

# The Reactor

Paul Azevedo



## For Civilization

What have you done lately for civilization?

Have you read a book? A poem? Written an essay on something that interests you? Written something to share with your grandchildren or children?

Have you written something on your family history? Have you put on paper who your grandparents were, where they came from, why they settled where they did, whom they married? If you know the facts, even partially, why not put it all together in a book? Prepare it as a gift to the family.

The Xerox machine is a wonderful tool. Prepare several copies of your book for your extended family, perhaps even an extra copy for the Sutro state library (which specializes in genealogy) and the local library.

Julie Gervais is a wonderful example. She put together just such a book. Julie's book is not perfect. Fact is, though, it is a loving, detailed compilation that will be important to her family for many years, perhaps even hundreds of years. Instead of fretting that she is not a pro, that her book would not be perfect, Julie just went ahead and did it. She created a family history, in fact a family

heirloom. Her book is a major sourcebook of life in San Pedro Valley in the early 20th century. There is comparatively little publicly available from that era. Others have talked and planned for years. She did it.

Obviously it was a labor of love. She gathered together family photos, newspaper clippings, many from the Tribune, and other memorabilia. She wrote of various members of the family. She put it all together, made a number of copies, and distributed them to family and to libraries where they would be preserved and where they would be of value to future researchers.

Julie, who now lives in Newark, is no longer young, but she is a vibrant, lively human being. Though she comes from the longest distance, she is always among the first to arrive at meetings of the Pacifica Historical Society.

Civilization is a fragile thing. It is culture. It is history. It is a love poem. It is a painting of a sunset. It is religion carefully observed. It is Ansel Adams photographing Yosemite. It is a teacher handing on the ABCs to another generation. It is a Chinese-American boy studying Mandarin, or a Jewish boy learning Hebrew, or a Catholic priest studying St. Thomas Aquinas in Latin, or John Bentley at Terra Nova showing a high school freshman how to play the drums.

Civilization is Maxine Gonsalves firing a pot in the kiln. It is an old craftsman with a linotype in his garage, setting type in hot lead, just for the love of it, or that same person hand-setting type the way it's been done since the time of Gutenberg.

We are all involved in civilization, or should be. What have you done for civilization today?

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