

Pinole Historical Society Newsbriefs



P.O. Box 285, Pinole, CA 94564

www.PinoleHistoricalSociety.org info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org

FEBRUARY 7 PHS MEETING

AUTHOR JOHN ROBINSON TO PRESENT 'THE LIFT BRIDGES OF THE BAY AREA'

The Bay Area is known for its beautiful suspension bridges. Most notably the Golden Gate Bridge, the new Bay Bridge, in San Francisco, and the Alfred Zampa Memorial Bridge in Crockett.

But the first bridges across the Bay were all lift bridges: the Antioch Bridge (1926), the Dumbarton Bridge (1927), and the San Mateo Bridge (1929). Alas, those are all gone now. Inadequate to modern traffic needs, most of these early bridges were replaced by less interesting, but more practical, concrete-and-steel spans.

But there are still a few old vertical-lift and swing bridges in use around the Bay Area. One of the most magnificent is not a highway bridge at all, but the Southern Pacific Railroad Bridge between Benicia and Martinez, opened in 1930, and a beautiful example of



Benicia-Martinez Bridge

a large vertical-lift bridge still in use today.

When you drive into Alameda you can see movable bridges.

In San Francisco there are still a few in service; most notably, the Lefty O'Doul Bridge near Oracle Park at China Basin.

Closer to home there is the lift bridge at Mare Island. Opened in 1980, and still in service, it is the third bridge between Vallejo and Mare Island.

The February 7 PHS meeting will be held from 6:30 - 8 p.m. in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road. All are welcome to attend this FREE event. Refreshments will be served.

Come by and learn more about the life, death, and in some cases amazing longevity, of these interesting and important parts of our architectural history — the Bay Area's movable bridges.

Published quarterly by the Pinole Historical Society

WHERE TO FIND NEWSBRIEFS

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Newsbriefs also posted on the PHS website (click on NEWSLETTER in the menu bar).

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If you're interested in advertising, contact **Jeff Rubin at info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org or (510) 724-9507.**

PHS CALENDAR

ONGOING

February 12, March 11, April 8: Monthly Board of Directors meetings. The public is invited to attend and speak on any of the items discussed at these meetings. Pinole Senior Center, 6:30 to 8 p.m.

PHS booth at Pinole Farmers' Market. Every other Saturday, April through December.

Pinole **Historical** Society

Board of Directors: Jeff Rubin, President; Mary McMains, Treasurer; Jo Ann Gannotti, Secretary; Norma Martinez-Rubin, Carol White.

Directors Emeritus: Marcia Kalapus, Jack Meehan, George Vincent. **Newsletter Editor:** Jeff Rubin.

2020 PHS MEETING DATES

February 7, May 1, September 11, November 6

All meetings are held from 6:30-8 p.m. in conference rooms 2A and 2B of the Kaiser Permanente Medical Office Building, 1301 Pinole Valley Road.

For more information, call (510) 724-9507, e-mail info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org, or visit our website at www.pinolehistoricalsociety.org.

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President's Message

Jeff Rubin, President, Pinole Historical Society

THOUGHTS ON THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

What inspires people to give back to their community, to help others with no expectation of reward?

It's a question that crosses my mind from time to time, particularly when I think about Mike and Terri Stott of The Bear Claw, and the Pinole Valley High School Interact Club.

Those of us who participate in community events know they will be treated to cookies and pastries donated by The Bear Claw. So, it was no surprise when the Pinole History Museum, which sponsored the 2019 Holiday Tree Lighting at the senior center, asked Mike and Terri to donate six dozen pastries, Mike donated 12 dozen instead. It's what they do, and they do it with glee.

SPIRIT OF GIVING

All generations turn to young people as our hope for a better future. It's always been that way, with each generation

hoping their descendants will live in a more peaceful time.

So, it's comforting, and encouraging, when I think of the Interact students.

I've seen them for years participating in a number of local events — Community Service Day and Coastal Cleanup, to name just two — but only recently have I had the pleasure of learning what imbues them with the spirit of giving.

Interact volunteers have been essential to the success of the first two Pinole History Museum dinners, helping set up and tear down tables, and serving meals.

What strikes me as so unusual is they look for activities in which to participate.

I asked Leda Pho-Thai, this year's Interact president, to interview some of her members and write an article on the spirit of giving. Read her article on page 12; it will make you feel good about the future.

The November 2 muse-

um dinner was a great success. We fed 240 people and had an incredible raffle and silent auction.

A complete list of all the raffle donors will be published in our next E-News online newsletter.



Jeff Rubin

Put My Experience and Knowledge to Work For You

Having the right connections in the community makes all the difference. I grew up in the Pinole-Hercules area, where my ancestors settled more than 150 years ago, some farming the fertile soils from Pinole to Rodeo, while others helped build the communities we now call home. The benefits of my longstanding connection to and detailed knowledge of the community are the foundation for the outstanding service I deliver to my clients.



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Always seeking to improve and add to the society's collection, the PHS welcomes inquiries from individuals owning objects which are significant to the history of Pinole.

Though we do not have a museum, we have three exhibit spaces at the Pinole Library and conduct history programs for service organizations, retirement residences, and schools.

Artifacts are an important part of these programs.

Please contact us at info@pinolehistoricalsociety.org or call (510) 724-9507 if you have an object you'd like to donate.

Also, you can view the numerous PHS programs right on your computer. Go to the city's website www.ci.pinole.ca.us/about/videos.html and scroll down to PINOLE HISTORY. Several recent programs have been added.

GET READY FOR THE 2020 U.S. CENSUS

**By Norma Martínez-Rubin
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Pinole**

In March 2020, your household will be invited to participate in the Census. You'll have three options to respond: online, by phone, or by mail. Census Day is April 1.

While the U.S. and California populations have increased over time, Pinole residents might wonder whether the small-town feel of our city has been affected by greater numbers of people now living in this part of the Bay Area.

Our septuagenarians and octogenarians miss the less-crowded streets on which they grew up. Our senior residents and other population observers can vouch for the city's population and racial/ethnic shifts.

Pinole's population was under 1,000 persons

before 1940. It exceeded that in 1950 with a population of 1,147. By 1960 it was 6,064. In 1970, Pinole grew dramatically to 15,850, attributed to the development of Pinole Valley.

By 1980, census data included new ethnic/racial categories to describe a population that counted Black, American Indian, Eskimo, Aleut, and Asian Americans. Asian Americans were further identified by specific national ancestry, with Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino among the largest percentages in the Asian community.

Prior to 1970, racial descriptions on census tables were limited to the very broad categories of "White," "Negro," and "Other Races," without differentiating among



Norma Martínez-Rubin

"Other Races." By 1980, categories among Asian Indian or Native American Indian persons were more specific.

The race/ethnicity categories reflected the language of the times with such major shifts as "Negro" to "Black" and later, in the 1990s to include "Latino/Hispanic" and "African American" as demographic categories.

As of 2010, Pinole's population was 18,390. In 2017, Pinole was among the top ten most racially and ethnically diverse cities in California. Let's all be counted in Census 2020!

References

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Editor's Note: Norma Martínez-Rubin is the primary Pinole City Council lead for community engagement and education for the 2020 U.S. Census.

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Back in the day

George R. Vincent

THANK YOU, MR. BOTTA!

The Pinole-Hercules School District was founded in 1865-66. Its best-known teacher was Frances Louise Ellerhorst who taught Pinole's kids for some 40 years.

One of her pupils, Margaret Collins, also became a teacher and later served as the district's last Superintendent. She stepped down in 1965 when the state mandated the small district unify with the larger Richmond School District.

Miss Collins had previously honored Ellerhorst, her beloved mentor, by naming a new Pinole Valley school after her in the early 1960s.

It was also in 1965 that Miss Collins hired an energetic new teacher fresh out of San Francisco state College. His name was David M.

Botta. He came with a proud hometown Italian pedigree from nearby Crockett.

David was recruited by principal Arthur Kelly, who wanted more male teachers at his Ellerhorst School. Who could have predicted that when the new Mr. Botta settled in Room #1 to teach 6th grade, he would remain there for 40 years?

His coming also meant Ellerhorst School would never again be the same calm oasis in Pinole Valley.

I arrived to teach at Ellerhorst School in the fall of 1966. I was also recruited by Principal Kelly, and lured away from my school by his stories of an abundance of good-looking, single young female teachers.

I had been the only male on my other faculty, and I left to the delight of the ladies, who could

once more claim the men's room as their own.

Little did I know then that no teacher-training manual could have prepared me for my new faculty family or for my new room neighbor — a charismatic and good-natured character named David Botta. His classroom was stamped Room #1 — and as I was to learn — a well-deserved personality number for him as well.

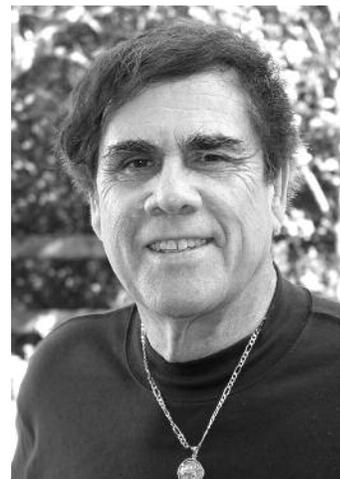
Mr. Botta welcomed me to the staff and showed me the school ropes. I was at first pitied, but eventually forgiven for not being Italian. We became fast friends, as both of us were local boys from the small twin planets of Crockett and Pinole.

David was to one day become a groomsman at my wedding, a godfather to my son, and a classy master of ceremonies at my retirement party.

David loved his Crockett roots; his family had owned the local garbage company. He entertained our staff with endless stories of "growing up Crockett."

He was a tireless worker in the charitable Italian Catholic Federation.

He had chosen to come to Pinole for a teaching job because he was so well-known in the Crockett community that he wanted a fresh start where his name was



George Vincent

unknown. It did not take long for his name and exceptional teaching reputation to travel the length of Pinole Valley's expensive new households.

The times in 1966 were a-changing. Mini-skirts, Flower Children, and psychedelic art and protest music invaded the culture. We still had a strict dress code of suits and ties while teaching large classes for about \$400 a month.

Pinole Valley's new homes sold for about \$35,000, and the city still held its colorful Fiesta de Pinole parade. But the main event in Mr. Botta's life in 1966 was his marriage to Rodeo beauty Pat Keys. He was now both a new teacher and a newlywed at 23.

Most of our faculty and staff were also very young, eager new teachers who bonded well in sharing teaching skills, as well as being very socially interactive.

In short, we had a fun-loving group including administrators, secretaries, and custodians.

It was Mr. Botta who was the sparkplug of our social calendar.

Continued on page 9

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THANK YOU, MR. BOTTA!

Continued from page 8

We had ethnic luncheons that would have made Martha Stewart envious, as well as off-campus holiday parties and excursions to local historical hot spots to support community businesses.

However, it was in the classroom where Mr. Botta's unique style of teaching magic would make him endeared to 40 years of Pinole's kids then, and later as adults.

He possessed a keen memory for his students' names. He kept 40 years

of class photos and knew the name of every child as a grown-up.

In all those years, he never missed a teaching day, even when his voice was only a whisper.

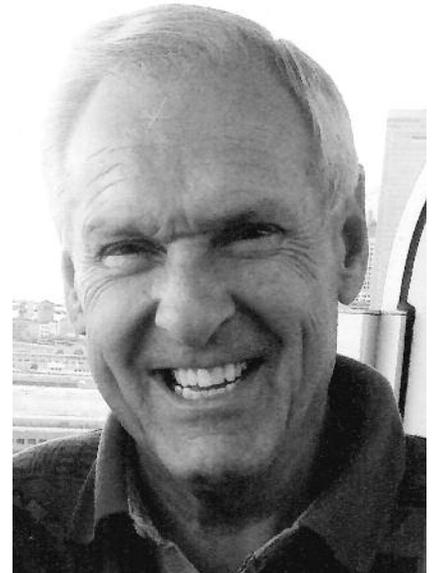
When on recess yard duty, Mr. Botta needed no whistle to get pupils' attention; his booming voice caused far-away doors to be closed and frightened birds to take flight.

To be a successful teacher, you have to be well-organized, have class control, and be respected by your students and

peers. Mr. Botta got a gold star on all counts.

He always gave 100% to his job and co-workers. He believed every child could learn if properly motivated, and he was their motivator.

His room was a museum showplace for neatness, his 6th-graders always lined up quietly, and he was well respected because he gave respect to his youngsters in return.



Dave Botta

However, to last 40 years in teaching, you
Continued on page 10

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GOT HISTORY?

The Pinole Historical Society is grateful for donations of artifacts, photos, newspapers, memorabilia — anything of historical significance.

Please contact us at
info@PinoleHistoricalSociety.org
or call (510) 724-9507.

THANK YOU, MR. BOTTA!

Continued from page 9

have to have something more going for you that you transfer to preteens besides academics.

Mr. Botta had an unorthodox way of building the necessary trust between teacher and pupil to inspire learning.

CAN'T FOOL KIDS

Children size up a teacher very quickly. In Mr. Botta's unique personality they found an exceptional person who loved teaching and really cared for them.

He was a genuine human being who smiled, laughed a lot, and ran a fun and orderly classroom.

He also gave no apologies to students for

setting his expectations for success and student behavior during their time with him.

When they graduated from Room #1 at year's end, students were not just prepared for junior high. Mr. Botta's classroom was a microcosm of learned life skills they would proudly carry forever as treasured memories of his imprint on their lives.

Such memorable moments stand out as his class's "Wacky Gleason Show," his hilarious "Old Lady Dress" at Halloween, and the competitive 6th-grade games of kickball, volleyball, and softball. A testimony to how well he was loved by his pupils was the Mt. Everest-pile of gifts

submerging his desk at Christmas.

SURPRISE VISITS

A visit to your classroom by Mr. Botta was usually unannounced, but always exciting with his loud "Who's in Charge?" greeting. Forget getting your class back on task after that. It was like Santa visiting in the spring.

I have Mr. Botta to personally thank for encouraging me in 1969 to ask for a date with a gorgeous new 2nd-grade teacher named Miss Christie DeVault. We were later to be married.

David passed away peacefully on November 14, 2019, shortly after his 76th birthday and a series of illnesses. My wife and I both miss him dearly.

ONE OF A KIND

When he retired in 2005, Mr. Botta's service to the community was honored by retiring Room #1 in his name with a brass plaque above the door.

Mr. Botta was a rare kind of teacher who could teach without books, and living proof that teaching is an art form all its own.

Mr. Botta's teaching

career has also been honored by his daughter, Nancy. She has followed in her father's footsteps as a teacher at Collins School in Pinole. In 1965, the school was called Pinole-Hercules #2. Coincidentally, it was here also that her father's professional career began when he signed his first teaching contract with Margaret Collins.

Mr. Botta was Pinole's adopted son and an unsung hero of its history. He taught generations of Pinole's youth, and has earned the grateful recognition of the city for his dedication to educating so many of its citizens.

Mr. Botta and Frances Ellerhorst were alike in many ways. They both shared a sense of humor and a winning smile for all they met. Both also loved to walk and garden.

I am sure in Mr. Botta's eternal encounters, Miss Ellerhorst will stop him and say, "Thank You, Mr. Botta, for a job well done in my name."

Mr. Botta was nicknamed the "Crockett Rocket." He might have been launched from Crockett, but luckily for Pinole, he landed here.


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PINOLE'S MUSEUM WEBSITE — SPREAD THE WORD!

The Pinole History Museum website is online at www.pinolehistorymuseum.org.

There are sections on the Pinole Garden Club, historic preservation, the Pinole Historical Society's annual school essay contest, the Faria House, the Fernandez Mansion, and some of our planned museum exhibits.

And, of course, you may donate to the museum via the website.

Let us know what you think of the website. E-mail comments and suggestions to info@pinolehistorymuseum.org.



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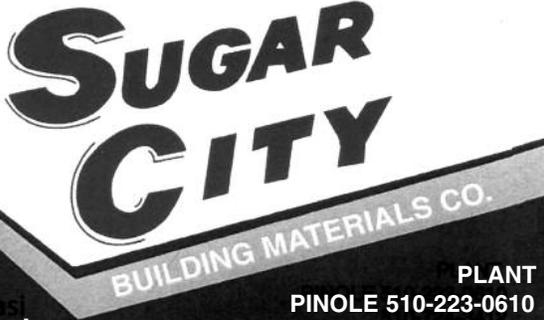
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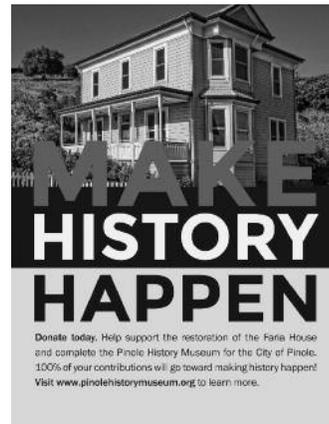
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The Pinole History Museum is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (82-1454949).

Your donation is tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.



PVHS INTERACT HAS THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

**By Leda Pho-Thai
President, Pinole Valley High School Interact**

Interact is an international organization that fosters students' leadership skills by teaching them to become responsible human beings, aiding them in international peace, unity, and understanding.

Interact clubs are largely student-governed, but are supported and inspired by the Rotary Club, a large, international service organization run by adults.

The name Interact comes from a combination of the words "international" and "action."

We interact with other high schools to promote communication, social activities, and service above self. Interactors learn the importance of leadership, personal integrity, helpfulness, respect for others, and advancement in interna-

tional understanding and goodwill. In the process, members are also able to have fun and meet new friends.

Interact gives youth an opportunity to give back, and show they are capable of being leaders of the community.

The community gives us so many opportunities, and it's our turn to show appreciation and say thank you.

Volunteering is a great way to feel good about yourself, as it is productive and it helps the community.

Pinole Valley Interact meets every Monday, where we discuss future events and how to prepare for them. We also reflect on past events to learn how to improve for the future.

Some of our biggest events are charity

dinner and environmental clean ups.

Dinner is one of the most important Interact events because we usually get extra money to fund our year-long projects. This year, we are looking into hosting a campus clean-up at our school, and making care packages to help out the homeless communities.

Hosting such events allows us to widen our networks and interact with other members from different high schools in California. These events also help us develop better leadership and communication skills.

Each individual has his or her own reason why they want to give back to the community, so I asked some of my fellow members why they joined Interact.

What really draws people to want to give back to their communities?

"After growing up in this community, I realized how much of a change I can make. I want the younger generation to realize they are not alone. It is always okay to ask for help. By me going to events, I am able to interact with other mentors and make a change, bettering my own community. The youth being involved sets a good example for the younger ones and strengthens one's self."

— Samantha VanSlochteren

"I enjoy volunteering. We are able to help the world in so many ways without even knowing."

"Seeing people enjoy something is one of the best feelings. When you are physically doing something, it makes you feel involved."

— Angelina Young

Continued on page 13

The Pinole Historical Society promotes awareness and appreciation of history through preservation and education, and chronicles the city's heritage for current and future generations.

PVHS INTERACT

Continued from page 12

"I give back because my actions are louder than my words. I'm not a person who just says things and doesn't commit. I stay true to my words.

"To feel like I'm doing something right I need to physically do it myself. The continuing encouragement makes me want to keep going and help. It makes me feel happy when I'm doing something right.

"I like to think about how privileged I am and how others don't have those opportunities. I'm thankful for them and want to take advantage of those opportunities.

"There is a special feeling when you're giving back. It's not all about getting free food, t-shirts, or stickers.

If you do not like what is going on, then

go out there and do something about it.

When you're trying to do something positive and impactful, no one is going to tell you no."

— Leda Pho-Thai

Honestly, most of us do not know why we want to give back. Once you start doing it, you start developing appreciation for it. Giving back makes you feel like you have a purpose.

RELATIONSHIPS

Doing community work, you start developing relationships with different people, and start getting to know your community more.

There's a certain feeling that gives you that makes you want to do more. Once you experience it yourself, you have a better understanding of what's going on.

Without Interact, many of us would not have the



L-R: PVHS Interact Club members Christine Tran, An Le, Kamilah Pollard model their motto – Service Above Self – on their t-shirts.

chance to grow as an individual. Interact allows us to get to know our community, as well as ourselves. We get to see and experience the different things that make up our community.

IMPROVING THE WORLD

When you put service above self, the world can be a much better place.

Volunteering is not always easy, but you always get something out of it, whether it be friendship, or even just an experience that makes everything worth doing.

We are the youth and we are the future. Most people might not realize the power that youth

holds because they might think that being a kid, you can only do so much.

Many of us look around and realize that we need to take action to make our communities a better space for us, and for all.

TAKE ACTION

Sometimes, we might feel powerless, but volunteering gives us that feeling that we can indeed make a change and help out the community.

As individuals, if you want the world to be a better place, you should take action and help. Be the change that you wish to see.

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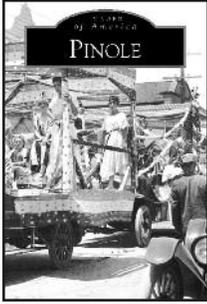
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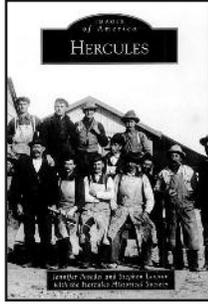


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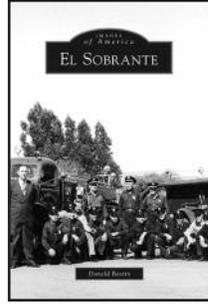
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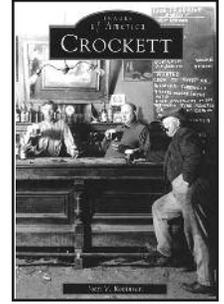
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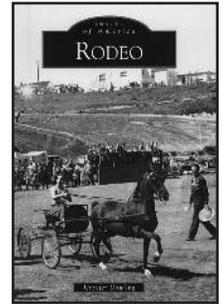
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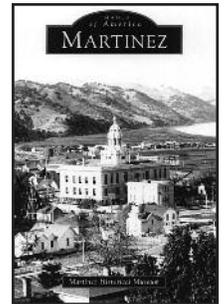
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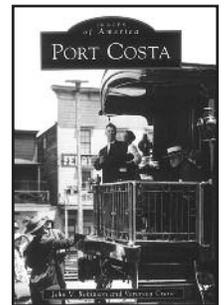
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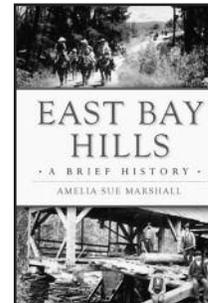
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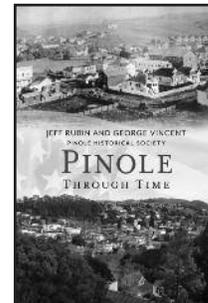
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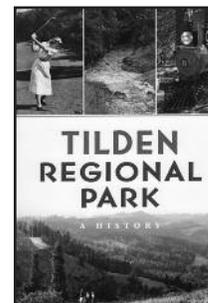
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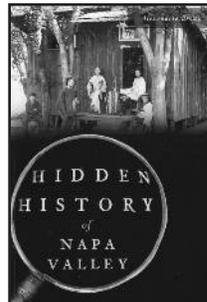
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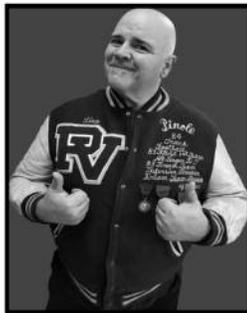
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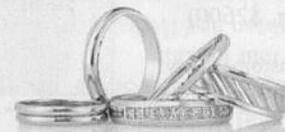
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