

Do You Remember?



By Anne Homan
Livermore City Historian

Livermore Downtown Valentines

This year I started my search for Valentines with our downtown merchants. My first stop was at the Cooleykatz Toy store at 1959 Second Street. The store is in the middle of a block long strip mall that was built in 1960 on the south side of Second from L to M Streets. When my family moved to Livermore in 1970, J.C. Penney's held down the western end, and The Squire, a clothing store, the eastern corner. Originally, the eastern corner was occupied by a Woolworth's store. Rexall Drugs was somewhere in the middle of the block. Today, none of the original stores are present.

The owners of Cooleykatz are Pat and Nita Cooley. They were sweethearts at Berkeley High. One of Pat's best friends told him about this "crazy" girl he had to meet. Amazingly, Nita was the same person he had liked in junior high; in fact, he had given her a lock of his hair back then. At Berkeley High, he would give her money, and she would stand in line to buy their lunches, and "it progressed from there." They married in 1975. They have lived in Livermore for 30 years and raised their children here. After their retirement, they opened the toy store in 2006.

Even if you haven't shopped at Baughman's Western Outfitters, I'm sure that you are familiar with their life-size brown horse statue on the sidewalk at 2029 First Street. Here I interviewed one of their clerks, Mary Lou (Daveny) Miller. She has a

quiet, competent presence. She has been a clerk at Baughman's for 28 years. At a New Year's Eve party on Tassajara Road, she met her future husband, Jack Miller. Although he was living in Alameda at the time, he often came to Livermore to visit friends and ride horses. He worked for the East Bay Parks. He roped in the Livermore rodeo; Mary Lou rode in the grand entry. They had their love of horses in common, and Mary Lou said, "He was tall and handsome." Their relationship blossomed, and they married in 1965. They lived in Collier Canyon. Unfortunately, he died in 1998, and Mary Lou is now a widow. Baughman's business started in 1881 across the street at what is now Proctor's. Jack Baughman bought the business, moved it across First Street in 1961, and began specializing in western style clothing. He died in 1973.

Valley Furniture, at 2193 First Street, was the original Safeway Store in Livermore. Bill Jeffers owns the furniture store. He met his wife, Stephanie Molcsan, at a dance at the Alameda County Fairgrounds in Pleasanton. The dance was a costume party on Halloween. She was dressed as a dance hall girl, and he was a genie. Bill bought Valley Furniture in 1981. His favorite part of the business is meeting the customers: "They make it all worthwhile."

Caratti Jewelers is a familiar name in Livermore, but Richard Caratti died in 2002, and the Bennetts bought the business from his estate in

that year. Laura Jackson met Colin Bennett at Lake Tahoe while she was on a ski vacation. They both attended a dance at Caesar's Palace. They danced the night away, exchanged phone numbers, and later got in touch. They married in 1997 and now have two children. Laura explained their compatibility: "I'm quiet; he talks a lot. He has very nice eyes." Richard Caratti ran his business for 30 years in the Rincon Shopping Center, and then moved it to Second Street. The Bennetts kept the same name for the business, but customers will now find Caratti's Jewelers at 2056 First Street.

I have worked as a columnist for the Independent newspaper for almost four years. I met my husband, Don, at Gettysburg College, a small liberal arts college in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He was my physics lab instructor, and I needed a great deal of help. Our first date was playing tennis. The Independent newspaper building, at the northeast corner of Livermore and First, was originally the Bank of Italy, built in 1922. Eight years later, it became the Bank of America. In 1957 the city of Livermore bought the building, and from 1958 to 1978 it served as Livermore's city hall. In 1978 the building was placed on the National Register of Historic Landmarks. Lynn and Joan Seppala bought the building in 1991, restored it, and made the necessary seismic reinforcements. You can drop in and pick up last week's edition of the paper in case you missed it; you can sign

up to have it delivered to your house by mail for free if you live locally.

A clerk in Van's Health Food store at 2148 First Street helped me recently when I needed a fragrance free shampoo. I was amazed—I thought they just sold food. The single-story 1937 brick building has a distinctive brick pattern on the street façade. The Van Der Kamp family has been running the business since the 1970s. Craig Van Der Camp, the current owner, after graduating from high school in Sacramento, made a tour through the United States. Later, he met his wife, Gayleen Labo, at a party. He admitted, "I was obnoxious and rude." Something must have appealed to Gayleen, however, because she did begin dating him, and they married in 1972. Craig admits that he still acts up sometimes. He took over the operation of the store in 1977.

(Readers can reach me at am50homan@yahoo.com.)

Tickets Availab

St. Patrick's Day Brew Crawl is planned from 6 to 9 p.m. on March 15 in downtown Pleasanton.

Participants will be able to sample 25 local beer and food pairings. To add to the festive, holiday spirit of this event, guests are encouraged to wear costumes.

The event is presented by the Pleasanton Downtown Association. Tickets at \$30 per person includes admission to the event, a commemorative beer glass,