

# Livermore Heritage Guild

*"Help Save Yesterday For Tomorrow"*



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The Seven Sisters were a series of 7 small hills (large bumps!) in Greenville Road during the 1960s. (Please see [Comments from Membership](#) regarding a letter about Livermore's "Seven Sisters")

Excerpted from Livermore Herald, 9-14-51

## **Head-on Crash On Seven Sister Road**

Top of the sharpest ridge on the Seven Sisters road south of Livermore was the scene of an auto accident last Sunday evening which sent seven persons to St. Paul's Hospital and wrecked two cars.

Owners of the cars were Richard P. Yancey of Sunol and Ernest George of Modesto. Yancey suffered a fractured pelvis; his daughter, Miss Wanda Yancey, forehead laceration and shock; Mrs. Lola Yancey, his wife, shock, multiple bruises and concussion; Mrs. George, severe lacerations of the face, bruises of the left leg and concussion. George and two others passengers, were less seriously hurt, although treated at St. Paul's.

The road extends from East avenue to the Tesla road across a series of ridges, with very steep pitches up and down the sides of the intervening gulches. It is a favorite route for "thrill" rides. The two cars met head-on at the top of the steepest ridge, there being only a few feet of level road at the spot before it starts steeply down each side. The force of the collision pushed the motors of both cars back to the drivers' seats.

Excerpted from Livermore News, 3-9-60

## **Seven Sisters Crash Hurts 7**

Livermore's famous "Seven Sisters" took probably their biggest toll Sunday night when seven Tracy teenagers were

injured when their car went out of control as they sped over the hills on a "thrill ride".

The seven youngsters, two others in the car were not hurt, were taken to St. Paul's Hospital by Allen's Ambulance and were released to their parents after treatment for cuts and bruises. None were seriously injured.

They were: Louis Menke Jr., 16 and driver of the car; Charles Gamage, 15; John Paine, 14; Bonnie Rowecks, 16; Julie Vollbrecht, 15; Rebekah Howard, 16; and Patricia Stevens, 16.

Menke said he had been over the "Seven Sisters" part of the Greenville road a few days earlier and was giving the others a thrill ride after a church service. The car sailed through the air at high speed and landed in a field 75 feet from the road.

Excerpted from the Livermore Herald 6-3-60

## **Reflections by Maitland R. Henry**

If the Seven Sisters Road east of Livermore were not used by many people on business, the best move would be to tear up the surfacing and restore the conditions of the old days. Seldom did an autoist get in trouble when it was a plain dirt road. Since it was paved, there have been many accidents, most of them seriously injuring one or more people. At even ordinary speed the road is thrilling and the faster the speed the greater the thrill. Unfortunately, the danger increases proportionately with the speed, and a car does not have to be going very fast to easily go out of control. Another of those instances in which improved driving conditions create a hazard. Most, if not all, the persons who have been hurt were traveling the road, which

is an unusual one with its steep dips, purely for the thrills. Those who use it for business purposes, drive with care and do not get into trouble. Some means must be devised to control the thrill seekers.

Excerpted from Livermore Herald, 3-9-62

**Your Last Chance for a Thrill Ride**

Livermore's favorite spot for thrill auto driving is soon to go, the supervisors having authorized County Surveyor Jas. Vivrette to operate plans for improving the Seven Sisters portion of the Greenville road.

The road has become an important route from the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory to Site 300 and in its present condition is not satisfactory for auto and truck travel.

The hills will be lowered and depressions filled in to eliminate the roller coaster effect and provide a more level route.

The road is also to be lowered south of the East avenue junction for the crossing of the South Bay Aqueduct, soon to be extended to the southern part of the valley. Estimated cost of the work is \$200,000.



**THE HISTORY OF THE HISTORYMOBILE**

In 1989, Merilyn (Tilli) Calhoun was asked by Barry Schrader (then Chairman of the Livermore Heritage Guild) to outfit a motorhome to serve as a Historymobile to bring the rich history of Livermore to school children and the general public. Volunteers built several plastic case covered tables to protect artifacts. Calhoun gathered photos, maps, posters and other materials of local interest. In 1990 the mobile went on its "shakedown cruise" to Rancho Las Positas School. It proved to be a shakedown as the pins used to mount matboard displays popped out and had to be stuck back in. We also found the need for some material to hold artifacts in place. Fire Captain Lynn Owens was the first driver.

The Historymobile is a 1969 twenty-seven foot Pace Arrow with Dodge running gear, and came from the San Luis Obispo Education Dept. It was used as a hearing test facility that could be taken to different schools. Barry Schrader arranged for the purchase and secured donations from local business to convert it for our use. Don Scullion donated about 100 hours of his labor to paint the exterior and also provided the signs for the vehicle. Groth Brothers Oldsmobile donated the original smog check. Coldwell-Banker Real Estate donated two fire extinguishers. Dom's Surplus donated a large tarp for outdoor storage of the vehicle. Roadrunner Glass replaced a broken side window. Chet and Henri Fankhauser donated cash. Barry and a few volunteers refurbished the interior, put acoustical tile

on the walls and set up display areas. At a later date Firestone donated brake repairs.

The Historymobile's first public appearance was at a Red Flower Sunday in April of 1989. Since 1990, we have visited many schools and thousands of children have toured the mobile. Bill Junk maintains the mobile in running condition and drives the mobile to the schools. We have had several reliable docents: Bobbie Baird, Marianna Deadrich, Vanna Born and others have helped. The schools usually ask for May dates as they finish Livermore studies and prepare for the Rodeo. Muriel Dean helps prepare notices to the schools.

The mobile has been a part of the Harvest Tour of local wineries for over 10 years. We are stationed at Concannon Vineyard and offer some extra displays of wine history and grapes for tasting. Loyal docents have included Muriel and Phil Dean, Joan and Walter Detjens, Bobbie Baird and Vanna Born. Treva Mauch, Anna Siig, Joan Bezus, Barry and Kay Schrader and others have also helped. Bill and Susan Junk help set up and take down outdoor displays. Last year we set up our displays at the Ice-Cream Social at Ravenswood and at the Lincoln Highway meeting at the Duarte Garage. Many people have helped with this project through the years, but Tilli is there every year. It is estimated that close to 900 students hear the talk and view the displays each year, plus adults and families at the Harvest Festival and Ravenswood and other community events. Thanks to all volunteers who made the Historymobile possible.

The general theme is to show the way our valley looked and how the people lived when the Indians were here, the Spanish, the farmers, the scientists, and the changes each group made. The response to our visits have been gratifying over the years. We offer California Bay Laurel leaves to students and other visitors as an example of something used by the earliest residents of the valley and still used today. Many students have said they have seen their mothers use the leaves in cooking. Children enjoy picking up the cattle branding iron, the acorn grinding stone and the roller skates with the key, just like one similar to what their parents and grandparents used.

*We are always looking for helpers to staff the Historymobile. Call 449-9927 if you are interested.*



**HERITAGE GUILD HAPPENINGS**

WANTED: Volunteers to lead local 3rd grade classes on weekday downtown walks, while you talk about Livermore history. Walks take approximately 1 hour. Will gladly train.

Contact Gary Drummond at [gadrum@comcast.net](mailto:gadrum@comcast.net) or call 447-5475 for details.

If you would like to sign up for either a downtown or residential **walking tour**, you may now register by either calling the History Center at 449-9927 or by visiting the History Center and completing a preference card. When several people have signed up for one tour or the other, a Walk Tour Guide will contact you with a time and date to meet.

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**COMMENTS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP**

From Chuck Trout:

I enjoyed your site. Brought back many fond memories—about the happiest 2 1/2 years of my childhood. I lived in Livermore from 1956 to 1958—6th through 8th grade at Junction Ave. Elementary School. Lived behind the school on Lee Ave. Delivered the SF Chronicle and Examiner papers to homes surrounding the school. Played Little League and Pony League baseball and ran in a relay race—Twin Valley Relays?? I remember when they opened the A&W Rootbeer stand across the RR tracks—rootbeer in frosted mugs on hot summer days. The flagpole in the middle of the street. My first girlfriend ever lived across the street from the 5th Street School—Cindy Marsh was her name. I used to ride my bike south of town past vineyards to a park with a stream. Unfortunately they closed Parks AFB and we move on—way too soon. Yes, only fond memories of a really neat place to grow up. *(The Heritage Guild responded to his guestbook entry. Mr. Trout sent the following in an email message)*

Thinking about those days also brings back some not-so-fond memories. When I first arrived my sixth grade teacher was a Mrs. Carr—very nice lady. Her husband, who was very popular with the students, taught the eighth grade at Junction. When I was in the eighth grade (not in his class) he had a heart attack and died while playing basketball on the playground during PE. His replacement was a young woman. On the last day of school she took me and a few friends that were in her class for a ride in her convertible (my first ride in one) to a place I recall was called the Three Sisters (not sure of the number—maybe six). It was a series of hills on a road outside of town—like a roller coaster. Kids use to joyride out there. A few years later I was attending Armijo HS in Fairfield CA. On the way to a baseball game I read a newspaper story about an automobile accident on those hills that took the lives of some Livermore HS students. Looking through the names I recognized two as friends of mine. Are those hills still there and do the kids still go joyriding there? [note: The road with the hills is Vasco Road, between Tesla Road and East Avenue. The section with the rolling hills was called the Seven Sisters. The road bed was cut into the hills, leveling

it out some, after the accident Mr. Trout mentioned.] If you wonder why I look back on those short two and a half years so fondly it's because that was the only time in my boyhood that I didn't live on an air force base.

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*It's still not too late to make donations for this year's LHG AUCTION. Donations of goods and services are greatly appreciated. All usable items will be accepted except books, clothing and furniture (unless considered antique) and computers or computer equipment. Time to clean out those garages and let us help you dispose of those items that need a new home. Phone for pickup: Bill Junk 447-4561, Anna Siig 447-5475 or leave a message at the History Center 449-9927. This has been a fun event for everyone and we look forward to seeing you at the auction!*

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**CALENDAR**

Thursday, May 13 @ 7:00 p.m.  
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Saturday, May 29, Livermore Heritage Guild Annual Auction and pasta dinner

Duarte Garage. Auction preview begins at 5 p.m., dinner starts at 6 p.m. and auctions starts at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$8.00 for the dinner can be purchased in advance at the Carnegie Bldg. or at the door that evening. Price includes dinner, coffee and desert.

Thursday, June 10 @ 7:00 p.m.  
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

Thursday, July 8 @ 7:00 p.m.  
LHG Board Meeting, Recreation Center

**Agenda for Future History Colloquiums:**  
**The next 2 history colloquium meetings will be held at the Bothwell Recreation Center, 8th and H Streets, Livermore at 7 p.m. Check with Carnegie Library for location of July 21 colloquium.**

**May 19, 2004:**  
Kathryn Laughlin and Kim Bonde, "History of the Livermore Rodeo"

**June 16, 2004:**  
Deacon Dave Rezendes Recalls Livermore

**July 21, 2004:**  
Lin Robertson Tobin, "Memories of Grandfather Robertson, Founder of The Livermore Sanitarium"

## A Word From the Chair

At the end of this month, the Livermore Heritage Guild will hold its 25th annual auction. We will serve pasta, salad, french bread (and dessert) dinner at 6:00 p.m. for \$8.00 donation. At 7:00 p.m. we begin the auction. There is no charge to attend the auction. The auction is run on the "One man's junk is another man's treasure" theory, so there is something for everyone. Lynn Owens, our auctioneer, always makes the auction a fun event. This is our major fundraiser each year so please come and support the Livermore Heritage Guild.

The monthly History Colloquium celebrated its one year birthday in April. Don Meeker, along with his wife, Diana had the inspiration for the event, and have been a major force behind the Colloquium since its beginning. We usually have 20-50 people attend each talk and it has been received very well. Check this month's newsletter for a flyer on upcoming subjects. Thanks Don and Diana for all your hard work in making this a reality.

The Guild would like to update and reorganize our web page. Originally it started as a four page website and has

grown over the last six years from there. We have been looking at sites that offer a virtual tour over the web and want to explore the possibilities of creating a virtual museum. If you know of a web based museum site you find interesting or know of someone who has experience in creating such a site, have them contact me, Larry Mauch at larrym49@comcast.net or phone (925) 443-8596. We have had people from all over the world visit the site and leave comments saying it has been a pleasant way of visiting their old hometown from far away.

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The author of Red Mountain (which is about mining in the Valley) passed away April 12, 2004. Robert W. P. Cutler was an expert in Parkinson's disease and also won a Kaiser Family Foundation Award for Outstanding and Innovative Contributions to Medical Education. After retirement, he lived on his ranch on a hill above Livermore. A memorial service will be held at 4 p.m. on May 11 at Stanford Memorial Church. Donations may be made payable to Regional Parks Fund and sent to the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, c/o Tilden Regional Park, Berkeley, CA 94708-2396

