

Ohhh My Orinda James Benney 2025

Kindergarten

I transferred from Park Merced kindergarten in San Francisco to Sleepy Hollow School in Orinda when I was almost 5. It was 1954.

The thing I most remember was the teacher telling me to arrange the books on the reading table the way they were before. I guess I didn't like the way she spoke to me. I knocked all the books to the floor and refused to pick them up.

I had to go to the Principal's office. She called my Mom who came to pick me up and drive me home. I remember thinking on the way home "This isn't so bad".

I don't remember ever really getting in trouble with my parents. It was always just a question of what were we going to do now. It was my life to live along with the consequences for my actions.

Hillside

We had a nice hill behind our house with a lot of coyote brush and a big Bay tree and a gnarly old Buckeye tree.

I spent a lot of time back there crawling through the brush and sitting in the branches of the Buckeye with a nice view of Sleepy Hollow and the hills beyond.

When I was 11 or 12 I saw a big brown bear lumbering up through the brush below me. Nobody believed me.

A few days later the last known bear in the East Bay was hit by a car on San Pablo Dam Road by Bear Creek Road.

The hillside hosted deer, rabbits, coyotes, skunks and more. And me.

I'll never forget at school one day watching a kid who didn't like what was going on head up the nearby hill on foot to go home. That seemed like the right way to handle things.

I spent a lot of time roaming the hills and creeks. There was never any fear of getting lost or hurt or not making it home for dinner.

Creeks and Hills

Orinda was really pretty idyllic back in the day, wherever you were. The weather between San Francisco Bay and the Central Valley was usually just right. Nobody had air conditioners. Once in a while in the winter the creeks would flood and the storm drains would ice up.

In the summer the fog would roll in over the Berkeley hills and hold back the Central Valley heat. Wonderful to behold.

Free roaming

From the beginning we all could walk and ride bikes to friend's houses or to the school playground for a little baseball game or to shoot a few baskets.

Everybody pretty much got along. It wasn't too boring, most of the time.

The main limitation for me was friends who had to be home to do homework, or Sundays when everybody but me had to go to church.

My parent's pretty much stopped telling me what to do after I ran away to the movie theater one day when I was very young. After that I just went along with what I had to.

Art Dawson M67

Although there was a commonality to our experiences because of where we were blessed to be, each had experiences that were unique to him or her.

Paul Cunha M72

I remember that before BART was finished, no one had ever heard of Orinda. Now, when asked where I grew up, I let them know that I spent my formative years on the mean streets of Orinda. It usually gets a laugh.

Joey Tuttle Judge *Acalanes High School '58*

A couple of times, just for fun, Sally Johnson, Steph Jensen and I hiked to the old Orinda School through the barbed wire fences and cow pastures that are now the Orinda Woods town house development.

We once took our very heavy fat-tired bikes and our dogs up over the hill to Briones. Of course we had to push those bikes all the way up the hill with our dogs happily running loose alongside. We rode through the little settlement of Briones.

I remember a store there but not much else, now long under the Briones Reservoir.

The Orinda School was still K-8 (Kindergarten to Eighth Grade) at that point.

Mr. Boyce was my 8th grade teacher and Billy Judge was in my class.

I kissed him the first time as seniors at Cal, married him ten months later and that was 63 years ago. Orinda has been good to me!

Paul Locklin M64

I remember growing up in a small California town called Orinda. Sleepy Hollow was part of Orinda.

It was all pretty much ranchland with occasional clusters of California ranch style homes.

My Parents

My parents came from working class backgrounds and close family structures. They were around 10 years old when the Great Depression hit in 1930 and as adults strove to be financially secure.

They met at Cal Berkeley during World War Two. Even though my Mom was known as a cripple (polio) in those days, my Dad always told me all women have the same equipment but they don't all have the same brains and inner strength. She had lots of both. That is what counts. She worked as a librarian until I was born.

Dad was an Army Air Force flight engineer during World War II and when he came back he switched his major from

engineering to law. My Grandpa disowned him. He hated lawyers.

I was the first child of three, born in 1949 in Quincy Massachusetts while Dad was in Law School. He got a job as an Associate at Orrick Herrington in San Francisco and later became a partner and an esteemed corporate lawyer.

He worked long hours and Saturdays all of his life. To help my mother cope with 3 kids he would take me to the office on Saturdays and I could play with the typewriters and hang around. He was usually the only lawyer there.

It was always clear that our parents loved us unconditionally and would do anything they could to help us get along. We were in Orinda partly because of the good schools and they were fervent about us kids getting a good education so that we could always be learning in life.

When I started getting in trouble with the law in my teens Dad would call a judge friend in the middle of the night and I would get bailed out of Juvenile Hall or Jail first thing in the morning.

Peer Group Parents

In Orinda our parents were for the most part well educated doctors and lawyers and business people. It never meant anything to us. They were all just parents. We kids didn't know anything about middle class, upper middle class, or rich. Later we learned we were better off than the kids in Richmond.

When I moved to an apartment in Berkeley when I was 18, I could hardly believe how many people around me had next to nothing to get by on, right over the hill from where I grew up.

Wendy Hall Read M67

You were so right about us not knowing our socio-economic status growing up. We were just kids and our parents were just parents! We all so admired your mom. She was such a strong woman despite her polio! Yes, you were one of the "bad" boys but not scary!

Donna Viale Gertler C68

Is such segregation from the outside a good thing? I grew up in Berkeley until I was 7. I lived on a block with so many people from all over the world. I often wonder what if we hadn't moved to Orinda.

*I remember your mom saying I was from the wrong side of town,
That was Orinda privilege.*

*I was often looked down on for not having nice clothes in Orinda. I
did have fun in my neighborhood. We had at least 60 kids we played
with all the time. To this day I have mixed feelings about the town.*

Christine Winters Dawdy, Acalanes '53

*My mother was Peg Winters. She taught a lot of Orinda kids to play
piano whether they wanted to or not.
She also coined the name "Dramateurs" and formed a group that put
on plays for children at the Orinda school.*

*This was during World War II. The divides between the Country Club
people and the Park Pool people weren't there during wartime.
Rationing was a great leveler.*

Phil Hicks M62

*The war was different for my father. He was an architect (MIT) and
wasn't allowed to enlist. He was forced to design army bases. As a
young man, he was spit on and sworn at on the streets in SF
because he wasn't in uniform.*

*My father-in-law (MIT) was abused similarly, and of course he could
not reveal that he was working in the Manhattan Project. He
developed the detonator for the bombs. Oh, yeah, duck and cover.*

For years I had nightmares about the mushroom cloud rising behind the Berkeley hills.

Your "city outing" (Bus to city) reminded me of a third grade trip to Chinatown to wander and then eat. The food was great, but the ants parading in single file around the booth were quite a highlight.

Ana Lucas M72

What I remember about Orinda: it was hot and dry and filled with foxtails.

What I found on Saturday at our Reunion: it was lush, green, with lovely public places

What I remember about Orinda people: too rich to keep up with, competitive, very strong cliques.

What I found at the Reunion: a mixed bunch of normal people, some with extraordinary talents, friendly and eager to talk.

What I remember about our home at 42 Las Cascadas: a huge house with pebbly, unusable patios.

What I found at 42 Las Cascadas: the only house in the area that hadn't been torn down and doubled or tripled in size, with simple smooth patios on either side, and one of the three redwoods Dad planted in the front yard still reaching for the sky.

Greg Dabel M68

And then there were a few of us who found Orinda to be a foreign land.

I arrived in Orinda in 1964 during my freshman year, a transfer from Berkeley High School. At Berkeley High School, I was an inner-city student.

I was ethnically White but a 'minority' because everyone was an ethnic minority. One-third of us were White. One-third Black. One-third Asian and Hispanic.

I arrived in all-white Orinda in 1964 and found that the only students of color at Miramonte were the exchange students (from Japan, Brazil, etc.).

I found Orinda and Miramonte to be dripping with money and snobbishness. Yes, there were good times. But I was glad to be done with it all when I graduated in 1968. Orinda is a beautiful place, but it has never been part of the real world.

Tom Well M73

My parents worked very hard to repress my maniacal tendencies.

We too went "exploring" along the creeks and woods and used to bring home jars of polliwogs, and suffer from brushing up against poison oak.

My parents also met a UC Berkeley. Dad immigrated in 1938 from Germany. Most of his relatives died in concentration camps. His immediate family was fortunate enough to "buy" their way out just in time. They settled in San Francisco.

Upon moving to Orinda, my parents were invited to join the Orinda Country Club, but the invitation was rescinded when it was revealed that my Dad was from a Jewish Family.

During my high school years, we used to sneak onto the Orinda Country Club golf course greens and fairways late at night to "ice slide". We'd leave the ice blocks on the putting greens to piss off the OCC members.

Orinda Country Club

It was just there. I started caddying at the golf course when I was 11, and when we were kids we'd go out in the afternoons and evenings when it was empty and knock a few balls around.

My parents, both Cal Berkeley grads and the only liberal democrats in Orinda at the time, kind of looked down their noses at the Country Club types, who were snooty rich people.

I got along fine. I caddied, they paid me, and the old guys would pick me up hitchhiking, even in the middle of the night.

Their kids were all just like the rest of us as far as we knew.

The Orinda Country Club had strict bylaws until the Civil Rights Act in the 1960's. No Blacks and no Jews. No exceptions. They had to reluctantly comply in a very limited fashion after that.

Kris Kay Maita M68

Shirley DenDulk and a few other classmates got caught by our moms when we were out "night running" on the Orinda Country Club golf course.

We had stuffed our sleeping bags but Shirley's brother Johnny turned us in. We had done it a few times before but that was the last time. We were always excited to see who else might be out at night!

I cherish my friendships K-12 growing up in Orinda.

Lisa Dyson M73

When I was ten my family moved to north Orinda, close to the Orinda Country Club. At ten years old, I thought we had moved to the poor side of town, because there were no sidewalks in north Orinda, just very old, narrow little country roads. We rode our bikes everywhere. We never worried about personal safety. Things were pretty idyllic.

Nancy Calavan M68

Who could forget Night Running-and ice sliding on the Country Club golf course. And going to someone's home-to play spin the bottle (my 1st kiss).

The squeaky clean boys transformed into the long haired product of the 60's. Should we go to the football game or a riot in Berkeley? Beach Boys vs the Beatles. Haight Ashbury/SF or a school dance.

One day a bus load of us spent the school day at Oakland Tech High School, and their bus load spent the day at Miramonte. (I guess that was our Cultural Diversity Day with people from through the tunnel / and over the hills.)

And I remember a ton of walking and climbing hills to get to do and see anyone.

Dave Ramet M61

A document was present with the deed to our new Orinda house in 1950 which bound my parents to never sell to Blacks, Native Americans, Jews, and the usual suspects. They were obliged to sign or some other more compliant prospect would.

Jews in Orinda?

None that I knew of until Miss Luder German teacher remarked on Lance Chilton's excellent German accent and he revealed his roots and use of the language at home.

She remarked "Chilton isn't a Jewish name," and he replied "the name was Cohen."

My aunt's husband was a Jew from New York.

He also employed illegal immigrant labor, a Nazi SS man to answer the phone

Antisemitism wasn't part of youth culture, we were too isolated and ignorant. The only Afro American was custodian Gay Robert who preyed on boys at the Orinda Theater.

Suspected sons of Democrats were to be pummeled.

It was worse to be a Democrat than any of the racially undesirable creatures.

Sixty years later a young suitor of my daughter bought a house off El Sobrante Road and encountered the same Hacienda Homes document.

The Orinda Country Club was the soft business encounter place for the white collar Corporation Men.

Gordie Seaman M66

We too lived in Sleepy Hollow. In fact, the Seamans were the 9th family to build and move into the Hollow back in late 1947.

My parents settled on an acre and a third, on a hillside, with a nice view of the Oakland Hills,

I got such a kick from reading about you and the Principal's office at Sleepy Hollow School. Jamie Armstrong and I spent many a noon hour there ourselves! Cynthia Knox was the principal and we called her "Fort Knox".

I also remember Mrs. Thom for second grade. Mrs. Thom would break rulers and pencils over heads when she was pissed off at something.

Thanks for remembering Ted Boyce and the flag ceremonies in the front parking circle. He was a great guy. And my favorite memory of Pine Grove is Don Jesse (8th grade) who got us through the Constitution in just a few short weeks while all the other kids and parents were sweating bullets about the test! He was truly a character and a teacher I'll never forget. God, what DRAMA!

Golf

There were two sides to Orinda. The Country Club Side and The Crossroads Side. The divide still exists today. The kids didn't know. We golfed in the afternoons and evenings when no one else was out there. It was fun to

find golf balls in the creeks and to ice slide on the fairways at night.

Sometimes someone would steal golf carts at night and cruise around. Those were the days! Eventually the whole place got fenced off and locked down.

Caddy

The Caddy Shack on the other hand was another world in the early sixties. We waited under the deck to get picked to go out on a round. There were old black men who had been there for years and Richmond kids trying to make a few bucks.

It helped to not stand out too much and be eager to help out. We would pitch pennies and nickels and play cards until we were called up. If there were too many hopeful caddies sometimes you didn't get to go out. Ambitious caddies would carry two bags for 18 holes. Some guys would go out twice a day. Starting at eleven years old I always had a few dollars in my pocket.

Edward (Sandy) Cutler M63

I was a caddie at the Country Club until a group of young boys from Richmond became caddies and forced out the Orinda kids like me.

Gordie Seaman M66

My brother Kit and I and Jamie Armstrong would go to the caddie shack too. We would sit around just as you described so well. I would carry singles and I recall the pay was \$4. Kit got to where he was carrying doubles, and then would even go out twice on some days. Shit, he'd come home with a wad of money. We did look for golf balls in all the creeks along Miner Road.

Jay Angelo M64

From about 1957 through 1960, I was a golf caddy at Orinda Country Club. This was back in the day when it was almost unheard of for a golfer to use a cart. Started out carrying a single bag when I was 11, and by the time I was twelve I was packing doubles. \$5-~~6~~ for a single and \$10-\$12 for doubles. That was a helluva lot of money back then.

Most of the caddies were from Oakland, El Cerrito, Richmond and San Pablo. This was a rough group of guys; quite a few had quit school or were just occasional truants. They had a tremendous disdain for Orinda people.

You learned how to stand up for yourself quickly - otherwise you would be hounded out of the "caddy shack.". I treasure those days - learned a lot.

Bill Keegan M68

Having caddied at Lincoln Park and once at the Olympic Club, when I went over to the Orinda Country Club to caddy I was told my hair was too long. Orinda was very uptight in the year I was there. The high school was just terrific. Mr. Sanford and that "great books" class was a gas. And wow, the girls were better than average.

Jody Jeffrey M66

*I too was one of the regulars at the Caddy Shack!
The card game that was played was called Tonk.
I used to carry singles (one bag) at first (\$3.50 a loop).
I was 10-11 years old then moved up to carrying doubles
until I was about 20 Brutal going out twice in the summer!! Very
hilly course!*

*Did you know that the 11th hole is set on an Indian burial ground?
(All those mounds around it, bizzarro!) heavy vibes! It is called "The
Graveyard".*

Boysen / Breuner / Longs

There were some people in Orinda that were considered to be kind of rich.

The Boysen Paint family were among the first to build in Sleepy Hollow and had a real nice home with a large pond.

The Breuner's Furniture family compound was across the creek and up the hill. They would have huge annual parties for their employees that came by the busload.

The Long's Drug people had a mansion on several acres right across the way, with horses for the kids and the whole rich package.

Sue Shabel Brix M68

We came back to Orinda from Texas and moved to Moraga ("the poor people"!!!) in my 8th grade year.

One of my escapades was going into the inside of the Caldecott Tunnel and another was going into the catacombs under St Mary's college!

Dick Davis

My connection to Orinda was being a Lucky Stores grocery clerk from 1958-1961 and returned to Cal Berkeley in 1964 and sympathized with the Free Speech Movement and wondered how the students could risk arrest or expulsion.

*I also wish today that all others had my advantages. Those advantages began **with** a good paying job at Lucky Stores, union wages started at \$2.22 an hour.*

I could rent a room for \$30 a month and save, plus virtually free California higher education. \$5 a semester at Oakland City College and \$60 my first semester at Cal and \$120 my final year. These were fees, there was no tuition. On campus at Cal I could eat at the cafeteria for \$2 a day.

Those three advantages, good pay, modest housing cost and no tuition are what I wish all others had today.

Religion

My parents were seriously anti Organized Religion, period. Both graduated from UC Berkeley in the late 40s, believers in science and social engagement.

They taught their kids that:

#1

More people had been slaughtered in the name of Jesus Christ than any other religion and the rest weren't far behind.

#2

People used religion as a crutch to help them cope with life, and we had enough going on in our lives that we didn't need a crutch.

My mother had polio and had to fasten a metal brace to her leg before she could get out of bed, and walked with

the help of a cane her entire adult life. So we weren't talking about that kind of crutch.

I knew nothing about anyone's religious practices except that a lot of my friends could not play on Sundays. I never set foot in a church. I was and still am completely ignorant of the difference between Catholics, Jews, Methodists etc.

It is not a factor in how I regard or interact with any human being. I don't care what their race or religion is. There is a lot to do besides praying all the time.

Mission Dolores

Because I had zero contact with church life growing up I didn't know how seriously people took it. In fourth grade we had a field trip to Mission Dolores in the city.

We walked into the sacred chapel and I bounded up to stand behind the podium on the alter. My teacher almost had a heart attack. I had no idea.

Christmas at 7 years old

For years our meals were fairly modest.

Cereal for breakfast, sandwiches for lunch, and spaghetti for dinner. Catsup was the vegetable.

We always had to eat it all because there were people starving all over the world.

Our Christmas Eve was an extravagant family affair with both sets of Grandparents and occasional Aunts and Uncles. Everybody was expected to bring a personal present for everybody else. Imagine the pile! Over 100 wrapped gifts.

When I was about 7 I looked at the mound of presents and thought “This is not right. How many people could we feed with what all of these gifts cost?”

I’ve never gotten over it, although peer pressure, marital demands, and my own kids expectations have forced me to begrudgingly go along. Now I’m called Scrooge and Grumpa.

Rich Kids

Growing up, we didn’t know one from the other, and it didn’t matter. Afterwards in life I came to the conclusion that the richer they were the more fucked up they were. That was not always true.

Today, the battles over the parent’s estates can get quite ugly, and frequently families break up and don’t talk to each other anymore. Sad but true.

Smart Kids

There were kids with brains that stood out right off the bat. Nothing academic or intellectual fazed them.

Not too many of us had to deal with it, but peer group acceptance was not unusual, and of course the teachers catered to them. Skipping a year every now and then could happen. They had their own demons to deal with.

Troubled Kids

There were kids who were always getting into trouble and usually having a good time doing it. Sometimes they would be held back a year, or have to go to another school, or get locked up in Juvenile Hall for awhile.

Serious issues could get you swept off to a mental institution, and then often forgotten about.

These kids were fun and entertaining to be around. Other times they were just very unhappy souls. I don't remember knowing about too many suicides, but they did occur occasionally.

I was a little mix of everything.

Lisa Douglas M71

There is still a wild side to all official members of the Orinda Brat Pack of which you and I are always members along with all the original Orinda families we know!!

Vince Campanile M61

The one thing I noticed that is missing in all of the comments so far is the fun of orchard running with your automobile. The owners of the orchards, of course did not think it was fun.

One other thing we did cruise North Main Street in Walnut Creek.

Sleepy Hollow Halloween

For some reason there was a wild side to some Orinda kids that was hard to contain. On Halloween night the older kids would create havoc in bucolic Sleepy Hollow. Eggings, slashed tires, broken windows, whatever.

It got so bad the police had to come in to try to control it. One year they set a police car on fire and after that there were police stationed at the entrance to Sleepy Hollow for many years.

Bob Abbott M63

Our times growing up were really similar. I grew up in Sleepy Hollow.

Tom Well M73

Orinda Halloween made a huge impression on me. We had bonfires in the street, and the high schoolers scared me. We'd get hit with water-balloons and eggs.

The threat of getting "pants-ed" and having to retrieve our shorts from the top of the flag pole loomed large.

Hal Keenan M72

We weren't the "Bubble wrap" kids that we see today. I thought Halloween antics were normal back then. Parents these days are shocked when I tell them about the Halloween's I participated in when I was a kid.

I remember one story about how some kids connected a chain to Boysen's fence and hooked the other end to a cop car. I guess you know what happened when the cop went after someone.

Personally I think all that hell raising was/is how kids learn important critical thinking skills and learn about owning their behavior.

Vince Campanile M61

It is sad to me that Halloween became such a degraded get together in Sleepy Hollow.

Bob Bahme M69

You have it right! The Good, The Fun, and The Trouble... only if you got caught.

Karen Granberg M66

I remember if a bomb exploded I would be required to walk home from Sleepy Hollow school....alone! I taught my kids to eat your dinner! Starving kids in the world. They said pack it up and send it to China.... One time my son and his friend tried to dig a hole to China. Used screw drivers and saws to cut a three inch circle in the friend's hard wood floor. Threw a rug over it but, got busted

Dr. Prlain

Dr Prlain was our doctor. When one of us kids was sick he would come to the house and sit on the bed to see what he could do. When we went to his examination room he would examine us then we would go into his office where he and my Mom would smoke cigarettes and discuss their plan.

Gordie Seaman M66

OMG, I can't believe you mentioned Dr. Prlain! He took care of my elderly grandmother and would come to the house when needed.

Mrs. Thom

My second grade teacher, old Mrs. Thom, became a legend in Orinda to those in the know. For her every subject became a lesson on phonics and phonetics, and understanding correct spelling.

Her students scored way higher in English testing than all the other kids all the way through high school. It was an important advantage to have.

Don Jesse

Mr. Jesse was my seventh grade teacher at Pine Grove. He made everything interesting, as he had a theatrical background. I will never forget him casting my friend Robby Wallace, who had a serious stuttering problem, in the lead role of the annual school play. It cured the stuttering for good. Magic of the highest order.

Ted Boyce

Ted was the Principal at Pine Grove Intermediate School. He led the Pledge of Allegiance at the flag pole every morning. A great guy. He made friends with all the kids who were getting in trouble, many of whom maintained life long relationships with him. He never missed our All Orinda Multi-Class Reunions, held every five years from 1990 on.

Over-all education

Even though I was not a good student and spent a lot of time in the back of the class with the other troublemakers, I got a good education, in my opinion.

In fact I have often felt that I was better educated than more recent graduates from UC Berkeley. My parents probably had a lot to do with that.

I seldom did homework and didn't really care if I passed or failed tests. It was my life to lead and I would have to live with my choices.

Apparently I did well on the IQ tests and other testing in comparison to everyone else.

Even though I didn't do all the homework I paid attention during classes and wasn't afraid to chime in with questions and comments. Often to the chagrin of the instructor.

My Dad had taught us to question conventional thinking.

His attorney partners thought they could win either side of almost any case. First you had to understand both sides, then proceed from there.

Irene Ingram (Moylan) Smith M59

My class entered Miramonte in 1955 - the year of its opening. Four years later, we became the first graduating class from this high school. Previous students from Orinda had attended Acalanes High School in Lafayette.

Our class was the beginning of the succession of students to follow but in 1955 we were the new Freshmen - the only class at this big new high school. - There were no Sophomores, Juniors or Seniors. Because the Class of '59 was the lead class, there were no older students to help guide us and no older boys to date!

Being a brand new school, much of the completion continued so we endured constant construction noise - I remember they were still building the pool and tennis courts, etc.

Our class was given the honor of choosing our new school

colors. We chose pink and black but the administration didn't like those colors so they chose green and white instead.

Our class still had many friends at Acalanes and they were the 'trend-setters'. What happened at Acalanes, later happened at Miramonte.

We had some wonderful athletes at Miramonte and all the girl talk was about Dixon Farmer - a tall, dark and handsome young man who excelled at track and went on to become a track coach at a major college.

Our class had some testy students who, I'm told, cut down the school flag pole as a prank - I never knew exactly why but I think it was in retaliation for some school policy. One of our teachers, Miss Giddings, was the Dean of Girls and an English teacher. Students were wary of her as she was a tough, no-nonsense teacher and expected rules to be obeyed. It was rumored that some students ordered a truck load of sand and had it dumped on her lawn as a prank.

Don Gardner (C69)

I went to the first 'All Orinda Reunion' (was it 1990?) held at the Rheem Theater – (one of the promoters I recall was Greg Bedayn – I'd bet a lot of your readers knew Greg...). Later I was present for another All Orinda Reunion (I believe it was in the 2000s, perhaps organized by you) held at the site of what had years earlier been known as Orinda School (in the Village); for that event I was joined

by my two older brothers; we had a great time and met up with lots of people we had known back in our school days.

One afternoon in late 2019 I needed something from the hardware store, so I drove down to the 'Crossroads' and parked on Orinda Way. As I was walking down the sidewalk, I noticed two teenage boys rather clumsily trying to roll up some weed.

One of them elbowed the other and said (somewhat carelessly) "Geezer alert!" Upon hearing that I whipped around expecting to see some doddering old bald guy following me (probably in Bermuda shorts and knee socks with a cane) – but nope – no one was there but me, (and I was only 68, reasonably fit and in good health.)

As I realized they were talking about me, I strolled up to them and said, "Why are you guys so nervous? Marijuana's legal now." The smarter one replied, "Not for us. We're not 21 yet." Uh huh.

I then spoke in a quiet and confidential tone and said, "You must be students from Miramonte." The kid who'd made the geezer remark retorted, "What makes you think that?" I smiled and quipped, "Because every freshman at Campolindo knows how to roll a joint discreetly in public..." With that I wandered off and entered the hardware store.

David Watkins M66

I didn't get kicked out of Miramonte High School, but I came within an inch. The school Principal Jim Lewis pointed to the door and said "You can go." I backed down because I was within three months of graduation and had been accepted to UCSB. I decided could tolerate those fools (Blackwood and Callan) for a bit longer.

I remember sneaking onto the golf course to play a hole or two. We kept an eye out for the man in the jeep.

There were one or two Halloweens where I participated in the mayhem in Sleepy Hollow. We were crazy. I'm not exactly proud of that.

In the El Toyonal neighborhood where I grew up, hardly any of the yards were fenced off. It was normal for kids to cut through people's yards to get where they needed to go. In fact our back yard was part of an important route for kids walking to and from the Park Pool.

I was a weird kid; in today's language, I was somewhere out on the spectrum. This made it hard for me to interact with other kids because I didn't know how.

One positive thing about my weirdness is that I had an uncanny mathematical ability. In Mr. Klein's 8th grade math class at Pine Grove, I realized for the first time that I understood the material way better than the teacher did.

Well, I parlayed that talent into a career as a professor of mathematics at several universities,

My childhood was difficult; I was a basket case; Who in Orinda would want to talk to me?

Judy Ageno Dossa M60.

Such a gift to grow up in Orinda. We kind of knew it but didn't think about how glorious it was until Squire Fridel wrote a beautiful description for our graduation ceremony.

Mary (Kooyman) Tebault M67

This did spark some memories!! Things I didn't know then that are eye openers now. I was so very shy, and going through school starting at Sleepy Hollow Elementary made it very difficult when I was finally trying to overcome shyness in my high school years. I was pretty myopic if you know what I mean!

Karen Klopfer Painter M59

I was in the first class, "59. What an experience. We picked the colors, the mascot, the name of the yearbook (Mirada), and like first children in a family, we wore down the faculty and staff to make life easier for y'all to follow

We had amazing faculty & staff. Mr. Campbell, a teacher, introduced us to skiing at Heavenly Valley, Dodge Ridge & Sugar Bowl but would not let his science class females go on class field trips with him and the male students.

Lonnette Pugh Corner M63

Please remove me from your list. I'm not the least interested in your life or beliefs growing up. I will report you.

Marilyn Anderson Lindell M64

I will always feel grateful to have been raised and educated in Orinda! At Miramonte. I remember an emphasis on critical thinking which I believe is sadly lacking (or ignored) today. This included a section on Propaganda Techniques during senior year American Government. The ones that come to mind immediately are "Glittering Generalities" and "Jump on the Bandwagon."

Lisa Dyson M73

I enjoy reading your reminiscences of Orinda. High school was not my most favorite of times, but occasionally I do look back on some of it with fondness

When I was ten my family moved from a house very close to Del Rey Elementary School to north Orinda, close to the Orinda Country

Club. At ten years old, I thought we had moved to the poor side of town, because there were no sidewalks in north Orinda, just very old, narrow little country roads. We rode our bikes everywhere. We never worried about personal safety. Things were pretty idyllic.

I do remember Dr. Prlain, (he had a daughter named Lisa too). In those days doctors made house calls.

I found Ted Boyce to be very intimidating, even though I was a very well behaved girl, who did well in school.

Our family always sat down at the dining room dinner table every night and had dinner. Not to venture into politics, but I believe it was Ronald Reagan who said something to the effect that all great change in America begins at the dinner table, emphasizing the importance of the family unit as the place where fundamental ideas and values are shared. If the phone rang, we didn't answer it. My dad worked in the investment business. He was very smart, graduated from Berkeley in three years, and ended up being quite successful.

I remember almost all the moms drove station wagons in those days, and the dads drove American mid-size or luxury sedans. It was very rare to see a Mercedes or other European automobile. One of our neighbors was Ed Daly, who owned World Airways, a charter airline. He airlifted many Vietnamese orphans out of Vietnam in the mid 1970's. He owned a Mercedes limousine and drove a Lamborghini. You could hear the engine of the Lamborghini when he drove down the hill past our house, and my younger brothers,

who were little boys at the time, would run to the dining room window to watch him drive by.

He used to let the neighborhood kids play tennis on his tennis court. Occasionally he and my dad would have a drink at the Casa Orinda, which has been around since 1932

I think Orinda had much more of a small town vibe then. Some time in the seventies Ed Daly was written up in Time Magazine, and then the kooks started coming out of the woodwork. Security fences and closed circuit cameras went up around his property. Very unusual for that time.

Orinda had everything from families with farm animals in their backyards - and this was long before it was chic to own farm animals - to families that had servants in their house, and everything in between. We all grew up together and went through the public school system. It was rare that one of us went to a private school.

In August of 1969, Charles Manson and his followers murdered Sharon Tate and her friends at her Benedict Canyon home in north Beverly Hills, and the La Blancas in the Los Feliz district of LA. It was the most gruesome and horrifying thing anyone had ever heard of. Nothing like this had ever happened before. Every day the story was plastered all over the front pages of the San Francisco Chronicle. As it unfolded, after Manson and his followers were apprehended, it only became increasingly macabre and disturbing. Even though we lived almost four hundred miles away, we were all terrified. I asked my father if he recalled anything like

this ever happening in his youth. He said no. The only thing he remembered was the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby.

One month later, in September of 1969, I entered Miramonte High School as a Freshman.

Bill Loughman M65

Our various memories of Orinda in the 1950's and 1960's could generate a thousand page book about a time and place that is the stuff of dreams.

Maureen Monroe (Smith) M73

I will always look back fondly on what a safe "bubble" Orinda felt like when I was growing up there, but I'm also realistic enough to know that under the facade of perfection, people are just people, everyone has problems to deal with and we were all just doing our best to live our lives at that particular moment in time.

Chuck Thomas M72

I was the Matador Mascot in 1968

In 1971 I was sitting in the grand stands, all alone, watching the senior class practice graduation ceremony. The rest of the school were taking their finals. It was dead quiet while I overlooked the school and corridors.

*I was admiring my birds eye view of the entire school while the administration were all in attendance directing the ceremony. I was the only one in the grand stands!
God like.*

*Then I heard a russle and some noise coming down behind me on the hill. When the noise got behind me, all hell broke loose!
Three two stroke motor cycles with extra loud pipes came tearing down to the baseball field, across the soccer field then down through the corridors to the tennis courts, then back through the corridors, (meanwhile Principal Mr.Yaich Etc started to run after them).*

Then they came back up to the baseball field and burned a bunch of donuts creating a huge cloud of dust. Just before the administrators got to them they disappeared over the running hill.

What a fantastic performance by the motorcyclers and please know you were louder than shit!!!

*Oh man...only a Junior and I have lived a complete lifetime!
I was a C student and did very poor on my ACT test. The first day of college I asked, "Why did you let me into California State University of Chico?"
"Because you're from Miramonte"*

My ADD, OCD, ?

I wonder if they had a diagnosis for this kind of thing in the fifties. It would be interesting to read the teachers private comments from my early days.

I wasn't bad, but maybe challenging. I liked having fun running around with my friends or just exploring, and being couped up in a classroom I only put up with because I had to.

I could pay close attention when something interested me, and when I cleaned my own room at home maybe there was an obsessive compulsive aspect to my approach.

Brushing Teeth

There was always something about being told what to do that rubbed me the wrong way. It was hard for my Mom to get me to brush my teeth. There were other things I was more interested in or wanted to do.

In fifth grade one of the parents was a dentist. He brought in a lab testing incubator. All the kids spit into a test tube and we'd see what happened.

When they opened it up a few days later one tube was bright yellow. It was mine. I didn't care.

Now I pick my teeth with a toothpick after eating and to this day I only brush my teeth once every four months before I go to the dentist to get my teeth cleaned.

I don't know what is the matter with me.

Grandpa's Store

I remember well my Grandpa's store in Walnut Creek in the early fifties.

He had a gas pump on Mt. Diablo Boulevard, a small grocery store and a little 2 story house in back. We would stay there sometimes and you could hear the train come through town at night. My Dad had had to take the train to high school in Concord, and Grandpa marveled about when they paved North Main Street in 1932. It was still a small town.

The old wood floors in the store and the sliced baloney had a distinct aroma. The state highway system in the early fifties brought an abrupt end to that little paradise. Eminent Domain. There was no appealing. Highway 680 was coming through.

He had to sell to the state and was able to buy a little grocery across town on Larkey Lane. Fifty years later people in that neighborhood still call it Mr. Benney's store.

When I was 6 or 7 my Mom would take me down to the Greyhound bus stop very early on Saturday mornings and Grandpa would pick me up in Walnut Creek and we'd spend the day in the his store. He was open 7AM to 7PM six days a week.

I would help out stocking shelves, sweeping up, or anything he needed me to do. He'd fix hot dogs for lunch, and give me a few dollars at the end of the day. I always had money that I had earned in my pocket.

The Bad Dad

His son was a big bully that played dirty football and maybe raped one of the nice girls in high school when it was still an accepted thing that happened with the kids and just got hushed up.

My parents considered this man beneath contempt. I never knew why.

The Strange Mom

The whole family were nice, bright, and odd people. The Mr. had a successful importing business. The mother was rumored to wander naked around Sleepy Hollow in the middle of the night.

Boy Scouts

I was in Cub Scouts until it became time to join the Boy Scouts. The advanced ceremony to join scared me half to death and I never went back. All the stuff about God and obedience just didn't work for me.

Bicycles

We could ride our bikes pretty much wherever we wanted. Nobody had ever even thought about wearing a helmet, or your bike getting stolen. They weren't fancy expensive bikes and some of the more rugged ones were good off road.

Warren Webster

Warren in Kindergarten was a big, strong, smart, athletic, and confident kid. We were friends.

His parents, Hoot and Aggie, were from the South and raised their two boys to be tough and aggressive, and to have fun.

We could turn over all the furniture in their living and dining rooms and cover it with sheets and blankets and play in our caves for hours.

Outside was a deer carcass stretched out drying. They had shot it in the hills behind their house and skinned it and had a freezer full of venison.

Warren was good in all the sports and never had a problem that I knew about academically.

His parents died when he was in high school and he and his brother inherited the whole operation. That didn't really affect him in a good way. He could afford hot rods and parties all the time.

After high school he joined the Army and went to Vietnam. A hero, and a real animal in the field. Brutal, unforgiving, and lethal. He came home to grow and sell pot, be wild in the woods, and live into his 40s.

Carolyn Caldwell Lambiase M65

The Websters were good friends of my family. When we needed a doctor my Mom or Dad would just walk us up and have Hoot take a look at us. He had been a Navy surgeon during WWII.

My brother had a bad accident on my bike when he was in the 4th grade. He never went to the hospital. Hoot and Bobby Hussey's Mom, Martha, a former Naval nurse, took care of him in our home for weeks. My Dad would give Hoot a couple of bottles of bourbon as a thank you. That's the kind of neighbors we were to each other.

Every 4th of July Hoot would buy fireworks and all the neighborhood kids would come to his back patio. He would get special permission from the Orinda Fire Department to set them off. We all had a ball.

Gordie Seaman M66

Thanks for the update on Warren Webster. Do you realize that he lived right at the end of our court and that we spent hours and hours riding our go-carts together, no doubt in the early years before all the sports etc.

I remember Hoot and Aggie as if they were here right now. When we were early in Orinda, the Park Pool was all there was.

Friends

I made friends fairly easily with a cross section of personalities of varied backgrounds. Some had Southern roots and were tough guys. Some were smart leaders who did their homework and went to church on Sundays. Sports was a common denominator.

Some people just didn't like me at first sight, but what can you do?

I had quite a few good friends. A real cross section of interests and futures. I got along with the tough guys, the popular guys, and the book nerds. They all achieved varying degrees of so-called success in life.

I still know them all, although our busy lives make us not close.

Chris Slattery M67

I really enjoy your memoirs, Jim. It all feels so familiar, but at the same time, another lifetime.

Edward (Sandy) Cutler M63

Thanks for sharing your interesting and poignant anecdotes. I participated in some of the shenanigans during Halloween in Sleepy Hollow, and also spent summers at the Park Pool. Fond memories! I was a caddie at the Country Club until a group of young boys from Richmond became caddies and forced out the Orinda kids like me.

One fun memory I still share about Orinda was driving into Berkeley and sneaking into the Claremont Hotel to take the indoor circular fire escape as a “thrill.” The staff finally got wise to us and put sticky tar in the slides to dissuade us from our escapades. It worked!

In those days we didn’t need our parents to arrange our athletic endeavors. And, where I grew up on Loma Linda Street, we could play kick the can or capture the flag until dark - without worries about being kidnapped or harassed.

I vividly recall Naomi Giddings, Dean of Students, telling my mother during a meeting that I “wasn’t college material.” Fortunately, neither my mother or I took her misguided advice!

One more interesting story about me at age 11. It was the first time I was arrested. My buddies and I were fishing for Carp in the San Pablo Reservoir when the “rangers, or whoever the authorities were,” came and confiscated our bows and arrows, and called our parents (in my case grandparents, since I was living with them). It was a painful experience, that I’ve never forgotten.

Sue Ferguson Pistalnick M67

It's not hard to see we lived in a place very rich, indeed. It was beautiful. Green. Fog winding down the hills like fingers. Old homes; old money; mixed with Moraga mostly new with some class.

We lived in families that for the most part were educated and successful in ways that mattered and many ways that didn't. So many of us were taught we were gifted.

Yet we had The Knights. Ah, but also Ailanthus (girls). Guys would race cars and auto shop was certainly well attended. And we were all headed to the "best" colleges. And got there.

Even as Berkeley meant freedom and righteous revolution just over the hills or through the tunnel. We lived Vietnam Nam Protests and Presidential races included candidates like McCarthy and McGovern. Snobbery, cruelty, and bullies made up our innocent, big hearted, popular and unpopular "groups". Horses were ridden right on our small town streets.

Steve Tess M67

The birthday parties were a lot of fun which would include activities like pin the tail on the donkey. cartoons on a movie projector, etc. While attending Pine Grove Junior High, I and my neighborhood buddies would ride our bikes 3 miles to the OrindaVillage/Crossroads on the very winding and narrow Miner Rd.

and top it off with a milkshake at the Orinda Hardware soda fountain.

While attending Miramonte, a highlight was getting your driver's license on your 16th birthday and then driving with all your friends piled in while rocking out to radio tunes.

I went to Woodstock in 1969 which fueled my life-long interest in rock music.

Bob Bardell, Rick Hale, Murray Bros, etc

By high school my friends were often sort of the outcasts. Bob hung out in the Crossroads looking for something, anything, to do. I totaled my first car, a 55 Chevy, racing Bob down Miner Road.

Rick ran around in the hills, caught rabbits, and ate fried rabbit's legs at school lunch. He found the dead body in the creek below Pine Grove.

The Murray Brothers moved in from Richmond with their father who was some kind of convicted felon, with enough money to buy a home in Orinda.

They hung around the Crossroads too and went on to smuggling hashish from Afghanistan on a remodeled London Double-Decker Bus. Spent time in prison for that. My first solo concert production, at the Antioch Fairgrounds, was a Benefit for the Murrays.

Sports

There were 3 options, football, basketball, and baseball. We never heard of Soccer. Swim Team was in the summer. I did it all and was an average talent but not super competitive. It was fun and it was something to do.

I stopped playing baseball when it switched from soft ball to hard ball and my friend Jerry Texdahl's Dad taught him to throw pitches at the batter's head to brush them back, so to speak. On top of that Jerry was very athletic and a strong pitcher.

I played football until a severe knee injury in high school. I played on the front line and later realized that it had prepared me to be physically confident in my approach to life's challenges. Every play was a battle with the tough guy across from me.

Park Pool

The Park Pool on El Toyonal was a completely unique and wonderful set up. Lifeguard Peggy Kirby had been there forever.

It was a big pool with easy slide-in entry all around.

Some kids like me and my brother and sister spent the whole summer there. Our Mom would drop us off early for swim team practice and pick us up late in the afternoon.

I fondly remember many of the other kids and still enjoy seeing them today.

Hal Keenan M73

There were (are?) a lot of springs up on El Toyonal. When E.I. De Laveaga first developed that area; he routed all of the spring water into a collecting pond that became the original water supply for the neighborhood. That pond eventually became the Park Pool.

Gay Worth Christianson M69

I have so many stories about growing up in Orinda...especially about the Park Pool, motor cycles, Young Life (with Bob Shapiro), the Community Church volunteer trip to the orphanage in Mexico and caroling and hay rides on Christmas Eve.

I remember at Pine Grove Intermediate School several girls got sent home for wearing "granny dresses" to school. (And, look what they can wear now!)

When we swam for the Orinda Park Pool as teens, we girls thought the boys were coming to see us swim - but. no, they were there to see us in our speedo swim suits! lol. I think my girl friends and I must have snuck into every pool in Orinda in the middle of the night to go skinny dipping! Wow, I could go on and on!

Jackie Edenhalm Pettus M63

*I'm jealous of the kids who spent summers at Park Pool.
We were new to Orinda and didn't know about it.
I went to a dance there once.*

Deirdre McKee M64

While interesting, your memories of growing up in Orinda, though somewhat similar to mine, are then again very different. I grew up at the top of El Toyonal and went to the Park Pool. Paul Hackett's family lived across the street and were close friends with my family. My father had to identify Paul's father's body when he was killed.

Most of us, maybe all of us, did not get in trouble in school. Most of us, but not all of us, went on to various colleges. Our friends in the neighborhood were not necessarily our friends in school.

Orinda was a great place to grow up back then so we keep it in our memory. We took high school seriously. Several neighborhood kids, myself included, had professors at Berkeley as fathers. But life began after Orinda and after high school.

After that I really felt no ties. I kept in touch with Billy Cooper for the last 20 or so years of his life. His life was a sad, sad story. And yet I think he was voted Most Likely to Succeed.

For me Orinda was a wonderful place to grow up in. Judy Hauer and I rode our horses all over the ranches just past my house on El Toyonal and all over Tilden Park and the area used by the Grizzly Stables.

In our day there were a few Asians and a few Hispanics. I had some Iranian neighbors, but I'm not sure of their religion. And there were many closeted gays. Including Mr. Gompf the art teacher.

Norm Zadeh, the son of the Iranians, went on to establish a naked female magazine picturing women with natural boobs... called Perfect Ten, I believe. He also got kicked out of Las Vegas for counting cards. A very bright guy, but who knew back then??

Dina Eldred Fiatarone M71

Living on lower El Toyonal since we were little, we walked up our backyard path to Park Pool every summer day and lived there until dark, playing Alligator behind the barrier. My big brother, Charlie would sneak in during the middle of the night to swim.

On Canon Dr. we'd always walk way around the other side of the street to avoid a man who we thought was a murderer, then checked out the haunted house at the end of Canon. Loved walking down to the Big Log and continue to Bear Creek. We played Kick the Can at night with the Worths and other neighbors. I remember Johnny Kirby teaching us dances like the "Mashed Potato"

Miramonte fun was the best getting to be a PomPon girl. We had a leadership period all to ourselves to practice. (or leave for the hour). One day the 6 of us left for the day, and went skinny dipping at Stinson. Nighttime activities with all my friends were ice sliding on OCC golf course or more skinny dipping at OCC pool. I'd better stop here, but these were the best years.

Swim Team

Because we spent all day every summer day at the Park Pool we were pretty good swimmers all the way into high school. Lots of blue ribbons from the swim meets. It was good for our competitive spirits, and probably overall health.

Regularly interacting with both sexes and age groups was helpful, and normal. Sometimes there were kissing contests behind the clubhouse. Mostly nobody even knew what sexual activity was, but there were mutual attractions recognized.

Rotary Field Day

Once a year at the old Orinda School there would be the Rotary Field Day. All the kids from different schools would meet for races and jumping gunny sack competitions. It was a chance to meet kids from the other parts of Orinda.

Dance Cotillion

One of the rituals that almost everybody had to attend in Junior High was the Clifford's Dance Cotillion. We had to get formally dressed up to go to the gym at night and learned every dance step popular at the time with whatever girl you happened to get stuck with. It went on for several weeks. None of it stayed with me.

Love

I don't know why but I always liked kissing girls who liked kissing too. (And still do) Sydney Cutting and I would make out in the bushes behind the bus stop. Occasionally I would hide in a closet with one or another willing partner.

I first fell madly in love with Nancy Ratcliff in fifth grade, writing poems and other nonsense and being thrilled to visit her at her home. I don't remember ever kissing her. In high school I was in love with Marilyn Titmus, who let me fondle her breasts outside of dances and at her dating jobs.

I first learned what sex was in the dorm at Stanford Coaching Camp. I might have been 13 and was shocked to think of my parents ever doing anything like that.

My first vaginal sex was with a black prostitute in a San Francisco hotel room while my cousin Tommy drove my car around the block. I was 17. He was killed in Vietnam a couple of years later.

Sex

I often say that I got my sex education from Playboy magazine. My parents never mentioned the subject.

Basically I learned from experience. I liked kissing girls when I was young and fondling breasts and fingering as I got older. After high school I got more serious but have always been a “Wham Bam Thank You Maam” kind of guy. Probably not the best. I will always love every woman who let me in.

Stanford Coaching Camp

For a couple of summers when I was around 12 or 13 I was sent to the two week long Stanford Coaching Camp. We'd be housed and fed in Frat Houses with a bunch of guys we didn't know.

The real head coach of each sport would run us through their drills. John Ralston for football, Howie Dallmar for Basketball, and Ray Lunny for boxing, for instance.

Lunny was a legendary pugilist and longtime Stanford boxing coach.

All the parents were allowed to come on one special day to see what everybody had been learning. I had to spar with a tough kid in the boxing ring as part of a demonstration. We wore gloves, but not head gear.

He clocked me a good one and I fell back against the ropes to try to recover. Everybody thought I was acting, and laughed and applauded. Really, I was spinning. Fortunately I came back enough to finish the round.

Trouble

I started getting in trouble in Kindergarten and never stopped. I was a smart-ass punk. My lawyer Dad at home would argue both sides of any discussion and felt he could probably win either side of any case he was working on.

Because of that I questioned things constantly and spent many years at the back of the class with the other trouble makers.

My Mom's polio led him to teach me how to drive when I was 11. By the time I was 13 I would take the family car out for a spin at night while he and Mom were out playing bridge or something.

When I was 14 I would drive into the city to North Beach. In those days it didn't matter how old you were, the barkers in front of the strip clubs would try to get anyone who walked by to come in.

I saw Carol Doda sing "The Look of Love is on your Face" at the Condor when I was 15. She was on the piano that would rise up from the stage floor and later crushed mobster Fat Davey Rosenberg against the ceiling.

Then came stealing cars.

After that it was drinking and fighting that got me hauled in. Kim Olsen started a fight at the Walnut Festival one night and we got tossed in the Walnut Creek jail. Mark Locklin and Mike Lucas started a small riot on the Santa Cruz Boardwalk one drunken night and Mike and I were arrested, and so on.

At the well attended Deke Ballard - Ronny Dice battle in Lafayette I mouthed off when the cops came and was the only guy taken to Juvenile Hall.

I pretty much straightened up at 22 after selling large quantities of pot and not denying it or apologizing for it. The District Attorney wanted to sentence me to 5 years in San Quentin Prison but Max Wilcox the judge was an Orinda Dad and I got probation and a fine.

Stealing Cars

In Orinda many people never took the keys out of their cars and didn't lock their houses either.

By the time I was 14 I was easily stealing cars and driving all over. At the Orinda Theater you could grab a car early and nobody would know it was gone until after the double feature. I could drive into the city and get into clubs in North Beach.

Through a fluke, one night my friend Kenny was sitting in a car I had stolen wearing a Nazi swastika emblazoned jacket that attracted a police car that happened to drive by.

I got caught and had to admit to stealing 5 or 6 cars and leaving them a couple of blocks from my house.

For Orinda kids Grand Theft Auto became "Joyriding". When it was all over I remember walking down the steps at the Martinez courthouse with my Mom thinking "That was barely a slap on my wrist".

Smoking

I started smoking cigarettes when I was 15 and when I was 20 I was smoking two packs of Old Gold Spin Filters a day, and gave it up because I could tell it was affecting my health prospects.

All the “cool” kids smoked, as did their parents. When I was a senior at Miramonte I was suspended for a couple of days for smoking in the bathroom.

Later that year I was caught with alcohol on my breath at an after game dance and was expelled for the rest of the year. I had to go to Campolindo Continuation School for half days with all the rest of the Mt Diablo School District’s bad boys and girls. Way more fun than Miramonte.

One day there was a punk kid sitting in my preferred chair. When he refused to move I lifted him out at the same time he was rising to punch me and because of his momentum I easily threw him clear across the room. The teacher broke up our little brawl quickly. I got my seat.

Drinking

Mostly, our parents drank and smoked. We started in earnest when we were 15 or 16. There were places that would sell beer to the kids. They needed the money. We liked to get drunk, pretty much every weekend. Parents would go out of town and there would be a big party.

Football playing jocks liked to drink and fight. There were places we could go where we would be left alone. Sand

Hill, Donald Drive, Dick's Rise, and more. Police were almost non-existent except when called in.

Not everybody participated, but my crowd was all in. We would put a couple of cases of beer on ice and just drive around all day, relishing the sound of bottles breaking behind us as we threw out the empty ones while looking for or waiting for a party to happen, somewhere.

After Game Dances were always a good place to show up with a buzz on.

Drugs and Alcohol

We knew nothing about drugs, but we did know about alcohol. Many of our parents drank like fish. We drank to get drunk. In 1967 hardly any of us had even heard of Marijuana. By 1968 it was everywhere.

Knights of Orinda

In high school there were unofficial frowned upon clubs of wild irascible boys who were always getting in trouble and liked a good fight. They also got the pretty girls.

The Knights of Orinda, The Bulls in Walnut Creek, and the Plainsmen in Lafayette would frequently battle after sporting events. We had a small riot one time at the Pizza joint in Lafayette. People were throwing benches and chairs and if you didn't know the guy in front of you, you punched him. A blast!

Because I'd been expelled from Miramonte in my senior year I somehow ended up as president of the Knights.

That summer at a dance at the Park Pool some punks from El Sobrante came to stir up trouble. One of them got kicked in the head and died and even though I wasn't there I got called on the carpet because it was guys in Knights jackets kicking ass.

The police couldn't pin it on anybody because nobody there had seen or heard anything.

Jack Krenek M67

We had this club at Miramonte back then called the Knights and I guess we thought we were pretty cool. The best way i can describe it is — it was a car club though none of us had cool cars.

My mom told me one day if she'd ever found out i was a member of the Knights she'd ground me until I was forty. So I never told her I belonged.

I used to keep my club jacket at my friend George Siri's house just to be safe.

One day my Mom and i were talking at the breakfast table and she was asking me some questions about the club. I was still half asleep and slurping my cereal and she asked something like, "what do they actually do" or something to that effect, and I said, 'we....' — I looked up at her and she said "I thought so".

I wasn't grounded until my 40s but I remember it being quite a long time.

I was visiting my sister in San Ramon a couple of years ago and stopped in Orinda to get some gas and look around. I used to work at the Chevron station right next to the Casa Orinda and remember that distinct aroma of cooking hamburgers. It suddenly struck me how little the town had changed and I remember reeling with nostalgia.

*There was a young man working at the gas station about my age (when I worked there) and I told him he was lucky to grow up in a town like Orinda. He was like, "This place? I can't wait to get out of here. Maybe move to the city or anywhere else."
I said, "Young man, you will appreciate it one day."*

John Dougery M71

What's up Jim! don't forget the ol T Bones Drive-In days. You guys were the last of the Mohicans!

The Counts, The Bulls, The Plainsmen! Rumbles!

David Ashburn M73

My Memories of growing up in Orinda include knowing people that were members of both the Knights and the DMA (Drinking Man's Association) . I was never a member of either but had friends from both.

I was more of a misfit but loved the area and had great adventures floating in the Orinda creek from Blacks Market to the bridge at Manzanita during storms, riding the Men At Work sign like a skid board at the flood gates at North Lane, riding bikes through the "ape man " tunnels from the Crossroads. Late night walks with our buddies all around from Sleepy Hollow, Miner Road, El Toyonal, Bates Drive.

Lisa Douglass M71

I agree with my cousin Wendy Hall. Jack Krenek, Rex Scatena, Jon Donlon, the wild, darling, bad-boys, and of course as a little sister, they were so cute!!!

The Knights.....

Running Moraga Way before football games....always a great visual!

Donald Driveafter football games, and Freddie's Pizza.

OCC Golf Course ice sliding and trying not to get caught by groundskeepers.

We were so lucky to have been raised together and in such a special place!

Pat Haley

I didn't know Pat very well but when I got to high school he was one of the well respected tough guys who it was best to just leave alone.

One day 4 or 5 of us bought a case of beer and went out to the off limits Briones Reservoir to enjoy it.

We hopped over the No Trespassing fence and hiked up into the wooded hills overlooking the reservoir.

After a while a water district vehicle showed up on the road below us. Then another, then a couple from the Sheriff's department, looking all over for us.

Actually, we doubted that any of them would try to scramble up into the forest as we had and we were right.

After a while they all left and we finished our case of beer. One of us went to retrieve the car and the rest of us hiked up to the public road above us. A great afternoon in the woods.

Another time I was present at the seminal Pat Haley / Jack Hayes fight on lower Donald Drive one weekend night.

They beat the shit out of each other for 10 or 15 minutes and called it a draw. We all went down to T-Bones and had hot dogs and shakes.

No person in their right mind would ever challenge either of these guys over anything.

Elaine Osmunson Ahrendt C70

What caught my eye included a mention of Pat Haley. Pat was a close friend of my brother Woody, who was also a Knight. I didn't really know Pat, but I certainly knew his reputation

Dennis Carleton M67

Yeah, we lived in a unique little bubble in Borinda.

Pat Haley lived about a block away from us near Del Rey. He took my candy apple red, three speed Royce Union bike and rammed it into a wall at Miramonte High School. My dad had a coronary and

went to their house and blew a gasket about Pat. Then he supposedly killed a guy at the Orinda pool??? This was news.

Fritz Van Mastricht chugged a quart or fifth of vodka in downtown Orinda near Lightner's alley across from the theater?

McClean & Buddy Worth in the P.E. locker room one morning mentioned stealing a car. But then, stealing a car or getting pregnant was the worst it got then.

Mike & Cathy Sullivan were near Del Rey. Cathy had a party after we graduated sixth grade. They had a monkey even. Mike's dad was a manager at a Ford dealership. Then he got that white, Carol Shelby Mustang 500 or 350. It was trick. I think Tony Paley, close to them had a tiger or caught a mountain lion because he lived next to some terrain on that big ridge

Menlo School

Because I was getting into quite a bit of trouble including stealing cars when I was 14 I was sent to Menlo School for Boys for my junior year. It was sort of a prep school for Stanford for rich kids. My Dad knew somebody to get me in there and had the money to pay for it.

We had to wear coats and ties to dinner in the commons every night. I went along with it because I had to.

I was on the football team and the coaches loved me because I could hit hard. I had learned at Miramonte playing on the front line that every play was a fight with the tough guy across from you.

A knee injury took me out of all sports from then on. I was on crutches with a full leg cast for quite a while.

One day a punk, Barry, pushed me to the floor in the bathroom and I got up and came back swinging and a teacher broke it up.

We decided to meet the next day behind the gym to settle it. I was still using crutches and had the full leg cast. My Dad had been a boxer in the Army/Airforce and had taught me how to throw a punch.

Barry had to go to the hospital overnight and then quit the cross country team. When I arrived at the dining hall that night the whole room went silent until I got to my seat.

Because of my bad attitude I flunked every class except English both semesters and was not invited back. I liked the English teacher and got straight "A's" in English.

Fights

In sports there were always occasional flare ups. By late in high school drinking and fighting was part of the entertainment. I won a few and lost a few.

I always thought it was important not to be afraid to fight, and to always be ready to if necessary.

Phairs

Phair's Market was kind of an upscale grocery store for the more well-to-do. Owned by the Phair family, Country Clubbers. My Mom had a charge account and I could go in any time and get whatever I wanted. Steaks, cigarettes, and soft drinks.

Because I was well known, when I was 16 I got the job of driving their VW van for deliveries to the locals. Lots of booze and cartons of cigarettes right to your door. The Kaiser family would order a full van of goods every couple of weeks.

The Phair's got tired of managing it and their very nice building in the Orinda Village has sat empty for 40 years. They don't need the money.

Ogdens

The Ogdens owned the only clothing store In town. We got everything there. I only wore clothes I liked. My mother wanted me to wear shorts. Never happened.

Polka Dot

The Polka Dot Burger Joint was where my crowd hung out. Because I had always had a job doing something I had cash and ate there a lot. I'd have a fabulous burger, a great tuna sandwich and a milkshake.

After an incident in Berkeley four friends in a car I was in got arrested for stealing a motorcycle helmet. I had slipped away via some other Orinda kids who had gathered around the scene and helped me escape.

I was very concerned that if I got caught my Dad would not come get me because he was getting tired of bailing me out of Juvenile Hall and Jail.

The four arrested friends would not divulge my name to the police who knew there had been 5 kids in the car. The Orinda Way.

I waited at the Polka Dot the day they got sentenced to see if I had gotten away free. Yep. Whew!

Frat Parties

When we were in high school and beyond we would go to the after game Frat Parties at UC Berkeley. These were unbelievably wild affairs. They would have like 12 fresh kegs of beer in the basement and everyone would be absolutely hammered. We could get as drunk as we wanted and drive back over the hill to Orinda.

Racism, sexism, homophobia, chauvinism, xenophobia, etc.

Growing up, all of these attributes were present in measurable quantities. No black people lived in Orinda. The Orinda Country Club Bylaws stated very clearly, No Blacks, No Jews. The black people from Oakland and Richmond could caddy at the golf course and work cleaning the homes.

Men went to work and women stayed home to take care of the kids. Attractive girls and women got the “best” guys. Sex education amounted to reading Playboy Magazine.

Anybody strange looking or acting simply did not fit in.

White Privilege

What can I say except that I wish everybody could enjoy it. We didn't know we lived in such a special world.

Our schools were excellent and our parents were for the most part successful doctors, lawyers, business owners and University professors. Probably some inherited wealth as well but we didn't know. It was a level playing field for us kids.

We were protected from the real world outside. It was safe. There were no police. We never had a key or locked the house. We would go on a two week vacation to Tahoe and leave the house unlocked and the keys in the other car.

When I would get in some kind of trouble at school my parents would just tell me it was my life to lead and I would have to live with the consequences of my actions.

In Crowd

There were always popular girls and handsome cool guys. Sometimes they knew it and acted it, and sometimes they didn't. Not everybody fit in. It was hard for some, but it turned out that not all the Big Men On Campus and Prize

Trophy Wives had happy lives. Everybody had to deal with their own unique circumstances.

Dad work

My Dad loved his attorney job at Orrick Herrington. He could hardly wait to get out of bed in the morning and get to work. He liked to beat the traffic into the city early and said he got more work done before the secretaries came in than the whole rest of the day.

His work involved millions of dollars of various business's cash flow and the lives of thousands of employees in different companies.

The three martini lunch was not a joke in his group. It was lunch. They would have a couple more drinks in the office after the secretaries left, and more when they got home. We kids knew if we wanted something from Dad we had about 10 minutes after he got home to make our case. After that he didn't like to be bothered.

He started bringing in pretty good money after becoming a partner and we never really wanted for anything.

Food, clothing, and vacation time was taken care of. It was a secure notch above middle class living. Getting a really good education was all that mattered.

Mom work

In our world mothers were expected to take care of the kids and the home front and not bother the Dads at work.

And they did, not always happily.

Although my mother was crippled by polio she was one tough cookie, and was there for us kids 100%.

Once we were all out of her hair she became a docent at the DeYoung Museum in the city and we got back stage passes to the occasional major event.

She would have preferred to not have had polio but I never heard her complain about it. Her parents fought for her to be treated like a normal kid.

My Dad was a football playing, boxing, future lawyer at Cal and had his pick of any woman. He loved her strength and active mind. That was what mattered.

Bus to City

When I was still pretty young, maybe 11 or 12, I could take the Greyhound bus by myself to the city to Christmas shop in Chinatown and Union Square. What a world that was compared to today.

Nuclear Bomb

We just had to accept that at any moment a nuclear bomb could explode right outside of our classroom and if we hid under our desks we might survive and be able to go home again. We did what we were told.

To us, wars had happened and would continue to happen, mostly somewhere else. Our fathers did not like to talk about their wartime experiences for the most part.

Some families had significant connections to their military backgrounds. Many did not. I was protected and sheltered from that part of the real world, except my mother's family included Naval officers that gave us tours of battleships on Treasure Island.

All I knew about WW2 was my Dad had been in the Army/AirForce as an engineer on airplanes flying over China. That's all I know today.

Vietnam challenged the "my country right or wrong" belief as well as the "love it or leave it" chant. Still, Nuclear power has been an important part of our culture and society.

Tom Well M73

Nuclear bombs? I was scared shit-less. Asked my dad why we didn't build a bomb shelter. He said just to run toward the blast ... you don't want to live in the aftermath.

Mark Lucas M70

Orinda in the '60s and '70s was such a strange protected microcosm. A bit of Mayberry in the middle of Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movements. At that time it was easy to either hitch hike or jump in a Greyhound bus and you were soon in the Haight or the People's Republic of Berkeley. We were at the cusp of many historic movements and only now so many years later can we fully recognize what we witnessed or were part of.

These days, it's all true, even the part where we were an isolated alien experiment that went horribly off the rails and was abandoned for the good of the Galactic Empire.

I am constantly amazed how life has turned out SOOO very different than what was planned. In my own case, I knew that one day I would be taking care of the elderly. I never imagined the elderly would be my younger brother. It happens.

I know the importance of remembering and sharing. It defines who we are and who we were

JFK

Now called “Camelot” his reign was seriously complicated. I saw him speak at UC Berkeley Memorial Stadium in 1961. He was youthful and appealing. It was no cakewalk being President of the United States though, even with Marilyn Monroe thrown into the mix. Nuclear war with Russia was narrowly averted, among other challenges.

We will all remember where we were on November 22, 1963 when he was assassinated. I was in freshman Science Class at Miramonte when the announcement came over the loudspeaker intercom. We were stunned but our teacher Mr. Casey assured us that this kind of thing happened all the time and we had to get back to our schoolwork. He was later dismissed from that campus.

The whole country was in shock and glued to the TV for a few days. By the time Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King were assassinated we were finally getting used to it.

Post High School

Because I was expelled from Miramonte for drinking and smoking during my Senior year I did not graduate with my class of 1967, but my picture was in the yearbook anyway.

I moved into an apartment in Berkeley as soon as I turned 18 and lived one block off Telegraph Avenue for 3 years. I could tell lots of Berkeley stories.

I was there when people were throwing FBI files out of the 3rd story windows at Moses Hall, at People's Park when the first shovel went into the ground, and trapped in my apartment when a full police state takeover had a platoon stationed in front of my building for days on end.

I was teargassed off the street into my building a half a dozen times. I was in Sproul Plaza when Ronald Reagan ordered helicopters to tear gas the protesters.

I never threw a brick or chanted a slogan. I was just there.

Vietnam

One day after high school I was drinking beer and playing cards with Warren, Ron, and Ricky. They decided to go to sign up for the Army in Oakland.

I deferred, and a few days later went to an anti draft rally at the induction center with Mike Lucas's family. Joan Baez sang a couple of songs and I became anti-war.

The boys had harrowing experiences in Vietnam and my first cousin Tommy, who was my age and a close friend, was killed over there. It destroyed his family.

I almost was drafted but got a high lottery number.

Gas Stations

After high school I was an excellent pump jockey. Worked at the Chevron in Moraga, Flying A and 76 Union stations in Orinda until I was almost 21.

Pumped the gas, washed the windows, checked the tires, and sometimes even checked the air filter.

The gas station owners wanted to sell more than gas. Billy Knox in Moraga was constantly warning worried mothers about the condition of their tires and brakes and we did a lot of tire and brake jobs.

Moraga Barn

Back in the day, bars in the small towns didn't care about checking ID. If you were old enough to have cash in hand you were good to go.

Sometimes Kenny Texara and I would get off work at the gas station, go have a couple of drinks at the Moraga Barn and decide to drive to Tahoe for some Casino action. After a couple of hours there we'd be drunk and broke and drive back home around 5 in the morning.
Yes. Those were the days.

Mr Tibbetts

Being an old Orinda boy, after Berkeley I landed in a little 625 square foot cottage in Moraga at the end of a dirt road on the edge of total wilderness ranch and water district land. Heaven.

I was there for 12 years. \$195 per month rent. Got married, honeymooned and had two kids born in the cottage.

The landlord who lived in the ranch mansion nearby was D. Reginald Tibbetts. Before anyone knew anything about satellite dishes he had 3 huge ones in the orchard by his house.

It turned out that he was an internationally recognized communications expert. During World War Two he had Native American code talkers living in his house and a platoon of soldiers stationed nearby to protect them.

Once when I was painting his house I overheard him chew out a United State Senator on the phone over some important matter. Mr Tibbetts had written the document rules in question and knew what he was talking about.

The raccoons in the woods bothered him. He would capture them in Hav-A-Heart traps, drown them in his pool and put them in the garbage can.

Students from his alma mater Stanford would come every year and interview him about what he was up to and his historic accomplishments. I loved it there.

Home Births

My first two kids, Jimmy and Elizabeth were born at home in Moraga under the guidance of Carol Hagin, who was Contra Costa Counties only illustrious midwife. She was a magician of the womb and the woman.

When my son was born I realized what true love really was. Both kids plopped right into my waiting hands.

It was a wonderful way to start out. My wife Suzie was a stay-at-home mother who wanted nothing more than to take care of her children, at least for the first few years. The rest is History.