

The 1930's

This decade opened with the reverberation of the financial crash of 1929. President Hoover tried for three and one-half years to overcome the worst economic debacle in Western memory. A third of our nation's population was in serious trouble. Pitiful men sold apples on street corners, long lines of haggard men and women waited in long lines for dry bread or thin soup. Children starved. Everywhere there was hunger. Young men, not necessarily hoboes, rode the rails. Hoovervilles, squalid villages, sprang up. And there were Hoover blankets, old newspaper used for warmth by park bench tenants. Mother Nature added to the misery with the Dust Bowl and migrant families. For all of that, scores of the surviving rich and too many of those in public office seemed blind to the misfortunes of the Depression. Finally, on the last day of Hoover's term as President, the banking system of the United States collapsed.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt became the 32nd President, the country was scared, more scared than ever in its history. But he immediately began to act. In the next 100 days, fifteen new laws assured government action. F.D.R. called the program a New Deal. The charismatic President sold his programs by way of Fireside Chats, informal radio talks to the nation. When his calm, resonant voice intoned "My Friends," America calmed down. Dozens of new organizations came into being, and became known by their initials because of their long names. They were Alphabet Agencies such as N.R.A., C.C.C., P.W.A., W.P.A. People either loved or hated their President. But America managed to keep its political balance, regain its economic health and reassess some of the old habits and values that had led us to the brink - Depression.

During the 30's, the radio was the main medium of entertainment. The big box in the living room was everybody's ticket to adventure, laughter, sweet music and romance.

Favorite programs were: "Amos and Andy", "Gangbusters", "Kate Smith" and "Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy", "Commentator H. V. Kaltenborn", "Ozzie Nelson and Harriet", "George Burns and Gracie Allen", "Fibber McGee & Molly", "Kay Kayser & His Orchestra", "Major Bowes", "Cavalcade of America", "Town Hall", "Kraft Music Hall with Bing Crosby and Bob Burns", "One Man's Family", "The Green Hornet", "Jimmy Fiedler's Hollywood Gossip", "Death Valley Days", and many more.

During the 30's children had their heroes, the funny papers - Flash Gordon or Little Orphan Annie and on the radio, Dick Tracy or Jack Armstrong. Saturday was movie day for the kids - Tarzan, Flash Gordon,

and that all time heroine, Shirley Temple. There were cutout and pop-up books of Shirley, Buck Rogers, or a pair of overseas idols, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose of England.

Hard times brought about a boom for one profession - crime. The most hated criminal of his time was Bruno Hauptmann, who kidnapped and killed the son of aviation hero Charles Lindbergh. America's No. 1 desperado was John Dillinger. Also on the most wanted list were Baby Face Nelson, Machine Gun Kelly, Pretty Boy Floyd, Ma Barker and her Boys, and Bonnie and Clyde.

When most of the country hit rock-bottom, High Society went along with it. Out of the rubble came Cafe Society. When Prohibition was repealed in 1933, chic restaurants such as New York's Stork Club, El Morocco, Club 21, and the like were reborn. Brenda Frazier was the No.1 Glamor Girl, followed by Cobina Wright, Gloria Baker, and Poor Little Rich Girl, Barbara Hutton.

In the middle of the 30's, the American worker found a voice - bushy browed John L. Lewis. Unions became very strong and another prominent voice was Walter Reuther.

At this time Hollywood decided to provide escape from the Depression. Came delightful fiction like Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", epics like "Cleopatra", and super spectacular musicals such as "Flying Down to Rio", "Gold Diggers of 1933", the Jeanette McDonald-Nelson Eddy operettas, the Dick Powell-Ruby Keller froths, and the Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers dance team. The most talented star of the decade was a little pop-eyed dynamo, Bette Davis. Clark Gable, Errol Flynn, and Gary Cooper were big box office attractions. And there was a pair of lovable youngsters, Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland who were so popular in the Andy Hardy series. The most expensive and discussed movies of the 30's was "Gone With the Wind." The plantation Tara, Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler really came to life.

And this was the era when the Big Band became big business. Teenagers danced the Jitterbug and the Big Apple to the music of Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, Artie Shaw, Bob Crosby, Glenn Miller, Harry James, Count Basie and Duke Ellington. Nonsense songs swept the country such as "Tutti Frutti", "Bei Mir Bist Du Shon", "Three Little Fishes", and "Flat Foot Floogie." Popular songs were "The Lady In Red", "Dream a Little Dream of Me", "Out of Nowhere", "It's Only a Paper Moon", "I've Told Every Little Star", "Lazybones", "The Very Thought of You", "There's a Small Hotel", "Tuxedo Junction", "One O'clock Jump", "Blue of the Night:", "Deep Purple", Gershwin's "I've Got Rhythm", "Embraceable You", "Sweet

Leilani" and that South American flavor such as "Cha Cha", "Tico Tico", "Brazil", "Hasta Manana" and "Rhumba."

Two important Broadway shows were Gershwin's "Girl Crazy" and Jerome Kerns' "Roberta" which introduced a young actor, Bob Hope.

Swing gave birth to Jive Talk - Hep Cat, Jitterbug, Killer Diller, Cuttin' the Rug, Alligator, Canary, In the Groove, etc.

Two of the biggest news stories of the decade were the abdication of King Edward who gave up the throne of England for the woman he loved, and the disappearance of the famous woman flyer, Amelia Earhart.

In 1939, the country was preparing for two big World Fairs. In New York, the Fair's theme was "World of Tomorrow." The Fair in San Francisco was on a man-made island, Treasure Island, and celebrated the completion of two bridges across San Francisco Bay.

In thousands of small towns across the nation, people were able to go on about the business of living pretty much as always despite the Depression.

Here is Evelyn Heim to tell us about Fair Oaks in the 30's.

The 30's

Evelyn Heim

Both my husband and I were born and raised in this area. Al's home place is at the north end of Minnesota Avenue in the Greenridge Tract. My home place is on San Juan Avenue across from the Raley's Shopping Area. This ranch of 185 acres was purchased in 1902 by my grandparents. About 115 acres were in orchard. Some 50 acres were in woods where a previous owner had had a private racetrack. Horses were very important in those days, as they were the only means of transportation. Hundreds were shipped in from Washington and Oregon, corralled on some 2000 acres near San Juan Avenue and Manzanita, then sold to local people who had to break them in for domestic use.

Learning to drive wasn't taken for granted either. When a new car was purchased, a teacher came out from the East and stayed with the buyer for several days teaching him to drive. It was a big change from the horse and buggy.

Quoting from my father, "In 1912 we bought a tractor, a Holt Caterpillar 30, and we were the first to own one outright. Until this time, they had been owned only by a group of people. I will never forget the day

the tractor arrived. It had been shipped to Ben Ali and from there I drove it to the ranch. What a noise! It popped, groaned and vibrated so that at every farm, people came rushing out to see what the racket was!" (My father sold it recently to a museum in Fresno.)

"One thing that is gone is the old Indian sweat house we used to play in. It was located just about where Walnut Avenue joins Winding Way just above the creek in Carmichael. It was shaped like a beehive with vents on top and a very small opening on the side to crawl in, Some wood cutters camping there enlarged the door and later when Winding Way was cut through, the sweat house was destroyed."

THURSDAY CLUB Fair Oaks 1930 to 1940

At the beginning of the decade, Mrs. Guy Camden, or Harriet as most of us remember her, was still serving her first term as President of Thursday Club. One of the items noted in the minutes was a letter from Mrs. C. C. Young, wife of the governor, offering her regrets for not being able to be with us on our opening day and wishing the club a successful year.

During Mrs. Louetta Van Maren's term as President in 1931 and 1932, the club was active in aiding the veterans, Indian families and other groups who needed assistance.

In 1932 and 1933, Mrs. W. E. Brillhart kept the club active with musicals, book reviews and luncheons. In the winter of 1932, we experienced the big freeze. Many orange and olive trees were lost which made the depression more disastrous for many people. On January 21, 1933, the banks closed, and our club was having a difficult time meeting current bills. Members voted to pay bills as the money became available. Even though this was depression time, Mr. Myron Wood, or Duzy as the townspeople called him, started the De Soto-Plymouth Automobile Agency, which is now known as the Edgett Motors (10123 Fair Oaks Blvd.).

After the Fair Oaks restaurants closed, Mr. Bill Andrews would cook up a big pot of stew in the back room of the service station he owned and operated just to the north of the Fair Oaks Plaza. He was able to get 100 pounds of potatoes for \$1.25, a big sack of day-old bread for 25 cents and many vegetables for the picking from fields in Yolo, and ham hocks and lamb at a reasonable price. He then served this stew free to people passing through the area.

When Mrs. C. Brown was club President in 1934, the Dramatic

Division was formed with Orla Gerhardt as instructor. Orla and her husband Lou came to Fair Oaks in 1928. From the article in Fair Oaks Memories Book, Orla is quoted - "In the midst of our unpacking a carload of Fair Oaks ladies came swinging up the driveway, rang the door bell and who were calling? A committee from the Woman's Thursday Club to welcome us and invite us to attend the husband's night party and asked if we would please entertain with a few numbers. Well, we did and that was our introduction to Fair Oaks society. Soon everyone knew that we had had a voice and dramatics studio in Des Moines, Iowa. That did it. Suddenly, the place was agog with the idea of drama and music." For many years residents of Fair Oaks, Orangevale, Folsom, etc. were active in plays and musicals under the direction of Lou and Orla Gerhardt and Mrs. Camden. Can you visualize Iva Langness as a petite and sparkling French maid, Esther Kirschman always in a fluttering dither, or Jay Campoy who could have taught Claudette Colbert to turn on sudden tears?

In June 1934, our very active Mrs. Lillian Webb became a clerk in the Fair Oaks Post Office. Later she served as the postmistress.

Fair Oaks had been represented in two publications: "Oak Leaves" and "Fair Oaks Progress", which later merged with the North Sacramento Tribune. These were not completely printed within our boundaries. February 2, 1933 then was the birth of our own San Juan Record. Many trials and tribulations were encountered by the founders, John and Geraldine Fitzgerald, but they made it into a fine weekly newspaper. In 1935 Mr. Leon Wheaton, known as Wheat, became publisher until 1948. Then Audrey and Sheldon Menefee published it until 1962 when the present publishers, Kathlyn and Reinhart Knudsen, took the paper and enlarged it to include a larger area than just Fair Oaks.

In 1936, several national publications mentioned the collection of rare birds belonging to Leland and Elma Smith, whose aviary was on the corner of Fair Oaks Blvd. and Sunset Avenue. They cared for more than 100 varieties of birds from all over the world. People would come from great distances to visit. I remember my parents taking out-of-town visitors there as one of the local places of interest. Mrs. Smith also had a florist shop there for many years.

Many of you know Mr. & Mrs. Ancil Hoffmann whose home is on Greenback Lane. Mr. Hoffman was county supervisor for a number of years and a successful avocado rancher, as well as manager of the thirteenth heavy weight boxing champion of the world, Max Baer. Max used to disrupt the classes at San Juan High School when he stopped to chat with students on his daily exercise runs. Needless to say, the principal, Mr. Mooney, asked

him to change his route which he did.

Mrs. James Tully was our President in 1936 and in 1937 Mrs. Camden served her second term. There were lots of musicals in these years too. On one occasion Miss Thalia Heim gave a piano presentation of "Liebestraum" and "Minuet in G." Thalia now lives in Chicago with husband Harry Davidson. They both teach music and give concerts.

1938 to 1940, Mrs. Marguerite Borsberry was our President. She came to Fair Oaks in 1932. One of the highlights she remembers so well during that time are the activities of a choral group sponsored by the Thursday Club and directed by Mrs. Camden. They took first place in a county and also a district contest. Included in the club scrapbooks are the dramas put on by members of our club, of which Mrs. Borsberry has many fond memories.