

# Rotary Club of Santa Rosa West

## Bulletin for November 21, 2005 "Stayin' Alive": Preservation of Petaluma Adobe

By Anne Abrams

### Preliminaries



Prez **Chris Parr**, donning a iridescent blue wig, called the meeting to order.

#### Coming Up

11/28 - 40 Years at Los Robles  
- Bill Fisher and Others  
Reminisce

12/5 - Steroid use and the pain  
of losing a son - Ray & Denise  
Garibaldi

Pledge: **John Palmer** did the honors. The flag WAS on the left.

Rotary Moment: **Terry Galazzo** reminded us to keep a smile on our faces as we gear up for the holiday season rush and also to "remember to zip up".

Thanks to **Tarina Hall** and crew for set up. Thanks **Jim Valinoti** for photographs and **Anne Abrams** for the Adobe photos.

#### ENTERTAINMENT:

At the foundation dinner several SRW Rotarians lip-synched and danced to "Stayin' Alive". We were treated to a repeat performance but without the assistance of alcoholic beverages to keep things lively. Still it was a very fun way to start a meeting. Our group included the lively **Janet Coddling** and **President Chris Parr-Feldman**, with **David Darling**, **Brian Fykes**, **Barbara Larson**, and **John Meislahn**.

#### Announcements and Such:

**Nominating Committee:** **Chuck Stark** announced a meeting of past presidents as nominating committee. He needs input from all members to recommend and express interest in being officers in two years or director next year. Pleas let him know if you are interested in one of these positions.



**Crab Feed:** **David McDonald** reminded us of the Crab Feed on January 28, '06. That is the last Saturday night in January. **Rich Pratt** will be in charge of ticket sales for the event. Tickets are \$60 each and \$1,000 for a table of 10. We accept cash or credit cards. Reserve your table or tickets now.



**John Meislahn:** Our Christmas party is on Dec 4 at the home of Past President, **Jim Hinton**. **Louie Capuano** will be making the gumbo and there will be an open bar. A list was passed around to sign up if you plan to attend or let **John Meislahn** know. Please bring your favorite food to share and a

bottle of a wine you would be proud to serve at your own table for your favorite guests.

**Crab Feed Live Auction:** Ed Burr needs items for the live auction such as special parties, flyer miles or vacation spots. **Susan Nowacki** announced she would donate a Gourmet Dinner for Ten. (Thanks, Susan!) **Tarina Hall** volunteered to donate a "Cinco De Mayo/Treasure Hunt". (Thanks, Tarina!) **Jim Valinoti** will underwrite the cost of a Gourmet Personal Chef's dinner for 8! (Thanks Jim!) **Bill Dodson** vouches for the great chef's talents. **Terry Galazzo** read a thank you from Jack Smith Glass for the dinner she provided last year. The thank you included a promise to bid on the item again next year, and so **Terry** agreed to another dinner for the Live Auction. (Thanks, Terry!) Everyone please let **Ed Burr** know what you plan to donate as soon as possible.

**Silent Auction:** Next week bring your wine for the Silent Auction. **Tarina Hall** and **Bryan Fykes** want to begin forming packages for the silent auction. So bring something from your wine cellar.

**Dictionaries:** **Chris Young** is expecting the dictionaries to arrive in just a few days. He hopes they can use **Mike Moore's** Warehouse again to receive the shipment and do the Rotary labeling of the books in preparation for distribution to local schools.

**Rotary Foundation:** Chair **Harry Rubins:** Forty Rotary members have donated \$14,000 to the foundation so far this year. Harry is hoping for 100% participation this year. As an incentive there will be 10 matching donations available in December. All donations are tax deductible.

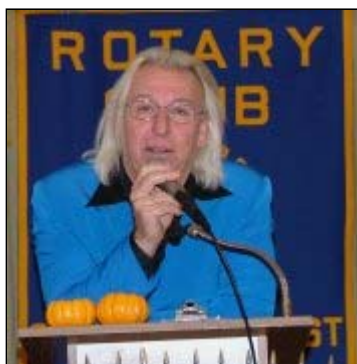


**Exchange Student Update:** Ed Burr announced that Print, our student received nearly all A's on her first report at Windsor High School. These are great marks! We still are looking for a placement for her for January, which is coming up soon! Please ask your friends and acquaintances.

And speaking of Exchange students; our exchange student to Thailand, **Hannah Manfredi** has unexpectedly returned from

Thailand. She will be coming to our club to give us a PowerPoint slide program on her stay there and describe for us what it was like to be suddenly immersed into a totally different culture. Watch for this program! I have had a sneak preview of it and I know you will find it as interesting as her chronicles!

## Craft Talk



**David Darling** kept us all awake with the story of his roots beginning with his parents who were from Kansas (mother) and Alameda (father). His parents met when they were both in the Armed Services during the Korean conflict. His father was a Marine Corp Pilot and his mother a Dental Tech.

He was born in 1950 and grew up in Oakland. He moved to Sonoma County and attended Montgomery HS. His grades quickly went from A's to half A's and had several dealings with Bob Zeni as a result. He joined the Navy at age 17 in 1967 only to find himself in the Marines instead. He did a tour in Viet Nam.

After military service he worked in Construction for PGE for many years. He retired last year, grew his hair out, and went into Real Estate. He is married to wife, Cindy, and has two kids ages 27 and 28. His daughter is marrying on April 2 and his son has trained as a chef at SF Culinary Arts School.

## Recognition

**Ron Malinotti** has a new job as manager of the Coddling and College Branch offices. That's Exchange Bank I believe. He also bagged a couple elk on a recent hunting trip. He donated \$100 to the Foundation. Thanks, Ron!

**Mike Moore** is back from a quick trip to Baltimore to review the "master plan" and "to discuss what went wrong". The power Point Presentation was a snoozer and then, while dropping someone off at the Rail yard near downtown and John Hopkins Medical facility, his driver swerved to squash a giant rat the size of a Chihuahua (which is a dog believed to antedate the Aztec civilization). As **Mike** put it "The highlight of the trip, a smashed rat." Thanks, **Mike** for sharing. He will donate \$100 to the Foundation, another "**Harry match**."



**Ken Kushnir** was visited in Mexico by **Scott Bartley**. Apparently he made Scott sleep in the garage after drinking too much with a buddy, Hummmm. I suspect more to the story....any way **Ken** was quite reluctant to come forth with nary a smile, and nearly was fined twice but got away with a "\$140 **Harry match**." **Ken Kushnir** called for an audit when Janet said he is not yet paid in full. **Chris** agreed to match **Ken's** Foundation donation of \$100. (**Harry**, are you keeping track of all this action?) (***We haven't seen recognition/fundraising like this since the days of Joe Dorfman RIP" Ed- J )***)

**Arnie Carston**: He's been spending a lot of time in SF but also spent time under Tuscan suns in Malta, Sicily, and Rome. Another \$140 to the "**Harry Match**" fund.

## Raffle:

\$475.00 AND 16 MARBLES. The ticket drawn was **Gary Lucas's** ticket but alas the black marble escaped him. **John Withers** went home with the Gold Medal winning bottle of white.

## Program: "Stayin' Alive": Preservation of Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park with Sarah Skinner, Director and Guide



**Sarah Skinner** is a guide at Old Adobe State Historic Park. Sarah "gives tours and runs the programs". She told a lot about the history of the site and some of the events that they hold yearly at the park. She is a delightful speaker and seems to enjoy her work extremely from the enthusiasm and knowledge that she displays. She encourages everyone to come out and visit the park. The club had some great

questions for her like about the 10ft in the ground foundation. Some of the information she shared with us included a lovely brochure which she wrote. The park is located at 3325 Adobe Road, Petaluma, Ca. Call 762-4871 for more information.

Petaluma Adobe State Historic Park is one of the oldest preserved buildings in Northern California, which was by all accounts the largest and richest privately owned Mexican estate north of San Francisco Bay, and one of the most important in Alta California. Exact boundaries of the rancho were of great debate especially after U.S. take-over of California in 1846.

The grantee was 27-year-old Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, who was then commandant of the presidio at San Francisco. The grant was intended to reward and further encourage Vallejo's leadership in settling the area north of San Francisco Bay. In fact, the governor also made Vallejo the "military commandant and director of colonization for the northern frontier," and instructed him to move his military headquarters to Sonoma. In a confidential letter to Vallejo at this time, Governor Figueroa made it clear that increased Mexican activity on the northern frontier was necessary to meet the threat of Russian settlement in those fertile valleys that lay just north of San Francisco Bay and just inland from the Russian establishment at Bodega Bay and Fort Ross. By early 1846, he held title to some 175,000 acres including the site of the present-day cities of Vallejo and Benicia, both of which he helped to found.



Soon after receiving the original grant in 1834, Vallejo started building houses, corrals, and other needed improvements. A commanding site on a knoll, overlooking Petaluma Valley was chosen for the rancho's main building. Construction of the massive adobe began in April 1836 and continued steadily over the years, but was still not complete in 1846 when California's Mexican era abruptly ended. All of the original lumber used in the building was redwood, most of it hand-hewn, although some was processed by Stephen Smith's sawmill at Bodega Bay - the first steam powered sawmill on the Pacific Coast. Only part of the walls were ever plastered and whitewashed, but the wide, covered verandahs that completely encircled the house gave the adobe walls adequate protection from the weather. The original thatched roof was replaced in the early 1840s when an American immigrant by the name of George Yount was commissioned to provide hand split shingles and put a new, all-wood roof on the adobe building. As a reward for this and other accomplishments, Vallejo gave Yount a land grant of some 12,000 acres in the Napa Valley where Yountville stands today.

Since the huge adobe building was constructed over a period of years in a time when the products of the industrial revolution were beginning to arrive in California, machine-cut nails, cast-iron hinges, and glass have been found side by side with wooden pegs, hand-forged hardware, and rawhide. During the 1830s and 1840s, the adobe was nearly twice as large as it is today. The portion of the building that remains standing today was matched by another wing so that the whole complex formed a quadrangle around a central courtyard. Historical photographs, archeological investigations, and various historical descriptions of the old building all indicate that the missing wing of the building contained many rooms and was roughly equivalent in size to the portion of the building that remains today.

The dining and living rooms have been restored to what is representative of how they looked in the 1830's .It is estimated that about 85% of the present walls and 20% of the woodwork is original. The walls were fully 2 feet thick providing excellent insulation, from the summer heat.



The main economic activity of the rancho revolved around the hide and tallow trade. The mild climate and luxuriant grasslands of California made cattle raising extraordinarily easy and profitable. As a result, cattle hides became so common an item of exchange that they were often referred to as "California bank notes." Rancheros throughout California used the tallow - rendered from the fat of the slaughtered cattle and hides to trade with the English, American, and other foreign merchants whose ships cruised the coast of California. In return, the rancheros obtained many kinds of manufactured goods and other commodities from the U.S.A., Europe, the Orient, and other parts of the world.



But Rancho Petaluma was far more than just a cattle ranch. Hundreds of Indian laborers lived on the ranch and worked at the

trades they had learned at Sonoma Mission. They tended large herds of horses, sheep, and cattle. Upwards of 3,000 sheep were shorn each year. They also planted and cared for great crops of wheat, barley, and corn, which they harvested and stored in the adobe both for local use and for trade purposes. Other crops such as beans, peas, lentils, and other vegetables were grown in abundance for daily use on the rancho. In addition to storage space, the great adobe housed a variety of processing and manufacturing operations. Carpeting, blankets, and other materials were woven, clothing was made, and blacksmiths turned out horseshoes, spurs, hand-made nails, tools and other metal items. Nearby, a tannery produced finished leather for use in making saddles, bridles, and other leather goods.

The so-called "Bear Flag Revolt" brought a sudden end to the rancho's great period of prosperity under General Vallejo. In June 1846, Vallejo himself was captured by the Bear Floggers and held prisoner for several weeks at Sutter's Fort. Meanwhile, the rancho was stripped of its horses, cattle, and other provisions by John C. Fremont who was then in the north Bay Area outfitting his "California Battalion" for the campaign against Jose Castro, Andreas and Pio Pico, and other native Californians who had decided to resist U.S. takeover of California. Along with horses, cattle, and supplies, the rancho also lost much of its labor force as many of the Indians ran away at this time and never returned.

Ranching activities were resumed once the political situation settled down somewhat. Under U.S. rule, however, it was not possible to operate the great rancho in the old way. In September 1850, Vallejo leased it out to a group of French colonists, and in subsequent years other arrangements were made in an effort to salvage some part of the rancho investment. In 1857, faced with an ever increasing number of "squatters," and plagued by other legal and financial problems, Vallejo decided to sell the adobe and some of the land around it.

During the 1860s, serious consideration was given to using the site as a new campus for the fledgling University of California. After a survey and much discussion, however, another site was chosen. Vallejo subsequently sold off his holdings in the area for ranch purposes. Thereafter, in the hands of various owners, the big adobe began to fall into disrepair and semi-abandonment. In the spring of 1880, when Vallejo was 72 years old and living in comfortable but much reduced circumstances, he decided to travel over the hills from Sonoma and take a look at the Petaluma Adobe. Shortly afterward, he described his trip in a letter one of his sons. "I ordered a picture taken of what was my old house, which I had not visited for some thirty years and, although almost in ruins, it nevertheless doesn't fail to show what it was in those days. It is a sad memory, but one bows to that which says that 'all is perishable in this world.' I compare that old relic with myself and the comparison is an exact one; ruins and dilapidation. What a difference between then and now. Then youth strength, and riches; now age, weakness, and poverty."

## Efforts to Save this Historic Site

In 1910 the Petaluma Adobe was purchased by the Petaluma Chapter of the Native Sons of the Golden West who managed to preserve the remaining half of the building until 1951. In that year the people of California took title to the building. Shortly afterward, a great windstorm carried away the roof and left the adobe walls exposed to the weather. Responding to this emergency situation, park system employees quickly devised temporary protective measures to keep the adobe walls from melting, and then early in 1952 replaced the roof, and began an ambitious, long-range program of restoration and historical interpretation.

Today the building is registered national history landmark, and is listed as state historical Landmark number 18. Many of the rooms have been furnished with authentic, rancho period furniture and equipment. Exhibits in the visitor center make it possible to visualize some of the early-day ranch activities that once took place here. The building is open to the public almost every day of the year. Arrangements for guided tours, for school and other groups should be made by contacting the park staff at least two weeks in advance of your proposed arrival date.

Your Bulletin Reporter:

**Anne Abrams**



Your Bulletin Editor:

**Jim Valinoti**



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