Welcome New Members of 2012
Jonnie Alper
Christopher Caproni
Susan Hill Cunningham
Jane Czech
Gary Ferroni
Ginna Fleming
Robert Hemstock
Paul Johnson
Wendy Johnson
Bill Lampl & Kathleen Clifford
Charles & Carol Mack
Michelle Petersen
Julia Salz
Julie Sigoloff
Kathleen Streblow

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Note from the President
As has been pointed out in this issue of our Spring Newsletter, as well as our Spring 2012 Review, AND in the around town publicity, the big event of our year is just about here. On Sunday, May 27th, we will hold our 35th annual walk in history. This year we will offer a special flashback in time to what other restaurants and bars have at one time or another resided in and around downtown Mill Valley. Each year our walks are special, yet the unique wrinkle to this year’s walk is the special WALK-THOUGH we will enjoy in two of our most historical restaurants, the EL PASEO, and the LA GINESTRA. Be sure to save 90 minutes out of your Sunday to come down for the walk.

We begin at 9:30 and the last walk leaves the Outdoor Art Club at 3:00.

Also of note on the upcoming schedule will be the unveiling of the historic remake of the Railroad Logos that one time adorned the Mill Valley train depot. (Now the Book Depot) From the time the train depot was built in 1929, to its ending days in the 1950’s there were five NORTHWESTERN PACIFIC railroad logos on the sides of the buildings. Two on the front, two on the back, and one on the west side, near the clock.

The Mill Valley historical society is sharing the credit of this long overdue project with the following: Tremendous efforts from former mayor Dick Spotswood and the Rotary club who initiated the project years ago. And, thanks to a special donation from the Drexler Estate fund, this long awaited project will finally come to fruition. The date has not been confirmed, but sometime this summer look for a special revealing of the logos (referred to my railroad aficionados as medallion-heralds) by the current movers and shakers of Mill Valley.
A Tribute To Gene Stocking
By Tim Amyx

Gene Stocking passed away last month at the age of 88. Those involved in the Mill Valley Historical Society have for years known Gene as a local treasure and window to the past. Gene's connection to the history of Mill Valley is second to none. Her knowledge, passion, and incredible charm have made her a best friend to all she has touched. Gene was born in San Francisco on December 15th, 1923. She lost her father at an early age and was raised by her mother, Lillian Roseveare Gardner. Lillian was the youngest daughter of the Mill Valley pioneer, Jacob Gardner. Jacob Gardner was the caretaker of the Throckmorton Ranch, many years before Mill Valley was founded. Although Jacob had passed away by the time Gene was born, she grew up knowing her family's incredible connection to the past. Gene's Mother, Lillian, was the first librarian in Mill Valley, back in 1911. Gene grew up in Mill Valley, and later attended Tam High school. I once asked her if she took the train to school. She laughed and said they didn't have enough money to take the train. Only the kids with extra money would take the train. She would walk from her family house on Buena Vista, not far from Mt. Carmel Church.

Gene spent two years at college of Marin, after graduating from Tam high school with the class of 1938. She married Bert Stocking on March 14, 1945 and they were together for 54 years until Bert passed away in 1999. They raised two children, Gwen and Dale who both went to Tam high school. Gene had four grandchildren and one of those is soon to be expecting what would have been her first great grandchild.

Gene was a charter member of the Mill Valley historical society and served for many years on the board, including two as the president. I was lucky enough to spend Gene's final five years on the board with her. Cordial, knowledgeable, fun, positive, gracious… To know her was to love her. She will be missed, but never forgotten.

Sonapa Farms: A Memoir
By Peter Richmond

"Man, I'm so famished I could eat a horse!" It was a Sunday morning in the spring of 1978, and we just arrived in downtown Mill Valley, breakfast not yet having been consumed. I had just been promoted by my then employer and told I’d be moving to San Francisco to open a new office of the French bank, Credit Lyonnais, which I worked for. I had to be on site not later than Labor Day, so this particular weekend my wife, Jane, and I had flown up to San Francisco to look around for housing. Because I had spent a fair amount of time during the previous three years traveling to the Bay Area for business meetings, I had some familiarity with the region, and some idea about where we might live. Having spent Friday and Saturday in the City and northern Peninsula, we'd saved Mill Valley for Sunday.

As it was a bit before eight in the morning, there was not a great deal of activity on the streets of the village. We circled the Plaza, rode along Throckmorton and Miller in and out of the downtown and finally grabbed a parking space. Walking around downtown, the first place that appeared to be open for breakfast customers was located a few doors up from the Plaza area on Throckmorton and its sign read, "Sonapa Farms". "Strange name", I thought, but breakfast was my goal, not linguistics. So we went.

It was everything and nothing like you would expect in the setting. Here we were in the center, more or less, of the downtown area of a quaint little town in northern California. It was close enough to San Francisco to be simultaneously affected and influenced by the goings on and general lifestyle of that famous city just thirteen miles to its south, and yet, as we quickly saw, deep enough in its own laid back lifestyle to feel as if it were in another time and place. Occupying the same amount of floor space that its present day successor, Champagne, now does, it presented exactly what someone in search of a filling repast without too many frills, and for a reasonable price, could possibly want.

"we were in the center...of a quaint little town in northern California"

Although I can’t recite from memory all of the fare offered in the double sided, plastic laminated menu, I do recall that there was an impressive list of omelets to choose from, the usual various presentations of eggs—boiled, fried, scrambled, etc.- served either nude (by themselves) or with a decent variety of sides. These sides were exactly what any hungry customer had a right to expect to be able to pick from: sausage, bacon, ham, lox—they were all there. Yes, nothing like it—good old-fashioned American cholesterol! It may ultimately kill you, but while you’re slamming it down, there’s no better feeling anywhere—well, OK, maybe one.

I had what over the decades had become my usual weekend breakfast fare—a couple of eggs, over easy, and a side of meat, ham in this case. This was preceded by a large glass of OJ and accompanied by rye toast, lightly buttered, thank you very much. Jane had an omelet, although neither of us can recall exactly what kind, also with a large OJ and toast. We both left completely filled and sated.

I have no recollection of what the damage was to my wallet, but I can assure you it was more than reasonable for what had been not only a thoroughly pleasant breakfast, but also a great introduction to what was to become, and has remained, our home for these past 34 years.

Please provide a Picture of Gene

1923 - 2012

M.V. Library History Room
Mill Valley Historical Society
375 Throckmorton Ave.
Mill Valley, CA 94941

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