



the reactor

by Paul Azevedo

Anthropologist Richard Leakey has searched out human fossils near his east African home which are over three million years old. However, when he spoke at Skyline College a couple of years ago, his theme was the ephemeral nature of we humans, how little of all that we make and manipulate and do that survives.

Civilized persons leave behind more artifacts than those first east Africans discovered by Leakey, but we and our possessions are also ephemeral. Two hundred thousand years from now, the most persistent remnant of American civilization may be radioactivity.

We are losing parts of Pacifica's history every day. Older residents die. Their precious memories die with them. Their letters, records, writings are burned, destroyed, or frittered away.

WHEN FRANK Stanger, the eminent historian of San Mateo county, died the other day at 92, he carried to his grave more than he ever wrote. In his case, we can be grateful that he left us so much; books like "South From San Francisco," articles in La Peninsula, the periodical of the San Mateo Historical Society, and his other writings. Without his careful, concerned studies, we would all be the poorer.

Even so, most of the history of San Mateo county has been lost. Pacifica's records are even more scanty and fleeting. With all the heroic work of Dema Savage (and

Angel Stewart before her) in saving and codifying the lore of this community, most of the facts and most of the history has been lost. Only a small part has been saved to tell our children's children the Story of Pacifica.

THIS WAS brought home forcefully to me the other day when I called Louis Rasmussen. Rasmussen is an expert on historical research. A quarter century or so ago he researched and wrote some articles for the Coastside Comet, published at that time by a man named Mel Hansen.

Hansen's newspaper, after a couple of sales and name changes, became the Pacifica Tribune in 1959.

I was following the trail of George Frederick Sharp, the San Francisco lawyer and 49er who 100 years ago owned the ranch that became the Sharp Park Golf Course.

RASMUSSEN HAD written about Sharp and the golf course. The articles very likely contained some valuable information. I will probably never know, because the files of the Coastside Comet have disappeared.

Mel Hansen died in 1974, only 48, in an auto accident. His father has since died. His mother lives in another state. Any Comets Hansen may have saved are evidently gone.

What a sad loss. Mel Hansen only 30 years ago was recording the current history of this area. Now not only is he gone, but that precious history he made and recorded has also been lost. Nothing else could tell us so much about the reasons why Pacifica became the community it is today.

Royer Protests Traps

Rep. Bill Royer signed a petition at the Peninsula Humane Society recently protesting the use of steel-jaw traps in California. Royer will deliver petitions against the traps bearing 23,000 signatures to the Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee. He is among the 102 representatives co-sponsoring a bill (H.R. 1297) to prohibit the use of the traps on grounds that they are inhumane and dangerous.

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