

history

From Marlene Wiley's Mountain-History Archives

Communication Supports Community Marlene Wiley

Redwood News

During a casual conversation, Win Parker of Redwood Estates told my husband about a newsletter published in the 1960s. She had four issues—May 1969, June-July 1969, September 1969, and January 1970. The January issue was volume 10, suggesting *Redwood News* began in 1961. It was fun reminiscing as I read the issues because we moved to the mountains in 1965.

One of the best highway improvements in the mountains began in the fall of 1969—construction of the Summit overpass. First-time commuters and other motorists benefited from safe access to Summit Road from Highway 17.

There are other nostalgic reports from mountain 4-H clubs. This wonderful national organization seems to no longer have the wide appeal it once did. We no longer read the news of Patchen, Highland Del, Summit, Burrell, Highland Hill and Laurel 4-H clubs. Of these clubs, Summit 4-H Club continued until the late 1990s, probably due to the dedication of the Cardoza family.

The January 1970 issue reported the death of Father Riker. The founder of Holy City, Father Riker organized his converts under the umbrella of "Perfect Christian Divine Science." Holy City was a colorful and often welcome stop on the old Santa Cruz Highway until Highway 17 bypassed the town.

An organization active in the 1960s and 1970s was the Lexington Hills Association. Organizations that remained strong: Summit Riders Horsemen's Association, Loma Prieta Volunteer Fire and Rescue, and Redwood Mutual Water Company.

Financing *Redwood News* was a continuing struggle for its dedicated staff. A plea for help appeared in the annual report published in September 1969. "Our income came from two sources—contributions and advertising sales. Advertising brought in \$1,600.50 while contributors sent \$1,085.02. In planning our operations, we had hoped that advertising revenue would cover the cost of printing, while

contributions could cover mailing expenses. This is approximately what happened. That it worked comes as something of a surprise."

The staff included Judith and Alan Ellis, Jean Dempsey, Bobbie Norman, Alice Nutt, Margaret Kisner, Jack Barrett, Christine Frank, Peggy Reed, Donna Supernaw, and Jill McKeon.

If you have issues of *Redwood News*, I would welcome the opportunity to photocopy your issues to add to the Mountain History Study Group archive. Call *MNN* at 408-353-1901.

Redwood Estates News

Redwood Estates News began in 1990 after the Loma Prieta earthquake. It was produced by the Redwood Estates Women's Club. The last issue I have is dated July/August 1995. Distribution was to residents of Redwood Estates. The masthead read "Just a Little Bit Above Los Gatos." June Sythe was the organizer and first editor. She was succeeded by Alice Hoglan in March 1994.

For these years, reporters included Margaret L. McGuan, Durl Gehrke, Larry Moitozo, Alice Ann Hoglan, Lois Munson, Regina Devlin, Charlene McIntyre, Mark Yoslow, Elaine Daniels, and Lou Calvert. By January 1993, Amy Sirota was the graphic designer. Distribution was handled by Ken Cichowski, Regina Devlin, Lois Munson, and Gretchen Ryan.

The publication carried local news, regular reports from the Redwood Mutual Water Company, and a classified section. Publishing costs were supported by advertising and the Redwood Estates Women's Club.

Articles of interest to the community were regular reports of the water pipeline financed by FEMA to provide water to mountain citizens. Redwood Estates' colorful Halloween parties were reported. A history of the Redwood Estates Women's Club was supported by information gathered from a 1949 scrapbook.

Redwood Estates community leaders were profiled. Marion Trumbull, postmistress



of Redwood Estates, retired in 1991, after serving the community for 21 years. In May 1993, *Redwood Estates News* joyfully announced the opening of the Redwood Estates swimming pool on May 29. FEMA funded construction of the new clubhouse and pool.

Bruce Franks wrote a history of mountain firefighting teams and stations. He was a member of CDF and Redwood Estates Volunteer Fire from 1948 to 1970. Other historical events reported were plans for rebuilding the Redwood Estates Pavilion, and the construction of the Lexington Overpass, dedicated as the Gillian Cichowski Memorial Overcrossing.

One of the last issues reported on the big storm of March 1995.

Do you have 1990 issues numbers 1 and 2? I would like to photocopy them for the archives. Please call *MNN* at 408-353-1901.

Partial sets of Redwood News and Redwood Estates News are maintained in Marlene Wiley's mountain-history archives.

June Sythe A Community Leader

June Sythe was the first editor and a cofounder of the *Redwood Estates News*. She was also president of the Los Gatos Community Concerts Association. A former R. J. Fisher Middle School teacher, she received an honorable mention award from Los Gatos and Monte Sereno community-service organizations for setting up the first computer lab in Santa Clara County schools at Fisher. Retired from teaching when the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake occurred, she led Red Cross activities in Redwood Estates and helped victims by providing three meals a day. She was active in Operation Reindeer, an organization that collected and distributed food and presents during the holidays.

**Part 2 of *The Poet of Holy City* series
The Love Balm Scandal of 1928
Shelley Adina Bates**

On New Year's Eve of 1927, a scandal rocked Holy City. There had been numerous court cases and lawsuits since its founding in 1918, but nothing like this—a spectacular half-million-dollar breach-of-promise suit against William E. Riker.

Woman Sues Cult 'King' for \$500,000.

Called a “love balm” suit, the astronomical sum was to salve the wounded heart of Mrs. Evelyn Rosencrantz, who had been living with Riker for a few months in Southern California, ostensibly as his secretary. The cozy brown cottage at 3679 Motor Avenue, Culver City, was the headquarters of Riker Productions. Mrs. Rosencrantz was not only to star in the production company's first movie, entitled *The Perfect Woman*, but was also to fly Riker's airplane, *The Spirit of Holy City Love*, from Holy City to Rome, in a publicity stunt to rival the Atlantic flight of Charles Lindbergh. He had, she said, promised her marriage—until two days before Christmas, when he backed out and returned to Holy City.

Cult King's Wife Raps Birdwoman.

On New Year's Day 1928, Riker and his wife, Lucille, drove to San Francisco to hold a press conference in the offices of their attorney, James J. Bulger. Lucille had already spoken to reporters over the phone. “I feel sorry for the woman, if she ever thought she was going to marry my husband, because I've been Mrs. Riker for twelve or fourteen years,” she told the *San Francisco Examiner*. “It looks to me like just another plot to throw scandal on Holy City. And anyone who tries that had better be pretty careful!”

Brave words from a woman who would have to stand by her man in the face of a wave of scandal and publicity, calm and well-dressed as always, knowing all the while that not only was her rival a six-foot redhead who could actually fly a plane, but also that Mrs. Rosencrantz's allegations



The “love nest” in Culver City, with a police investigator out front. Los Angeles Public Library photo collection, 1928.

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Evelyn Rosencrantz photographed with an airplane in San Diego. From *Oakland Tribune*, December 27, 1927, p. 40.

were likely true. If they lost the suit, Holy City would have to be sold, and everything Lucille had built there, the security she counted on as a middle-aged woman, would be taken away. Riker denied everything, going so far as to admit that while he had called Mrs. Rosencrantz “dear,” she had clearly misunderstood him. “We believe that all people should live in brotherly love and mutual regard,” the *Examiner* quoted him. “We have a wonderful spirit down at Holy City and I call everyone ‘Dear.’”

From his correspondence, this at least seems to be true. Mother Lucille went on to say, “This whole thing is caused by an unscrupulous woman after money. You know, some people think that Holy City is a ‘love colony’ and that we practice free love there. Nothing could be farther from the truth. This woman is trying to capitalize [on] that popular belief.”

Luckily for Riker, by March 1928, Mrs. Rosencrantz had been arrested for passing bad checks, and was eventually sent to San Quentin as a habitual offender. The love-balm suit was transferred to Santa Clara Superior Court in January 1930. By then, Mrs. Rosencrantz had filed a number of

Celebrating life in the Santa Cruz Mountains



Sky King, flown by stunt pilot Eddie DeLarm, was the only airplane ever to land at the Holy City airfield. Based south of San Francisco, DeLarm's flight school was where Riker and Evelyn Rosencrantz met in October 1927. I.B. Fisher collection, collection of the author.

other lawsuits against Riker, keeping the newspapers busy for months.

Everybody's Girl. Lucille maintained her position as a loyal, supportive wife throughout that stormy year. But in the privacy of her own writing, it's possible she allowed her true feelings to show. In the archives at the Beinecke Library at Yale is a collection of Lucille's poetry that she sent to a music company in 1941. With the passing of a decade or more, perhaps she felt she could finally express herself, such as in this unpublished song lyric entitled *Everybody's Girl*. Aside from the allusions to the “girl” being sexually promiscuous, could “on the wing” be a veiled reference to a certain red-headed aviatrix?

***She's everybody's girl
She's to every man a pearl,
Sweetheart to all beneath the sun,
She's in love with every man
In this great big perfect plan,
For to her all men are one.***

***And while she flits and flutters,
From palaces to gutters,
She smiles for what smiles will bring,
In no one place she'll tarry,
Least [sic] she'll be asked to marry,
She's safe to smile when on the wing.***

A person can only wonder why Lucille stayed with Riker when he put her through so much public mortification. Perhaps it was a trade-off. She looked the other way during his affairs and stood by him in court. In return, the disciples looked up to her as “Mother Lucille.” She had a comfortable home, and most important, she was free to exercise her excellent business sense to make Holy City a much greater success than it would ever have been without her.

A resident of Redwood Estates, Shelley Bates is the author of 42 novels. She is currently working on her Ph.D. in Creative Writing at Lancaster University in the U.K.

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