of wisdom from my perspective.”

A saying that Marie often repeats to those experiencing the loss of a loved one is “We are but a grain of sand. We’re just stepping through on a journey of life, and the good we do here counts for eternity.”

Rosies Unite in Support to Save Historic New Helvetia Housing

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

A group of nine women dressed in the attire of the iconic Rosie the Riveter character of World War II gathered on Aug. 18 at the historic, Land Park area New Helvetia public housing project to express their support of the preservation of those structures.

This event occurred a week ahead of the Sacramento City Council’s vote on the city’s proposed revitalization plan that could lead to the demolition of these decades-old Broadway structures that were built during World War II.

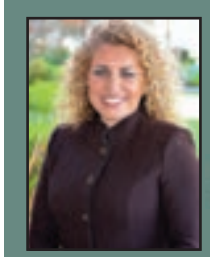
The selection of the “Rosie the Riveter” character for last week’s

see ROSIES page 11





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Rosies

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gathering was additionally fitting, considering that these buildings were initially used as defense housing during that war, before being converted back to their original intended purpose of serving as low-income housing.

The original Rosie the Riveter, Rosalind (Palmer) Walter, died last March at the age of 95. She worked for a year in a Connecticut aircraft plant, and her image served to represent the strong, capable women who took the place of many male workers in war industry jobs.

Also significant to the history of New Helvetia is its connection to Nathaniel Colley, the first black attorney to establish a private law practice in this city and the former legal counsel of the local chapter of the NAACP – the nation's oldest civil rights organization.

In the early 1950s, after becoming aware that certain, mostly black residents were being segregated in 16 units at New Helvetia, Colley filed a lawsuit against the city's housing authority that led to the end of that practice.

The historic, 360-unit New Helvetia complex along Broadway, between 6th and 9th streets, is the city's oldest public housing. They sit within the New Helvetia Historic District, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2014.

Several blocks from those buildings – modernly known as Alder Grove – is the 391-unit Marina Vista low-income, public housing project, which was built in the 1950s.

Both Alder Grove and Marina Vista are managed by the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency.

Of concern to the women who portrayed Rosie the Riveter last week was the City Council's then-upcoming vote on the West Broadway Specific Plan, which includes Alder Grove and the New Helvetia Historic District.

This proposal was designed to set policy for future development for the next 20 years, within a 279-acre area intended to improve connectivity with Land Park, the Sacramento River and the central part of the city. This area is generally bounded by Highway 50 and Broadway on the north; Muir Way and 5th Street on the east; 4th Avenue on the south; and the Sacramento River on the west.

Within the proposal are new city streets that would run through Alder Grove – the historic New Helvetia low-income housing site – and necessitate the demolition of structures on that property, as well as displace low-income residents.

A city document on the plan notes that at build-out, the area "will accommodate up to 4,900 housing units, approximately 389,000 (to) 429,000 square feet of commercial and/or other public and employment uses, and approximately 148,000 (to) 163,000 square feet of public or recreational building development." This plan also "incorporates a park and open space framework that includes improvement of the approximately 60-acre Miller Regional Park and Sacramento Marina and an additional 20 acres of parks and open space."

While posing in their Rosie attire, the nine women were photographed with the old New Helvetia buildings as a backdrop by three local photographers.

Amreet Sandhu, one of the organizers of the event, said that the gathering was established as a photography session to document and highlight the value of the historic buildings and their grounds.

"It's important for people to know that this is a historically and culturally important community that, I think, people fail to recognize the architectural importance of (these buildings) being in the national historic register," she said. "And this photo event was to showcase those elements.

"Our purpose was to work with current residents on highlighting the space, so that for people that haven't been there, they can see that there's lush lawns for people to walk on, there are walking paths throughout the buildings.

"There are already parks in the community, and tenants are working with organizers from dif-

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New Helvetia

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ferent parts of the community in one coalition to save New Helvetia to make sure that piece of Sacramento remains intact as it currently is."

Also attending the event was Les Light, a member of the organizing team of the Sacramento Tenants Union, which is self-described as a "tenant-led organization fighting for affordable, safe and fair housing options for all Sacramentans."

Light noted that the housing market would be impacted, if any public housing in the city is lost.

"If we see public housing being removed, that's going to affect the rates of our rents," he said. "That makes it tougher. We've got a housing crisis in Sacramento as it is. It's very concerning to us."

Following the event, two residents of the neighborhood's low-income housing shared their views on the city's proposed revitalization plan.

Marcheri Smith, a single mother of two children, said that she desires that the old New Helvetia buildings are saved and continue to serve their original intended purpose.

"For me, I just feel like the history behind what these were built for, the legacy that it's leaving, I don't feel like it's something that should be torn down and reconstructed for the benefit of people that are already happily wealthy or living the good life," she said.

"Just the whole idea of what this was built for, was for lower-class families that were trying to do the best they could to survive. So, to take something like this away from this particular population of people is just going to make the homeless rate even (higher)."

Smith stressed that there is a need for upgrades at Alder Grove, but that the buildings are valued by the tenants who live there.

"I think they should just stick with doing some modifications inside," she said. "A lot of the buildings, they don't have central air and heat. It would kind of be unfair to all of a sudden throw all these people out who haven't had central air and heat all this time.

"They'll rebuild it, put central air and heat in here and not even let them come back and enjoy it, because now they want it for the public and not for the housing community that it's supposed to be for."

Smith emphasized her desire for the historic New Helvetia structures to remain standing.





Environmental Lawsuit Filed to Protect Historic New Helvetia Public Housing

An association called Friends of New Helvetia Public Housing has filed a public-interest lawsuit against the City of Sacramento challenging its approval of the new West Broadway Specific Plan.

The Friends claim that the City's approval of the Plan violated state law: the California Environmental Quality Act. CEQA safeguards California's unique 'built' environment — including the National Register Historic Landmark District known as New Helvetia that lies within the Specific Plan's boundaries — just as it protects natural environmental resources such as clean air and water and endangered flora and fauna.

The New Helvetia public housing project of 360 units was a first in Sacramento and became an early national model of racially-integrated public housing. It is the legacy of Nathaniel Sextus Colley who was the first Black attorney in private practice in the city. Colley became a national civil rights leader in the mid-20th century via successful court battles against housing segregation, beginning at New Helvetia.

In a press release announcing the lawsuit, Friends of New Helvetia Public Housing state that "despite the ongoing and historic importance of New Helvetia, the Specific Plan anticipates and facilitates wholesale demolition. The city discounted the protests of racial justice advocates including the Nathaniel S. Colley, Sr., Civil Rights Coalition, tenants, and preservation advocates who urged the city to adopt a viable Plan that rehabilitates much of New Helvetia housing along with compatible new development."

The city assured the public and New Helvetia tenants that rehabilitation of New Helvetia could be considered in the future. Housing advocates worry that the approved plan now incorporates an incompatible new street grid and design that call for demolition. Instead, the advocates state that to comply with state law and avoid significant impacts, the plan should anticipate and facilitate feasible rehabilitation instead of demolition, keeping the current New Helvetia street grid, and allow future consideration of demolition only if proven necessary. The lawsuit claims therefore "the sequence of planning for New Helvetia must be reversed to comply with CEQA."

Berry Accius, CEO of Voice of Youth (VOY) stated in support of the lawsuit that "Demolition of these historic buildings would erase Sacramento's history of fighting segregation right here at New Helvetia — this is equivalent to holy ground for desegregation. We stand with New Helvetia residents so that this important community will not be destroyed."

Herbert Yee Receives National Recognition for Volunteer Service

By LANCE ARMSTRONG

Dr. Herbert Yee, a retired Sacramento dentist, on July 25 received the President's Volunteer Service Award.

This award, which was founded by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation in 2003, is a civil award bestowed by the president of the United States. It recognizes individuals whose service has made a positive impact on communities throughout the nation, and those who inspire others to take action.

Yee, 95, was presented the award during a ceremony held before a small, socially distanced group of mostly members of his family. The event was held in the backyard of his South Land Park home.

David Yee, who presented the award, described his grandfather as a "fitting recipient of this prestigious award."

While standing the currently recommended social distance of 6 feet from Herbert, David further praised his grandfather.

"We are here to celebrate an American icon, Dr. Herbert Yee, also known as Grandpa, for his exemplary service to the community," he said.

After completing a short speech about Herbert, David presented him with the President's Volunteer Service Award certificate of achievement and a letter signed by President Donald Trump. He also received a gold medallion as part of this recognition.

The gold medal represents the highest level of achievement of this award. The award also includes silver and bronze medal recipients.

David later told this paper that Herbert earned this recognition due to his strong dedication to serving and inspiring others.

"He has volunteered his service and time in endeavors, not only related to his profession but also in other disciplines," he said. "As the president of the International College of Dentists, he advanced education and established relations with China and Viet-

see YEE page 13



Yee

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nam during a difficult political climate.

"He has also served on boards of the Sacramento County American Cancer Society and the California State Railroad Museum, and as district governor of the Lions Club (District 4 C5)."

His leadership positions also included serving as president of the California State Board of Dental Examiners.

David noted that his grandfather has been an inspiration in his own life.

"Ever since I was a kid, I wanted to be like Grandpa and make him proud," he said. "During his life, I can only imagine the barriers that he had to overcome, paving the way for subsequent generations."

Herbert, who was born near Sing Tong Village in Toishan, China, immigrated to the United States through Angel Island at the age of 6 in 1931.

At the age of 20, Herbert enlisted in the U.S. Army at the Presidio of Monterey, and he would later become a founding member of Gung Ho American Legion Post No. 696 in Sacramento. He currently serves as the commander of that post.

A 1948 graduate of Stanford University's College of Physicians and Surgeons as a dental surgeon, Herbert worked in the dental profession for more than a half-century.

As a humanitarian and philanthropist, in 1981, Herbert became the first overseas Chinese to have a school built in China near his village. He also had a cultural center and library constructed in the same area in 2007.

Herbert, who is a descendant of California Gold Rush pioneers, additionally helped fund the restoration of his great-grandfather's herb store, which was built in Fiddletown in 1851.

In response to his then new role with the International College of Dentists, in 1984, Herbert received praise from President Ronald Reagan.

"This honor reflects your commitment to your profession and to the organization paying tribute to you," Reagan wrote. "By your service as a dentist and as a member of your community, you have made outstanding contributions. In every area where you work, whether as a member of your profession or as a concerned citizen, your dedication is greatly respected."

Herbert was previously no stranger to Reagan, as his 54 years as a dentist includes his time as the official dentist for the staff of two governors – Reagan and Pat Brown.

He additionally served as president of the Sacramento Chinese Benevolent Association, the Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Association, and the Yee Fung Toy family association.

Herbert's longtime commitment to service also includes being inducted into the California School Board Foundation Hall of Fame and being named Humanitarian of the Year by the California Dental Association.

His notable positions also include his service as counselor of the American Dental Association's Council on Dental Education.

Herbert is also awaiting another award: the Congressional Gold Medal for Chinese American World War II veterans. But due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, that award has been delayed until further notice.

In the meantime, Herbert received his latest award, with the accompanying letter signed by Trump.

"Each generation of hardworking and kindhearted volunteers helps to write a new chapter of American greatness, and our nation is proud for your commitment to this honorable tradition," Trump wrote.

Asked what he thought of receiving his latest recognition, Herbert responded with humility.

"I don't think I deserve it, but I'll accept," he said.

The award, David noted, "kind of recognizes (the) life's work" of Herbert, who was married to his wife, Inez, for more than 70 years, has four children, nine grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

David added that his grandfather is a role model to him.

"I was very happy to see grandpa happy (during the July 25 ceremony)," he said. "I try to honor his legacy and try to walk in his footsteps, but it's hard to walk in footsteps of a giant."

In summarizing his grandfather's many accomplishments, David said, "His life exemplifies the American dream."

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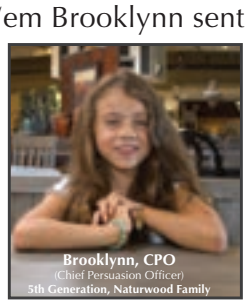
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