

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

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Preserving Cotati's Past
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Bobbie Veronda, Editor

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COTATI MUSEUM HOURS

Every Saturday, 1-4 p.m.
2nd Tuesdays, 5-7 p.m.

For tours, research &
other appointments,
call 707-794-0305.

*Inside Cotati City Hall
201 W Sierra Ave*

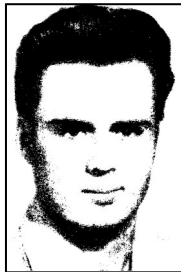
THE CHS MISSION

As stated in our Articles of Incorporation, dated April 11, 2007, the specific purposes of the Cotati Historical Society are 1) to protect and preserve the history and culture of the City of Cotati, 2) to provide a permanent resource (museum and interpretive programs) for the preservation of artifacts, memorabilia and documents illustrating the past and present life of the Cotati community, municipality, and its citizens, and 3) to reach out to the general community and to support similarly guided educational and historical agencies.

The Sad Story of Cotati's Skilling Family

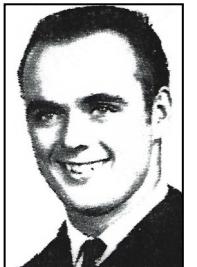
By Jack Withington

On March 20, 1954, Lee Turney crashed the 1947 Chevrolet Fleetwood Sedan in a tragic automobile accident that killed his friend 17-year-old **Neil Skilling**. They hit a tree on Redwood Highway near Cinnabar School north of Petaluma. Neil was pinned in the right front seat while Lee was thrown through the windshield. Lee's younger brother Jerry (Gerald) a passenger riding in the back seat, was thrown 50 feet from the accident site and suffered major internal injuries but survived the crash.



Almost to the date, two years later, in March 1956, Neil's older brother, **Robert** (Bob), age 23, was killed when the tractor he was operating overturned, pinning him beneath it. Bob, a Navy veteran, was employed by Ken's Auto Body in Petaluma, had been married nearly a year, leaving behind his wife, Carol, and an infant daughter, Michelle. This deadly event was witnessed by a younger brother, 15-year-old Gary.

Gary attended Cotati Elementary School and Petaluma High School. While he was a Trojan fullback, his teammates selected him as the team's most valuable player for the class of 1958. He was also picked by long time PHS football coach, Bill Abbey, for his 1941-1958 list of "Best Players."



After graduation, Gary joined the United States Marine Corps and was assigned duty on the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Bennington. On Christmas Day 1960, while the Bennington was berthed at Cubi Point, Subic Bay, Philippines Islands, Gary suffered an accidental fall while aboard. He died the next day at the Subic Bay U.S. Naval Hospital.

He was the third and last of the Skilling boys to grow up in Cotati and die prematurely—four and six years after his brothers. All were survived by their parents, Clyde and Alma Skilling.

In 1961, as a tribute to the Skilling family, a group of Cotati residents led by the Cotati Civic Improvement

Committee and the Cotati Rotary raised funds to create a "living memorial" planter to honor the memory of the young men.



The planter and dedication plaque can still be found in the Cotati Plaza Park.

Memorial Photos by Chris Wendt

THANK YOU TO OUR NEW AND RENEWING 2019 MEMBERS AND SOCIETY DONORS

Marion Ackerman	Judy Gustafson	Millie Nibe
Marie Aggio*	Martha Gustafson	Vi Nordman
John Allred*	Carolyn & Paul Hacker	Kathy Norwood*
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Jane Ferina	Bruce Jr, Heather Rose & Ali Martin	Yvonne Van Dyke*
Melanie Fleek	Gary, Kim & Jake Martin	Barbara Jean Veronda*
Elizabeth Fredericks	Kiyoko Kay Maruyama	Sandra Walton
Barbara Gegan*	Denise Libarle McCarthy	David, Laura & Johnny Wasson
Janet Gingham	Bette McKnight	Pamela Wilford
Harold Griffith	Rick Minervini*	Jack Withington
Fred Groverman	Scott Minnis*	
Greg Gustafson	Barbara Morrow*	

* Indicates a general donation in addition to dues

Note: Memberships and donations received after February 15, 2019 will be acknowledged in the summer newsletter

In Memoriam Donations

Marion Ackerman for Lillian Ross Jasperson	Kiyoko Kay Maruyama for Hatsue Otani & Taka Kaivase
George Bunting for Prue Draper	Denise Libarle McCarthy for Millie & Red Libarle
Ken & Sherri Carli for Marge Rosselli	Vi Nordman for Ed Nordman
Vanessa Davenport for Prue Draper	Bob & Debbie Renati for Lu Watters
Elizabeth Fredericks for Maurice Fredericks	Gary Santero & Reta Kyle for Barney & Evelyn Santero and Gus & Mary Bianchi
Constance Hammerman for Bill Hammerman	
Dave & Karen Heisel for RC & Lena Braden	Joan Tunzi for May Andreoli



Japanese in Cotati exhibit still educating at the museum

“Wa” is an exciting exhibit covering information from the 1790’s through the present

“Wa” translates as harmony, community, peace and “things Japanese”

Annual Fourth Grade Field Trip Takes a Big Team

By Marie McNaughton

Thirty-seven fourth graders from Thomas Page Academy (and their chaperones) lived in the Cotati Museum, as well as Cotati City Hall and Police Department on Wednesday, February 6, 2019, as part of the annual field trip meant to offer a Cotati slice of California history and to show how city government works.



Students learn about the city with Cotati City Officials from l to r: Iris Olvera, Ashley Wilson, Christian Delagnes, and Lauren Berges

This was the first such field trip by new Thomas Page teachers Janae Dedekam (4th grade) and Amy Miller (4th and 5th grade mixed), who were happy to add the experience to their curricula. Teachers, school staff, and parents ferried the students from and to school at 9 a.m. and 11:30.

The students were guided by CHS volunteers Judy Gustafson, Sandy Divine, Yvonne Van Dyke, and Marie Aggio to four learning stations staffed by additional volunteers and city employees. City department guide Lisa Moore worked with City Clerk Lauren Berges to explain how various offices serve Cotati citizens and businesses and plan for the future. Cotati Police Department liaison officer Katie Huldermann helped provide a look at policing from inside of the station.

Velma DiMeola, field trip coordinator, led students on a scavenger hunt through the museum to find information of Cotati's history and artifacts, and Marie McNaughton gave a Cotati history presentation created by Cathryn Fairlee. As always, Jerry Pagnusat captured the event on camera.

*Along the way, students, parents, and teachers asked a number of good questions: ***

Why is Cotati spelled so many ways?

Was there really a Chief Cotati?

Where was the Cotati speedway?

What is special about our Police Dept building?

*** If you are uncertain about the answers, please visit the museum.*

** All photos by Jerry Pagnusat*



Students with Cotati Police officers Ryan Reinke, l, and Taylor Wardle, r



Fourth graders with CHS volunteers (in the rear from l to r) Marie Aggio and Velma DiMeola and teacher, Amy Miller

Upon returning to school, each student also received a gift bag with a reusable eating utensil set from Recology Waste Management and materials from the police department and the historical society. These included instructions on how to write and submit an essay for the CHS annual history essay contest and a flyer about our upcoming barbecue fundraiser.

A CHS committee will read the student essays and pick one student to receive a \$50 prize and certificate at the April 7th BBQ. Honorable mentions will also receive certificates and all winning essays will be on display so that attendees can read and learn about Cotati history, especially the story of Rancho Cotate owner Thomas Page and his family. The classroom of the winning essayist also receives an additional \$100 reward.



At the museum students find information about Cotati's history to help them write their essays



CAN YOU HELP?



*With only ONE MONTH until the
11th Annual CHS Old-Fashioned BBQ
Sunday, April 7, 2019*

BBQ VOLUNTEERS

Cashiers
Table Runners
Setup/Takedown
Food Prep & Service
Kitchen & General
Cleanup

Call Ed Gilardi
707-792-2526

YOUR SPECIAL BAKED GOODS

Cookies, Bars
Cupcakes
Cakes & Pies
Whole & Single
Servings

Call Judy Gustafson
707-665-5993

SILENT AUCTION DONATIONS

New Merchandise
Art, Kids' Stuff
Gift Baskets
Services, Crafts
Gift Certificates

Call Bobbie Veronda
707-486-6143

WE NEED YOU TO MAKE HISTORY!!

Cotati Historical Society & Museum
Inside Cotati City Hall at 201 West Sierra Ave
PO Box 7013 Cotati CA 94931

Cotati Museum & Historical Society

11th Annual Old-Fashioned Chicken BBQ Sunday, April 7, 2019

Ray Miller Community Center, 216 E. School St.

**CAR SHOW*



**LIVE MUSIC*

**BAKE SALE*

**SILENT AUCTION*

12 Noon - 4:00 pm

Meals served until 3:00 pm * Take-out Available

Tickets available at:

Professional Framing Services 795-2791

Cotati Exchange Bank

Cotati Historical Museum 794-0305

\$14 in advance, \$17 at the door