



NEWS

This Member newsletter is a bi-monthly publication of the SHARPSTEEN MUSEUM ASSOCIATION, a non-profit organization.

VOL. 38, NO. 4 ■ June/July 2020

Message from the Board:

On Friday the 13th

We are sure you have all been wondering “what the heck is going on with the Museum?” We are here to let you know, so read on.

It was Friday, March 13th at 2:00 PM that the decision was made to close the Museum. Due to the threat of the coronavirus, our concern was for the safety of our docents and volunteers.

The original closure was to be through March, obviously things changed. The Sharpsteen will open soon following mandates established by the State of California and County of Napa. We will post updates to our website as soon as we can so keep checking.

The Preview Party

See MESSAGE pg 3

REMINISCENCE, PART 1

Ben wanted to see my dollhouse!

by Ruth Durbin

Upon retiring in 1971, with time on my hands, I enrolled in Dave Huddleston’s oil painting class. I had been an art major in college but had never pursued my education. (My other interest on retirement was building and furnishing a doll house.)

One night after class Dave told me that Ben Sharpsteen wanted to meet me. What an honor to have someone of Ben Sharpsteen’s caliber interested in my paintings! I hadn’t realized, I “modestly” thought, that I was that talented!

Ben and his wife, Bernice, arrived at our home at the appointed time. I had spent much time arranging and rearranging my paintings for advantageous lighting. His first words were: “I came to see your dollhouse. “ Pouf! so much for my ego!

Ben told us his dream of building a museum in Calistoga in memory of the early settlers. He explained that he was looking for someone to do the

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“When Ben Sharpsteen saw a four-story Victorian doll house, complete with all furnishings and a family of four, plus three servants which was made by Mr. and Mrs. Bob Durbin of Diamond Mt. Rd., he engaged them to make the miniatures of Sam Brannan’s buildings for his museum.”

—The Weekly Calistogan, Feb. 19, 1976

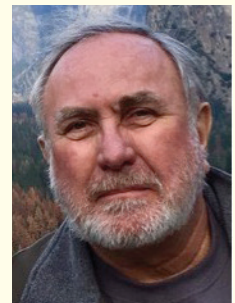
In 1993, Ruth Durbin compiled all of her memories of constructing the miniature displays with her husband Bob, and of working with Ben and other artists on the museum in the 1970’s.

We present her story entitled “Reminiscence” along with photos from the archives in installments as space allows beginning with this newsletter.

Voting results are in for 2020-2021

Thank you to all members who sent in your ballots for the new Board of Directors for fiscal year June 1, 2020-2021.

Many of you included encouraging comments such as “Go Team Sharpsteen!”, “Thank You to all who keep Ben & Bernice’s museum going for us” and “Thank You for your hard work!”



Alan Rogers

See VOTE COUNT pg 2

Summer Library Reading Program is Happening Online this Year

We are pleased to announce that our popular Summer Library Reading Program will happen this year. However, in light of COVID-19, the way to join the fun is to sign up and participate online at: www.napalibrary.org/sla

Registration for the 2020 Summer Library Adventure begins Tuesday, May 26th and runs through August 31st. There is no charge to participate in the Summer Library Adventure, events or to check out library materials. Paper reading logs will be available at a number of food distribution sites in Napa County and can be mailed upon request. When libraries reopen, community members may pick a log up at their nearest Napa County Library location.

Children's programs will be videotaped and will be available online for students to enjoy. Each presentation will only be available for a limited number of days so it is important to log on to the above website to see the available dates.

Uncle Jer's Traveling Bee Show- Bee info, puppets and observation hives

Zun Zun- The Water Beat- a water celebration with music and movement

Caterpillar Puppets- Mr. Froggy, Ace Detective

Puppet Art Theater- Tommy's Pirate Adventure

Banana Slug String Band- We All Live Downstream

End of the Summer Reading Program Celebration- Stories, rewards, treats & crafts - TBA

Docent Corner:

High fives to our entire team of Docents

Since the Museum was open only for 2 weeks during this period, we thought it appropriate that each and every one of the best docents known to man be listed. We will see you all again very soon.

Christine Amey

Bev Barnes

Kathy Bazzoli

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Jane Bennett

Ray Branstetter

Emily Bucchianeri

Judith Cornils

Donna Dill

Claire Flickinger

Lorne Glaim

Marilyn Glaim

Linda Hanson



Pat Haynes

Sally Houk

Gisela Huesmann

Wendy Johnson

Cathy Keag

Jackie Lang

Pat Larsen

John Loschmann

Barbara Maxfield

Emma Mazzola

Jo Ellen Noble

Mary Nuernberger

Maria Moreno

Reyes

John Rickman

Ellie Robinson

Anne Scott

Lauren Thollander

Bill Thomas

Rita Tucker

Wendy Watson

Lamar Webb

Jeannie Williams

DeAnn Wylie

Ron Yost

Thank you all for your loyalty and dedication.

Jane Bennett
Docent Chair



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Museum Hours: 11 am-4 pm daily,
except Thanksgiving and Christmas.

BOARD MEMBERS:

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Editor: Shari Hanson

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Museum's mission is to preserve and to provide for public exhibitions and study of the history of the community of Calistoga and the upper Napa Valley.

VOTE COUNT

Continued from page 1

We sincerely appreciate your continued support and good wishes. Your Board of Directors per ballot count:

Alan Rogers

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Recording Secretary

DOLLHOUSE

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miniature work for the main diorama and would we be interested in giving it a try. It sounded like fun and something Bob and I could do together; Bob doing the “heavy” half-inch scale construction and I the “gingerbread” work.

Ben left several photographs of the first cottage and after I completed detailed scale plans, construction began. Ben was satisfied with our first attempt and casually mentioned he would need four or five more elaborate cottages. Little did we realize that more than three years later “Lilliput Construction Company” would still be in business!

Work on the cottages became a way of life. It meant investing in miniature tools which came

from the most unlikely places--dentists, jewelers. One very important tool which we purchased was a lathe so small that I could turn toothpicks on it!

There were times that I would be in tears and wanted to give up the whole project. Ben was such a perfectionist and his approval was so important to me. I would file and sand for hours on the intricate trim for the cottages only to have the strip break. I later learned that plastic wood covered a multitude of sins. Before we finished one building, Ben would announce that he needed a bath house or a hotel or the mansion house. I began to feel that I had brought upon myself a Herculean task.

Requests for more and more buildings were coming so fast that . . . to be continued!



Bob Durbin works on buildings for the Sharpsteen diorama.

MESSAGE

Continued from page 1

for the new Earl Tholander Special Exhibit which was scheduled for May 8th was postponed. A new date has yet to be chosen. The exhibit will be fully set-up and ready the minute our doors are again opened.

The two “Meet the Author” events (Todd Shulman author of *Murder & Mayhem in Napa County, Part 2*, and Alexandria Brown author of *Lost Restaurants of Napa Valley and Their Recipes*) are still planned for Summer, but no dates can yet

be confirmed.

One very hard decision we had to make was to cancel this year’s Instant Wine Cellar scheduled for late August. As you know this is our one and only fund raiser each year, the one we count on to help keep us going. The IWC has been made possible due to the generous donations of local merchants and wineries (as well as grand prize ticket purchases) but the virus has created struggles for us all. We wanted to give back to the merchants and wineries somehow, support them in return. We decided the best thing we

could give would be to NOT ask for their donations to the IWC.

And for you we have a very special offer. If you had planned on attending this year’s event or had budgeted for ticket purchases we are asking that you consider donating the same amount for one very special mixed case of Napa Valley wine. Chances are \$10.00 each or 5 for \$40.00. Simply mail us a check as a donation noted specifically for this raffle prize. All entries received by July 31st will go into a special drawing. Make sure you include your phone num-

ber so we can call you when you win!

Please know that our past successes have been accomplished due to your ongoing support and encouragement. We realize the next few weeks may continue to be challenging for all of us but you can remain confident that your Board has never shied away from a challenge. It is for you we stand strong.

We are sending you all our sincere wishes for health, safety, and a prosperous future. Keep those masks on. We hope to see you all in the very near future.

Book Store: Lost Restaurants of Napa Valley

Author Alexandria Brown strikes again! Many of you have met her and purchased her first published title “Hidden History”.

Her second to be published is “Lost Restaurants of Napa Valley and Their Recipes” which we highlight here. This volume is filled with the history of the growth of the “mouthwatering eateries” in Napa County dating back to the 1800’s with biographical stories of how these enterprising risk-takers made the Valley a “foodie haven”. Calistoga’s El Faro Restaurant, Magnolia Hotel, Calistoga Hotel, Groenweld’s Restaurant, and Silverado Creamery to name a few.

Did you know that “restaurants” were born in Paris in the early 1800’s? A “restaurant” was actually a meat broth mixture, not an establishment. Ever wonder where Ronald Reagan announced his candidacy for Governor of California? It was 1966 at Aetna



Springs Resort in Pope Valley, the photo is found on page 56. Scores of photographs are found throughout this volume including one of Carole Lombard having breakfast at the Plaza Hotel during the shooting of They Knew What They Wanted in 1940.

Under many of the photographs you will see the notation “courtesy of the Sharpsteen Museum”. Yes we helped Alex with this new publication, as we

did her first. Read the acknowledgment page, you will be as proud as we are.

From hotels to boarding houses to saloons, author Alex Brown takes you on a magical journey through Calistoga and our Valley’s epicurean history.

Even though the Museum may not be reopened June 1, this book has already been added to our shelves. If you would like to purchase now, go to our web site. \$21.99/ea. plus tax and shipping/handling = \$27.68 delivered to your door; otherwise just stop by once our doors are open.

Sales in our Book Store help in supporting our efforts, events and programs. We thank you for your continued generosity.

Kathy Bazzoli – Book Store Chair
Lorne Glaim – Co-Chair



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