

Museum Musings

GRIDLEY MUSEUM

MANY WATCH BIG PARADE AT COUNTY FAIR

Gridley—Thousands of spectators lined the sidewalks last night to watch the opening parade of horses, floats and features at the Butte County Fair, which began Thursday morning.

Outstanding attraction of the parade was the number of horses which were described as Butte's finest. The event was directed by the Gridley Lions Club with M. J. Hafferty as Marshal.

THE MAIN TENT IN CITY PARK WAS FILLED with prize exhibits of products grown in Butte and bnd booths displayed the varied agricultural crops.

A booth that drew many approving comments from the crown was "Grindstone Farm" by Joe McGie, principal of Wilson elementary school in Gridley.

In particular, "Daisy," a brown hen in a canary cage .was the cause for interest by small fry as well as their parents.

Dairy Cattle, turkeys, chickens were on exhibit in another part of the fair.

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Butte County Fair Parade



Please visit the Museum to see the temporary exhibit on the Butte County Fair

Museum hours are Tuesday thru Friday, 11 to 3 PM

Summer Memories by Tom Sanford

Our conversation yesterday triggered lots of memories of activities that occupied us growing up in Gridley. It was a different time. No cell phones, no computers and certainly no AI. As a very young person my parents had no reservations about sending us off up the Southern Pacific line knowing that we would be undoubtedly interfacing with "hobos." No responsible parent would allow that today. We fished and caught crawdads and cooked them up with the hobos. I never felt threatened. In more recent years I have come to appreciate that these fellows were undoubtedly service veterans of World War II and Korea who simply couldn't cope with the general society after what they had experienced during the wars. My belief is that they were suffering from what we now commonly refer to as PTSD. There were no drugs in use that I ever saw.

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bike. Bill Huffman and I used to ride out to his parents' ranch on West Liberty with our shotguns over the handle bars. (I started picking prunes for Orvil Barrow when I was 9 to be able to buy my first shotgun. I still own that gun which I bought from Bremer's Hardware) I dare say that if the police saw that today they would go nuts. When I was in high school half of the pickups parked at the school had guns on a gun rack in the back window. There were rumors of locals duck hunting after the legal hours but we won't go into that as the statute of limitations may not have run on that.

Once I got my driver's license one of our great summer pastimes was to go to the Chico Teen Center at the Silver Dollar Fair Grounds to dance to live music on Saturday nights. I remember one night I was driving home with Bill Huffman and Augie Boeger and I was driving my grandmother's 1954 Ford. We were coming down the old Highway 99E through Durham and Nelson and when I came to the stop sign in Richvale a Butte County Sheriff's deputy came up behind us and turned on his red lights. After I pulled over the officer approached my driver's window with his pistol pulled and a flashlight on us. Once the officer took a good look at the three of us he smiled and announced that my grandmother's Ford matched the description of a getaway car in a bank robbery. We laughed about that event for years and teased my grandmother about her secret bank robber activities.

Lots of people in the Gridley-Biggs area learned to water ski behind the Hazelbush Dam east of Biggs on the Feather River. My parents said that we could not get a boat until all three of the boys were strong swimmers. I was 10 years younger than Roger and 6 years younger than Ron. Needless to say my brothers wasted no time in making sure that the fat little brother could swim. I learned to ski at Hazelbusch in 1953, when I was 8, behind a plywood boat powered by a giant 15 horsepower engine. We experienced many great times at Hazelbusch.

Virtually all of my contemporaries worked long hours and 7 days a week in the orchards during the summers when I was in high school. (Since the statute of limitations has undoubtedly run by now I can tell the following story.) There wasn't really time to go get the boat after work so we came up with a faster alternative. Aug and Dan Boeger had a big black pickup truck and along with Bill Huffman we managed to weld a pipe assembly vertically in the pickup bed with an eye at the top to which we could attach a ski rope. The idea was to water ski down the larger irrigation canals in the evening after work. We had to elevate the attachment point for the ski rope as otherwise as you were proceeding down the canal bank at about 40 miles an hour there was a significant chance that the rope would get caught on an irrigation valve and immediately slam you into the bank, which, fortunately we never experienced. We had a great fun with this pastime but the last time I did it was pretty scary. I was being pulled down the canal at a very good pace when I looked over my shoulder and saw a Butte County Sheriff's car racing up behind us with his lights flashing. I kind of freaked out and when I saw a good patch of tules I dumped the ski rope and skied into the tules and stayed there until my partners in crime returned to get me. It seems the officer overtook them but only gave them a warning. We escaped unscathed but learned a good lesson!



**Read on for
more Summer
Fun Stories**

I am driving out the back roads, a web of country lanes and irrigation canals...a trip entered into against the advice of my lifelong girlfriends... "You can't ever, really go back home again"... So worldly wise...

Just for an itty bitty while, I am escaping the ruthlessness that has been the warp and woof of my professional life for far too long... I arrive at my destination. I have found our old swimming hole.

Standing on the bank, looking out over the place, As I stand there, a small place inside me begins to soften up. It's a little like summer fruit. If you lived amongst the orchards, you learned how to spot a really good peach. A good peach isn't the picture perfect orb you find in a corporate store. The substance of these things is more akin to wax, intended for display as still life. A really good peach is one that has taken its time to ripen. More than likely it sat on the kitchen table and soaked up some heat. It might even have a spot or two. But when you bit into it, you just know that this is it! A stand over the sink, let the juice drip down your chin. Living in that moment, you can revel in what has come to pass perfectly on its own. Have no guilt about the carbs. This is real living, a sacrament.

As I go to leave, I lean against the car, looking back at the canal. Something in me begins to expand. It's as if my vision gets bigger, wider, and smoother. In that moment I am more able to take in the whole scene past and present. I see my daring boyfriend now as he flies by on water skis; grinning and howling with laughter, he fishtails and soaks me....and then I am at Hazelbush...the breeze off the water blends with the scent of willows and a touch of Coppertone. The sand beneath my toes is warm and crunchy. I am with my folks and the other families caught up by the water-skiing bug. Grinning and laughing someone snaps their picture...my dad is strapped up to bind his three broken ribs, mom has slalomed for the first time...just in this moment, no one could possibly steal their happiness. Gridley people have always known how to make their own fun.

The sounds and feel of those summers long ago have imprinted themselves on these places and my heart. I believe because so much happiness, innocent fun, fellowship, and pure joy lived there, a tiny miracle seems to have taken place. The water still flows strong and clear, even if kids on bikes don't keep watch anymore for the first full run in early summer. The weir is still there with the name of some lost love traced into it while the cement was still wet. And faintly, now more clearly, I can hear the voice of the beautiful neighbor lady who taught me to swim there. "That's right, honey, jump 'way out beyond the crawdad's nest; now kick, kick,...that's right...you're gonna make a fine swimmer someday!" As time goes by, I have discovered there are all kinds of swimming...

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*Clarice and Oliver Dukes 1953
With their children, Suzie and Mark
and their Dog "Big Ears" playing in
the river*

“Taking The Plunge”

By Gregory Hubanks

It was another one of those hot summer days that happen so often here in Northern California and time to take a dip in the Feather River. In 1967 the place to be was Cox's Spillway just east of Manzanita just south of Gridley California. Not many people go there now but at the time the spot had a great rope swing that took you out over the river with a breath taking plunge into the cool water. The place was named for the spillway that delivered runoff from the irrigation ditch back to the Feather River. It was a three tiered affair that created a rather nice little water fall and is there to this day serving its purpose just as the river does. We would use it as a place of recreation, and what a divine place it was.

The rope swing was hung from a huge Sycamore tree that grew out over the water and made the area around it shaded and hidden from the summer's hot rays. The place was ideal for swimming and swinging on that rope, yet the tree also invited a good climbing. I had the agility and the intelligence of a monkey so I would often climb to the upper reaches of that tree and just sit and look at that great water way. The tree had taken its portion of victims and could be a dangerous proposition to even climb let alone what I had decided to do on this day. Someone we all knew once fell from this icon of danger and broke his back, spending a large amount of time in recovery. As I looked back down the path to the ground that day I decided it may be a better option to just jump into the water. I watched as the flow gently moved along and decided it was an innocuous substance. My heart began to pound as I realized I was actually going to do it. As I stood up on the branch that was my perch I could hear the clamber below, “What's he doing?” “He's not going to jump is he?” I just couldn't resist at that point, my ego insisted. I stood up on the branch and spread my arms like an avenging angel and jumped into obvation. The air blew past my ears and the water got closer and closer. Just before I hit I pushed my hands forward to cushion the inevitable blow, and they were forced back with the impact. I could not believe how far down into the water I had gone, but considering the distance I had traveled it seemed reasonable. As I swam up and broke the surface I could hear the shouts of cheer. I felt like a hero. “That was incredible” someone said and I had to agree. I couldn't believe that I actually did it. But now done I had to do it again, and I did. Over that summer I probably made about fifteen to twenty jumps and was filled with the same satisfaction as the first. Of course an activity such as this will take a toll on one's body and when I tried out for the football team that year the test found blood in my urine. I was not able to play that year and was completely barred from playing any sports. I ended up working in the office of Earl Souza, running off P.E. programs for the workouts and being a general “go for”. I was another causality of the “tree” and after that summer I kept my diving to the swimming pool and diving boards. But wow, what a rush that was!

Possible Upcoming Events

Memories Road Show
(Sharing your Treasures)

“In Their Own Words”

a collection of Veteran's stories

A Veteran's Musical in November

“Writing your own Story”

Researching your Ancestry

Old Fashion Tea Parties

*If you are interested in any of these
Activities, or have suggestions, please
contact RuthAnn King
@ 530-846-4482 or
gridleymuseum@gmail.com*

