

How to Store, and Restore, Local History 10/20/93

Pacifica needs a storage museum, where we can keep a selected amount of history. Even with a museum, we'll have to eventually throw out most of that history. The Pacifica Tribune is on microfilm, which is better than nothing, but not much. Without microfilm, libraries would be as big as the Coliseum, and contain nothing but newspapers. Miniaturization is microfilm's only advantage, unfortunately. It's hard on the eyes, inconvenient to access, time consuming to study. Hard copies are expensive and poor quality. Bound volumes of newspapers are more useful, except for their bulk. Can you imagine trying to deal with 100 years of the daily Examiner or Chronicle.

History is more than newspapers. The Pacifica Historical Society has hundreds of pictures, a few videotapes, and a shotgun, which happens to be the one that Lydia Comerford Fahey used to hold off the surveyors for the Ocean Shore Railway. We would have more video, except that former Channel 8 staffers, in a frenzy of economy and recycling, re-used some of the tapes that held Dema Savage's interviews and stories of the history of Pacifica. It's so easy to dump or destroy history. It's so hard to reconstruct it. Dema Savage put a great deal of time and skill and knowledge into her efforts to preserve local history. I hope that her dedication can be acknowledged in the future, as we continue her goal of preserving and expanding Pacifica's knowledge of itself.

The water district wants to let the Historical Society use one of its old redwood tanks, which are pretty historical themselves, as a historical museum. Putting a tank into usable shape will take tens of thousands of dollars and much labor, so it isn't a done deal, but wasn't it thoughtful of the water board to think of the needs of history? They're coming up on their own fiftieth anniversary. If no-growth advocates had had any clout in 1944, they might have stopped local growth at one or two thousand people, just by aborting NCCWD. No water, no Pacifica.

We'd still be dealing with a volunteer fire department. Artichokes would be a major crop in San Pedro Valley.

Pacifica would only be the name of an 8 story high statue demolished by the Navy to make way for WWII. History is made up of decisions. Without voting in a water district dedicated to public service, Pacifica would likely have been decided in the negative. Or we would have the same kind of water problems that plague Montara.

The city has been kind enough to permit PHS to use some office space at the Community Center. Unfortunately, decisions still have to be made on priorities. It's a small room. What do we save? What do we dump? We're bound to make a few bad decisions along the way. If you have any contributions that might improve the quality of those decisions, or even if you just want to know more about local history, you're more than welcome at the next PHS meeting Thursday evening, Nov. 4. You'll see more about the details in next week's Tribune.