

The Governor and the Picnic 6/30/93

A number of Pacificans and others will share in reading the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence next Sunday morning at 11 a.m. sharp, as part of the Pacifica Fourth of July Picnic at Frontierland Park.

While Governor Wilson will not be able to be in Pacifica to share in the reading next Sunday he has sent me an engrossed copy of the official proclamation celebrating this 217th Anniversary of the Declaration.

As the Governor stated "I...encourage the people of our state to join in appropriate observances to commemorate the most significant event in the founding of our nation."

While the Governor can't make it, our new Supervisor for the Third District, Ted Lempert, will be here to read his portion. Since he and a number of other county politicians will be involved in the annual parade in Redwood City, he expects to arrive later in the reading. That's no problem, because this second annual reading, like the first, is deliberately low key and informal. Readers are expected to come and go. The event itself will be interrupted for the celebration's opening ceremonies. The important thing is that it happens. As the Governor said "it is important...to learn more about the meaning of our Declaration of Independence, the brave patriots it helped to inspire, and the great nation that it brought forth."

I find it fascinating that in the timeline of history, the Declaration of Independence, and the war that followed it took place in the same period that the Spanish and their Mexican-American associates were colonizing San Francisco. Mission Dolores needed food and materiel. The colonists and their Indian converts dug limestone at what has become the Rockaway Quarry, thus founding one of the first industrial sites in California, and certainly one of the few that have continued the original project into modern times. Food was provided to Mission Dolores by the gardens and fields of the asistencia called San Pedro y San Pablo, located where the Sanchez Adobe would later be built.

While the Americans and the English were reconciling their differences and learning how to live as separate nations, and the Americans were constructing a Constitution to live by, native Americans of Ohlone ancestry were being taught to be good subjects of Spain, to work hard and honor the king. Unfortunately they also proceeded to die in large numbers from smallpox, measles, and perhaps deep despair.

The Ohlone are gone. Their successors the Spanish are gone. In turn the Mexicans who succeeded the Spanish came and went as the Americans arrived.

The lesson is that no nation or group gets a free ride for long. For 143 years Americans and those who emigrated here to become Americans have been in control. Only our vigilance, and our concern to live up to the meaning of the Constitution will prevent some other group from following us as we followed those others. The Constitution is the linchpin of our liberty and our existence as a nation. Enjoy your Fourth. See you at the picnic.