

# Millbrae Life & Times

M I L L B R A E   H I S T O R I C A L   S O C I E T Y   N E W S L E T T E R

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## HISTORICAL SPOTLIGHT: GROWING UP IN MILLBRAE - "THEN AND NOW" BY TOM DAWDY



I was driving home passing through Downtown Millbrae the other day, and as I yielded to the Sheriff's car at the stop sign on Broadway & Taylor Boulevard I reminisced (like I always do) about growing up on that corner in the 1950's. Most residents in Millbrae know very few of our Sheriff's Deputies that patrol our streets keeping Millbrae a safe place to live. The Deputies do a great job in Millbrae, but I'm not going to lie - I do miss knowing the names of just about every officer mostly because they all once lived and raised their families in our little town of Millbrae.

Quite a few of my friends that I grew up with in Millbrae have since moved away. I keep in touch with most of them, and we sometimes talk about Millbrae then and Millbrae now. Some ask me "What is new in Millbrae?," and I always fill them in. Others have very negative comments, telling me "Millbrae has changed" and other unpleasant things about our town. Yes, it is true. Millbrae has changed just as the world around us has changed. We no longer live like the *Donna Reed* or *Father Knows Best* families.

Of course, this is common with almost all of us thinking about the "good old days" in the hometowns that we grew up in. It is also sometimes an overused theme for television shows and movies that people return to their hometowns to find that everything

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT JOHN MUNIZ

Last year, on November 14th, the **Millbrae City Council** implemented an official land acknowledgement statement to be read before every formal meeting honoring and acknowledging the **Ramaytush Ohlone** people, the indigenous inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula.

The Millbrae Historical Society's responsibility is to provide continu-

ing and contemporary leadership for broad-based community understanding and appreciation of historical values, which include social, cultural, technological, and educational interests that relate to future community improvements. Before every Millbrae Historical Society Board meeting, the President will read the Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgement, as follows:



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## P R E S I D E N T ' S   R E P O R T

( C O N T I N U E D   F R O M   P A G E   1 )

"The Millbrae City Council acknowledges that we occupy the unceded ancestral, traditional, and contemporary homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone peoples, who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula. We wish to pay our respects to the ancestors and relatives of the Ramaytush Community and to affirm their sovereign rights as First Peoples. We recognize that the Ramaytush Ohlone have lived in harmony with nature for millennia, and that to achieve a truly ecologically sustainable future for Millbrae, we must embrace Indigenous traditional ecological knowledge in how we care for the city's lands, waters, and all its people. We will continue to uplift and foster a meaningful relationship with the Ramaytush Ohlone community, and we encourage all to visit [www.ramaytush.org](http://www.ramaytush.org) to learn more about the Ramaytush Ohlone people."

In keeping with the Millbrae Historical Society's acknowledgement of the historical indigenous peoples of the San Mateo Peninsula, the Society embarked on a project to help commemorate the 250th anniversary of the first European sighting of **San Francisco Bay** by the **Gaspar de Portolà** Expedition in 1769. In association with the **San Mateo County**

**Historical Association**, the Millbrae Historical Society celebrated the creation of the **Ohlone-Portolà Heritage Trail**. The Society funded two interpretive panels which were placed along the Heritage Trail at the Portolà campsite monument at the top of Hillcrest Boulevard.

Please take an opportunity to visit the Millbrae Historical Society website at [www.millbraehs.org](http://www.millbraehs.org). I encourage students who want information about the history of their community to check it out. Check out the dropdown tab labeled *About Us*, which contains Ohlone-Portolà interpretive panels, Millbrae history videos, and stories about Millbrae. Also, of great interest is the information under the *Millbrae Neighborhoods* tab, where you can find and explore your own neighborhood.

Thank you,

**John Muniz**

Millbrae Historical Society President

2009 – Present

"The Past is our Key to the Future"

# Step Out to Fight Human Trafficking!

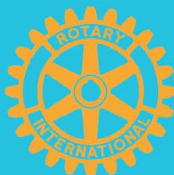
Join the walk to raise awareness

**April 23, 5:00 p.m.**

**Louis A. Turpen Aviation Museum  
SFO International Airport Terminal A**

Organized by:  
Rotary Club of San Francisco International Airport  
Rotary Club of Belmont & Redwood Shores  
Rotary Club of Millbrae

**Proceeds support  
Justice At Last,  
Love Never Fails,  
and Ruby's Place**



Be a Sponsor, Walk, or Donate!  
Use the QR Code or Link to Register  
<https://forms.gle/W7rsBkEPnyTFGN8S9>



## VICE-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

PAUL LARSON

Beautiful and bright spring wishes to all our MHS trustees, members and friends!

Many historical events and rites of passage have taken place during the spring months. According to a passage in **1-800-Flowers**, before spring was actually called "spring," it was referred to as "Lent" in Old English. For those who celebrate Easter, you may already be familiar with this term, as it refers to the period leading up to **Easter Sunday**. During the 14th century, the period known as Lent started to be called "springing time," since this was when plants, shrubs, trees, and other greenery started springing back up from the ground. A century later, this term was shortened to "spring time," and a century after that it was shortened, you guessed it, to simply "spring."

Spring's astronomical meaning: The period known as spring symbolizes the time between the spring equinox and the summer solstice (the time when the **North Pole** faces the sun at its greatest angle). A quick science lesson: Each year there are two equinoxes, days when day and night are practically equal. What we know as the spring, or **vernal equinox** usually occurs sometime around March 21 for those in the northern hemisphere. For those in the southern hemisphere, the spring equinox happens around Sept. 21. Thus, our spring starts on the first day that day and night appear for almost the same amount of time, and ends when the North Pole tips toward the sun to the greatest degree possible.

Although the start of spring can make things a little difficult on our



health (spring allergies, anyone?), it surely is one of the greatest times of the year. The sun is shining, flowers are blooming, temperatures are rising... it's just what we need!

I hope you'll have a burst of spring-time joy, health and happiness to enjoy at this time of the year.

All my well wishes to you, your family and friends, from **MHS 1st VP Paul Larson**.

CITY OF MILLBRAE

## EARTH & ARBOR DAY CELEBRATION

APRIL 27, 2024

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

### Location:

Spur Trail on Millbrae Avenue  
by the Skate Park and Fitness Court

### ACTIVITIES

- 9:00 AM Tree Planting
- 10:00 AM Litter Removal and Clean Up of Spur Trail and surrounding areas
- 11:30 AM Lunch is Provided to Participants

Supplies will be provided for participants.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND  
WITH QUESTIONS PLEASE CALL,  
(650) 259-2444

To Register Scan:



Please patronize our Millbrae Historical Society Lifetime Business Members:



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9:30 to 5:00 PM  
Monday - Saturday  
Closed Sundays

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GROWING UP IN MILLBRAE - "THEN AND NOW"  
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Then.....Now



## Millbrae in the 1950's vs. 2020's

has changed. Sometimes even taking them on a journey to the **Twilight Zone** where strange things occur in their old hometown. This, however, is not the case in my hometown of Millbrae. There are a lot more changes nowadays for kids growing up here than there were for me in the 1950's. One of the most notable changes is shopping in downtown. As a kid, downtown Broadway was lined with retail stores from Victoria Avenue to Taylor Boulevard. You could fulfill almost all of your family's needs without leaving town. There were hobby shops, clothing stores, variety stores, grocery stores, shoe stores, deli's, and soda fountains - almost anything you wanted! Today shopping is almost exclusively done at supermarkets, big box stores, and online. I must admit, this is the way we all shop now.

Growing up here in the 1950's & 60's, Millbrae was a very safe town with very little crime. I still feel very safe here today and crime is still fairly rare. I recently went through some old copies of the **Millbrae Sun** reviewing crime stories of the 1950's. There were stories every month of armed robberies and shootings here in town, many occurring at the **El Rancho Inn**. There were multiple kidnappings by armed robbers and of course the famous police shootouts during a robbery. Fighting during that time seemed to be accepted. There was a big hill behind **Taylor School** that was the place to meet for a fight after school. Another designated fight spot was the parking lot under **Kings Bowl**. There was also a "boxing ring" just off **Sawyer Camp Road** (then known as "**Old Lake Road**") that was reserved for high school students. Almost every family sitcom on TV had kids with black eyes, because this was a rite of passage during the time.

Both of Millbrae's drive-ins had weekly fights or riots. One thing that freaked me out when I was very young were reports of teens playing "Russian Roulette" at **Smith's Drive-In**. Some things you did not want to do in Millbrae were to shoplift or smoke pot. Even stealing a candy bar from a local store would get you in big trouble and even a trip to **Hillcrest Juvenile Center**.

Most crimes in Millbrae today tend to be committed by out-of-town criminals. Stealing catalytic converters, taking valuables from unlocked cars, and retail theft plague our town at times. Nowadays we also have to be aware of cyber criminals. Millbrae is ahead of its time with license plate readers throughout our City.

I had a very good experience attending Millbrae schools. Our family grew up in **Bayside Manor**, and we took the school bus to **Chadbourn School**. Like most kids, we always enjoyed the "Sloppy Joes" in the school cafeteria. At **Mills High School**, we had an open campus. We could go anywhere for lunch, and if you smoked you could go across the street at recess to be cool and have a cigarette. One strict rule was the girls had to wear dresses or skirts and could not wear pants. All male teachers were required to wear coats and ties. Longtime Mills teacher and principal **Frank Seebode** told me that he was written up once for leaving his classroom without his jacket on!

Growing up in Millbrae now is a lot different than growing up here 60 years ago. Millbrae is still a great town to raise families, but both parents now need to work to afford to live here. I will leave you one thing to think about: "In 50 years, what will Millbrae be historically remembered for from the 2020's?"

## CURATOR'S REPORT

DOROTHY SEMKE

Welcome to the year 2024 in Millbrae! Our lovely town has grown so much over the years. We hope that you will take the time to visit the Museum, as new items are always being added. We recently received from the late **Bernese Baxter** estate two books published soon after the **1906 earthquake** about the Great Disaster with beautiful photography belonging to her grandfather. The family also donated a series of 15 paperback journals

about the **Civil War**. These can be found on a shelf in the dining room. Thank you to the family for their thoughtfulness.

This has been a hard winter. Rain has kept us from opening up many days. If it doesn't rain, we will be open. Hope to see you soon!

Stay well,  
**Dorothy Semke**  
Curator



## CITY OF MILLBRAE SOCIAL EQUITY PLAN PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Who: Environmental / Justice Solutions and the Millbrae Community Social Equity Committee

What: The first public workshop in the City of Millbrae's social equity planning process

When: April 20, 2024 from 4:00 - 6:30 PM

Where: Millbrae Recreation Center, 477 Lincoln Circle

Why: Learn about the Community Committee's vision for social equity in Millbrae and join your neighbors and community members to map your community's strengths and vulnerabilities.

Free to all Millbrae residents, students, workers, and business owners

Free childcare

Free food

Simultaneous Interpretation (Spanish and Cantonese)



The City of Millbrae has launched request management software **Millbrae Works** powered by SeeClickFix. The application is available for all residents to download on any Apple or Android device. The **Millbrae Works** app allows Millbrae residents who identify community repair or service request needs to submit photos, location information, and details directly to City of Millbrae administrative staff members.

WE'RE ON THE WEB AT  
WWW.MILLBRAEHS.ORG



**MILLBRAE  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

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Millbrae, CA 94030

Phone: 650-692-5786

**MHS OFFICERS – 2024-25**

**John Muniz, President**

**Paul Larson, 1st Vice-President**

**Joe Teresi, 2nd Vice-President**

**Gaetane Andrews, Secretary**

**Vern Bruce, Treasurer**

**Mary Vella Treseler, Parliamentarian**

**Dorothy Semke, Curator**

**Tom Dawdy, Historian & Carriage House Curator**

**Ray Gier, Museum Facilitator**

**Joe Teresi, Newsletter Editor**

**C A L E N D A R   O F   E V E N T S**

**Saturday, April 20: City of Millbrae Social Equity Plan Public Workshop**

- 4:00 - 6:30 pm; Millbrae Recreation Center
- Join your neighbors and community members to map Millbrae's strengths and community needs
- [RSVP](#) requested

**Tuesday, April 23: Human Trafficking Awareness Walk**

- 5:00 - 7:30 pm; Aviation Museum at SFO International Terminal
- Help bring awareness to human trafficking and support organizations that provide services to survivors
- [RSVP](#) requested; contact Joe Teresi at (650) 455-4887

**Saturday, April 27: City of Millbrae Earth and Arbor Day**

- 9:00 am - 12:00 noon; Spur Trail on Millbrae Avenue by the Skate Park and Fitness Court
- Planting of trees on Spur Trail along Millbrae Avenue and a clean-up of Spur Trail and surrounding areas
- 11:30 am lunch will be provided to participants; [RSVP](#) requested

**Fourth Wednesdays of the Month:** Millbrae Historical Society Board Meetings, 7:00 pm,  
Millbrae Museum, 420 Poplar Avenue. MHS members and guests are welcome to attend!  
(Please note that Board meetings are being held online via Zoom until further notice)