

Not-so-ancient history from Reporter's pages

By Jerry Bowen

Sunday, March 11, 2007

The majority of articles Sabine Georke-Shrode and I have been writing are about happenings well in the past. So, why not write a few items about what has happened that are more recent?

Or, as teenagers of today might consider it: "ancient local history."

Of course some of us "ancients" can remember a lot about those days and the real old-timers may have a little fun in remembering somewhat simpler times.

We have been restructuring everything in the Vacaville Heritage Council at the Old Town Hall and we came across a large cache of Reporter newspapers dating back as far as the 1950s. They're much easier to read than microfilm. And they are a wee bit bigger: one page measured 17.5 by 22 inches versus today's at 12.5 by 22 inches. The paper itself also seems to be a little thicker.

The Reporter only came out a couple of times a week, but it was chock-full of content about local people. It was also interesting to know the outcome of some of the predictions made by editors and columnists at the time.

Friday, June 22, 1956 - On the editorial page under "Vacation Days" the editor wrote, "School's out again, with all the thrill for the young fry that stirred us when you and I were young, Maggie.

"Must be different though.

In the long ago, children were impolite little savages, singing 'Good-bye books, good-bye school, good-bye teacher, you darned old fool.'

"Of course today's generation is different, it's civilized and proper."

The editor finished his piece with, "But times have changed, to be sure. Kids aren't what the breed used to be."

Hmmm, something about that editorial seems to be very familiar.

"Friday, June 29, 1956 - Mercury soars to 110 on Wednesday Wednesday's 110 was probably the hottest June 27th on local record books - was too hot to thumb through the

books."

Think about it - this was before the global cooling fad and now the global warming fiasco!

Some of the prices at Vaca Valley Shopping Center on Merchant Street: Butter, 63 cents a pound; Oleo, (remember that butter substitute?) two pounds, 63 cents; nine-pound canned hams, \$6.39; and beef sirloin steak, 89 cents a pound.

Congressman John Baldwin wrote a regular column keeping the locals fully informed about what was happening in Washington. The subjects for the week were Monticello Dam, flood control, anti-trust laws, and the annual Congressional baseball game "Firemen Answer Grass Fire; Get Reply: 'Who Called You?' " It seems that some Mexican laborers set the fire in grass to flush out a snake. They were told they were, " in violation of the county ordinance that forbids burning without a permit."

On the "some things never seem to change side," the header shouts, "Drinking Drivers Become Growing Menace on Highways," with slogans "Don't die, drive dry" and "If you drink, don't drive." The slogans were judged, " well worthy of serious consideration by all drivers." Say that first slogan fast 10 times without a mistake and my guess is you were probably sober enough to plunk down behind the wheel.

On Page 15, a large photo showing progress of the Monticello Dam dominates the page along with a ground water report for the Putah and Suisun-Fairfield areas that discusses the history of water supplies.

The Cold War was warming up at the time. A small column on Page 19 reminds one the seriousness of the situation: "Government to Spend \$405,000 for Local Area Nike Station Roads." Nike sites surrounding Travis Air Force Base as a protective ring informed the Board of Supervisors they would be surveying nine miles of county roads to more efficiently connect the sites.

On the editorial page it was noted that the organization of the General Plans Advisory Committee with its subcommittees of interested Vacaville citizens was an important step in the right direction. The editorial goes on to state, "A community such as Vacaville could use many improvements - a well-equipped city park, off street parking, street improvements, etc. There are many communities which have city-owned hospitals, swimming pools, recreation centers, none of which are out of reach of the possibilities of a community such as Vacaville.

"We believe, that through the Advisory Committee, many worthwhile recommendations will be forthcoming. Some of them may be undertaken, while others must await their

opportune time. But, at least it's a start on the right track, and let's hope the results will be conspicuous within the immediate future."

I believe history has shown this editorial to be right on. It was a pivotal time for Vacaville as it began to grow and grow.

I'll continue with some more pieces of history from The Reporter in my next column. I think it will be interesting to see the mistakes and good things that made our city the fine place to live in today.

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/352>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/352/>