

Cotati Historical Society Newsletter

A non-profit 501 (c) (3) California corporation Tax ID #30-0421172

Preserving Cotati's Past
PO Box 7013 Cotati, CA 94931
chsinfo@sonic.net www.cotatihistoricalsociety.org

Winter 2021

Marie McNaughton, Editor

Vol. 14 No. 4

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President	John Allred, 795-2791
Vice President	Ed Gilar di
Secretary	Velma DiMeola
Treasurer	John Dell'Osso
Director	Bobbie Veronda
Archiving Administrator	Judy Gustafson

MORE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

STAFF

Website Coordinator	Stephen Gold
Docent Coord.	Marie McNaughton

COTATI MUSEUM HOURS

Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.
& by appointment

For research, donations &
other concerns,
call 707-794-0305.

Inside Cotati City Hall
201 W. Sierra Avenue

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.

Cotati's Own: Rudy Theiller Was Among Sonoma County's Pearl Harbor Casualties

By Michael Von der Porten

Eighty years ago this December 7, Sonoma County citizens were shocked at the announcements that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. It would take days and weeks to learn that three Sonoma County "boys" had been lost that day. Only one had been born in Sonoma County: Cotati's Rudy Theiller, Jr.

Rudy was born in Cotati, on July 24, 1922, to the former Martha Block, who came from Wisconsin in 1919, and Rudolph Theiller, Sr., who was born in San Francisco. The Petaluma papers reported the home birth and proud parents and grandparents.

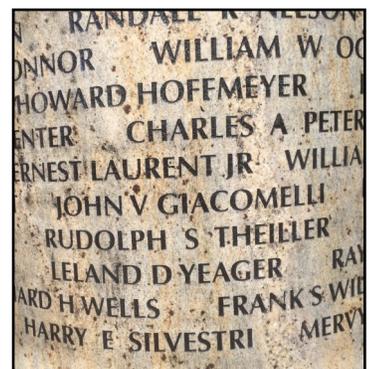
The Theillers moved to the Sebastopol area around 1936 where Rudy Junior attended Analy High School and played on the "B" class (intra-mural) basketball team. Rudy was recognized countywide for his FFA activities. In April 1937, Rudy motored with a teacher and fellow students to an agricultural meeting in Sacramento. In May, Rudy and his partner Tag Arthur tied for a high score in dairy judging; Rudy also earned a second place as an individual judge. In August 1938, Rudy won first place for his senior boar. In October 1938, *The Press Democrat* reported that Rudy's sows had produced litters of 14 and 17.

Rudy graduated from Analy in 1939 and in November 1940 joined the U.S. Navy. His first training was in San Diego. He transferred to Bremerton, Washington, but was able to spend the holidays at home. He transferred to the *U.S.S. Arizona* in Hawaii in early 1941 as a seaman first class. He was aboard the battleship when it blew up early in the attack.

Christmas 1941 must have been a sad time at the Theiller home: Rudy's parents and brother had been notified on December 23 that Rudy was missing. On the 24th, the *Santa Rosa Republican* reported that the family said they were "'carrying on' on the home front" as they awaited news. It was not until February 6, 1942, that the family

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Cotati-born Rudy Theiller (top) was among the first three Second World War casualties from Sonoma County. He is honored at the Santa Rosa Veterans' Memorial. The top photo is from Ancestry.com. Lower photos by Michael Von der Porten.



CHS Reboots Fall Event With Community Gathering & Book Sale

After the events hiatus of 2020, CHS was delighted to welcome the public back to its annual Fall Event on Sunday, November 7, 2021. Featuring the sale of 1,000 books, the oldest dating back to 1870, the social event also offered light refreshments and the always-free entrance to our recently reopened museum.

The books and a fine antique desk offered for sale were donated by Ed and Pat Gilardi, part of the estate of Pat's recently deceased mother, Frances Sainsbury. Book buyers departed with bags and boxes of treasures for pennies on the dollar. The desk was purchased by Dave Wasson.

In addition, dozens of jars of jam made by Ed Gilardi from frozen berries picked by Bruce Martin and his late wife, Connie, were popular—as usual. All proceeds benefited the museum.

The event also featured a display of blueprints for the custom display-and-storage cabinets being made for the museum. They represent a substantial donation in memory of Connie by the Martin family.

Delicious homemade baked goods from Marie Aggio, Diane Canadas, Donna Rose, Bobbie Veronda, Velma DiMeola, and Judy Gustafson were supplemented with desserts from Nothing Bundt Cakes of Santa Rosa and coffee from Peet's Coffee in Cotati. The City of Cotati donated the use of the Cotati Room. Marie Aggio, Pat Anderson, Robin Draper, and Marie McNaughton staffed the museum.

Special thanks are due, too, to the volunteers who arranged all the boxes of books on Saturday: Matthew, Karianne, and Anthony DiMeola, Chuck and Caden Lucas, as well as board members, Ed, John, Bobbie, Velma, and Judy. Ed and John also did plenty of heavy lifting during the after-event takedown.



At left, photographer Margie Arthur Cassero captured CHS volunteer Donna Rose, President John Allred, and Treasurer John Dell'Osso greeting society members and new supporters to the Cotati Room. Below clockwise, fellow photographer Dave Wasson snapped the refreshment table, visitors and volunteers in the museum, CHS Vice President Ed Gilardi helping a happy book buyer, and a full complementary CHS book bag.



Cotati Museum Reopens with a New Cohort of Volunteers

Our annual fall event was preceded by a soft reopening of the museum in September, made possible with the training of a new cohort of docents and collection volunteers, supported, of course, by our veteran museum workers.



Please welcome new docents Pat Anderson (left) and Carol Williams. (Photo by Marie McNaughton)

Lucas, Chuck Lucas, Kathy Norwood, Dave Wasson, and Carol Williams, who are pleased to be learning about the many museum exhibits and collections, and working with experienced docents Marie Aggio, Velma DiMeola, and Robin Draper. Margie Arthur Cassero and Gregg Fautley will begin training in December.

Debbie Dvornik is a new collections volunteer, with a Master's degree in Library Science, joining Diane Canadas and Archiving Administrator Judy Gustafson in organizing, documenting, and rehousing the many donations of documents, images, objects, and ephemera we receive, sometimes by the box load!

Docent Coordinator Marie McNaughton welcomes inquiries from other CHS members interested in helping work with the public, the collections, and exhibits. Call her at 707-529-0734 or email mrmac@sonic.net.

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

Guided Walking Tours of Cotati to Begin in 2022!

CHS is taking names for guided walking tours of historic Cotati. To sign up, email chsinfo@sonic.net.

For a sneak preview, see our 13-minute video:

www.cotatihistoricalsociety.org

Cotati Historical Society Dues/Donations 2022

If you have already paid your dues for 2021 you will be marked paid thru 2022, since 2021 was gifted by CHS due to COVID-19. This form may also be used for donations, memorial donations and volunteering. Thank you for your support of Cotati Historical Society.

___ Yes, I want to join/renew my/our membership thru 2022 @ **\$10 per person** \$ _____

___ An additional donation of \$ _____ is enclosed.

Member Name/s _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Home Phone _____ Cell _____ Email _____

A memorial donation of \$ _____ is enclosed in memory of: _____

Please send an acknowledgment to: _____ Address _____

I would like to assist the Cotati Historical Society in this way:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ___ Help in the museum on Saturday afternoons. | ___ Help with membership mailings & data entry. |
| ___ Help with annual barbecue and silent auction. | ___ Help with student field trips and essay contests. |
| ___ Help with publicity and advertising. | ___ Help with cataloging of archives and artifacts. |
| ___ Other ways I might help _____ | |

Please send to: **Cotati Historical Society, PO Box 7013, Cotati CA 94931**