



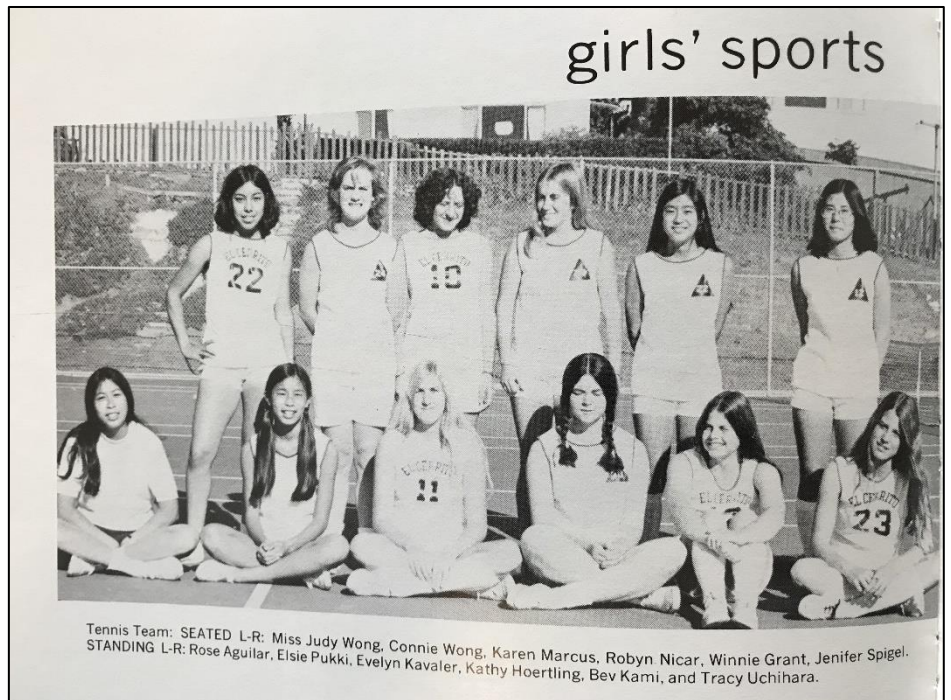
Rose Aguilar McHone: A Pioneer in Girls Athletics at El Cerrito High School

By Jon Bashor

In spring of 1975, El Cerrito High School senior Rose Aguilar was looking forward to receiving her diploma and her athletics letter for competing in interscholastic sports. The diploma wasn't a problem, but when she didn't receive her "Block C" letter for playing varsity softball, tennis and JV basketball over four years, she wanted to know why.

"When I was a senior and getting close to graduating, I realized hey, we haven't gotten our letters," Rose Aguilar McHone recalled recently. "So I went to ask for them, not just for me but for four others too. I assumed I would get one – I didn't know that girls didn't get letters." She first asked her tennis coach, Connie Wong, and was told that while boys received them, girls didn't.

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Tennis Team: SEATED L-R: Miss Judy Wong, Connie Wong, Karen Marcus, Robyn Nicar, Winnie Grant, Jenifer Spigel.
STANDING L-R: Rose Aguilar, Elsie Pukki, Evelyn Kavalier, Kathy Hoertling, Bev Kami, and Tracy Uchihara.

Rose Aguilar, back row left, poses with her teammates for their 1973 yearbook photo. Photo El Cerrito Historical Society collection.

Son of Mausoleum's Founder Heads Its Expansion, Suffers Financial Woes

By Dave Weinstein

This is the second of a two-part history of the first 50-plus years of Sunset (now Golden Gate) Mausoleum above El Cerrito. Part one focused on the era of founder Arthur F. Edwards Sr.

During the 1930s and 1940s, as Sunset Mausoleum grew and faced economic challenges associated with the Great Depression and World War II, the mausoleum's future owner, Arthur Edwards Jr. was distinguishing himself in military school, on stage, and in the law.

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Contra Costa Civic Theater Ready to Stage Post-Covid Comeback

By Jon Bashor

This is part 2 of a history of the Contra Costa Civic Theater, founded in 1959 in El Cerrito.

The Contra Costa Civic Theatre enters its 65th year in 2024 facing a number of changes, including drawing post-pandemic audiences in a time when other theaters are closing, new regulations for staff and the need to ensure financial stability.

But there are constants to make the journey easier.

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Rose Aguilar

Continued from page 1

She then approached baseball coach Larry Quirico and got the same answer, but he added that he would look into it. Quirico did tell her that if Principal Frank Granucci said it was ok, he would give the girls their letters.

When she went to the principal's office, the secretary was out to lunch so she went straight into the office.

"When I went to Dr. Granucci's office I had my speech all made out and was even prepared to cry," Rose said. "Then he said 'Ok' and got on the phone to Larry, who then ordered the letters for us."

Quirico, who graduated from El Cerrito High in 1958 and returned in 1969 to coach baseball and later became athletic director, credits Rose with being a leader in launching girls' sports at ECHS.

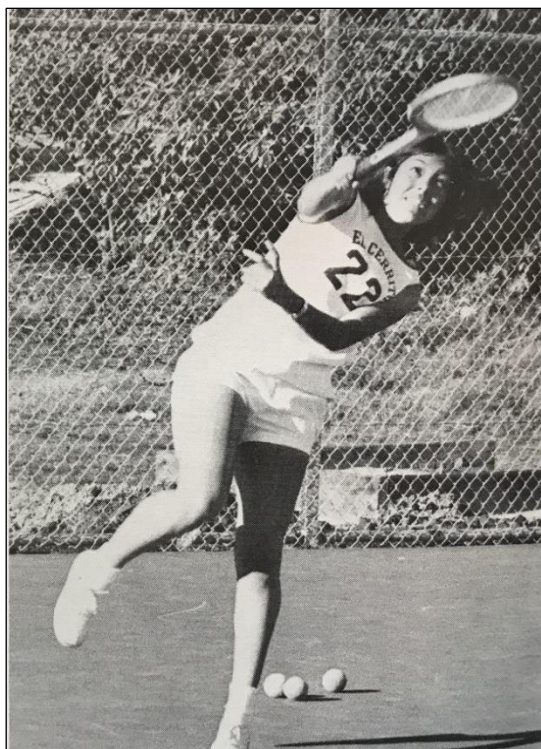
"She was a good athlete, she was smart and she loved to play sports," said Quirico, who retired in 2001. "Rose and the other girls who pioneered women's athletics set the table for those who followed. But Rose was the first woman to earn a varsity letter at El Cerrito High."

At the school, Rose played softball and was the team captain for four years. She also played tennis and won the doubles championship in 1974 with partner Ann Miller. That year they were voted MVPs by their teammates. She also played JV basketball for the school.

"I played sports because I loved it," she said. "I played every sport I could."

When tennis coach Wong handed out the letters, she didn't have the one for Rose, telling her "Coach Quirico wants to give you yours personally."

But getting her letter wasn't the end of her story. The 1975 edition of El Camino, the school yearbook, had already been printed, so a special



Rose Aguilar returns a shot on the tennis court. Photo El Cerrito Historical Society

supplement was printed with photos of the girls with their letters. And anyone who wanted a copy had to pay extra for it.

The school yearbooks published during Rose's time at the high school also reflected the dominance of boys' sports. The 1972 edition devoted 34 pages to boys' sports, while girls merited only four. In 1973, the score was 38 pages to six and by 1974 it was 40 to seven.

Same old story

To display her Block C, Rose wanted a letterman's jacket, with a felt vest and leather sleeves. But when she went to the local sporting goods store with her mother to buy one, she heard a familiar refrain. Only boys could get the jackets, girls got sweaters. Undeterred, she had her brother and mother return to the store the next day to buy an XS jacket for him, but the store owner refused. Her mother bought

the white sweater, sewed on all of Rose's awards and embroidered it with "Rose."

The challenges she faced were reflective of the times. Title IX, the landmark federal civil rights law that was enacted as part of the Education Amendments of 1972, prohibited sex-based discrimination in any school or any other education program that receives funding from the federal government. That also applied to scholastic sports.

Although the law mandated equal programs for boys and girls, there was no additional funding to cover the costs, Quirico said. In the then-Richmond Unified School District there were very few women P.E. teachers who

were interested in becoming team coaches, he said, adding that as younger teachers were hired that changed. And as the early girls teams achieved success in interscholastic play, more girls tried out and competed in tennis, volleyball, softball, basketball, gymnastics and track.

"It got more popular as more girls started playing and realized how much fun it was," Quirico said. "By the 1980s, girls athletics had really taken off."

In addition to Rose, Quirico cited two other female athletes who also excelled; Karan Mason and Janice Knudsen.

Karan Mason played basketball from 1975-77 and was all-league in '76 and '77, setting a team record by scoring 19 points in a game in her senior year. She also played tennis

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Rose Aguilar

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and went on to play at San Jose State University. She was inducted into San Jose State's hall of fame in 2000.

Janice Knudsen played basketball from 1976-79 and was selected all-league in 1978 and '79, all-East Bay in 1979, all-tournament in '77 and '78, plus named prep of the week two times. She also excelled in volleyball and competed in track. At Cal State Hayward she played basketball for four years, was all-conference for three of those years and was inducted into the university's hall of fame in 1994.

After ECHS, Rose attended San Francisco State University where she majored in physical education and played softball for four years. After graduating, she returned to El Cerrito High to coach softball for two years and also played softball and tennis in city recreation leagues.

But, she said, when the district implemented coed physical education classes, the male teachers got the jobs. She returned to school and became a court reporter in San Francisco for 10 years. Later, her husband's job took him to Singapore and Malaysia. They have two sons.

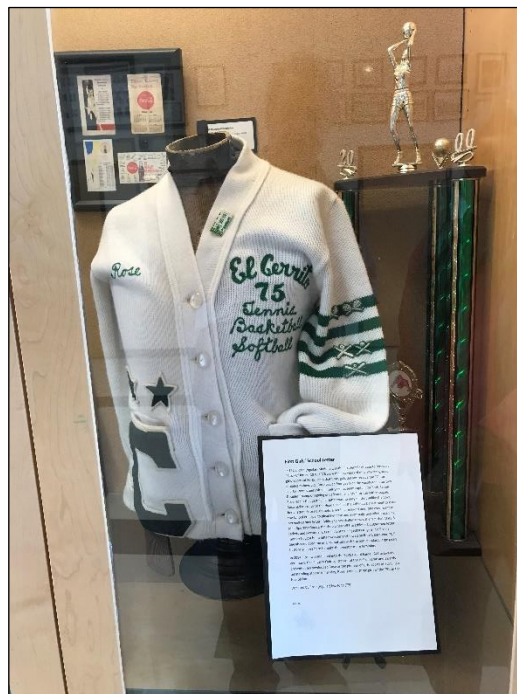
In 2014, Rose was inducted into the El Cerrito High School Athletics Hall of Fame, which Quirico helped establish in 2009. For her induction, she wore her hard-earned sweater bearing her athletic achievements.

Afterward, she decided to donate the sweater to the ECHS Archiving project. "First, I asked my sons if they wanted it and they said, 'Nope!'," Rose said. "Then I asked Joann Steck-Bayat of the Archiving Project and she said 'We would love to have it.'"



Wearing her hard-earned Block C sweater, Rose Aguilar McHone was inducted into the ECHS Athletic Hall of Fame in 2014. Photo ECHS Athletic Hall of Fame.

The sweater is now prominently displayed in the hall of fame showcase outside the school gym.



Rose Aguilar's Block C sweater on display at ECHS. Photo by Jon Bashor.

"I was very, very honored and pleased to be selected for the hall of fame," Rose said. "I hope that what I was able to accomplish will inspire other young ladies to play sports and succeed."

One more challenge

Recently Rose set her sights on one more accomplishment. Her niece, Peyton Aguilar, was a senior and standout softball player at the high school who had earned her letter and proudly wore it on her own letterman's jacket. After Peyton died unexpectedly on Jan. 1, 2024, Rose became determined to have her niece's jacket displayed next to Rose's sweater. After a series of discussions, on March 18, Peyton's jacket was put on display next to Rose's sweater in the hall of fame showcase.

The Forge. Edited by Jon Bashor and Dave Weinstein. Our goal is to publish The Forge quarterly. It is sent to all members of the society. It takes its name from the forge of blacksmith Wilhelm Rust, an early settler and one of the founders of our city. The society also publishes Sparks, an online monthly newsletter.

Mausoleum

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Edwards, 17, a “brilliant young junior cadet at the San Diego Army and Navy Academy,” was one of four cadets chosen to represent the school in “a drama tournament put on by Pasadena Community Playhouse,” the Chronicle reported in 1934 – a year after he’d won a medal at the school for “best scholarship.”

At age 20, Edwards graduated from the Junior College Division of the Army and Navy Academy, which the Chronicle called “the West Point of the West,” adding that his company won first place in competitive drill.

Edwards attended Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco, passed the bar in 1938, served in the military during the Second World War, and was soon enjoying a legal career in the city and as a performer, both onstage and in real life.

By November 10, 1949, Edwards Jr. was appearing in Herb Caen’s now-legendary Chronicle column representing the husband in a divorce case complicated by a battle between man and ex-wife over “an elephant’s head, six feet high and seven feet wide, complete with trunk, bristly hair and bullet hole in forehead.”

Edwards (1914-1994) managed to win the head for his client – who then said he didn’t want it. A subsequent column continued the tale: “Anybody who wants an almost new, elephant-type stuffed head (Female) contact Arthur F. Edwards.”

Less than a month later Caen told readers a happier tale about a marriage, this time involving Edwards, described as “a widely known S.F. atty.,” and his wife



A tour of the Golden Gate Mausoleum hosted by the historical society in August 2023 drew dozens of people. Photo by Dianne P. Brenner.

Helen. “Before a roomful of guests, his prize Siamese cats, Pong (a male) and Muey (a female) were united in a wedding ceremony....Pong was attired in a bow tie, and Muey wore a white veil.” A deputy D.A. performed the ceremony.

Throughout the 1950s and into the early 1960s, the doings of Arthur and Helen Edwards made news on the society pages. Edwards cut a loud figure, with news columnists several times noting his sartorial splendor. In 1956 the Chronicle spotted Edwards on a night in town wearing “a violently plaid dinner jacket.”

It’s notable that Arthur and Helen were active in society both in the city and Marin County, but not, apparently, in the El Cerrito-Kensington area. Most of the couple’s theatrical ventures took place at community theaters or society events. In 1953 the Children’s

Theater Association performed ‘Candy,’ a play about a carnival zebra, at the Marines’ Memorial Theater in the city. The Chronicle credited Helen as author, based on a book by the couple. Arthur designed the sets.

A 1955 Junior League revue at the Veterans Memorial building was standing room only, the Chronicle reported. A highlight was set at Sutro Baths, “where Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Edwards led a line of Gay Nineties bathing beauties and their beaux.”

Two years later the Chronicle’s Talk Around Town columnist David Hulburd caught ‘Private Lives’ at Sausalito’s Little Theater featuring “socialite doll ... Ann Folger (coffee) Hanger,” and “Arthur Edwards, owner of the Sunset Mausoleum-Columbarium in Berkeley, as her leading man.”

Arthur also wrote plays for himself and his friends to perform at Bohemian Grove retreats.

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Mausoleum

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“The Edwards household is a happy state of affairs,” ran the headline over a short feature by Yvonne Mero in January 1955, reporting that Arthur and Helen shared a large Tudor home on seven hillside acres in San Anselmo with four dogs, four cats, and a seven-year-old son.

Mero reported that Arthur and Helen not only performed together, but built objects for their garden, silkscreened their own Christmas cards, and made chairs for their patio. “Now they are in the process of molding animals as light fixtures for their driveway,” she wrote.

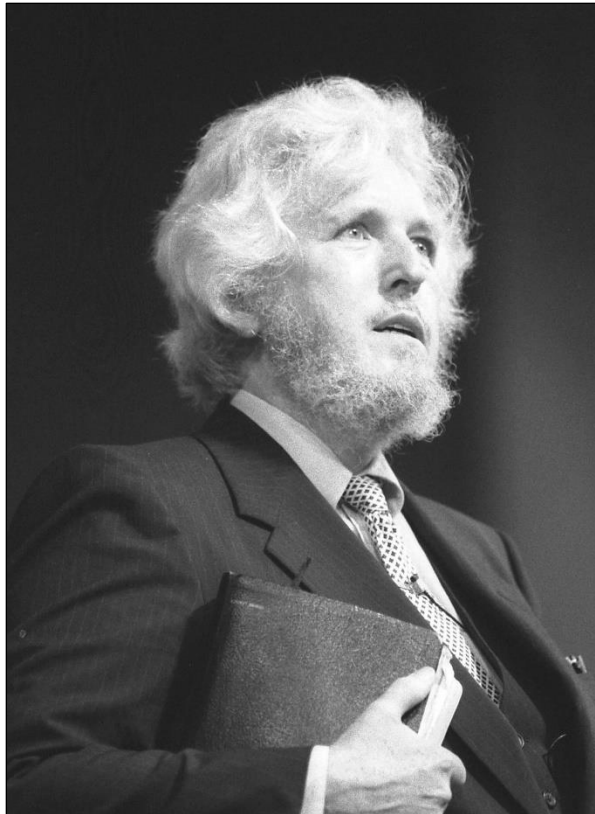
“Attractive Mrs. Edwards, who is active in Marin Unit of the San Francisco Junior League, is also raising funds for the Junior Museum of Marin.”

Besides working as a lawyer in the city, Edwards oversaw Sunset Mausoleum as manager, starting in 1952. His father had never served as manager, leaving that role first to Fred Purner, from 1926 to 1931, then John M. Brenneis, from 1931 to 1952. Edwards left his law practice around this time to devote his energies to the mausoleum.

The lower terraces were designated as a fallout shelter during the early 1950s and equipped with food and other emergency goods.

In June 1953 – the mausoleum’s 25th anniversary – Edwards Jr. announced plans for expansion. He told the Chronicle he would tour Europe to find marble for an expansive addition, adding a large chapel and two terraces behind the original building.

“We will build an outdoor garden, reproducing Stephen Foster’s memorial chapel,” Curtis E. Clark,



Dr. Gene Scott, who took over ownership of the Sunset Mausoleum in 1970. Wikipedia photo.

the mausoleum association’s vice president, said. “We have designed a Childrens’ Sanctuary with a replica of Gainsborough’s Blue Boy in stained glass.”

On March 9, 1954. Sunset Mausoleum and Columbarium opened after the remodel – but apparently without the Blue Boy. The mausoleum prospered during the 1950s and 1960s, attracting many families. As civil rights laws were enacted, the mausoleum opened to people of all races.

By 1969, drama came to this temple of entombment, and it came from within. Records from Alameda County Superior Court tell the tale.

In over his financial head on a scheme to construct a commercial building in Berkeley, Arthur Edwards Jr. used the family home as collateral for loans, embezzled funds from the

mausoleum’s endowment care fund, and used stolen funds as collateral to get a bank loan, draining the mausoleum association’s funds to the degree that bankruptcy loomed.

The early 1950s Sunset Mausoleum brochure makes clear that the endowment fund should have been untouchable.

Defining Sunset Mausoleum as an “endowment care property,” the brochure explained:

“From each completed sale (of a niche, crypt, or memorial chapel), a sum is deposited in a trust fund which is audited yearly by certified public accountants, and the trustees of which are constantly advised by a nationally known brokerage house. Under the law of the State of California, only the income of this trust may be used for the upkeep and embellishment of the Mausoleum. The principle must always be kept intact, thus ensuring permanence of upkeep.”

By 1970, Edwards had lost control of the mausoleum and mausoleum association, selling his ownership stake for \$1.62 million to a man who was known both locally and nationally as a television evangelist, W. Eugene Scott. It’s not clear how Scott came to own Sunset Mausoleum. Likely he was seen either by Edwards or by members of the association board as a potential financial savior.

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Mausoleum

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Arthur and Helen's marriage had ended and Arthur was living in an apartment in Oakland's Adams Point.

Edwards was indicted on April 6, 1972, charged with grand theft. He pleaded guilty.

Charles Herbert, the deputy DA. handling the case, sought prison time. "This money is money that the defendant in effect stole; that he embezzled from trust funds over which he had absolute control," Herbert told Judge Harold B. Hove.

"The defendant expanded a first deed of trust on the Sunset Mausoleum Association," Herbert said, taking in \$190,000, "and the defendant used that money for his own purposes. This was embezzlement.

"The defendant put a second mortgage, or a second deed of trust, on the property by securing a pledge of some \$420,000 from a family by the name of Ahern." This generated a letter of credit from another bank, "to provide some other funding for the defendant's own use."

"On top of that the defendant has taken some \$60,000 of rent money that was due Amalgamated Properties Limited," Herbert said. As recently as early 1972, Herbert told the judge. Edwards was trying to raise money fraudulently. "He attempted to get a \$1,000,000 loan from a New York organization, using the Mausoleum property as collateral."

"I think what the picture that's presented here is of a man that is overly ambitious, who began a large project that was grossly under-capitalized, and he began regularly and systematically embezzling property over which he had control to bring that to fruition, and the manner

What is a mausoleum? It is a freestanding, above-ground structure in which either whole bodies or cremated remains are kept in urns in crypts, niches or in family memorial chapels. A columbarium is a structure that holds niches and urns with the remains of cremated people.

in which he did it was clearly criminal," the prosecutor said.

Judge Hove had the last words.

"When a lawyer, a man who is schooled and especially trained along particular lines, embezzles funds that are entrusted to him, why, he has to face up to the situation.

"The public has been hurt."

"If I take these statements correctly in here," Hove said, referring to sentencing reports, "his wife's funds have been depleted, too, to the extent of some \$700,000. So, I mean, everything he has touched lately has gone 100 percent wrong."

Edward's lawyer, Jerrold M. Ladar, asked the judge to allow his client to remain out of prison so he could pursue his claim of ownership of the mausoleum in a civil suit with Gene Scott and Faith Temple. Ladar described Edwards as suing Sunset Mausoleum "to reclaim" it.

"If Mr. Edwards is allowed to remain at liberty on probation, he will be available for that suit," Ladar argued, to no avail.

"Probation will be denied," Hove said. Edwards was sentenced on December 27 to one year, one month and four days in prison at the California Medical Facility, Vacaville. He served the time. Edwards resigned from the state bar as the

association moved to disbar him. Edwards' legal fight continued on the civil front, however. Edwards and Scott had begun suing each other over ownership of the mausoleum shortly after Scott became chief executive in 1970. Edwards was also involved with civil litigation with the association, court records from his criminal

case show.

Scott (1929-2005), with a Ph.D. in philosophy from Stanford, made a name for himself in the mid-1970s as pastor of the Faith Center in Glendale, later known as Wescott Christian Center. The church ran a 24-hour cable TV broadcast on stations in many markets, including the Bay Area.

Secular hipsters tuned in, as did people who were deeply devoted to Scott's sometimes hours' long perorations – or occasional silences, as he stared at his audience, bearded, intense, often beneath a sombrero and puffing on a cigar.

On his death, the Los Angeles Times called Scott, a "flamboyant and plain-speaking pastor and television preacher who was as adept at staring down a live television audience to raise money as he was at holding forth with an erudite teaching on the Bible."

Among his dedicated parishioners was none other than country musician Merle Haggard, who told the Times, "He was the mind that all other brilliant minds looked to for guidance on problems that were insoluble."

Edwards and Scott reached a resolution of some of their differences in 1975, with Scott's

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Mausoleum

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Sunset Mausoleum instructed to share some of its income with Edwards. But in 1980 Edwards again sued Gene Scott in Contra Costa Superior Court, according to the Oakland Tribune, saying that Scott “renewed on an agreement to pay \$1.62 million” for the mausoleum.

Scott countersued, calling Edward’s suit “malicious” and claiming that Edwards owed Scott money for having misappropriated funds from the mausoleum after selling it to Faith Center. Edwards never regained control of the mausoleum. Under Scott, the mausoleum association righted its finances.

In 1985 Governor George Deukmejian, following the recommendation of the superior court which certified Edward’s rehabilitation, granted Edwards a full pardon, saying he had paid his debt to society.

Wescott retained ownership of the mausoleum after Scott’s death in 2005, selling the institution in February 2022 to ATL USA Inc., a subsidiary of the ATL Group Limited, which says it is “one of China’s largest managed service companies in the international afterlife care industry.”

Interestingly, although Wescott owned the mausoleum for about as long as it had been owned by the Edwards, neither Scott nor his successors expanded or made major physical changes. They did provide superb stewardship of the building and the institution. The mausoleum remains well run, attractive, monumental and, appropriately, quiet.

Today, 12,000 people are entombed at Sunset Mausoleum, including Arthur Edwards Jr. and Sr. and Gene Scott. Among prominent people entombed within its terraces and chapels are such illustrious names from East Bay society as the Hinks, the Woolseys, the Spengers, and late El Cerrito mayor Ernie Del Simone. The mausoleum is also the final resting place of Tony Lazzeri, a New York Yankee who was part of the feared “Murderer’s Row” lineup along with Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig.

The goal of Edwards Sr. to create a place of peace and repose was clearly achieved. It’s a fascinating spot to visit and is open to the public during the day, every day except for federal holidays.

In mid-2022 ATL announced plans to upgrade and expand the mausoleum and give it a higher profile, while retaining its historic character.

It is not clear whether those or similar plans will proceed.

Historical Society Elects Two New Board Members

At the Feb. 8 annual meeting, ECHS members elected Ed Crowley as secretary and Meredith McGuire as member at large. Returning to the board are President Dave Weinstein, Vice President Jon Bashor, Treasurer Tom Panas and At Large Members Patricia Durham and Michael Martin.

Retiring from the board were Secretary Dianne Brenner and At Large Member John Falconer. Thank you for your dedication.

The board meets monthly from 5 – 6 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month. ECHS members are invited to attend.

Membership Dues Now Due

It’s time to renew your membership in the El Cerrito Historical Society – and consider making a donation at the same time.

Last year, the society added the option of paying online, saving you from needing to write a check, find an envelope and stamp, and remember to mail it in (although you still have that option)

To renew online, go to the society’s home page at elcerritohistoricalsociety.org and click on “How to Join” in the top menu bar.

Membership is \$30 a year. We also offer memberships at the sponsor level for \$75 and life memberships for \$400. We also accept donations of any amount.

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Theater

Continued from page 1

Descendants of CCCT founders Louis and Bettianne Flynn are deeply involved, the theater has a stable home at the corner of Pomona Street and Moeser Lane and a highly regarded program for young people continues to thrive.

“We are one of the oldest and largest community theaters on this side of the East Bay,” said former CCCT Artistic Director Marilyn Langbehn. “Sadly, many theaters our size and smaller didn’t survive the pandemic. And we’re not completely adjusted to the new reality.”

In 2020, CCCT was getting ready for its next show when COVID hit and everything shut down on the eve of opening night. The set for “The Waverly Gallery,” a play by Kenneth Lonergan about a grandson watching his grandmother slowly die from Alzheimer’s disease, collected dust as it sat unused on the stage. When the Bay Area and the rest of the country began to open back up, the theater entered a new era.

“It’s a different game than it was in 2020,” said former CCCT board of directors member and president Kimberly Mayer.

During the shutdown, current board president Kathleen Perka secured a number of grants, bringing in tens of thousands of dollars from federal and state programs.

“Kathleen stuck with it and saved us through the pandemic,” said board member Steve Kirby. “Now we’re looking for creative ways to find more funding.”

Adding to the financial pressure is AB 5, the state law passed in 2019.



Marilyn Langbehn stepped down after 10 years as CCCT’s artistic director. American Theatre photo.

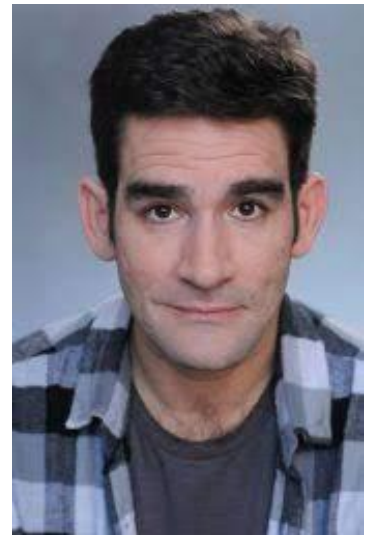
Originally introduced to require ride-sharing companies treat drivers as regular employees, the bill has wider effects. Among those affected were CCCT volunteers who helped with the summer program and were given a stipend at the end of the term. Under the new law, they receive regular pay and workplace benefits.

One likely result of the financial changes will be fewer shows, for which the theater pays royalties.

Langbehn, who had been working for both CCCT and TheaterWorks Silicon Valley since February 2023, moved to the Mountain View theater full time in February. She says theaters need to re-engage past audiences and find new ones.

“We have to recognize it’s not the same experience,” Langbehn said. “How do we serve our audiences in this environment?”

At the same time, she is proud of the stories that CCCT has



Joel Roster joined CCCT as the new artistic director in 2023. CCCT photo.

told since she began her 10-year tenure here. “We successfully transitioned from old-style kitchen-sink dramas and living-room comedies to more contemporary programming,” she said. “We featured works by more women playwrights and had more diverse and inclusive casts and crews.”

Kathleen Flynn Ray, daughter of CCCT founders Louis and Bettianne Flynn, credits Langbehn with doing a “Herculean job” to keep the theater going during a time with “no classes, no shows, no income.”

In turn, Mayer credits the dedication of the Flynn’s and Ray to establish and keep the theater going for the community for more than 60 years.

Succeeding Langbehn is Joel Roster as the new executive artistic and managing director. Roster is no stranger to CCCT, having acted in the 2011

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From the El Cerrito Stage to Bigger Roles

A number of people who learned acting or teaching theater on El Cerrito stages have gone on to working on bigger stages. Here is a partial list.

From CCCT



Assemblyman Bob Campbell

Robert “Bob” Campbell

was an actor in the very first show presented at CCCT. Campbell would go on to represent west Contra Costa County in the California State Assembly for 16 years.

Laura Dreyer performed as an actor at CCCT and is now a jazz musician in New York City. A saxophonist, woodwind artist and composer, she has headlined at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival, Blue Note Napa, The Montavilla Jazz Festival, The Syracuse Jazz Festival and other festivals and jazz venues.

Lisa Drummond, a former CCCT actor, has worked extensively in the Bay Area and Southern California as a teacher,

actor, director and acting coach for the last 20 years. Her acting credits also include productions with San Diego Repertory Theatre, Starlight Musical Theatre, North Coast Repertory Theatre, Sierra Repertory Theatre and the Willows Theater Company. She joined the Diablo Valley College faculty in 2009.

Nancy Fineman was an actor and stage manager at CCCT and is now a civil court judge for the Superior Court of San Mateo County. She was appointed to the bench by former Governor Jerry Brown in 2017.



Matt Flynn

Matt Flynn, son of CCCT founders Louis and Bettiane Flynn, learned set design at CCCT, studied architecture and became a television production designer for more than 20 shows including “The Office” and “Just Shoot Me.” He has also designed theater sets for more than 50 productions.

Asa Kalama was both a

CCCT summer drama camper and counselor. He is currently a VP executive of Creative & Interactive Experiences at Walt Disney Imagineering and oversees the development of interactive experiences for Disney’s theme parks. One of his most recent credits was working on Star Wars: Galaxy’s Edge at both Disneyland in California and Disney’s Hollywood Studios in Florida.

Dena Martinez has 40 years of national professional acting experience to her credits, including touring with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, Culture Clash and El Teatro Campesino. Her theater credits include leading roles at California Shakespeare Theater, Denver Center Theater Company, Marin Theater Company, Berkeley Rep, Word for Word, San Jose Rep, Magic Theater, TheaterWorks Silicon Valley and Shotgun Players. She is also a director and agent.

Dallas McMurray, a native of El Cerrito, was an actor and dancer at CCCT. He received a B.F.A. in dance from the California Institute of the Arts. He joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.

Nina Meehan was a director of CCCT’s summer

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Bigger Roles

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drama camp who went on to found the Bay Area Children's Theater and now directs children's theater at the Pasadena Playhouse.

Amy Parmeter was an actor at CCCT who became a background actor in Hollywood best known for her roles in "Haunted Planet" (2007) and "Clean" (2020).

Joe Paulino was an actor at CCCT and has been a voice-over actor for more than 25 years, appearing in a wide range of video games and advertising campaigns.

Robert Turturice, a former CCCT stage manager, became costume designer for television and movies and was best known



Robert Turturice

for his work on *Batman & Robin* (1997), *Moonlighting* (1985) and *CBS Afternoon Playhouse* (1978). He was president of the Costume Designers Guild from 1992-96 and received the Costume Designers Hall of Fame Award posthumously in 2010.

Elaine Walenta, a former CCCT actor and teacher, has taught classes in drama, advanced drama and theater tech at Abraham Lincoln High

School in San Francisco since 2001.

From the El Cerrito High School Drama Program

Jim Letchworth went on to a career in nursing, but also acted on occasion. Most recently he portrayed Ebenezer Scrooge at the Great Dickens Christmas Fair held annually at the Cow Palace.

Eric Lichtman earned his master's at UC Berkeley and is director at ETL Consulting, and education and communication consultancy in Paris, France.

Nancy Shelby works at Word For Word Theatre Company in San Francisco as a theater actor and director, public appearance coach and consultant for writers reading their work in public.

Theater

Continued from page 8

production of "Big River" and later in "Barefoot in the Park." At CCCT, he also directed "Bleacher Bums" and "Steel Magnolias," which were both critically and financially successful. He brings more than 20 years of experience as an arts educator and work with community theaters in Antioch and Lafayette to the job.

"Coming back to work in such a welcoming place is a big part of the appeal of the position," Roster said. "When you talk to anyone who's worked at CCCT you would be hard pressed to find a person with bad memories."

Roster sees CCCT as moving toward more intellectual productions, more character driven.

"The world has changed dramatically and patrons of entertainment have also changed," he said.

"We have to ask ourselves three questions: Why are we telling these stories?; Why are we telling these stories right now?; and Why are we telling these stories with this group of actors and this stage team? "That said, I'm very excited about what the first season will bring."

Although a number of theaters in the Bay Area and beyond have closed due to the pandemic and financial reasons, Ray sees the theaters that have survived as partners in bringing people back to fill the seats.

"It's not a competition—if people go to a good show at one theater, they are more likely to go to another show at another theater," she said. "We're alive, we're going and we have every intention to be here forever. It's going to be a brand new world in the next year and it's going to be exciting."

More images from the historical society's first-ever historic photo contest

More than 70 photos were submitted last fall for our first-ever photo contest. The only stipulations were that the photos had to have been taken in El Cerrito and before 1973. Shown below and on the next page are two of the winning photos and several others which caught the editor's eye. The other winning photos were printed in the last issue of the Forge. Thanks to all who submitted images and attended our receptions.



The winner in the School Life category is Virginia Burns' submission of this 1913 photo of Miss Breneman's class at Stege School. The teacher (far left) is Virginia's great grand-aunt.

Donna Hauser submitted this late 1930s-early '40s photo of her grandfather Umberto Paoli's gas station equipped with gravity-feed pumps. The station was at the corner of Central Avenue and Carlson Boulevard. That's her grandfather in the center.



More historic photos submitted in our contest



The photo chosen by judges as best in the Buildings category was Nancy Woodruff's submission of this circa-1948 photo of the interior of the Atwell House. The home was designed by Richard Neutra and photographed by Julius Shulman.



There is no substitute for quality, as attested to by this photo of the B&H Quality Meats counter submitted by Joanne Paulsen.



Matthew Flynn submitted this photo from the 1971 staging of "Plaza Suite" at the Contra Costa Civic Theatre.