

# THE MIRROR

The Richmond Museum Association Newsletter

Richmond Museum of History

Winter 2014 - 15

SS Red Oak Victory Ship

## COMMEMORATIVE FLAGS HONOR *RED OAK* CREW



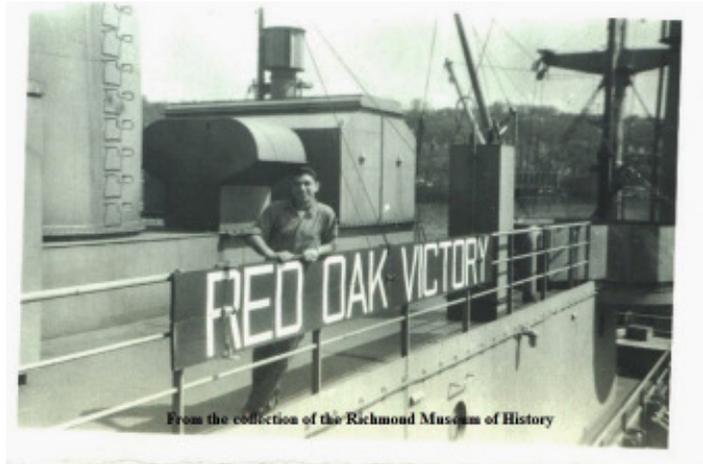
U.S. Representative George Miller was instrumental in helping the Richmond Museum Association acquire the *SS Red Oak Victory*.

As he retired after 40 years of service, one of Miller's last gestures was to have two flags flown over the Capitol on November 9th, 2014, the 70th Anniversary of the day the *Red Oak* was launched in Richmond, and then donated to the RMA. The presentation was made at the Veterans Day ceremonies by his Chief of Staff, Barbara Johnson.



One of the flags will fly proudly on the *Red Oak* and the other will live in a commemorative case with a plaque that reads:

*Flown on November 9, 2014, in commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the launch of the Red Oak Victory Ship, this flag is presented to the Richmond Museum Association in recognition of the men and women who built the Red Oak, the military personnel who have bravely served on it through the years, and the many volunteers who are now lovingly restoring it.*



Robert DiChiara served on the *Red Oak* from 1944 to 1946. This year he came back to visit. Story on page 3.

## HISTORIC FILMS ON THE *RED OAK* FOR WINTER/ SPRING 2015!

Attention movie lovers! The Winter/Spring 2015 lineup of the wildly popular Historic Film Festival has been announced:

January 20, 2015 — [The Heroes of Telemark](#) (1965)

February 17, 2015 — [So Proudly We Hail!](#) (1943)

March 17, 2015 — [Odette](#) (1950)

April 14, 2015 — [Force of Arms](#) (1951)

Please note the Film Festival will take place on Tuesday evenings rather than Thursday evenings for the foreseeable future. Ship doors open at 6:30 and movies are shown at 7 p.m.

The ROV concession stand will be open during the Film Festival, so join us for a movie, popcorn and hot chocolate!

**BE A GREETER**  
**SEE PAGE 6.**

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

In 2014, the Richmond Museum Association continued to advance our mission to excite the people of Richmond about our history, and we are delighted to keep doing so in 2015 and for years to come. Notable accomplishments for the organization for the past year were launching a new website with e-commerce capabilities ([www.richmondmuseum.org](http://www.richmondmuseum.org)) and earning a Coast Guard Certificate of Inspection as an Attraction Vessel. These are major successes, yet there continues to be room for the organization to grow into its fullest potential. The board and staff are committed to the organization and will continue to work for growth at the Ship and Museum.

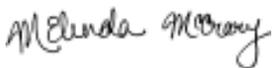
However, it is my personal goal to create and foster a renewed sense of interest in the Museum from the community. After all, the Richmond Museum of History cannot be the community museum without the people of Richmond. I plan to create more interest in our lovely Museum by taking steps in many areas, two of which are outlined below.

I am working on building partnerships with City of Richmond staff and personnel at West Contra Costa Unified School District. One exciting result of my efforts is that the school district agreed to collaboratively host an open house at the Museum for 3rd- to 6th-grade social studies teachers in an effort to introduce them to our Carnegie Library and exhibits. The event will take place early in 2015 to give them time to plan field trips for the end of the school year. Hosting an open house for the WCCUSD teachers is just one of many ways I am working to increase interest in the Museum.

In November 2014, the Renaissance Entrepreneurial Center hosted the Social Enterprise Pitch Night at the Richmond Museum of History and with over 40 people in attendance it was a great success. Offering the Museum as a meeting or event space for other community organizations for a nominal fee is another way I am working toward increasing the profile of the Museum in the local community and beyond. Does your service club or business require a meeting space? If so, please consider holding your meeting at the Richmond Museum of History.

Thank you so much for your continued support!

Best Wishes,



Melinda McCrary

*P.S. Members -- don't forget to attend our annual meeting at 2 .pm. on January 11, 2015, in the Seaver Gallery at the Richmond Museum of History.*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# COME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

*by John Ziesenhenn, President of the Board*

2014 was a very exciting and successful year for the Richmond Museum Association and we plan to share the excitement with you at the Annual Meeting on Sunday, January 11th, at 2 p.m. at the Richmond Museum of History.

The Association will be voting on the calendar of events for 2015 as well as the budget. The Board will also present a Resolution to change the membership dues structure. If you are a member in good standing, meaning you paid your annual dues by October 14, 2015, you will be able to vote. If you are not a member, please plan on attending to listen to the great year we completed and plans for a wonderful year ahead!

The major accomplishment for the *Red Oak Victory* in 2014 is attaining the Certificate of Inspection from the U.S. Coast Guard which took us 16 years to achieve. Under the direction of the Port Captain Dee Davison, and with hard work by Angelo Barone, Director of Ship Operations, and his team leaders, the crew worked tirelessly for six months to accomplish the long list of Coast Guard requirements. Job well done, *Red Oak Victory* Crew! The next goal for 2015 is to get the ship running. Stay tuned.

Museum Executive Director Melinda McCrary hosted some beautiful exhibits in the newly-painted Seaver Gallery including an interesting Quilt Show in the Spring that was very, very popular. We were much honored that Susan Hildreth, the Executive Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services from Washington, D.C., visited the Museum and enjoyed the quilt show and tour of the Museum. A second exhibit about the history of the Richmond Fire Department was also well-attended and we were honored to have so many Richmond Fire Fighters and retiring Fire Chief Michael Banks in attendance for the opening.

There are so many other accomplishments for 2014 to report to you that you will just need to come to the Annual Meeting to hear about them. Thank you for your generosity to the Richmond Museum Association and thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers who turn dreams into reality. We are very proud of our beautiful Museum and Kaiser Shipyard historic vessel. We look forward to 2015 and sharing our artifacts and history with double the people that we served this past year!

## RED OAK SAILOR RETURNS TO RICHMOND

The Veterans Day celebration hosted by the Richmond Museum Association was particularly special in 2014 because we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the launching of the *SS Red Oak Victory* and were joined by a one-time crew member. Robert Di Chiara, Sr., and Joyce, his lovely wife of 63 years, travelled to Richmond from Singer Island, Florida, to visit the Ship again. Bob served aboard the *ROV* from 1944-46, beginning his career washing pots and pans for three months and ending his naval career as a Signalman 3rd Class.

Bob arrived in Richmond early in order to participate in an oral history conducted by Steve Gilford, RMA board member and retired documentarian, and filmed by local videographer Lana Husser. The interview took place at the Richmond Museum of History and the footage will eventually be turned into a brief film and incorporated into the exhibit on the Ship. We are all so excited that the RMA had the opportunity to record Bob speaking about his experience aboard the Ship during World War II. Lana was



*Robert Di Chiara, Sr., at Veteran's Day  
Photo courtesy of Ellen Gailing.*

gracious enough to provide us with a teaser clip from the interview that you can view on YouTube; visit the RMA blog on our new website at [www.richmondmuseum.org/blog](http://www.richmondmuseum.org/blog) for links to the video.

Bob further honored the organization by acting as the keynote speaker at the Veterans Day ceremony held in the Rigger's Loft. His speech included humorous personal anecdotes about being kicked out of another sailor's bed, getting seasick, and antics surrounding the captain's personal dinghy. He also spoke of the dangers associated with serving on an ammunition ship including the *ROV*'s near-miss with a Japanese kamikaze pilot. Bob had the entire audience enthralled in hushed silence as he recounted the moments of terror he experienced aboard the *SS Red Oak Victory*. It was truly an amazing experience to have a one-time crew member speaking in the presence of the restored ship he served on.

## MENTORING YOUNG MARINERS

*by Dee Davison, ROV Port Captain and Environmental Health & Safety Officer*

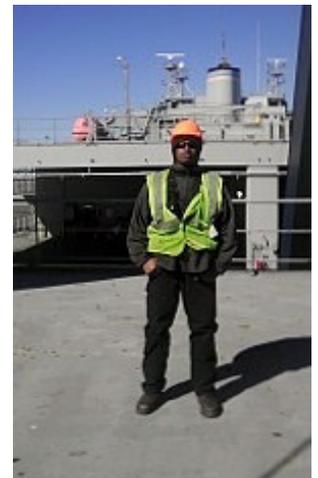
We've had many people come to the *Red Oak* through The Anchor Program (TAP), a non-profit organization that helps young people train for a Maritime career. When I meet these TAP individuals, you can tell immediately who is serious about the endeavor. Pierre's enthusiasm excited all who met him. He described his dream to move forward with his life and help his family out financially. I kept telling him it was his God-given right to have a journey of his own—that is what life is all about—what you do with your life is in your power to do. Encouraging these young individuals and seeing their eyes light up with enthusiasm was such a privilege to be a part of. In my youth, there were individuals who encouraged me, helped me entertain the thought of being independent and in control, because that is what you are taught your whole life—learning to make good choices for yourself.

Pierre and I got to work right away on his résumé and STCW (Merchant Marine certification) documentation. I verified what was required and let Pierre know what experiences he should focus on, including basic seamanship. The Deck Department is where he can learn these skills. So, as with all TAP individuals, he began in the Deck Department. As the months passed, Pierre shared his thoughts and dreams with the crew. The crew, coming from many different backgrounds, shared their experiences and suggestions with him.

When his résumé and STCW documents were completed,

Pierre submitted them to APL, a ship transportation company, and was hired. A year passed and Pierre returned to the *ROV* and shared his adventures. When I first saw him, he had a big grin on his face, and it confirmed to me the importance of the *ROV* and its role in relation to young adults who use the TAP program to create their independence in a good way.

Pierre is very proud to be helping his grandmother and you can be assured she is very proud of her grandson.



*Pierre*

It is a great honor to empower these fine individuals with the conception of self, confirming to them that they have control and the power to make intelligent decisions; to move in a forward direction and to stay focused on what they desire to become as mature individuals. Their decisions will create the life and ultimately become the journey they strive for. As with my children, the recipe is the same: some listening, encouragement and letting them know they are in control.

# GREEN'S WESTERN WEAR: EAST BAY SHOP OFFERS GLIMPSE OF THE PAST

*Benjamin Pimentel, Chronicle Staff Writer Published  
4:00 am, Friday, March 12, 1999*

The strong odor of leather and a life-size fiberglass horse named Spot greet visitors at Green's Western Wear on San Pablo Avenue in Richmond. Once the horses at the 67-year-old store were real and the smell of leather permeated the entire block. But while its surroundings have changed — across the street from the store are Wendy's and a Thai restaurant — Green's remains a favorite of Bay Area horse lovers and wannabe cowboys and cowgirls.

"This is a little bit of heaven for all of us," said Victoria Shannon, a store manager who has worked there since 1991. "If we had our druthers, we'd like to have been born in the mid- to late-1800s, when horses were still important, when we can still be cowboys and cowgirls — real cowboys and cowgirls."

The store was started in 1932 by a "real cowboy," an Arkansas bootmaker named Lewis Green, who came to visit friends and decided to stay. He called his store Green's Boots and Shoe Repair. "People needed boots," Shannon said. "This was all dirt roads back then. There were a lot of horses."

Green later moved back to Arkansas, where he died two years ago at 92. His son, Fred, who lives in Vacaville, took over. Green's still serves customers from as far as Vacaville and Sacramento. Most come to buy boots and hats, Shannon said. They also buy Levi's and Wrangler jeans — the traditional kind — Shannon is quick to add. "They're not big baggy pants; they're original Wranglers and Levis," she said.

About a quarter of their sales come from horse medicines and tack. On the store's second floor, horse owners can choose from a collection of cures for hoof infections, colic and equine skin problems. The store stocks brushes, combs, feed bags, fly masks, sweat collars and horse blankets, one kind for winter and another for summer. Customers call to ask for medical advice for their horses, Shannon said. Often, sales clerks refer them to a veterinarian, sometimes they share what they know.

"Most of us have a reasonable knowledge of horses," she said. "We try to be as helpful as we can."

Sometimes Green's gets a boost from a hit movie or song, such as Glen Campbell's "Rhinstone Cowboy" or John Travolta's "Urban Cowboy."

"Suddenly they want the shirts and the boots," Shannon said. "When they fade, it's back to the old staple cowboys."



## ITEMS NOT ON DISPLAY

### WESTERN SADDLE

*by Lynn Maack*

Here's an item that probably everyone recognizes. It's an equestrian saddle—a western saddle. In western United States culture, the western saddle is iconic; an indispensable tool in development of the old west, with a continuing role in modern society, in both agricultural and ceremonial uses. Often called a cowboy saddle, the western saddle is one of many types of saddles used for carrying people on animals such as horses, donkeys and camels. Saddle designs differ depending on their intended uses. Some are for competition riding and jumping, some for sports like horse-racing and polo. Distinctive for its raised horn in front of the seat, the western saddle is used on horses when herding, chasing and roping cattle. Its horn is primarily for "dallying the lasso" (anchoring the rope) after a cow or steer has been lassoed.



The Museum's saddle is made of wood, metal and leather. Its base, or "tree" is most likely made of wood, which is covered in heavy leather. Sheepskin covers the underside as cushion for the horse's comfort. The saddle is rather plain. The leather is un-tooled, and the saddle is undecorated, except for four round, silver-metal conchos, to which are attached leather strings used for tying on small objects. Impressed into the leather on the pommel, the raised front of the seat, is the letter "G," surrounded by the name of the store in which the saddle was sold: Green's,



in Richmond, Calif. The logo appears also on the stirrups. A large "G" is burned into the back flap, likely the owner's initial. Interestingly, impressed on the pommel, above and to the left of the Green's logo, are the small letters "L.O.G."; perhaps this saddle was made or owned by Lewis Green, who opened Green's in 1932.

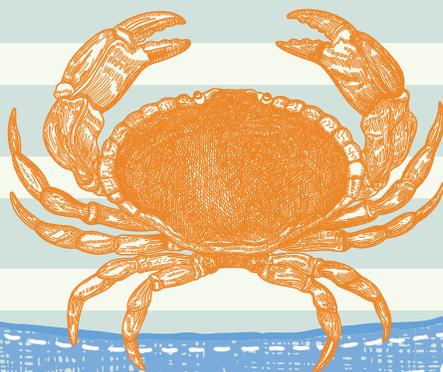
Green's is a long-time Richmond business, still open at its original location on San Pablo Avenue.



The Richmond Museum Association Presents

**CRABFEST**

**20 15**



**SS Red Oak Victory**

**Saturday ★ January 31<sup>st</sup>**

**COME ABOARD**

Join us at four o'clock to listen to sounds of the 40's while enjoying a pile of crab plus salad, pasta and artisan bread!

**TICKETS \$40**

advance purchase ★ no host wine & beer

[www.richmondmuseum.org](http://www.richmondmuseum.org) ★ 510.237.2933 or 510.235.7387

## THE GOINGS-ON ON THE *RED OAK*

Just this year there have been performances, weddings, conferences, classes and celebrations of birthdays and anniversaries on the decks of the *Red Oak Victory Ship* and in the holds below.

What a great place to host your own celebration! Your family and friends will never forget your party and you can make arrangements to include tours of the Ship for your guests.

Call Lorraine or Marjorie on the Ship at (510) 237-2933 to discuss using this unique and amazing venue for your next celebration!

Call Melinda at the Museum (510) 235-7387 to talk about holding a meeting or event in the Museum itself.

## JOINING THE MOVEMENT

Just as you are doing at home, the Richmond Museum Association is working to be more environmentally aware and economically sound.

We hope to communicate more and more with you electronically.

If you are able and willing to receive your quarterly issue of *The MIRROR* by email, please send a note to the Museum staff at [info@richmondmuseum.org](mailto:info@richmondmuseum.org) to tell us. And don't forget to include your email address!

## GREETERS NEEDED

We get hundreds of visitors on the *Red Oak* on open days - Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays -- and we need volunteers onboard to greet them and direct them to a self-guided tour or the next docent-led tour, especially on the weekends.

If you have one day a month to spend welcoming visitors it would be most appreciated and you will enjoy it.

Call Lorraine on the Ship at (510) 237-2933 to talk about being a Greeter.

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS TO THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

### George Schmidt

A large collection of Richmond election material (1979-2014)

### Marie Davies

June 1927 Winged R

December 1927 Winged R

(Winged R was a literary journal from Roosevelt Jr. High School)

### Robert Di Chiara, Sr.

Naval uniform blouse, medals for service in the Pacific Fleet during WWII, US-issued identification tags

## ROV WISH LIST

Donate wish-list items or send a monetary contribution toward any of these things:

- 6-foot ladder (straight or step-ladder)
- Fluorescent light fixtures
- Six 48-inch fluorescent shop lights
- Strings of Christmas lights
- Cree LED light bulbs, 100W, 60W
- Electric griddle – commercial size
- Stand-alone convection oven – commercial
- Rags
- Traffic cones (orange)
- Haze-gray marine paint (approx. \$50/gal.)  
(Hempel Coating Co.)
- Hydraulic oil for steering gear  
(approx. \$67/5-gal pail)

If you have questions about these items or about how to get them to the Ship, please call the Ship at (510) 237-2933.

## WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR MEMORIES?

Do you have memorabilia from your past? From Richmond's past? If so, now is the time to talk to the staff of the Richmond Museum Association about preserving your memorabilia and your memories forever by donating it to the place that will honor it, care for it and incorporate it into the story of Richmond.

Memorabilia can be photos, clothing (uniforms?), paper items, toys, almost anything.

Call Melinda McCrary, Executive Director, at (510) 235-7385 or send her a note at [info@richmondmuseumofhistory.org](mailto:info@richmondmuseumofhistory.org).

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Current distribution -- about 400 -- but we're growing.

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And Receive These Benefits:

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- ★ 10% discount in gift shops
- ★ Membership card
- ★ And more:

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Individuals 62 & over and students

\_\_\_ \$50 **Potrero Ave** --

Individuals

\_\_\_ \$100 **Cutting Blvd** --

2 adults/2 youth --Benefits above & invites to member only events

\_\_\_ \$250 **Garrard Ave** --Benefits above

& "Behind the Scenes" tours of museum collection & ship archives

\_\_\_ \$500 **Barrett Ave** -- Benefits above

& exclusive tour & luncheon with museum curator & ship captain

\_\_\_ \$1000 **Macdonald Ave** --Benefits

above & two tickets on

The Red Oak "Sail-on-the-Bay"

\_\_\_ **New** \_\_\_ **Renew** \_\_\_ **Gift**

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Date: \_\_\_\_\_

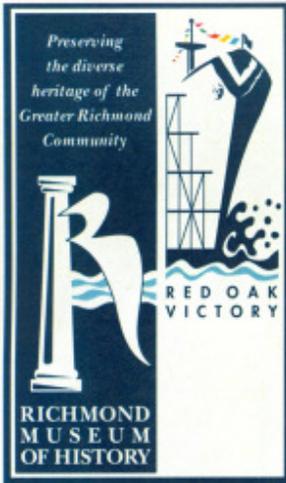
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Lynn Maack, Editor

**Contributors**

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Melinda McCrary  
John Ziesenhenn



***Red Oak Victory Ship***

Open Tues, Thurs, Sat, Sun  
10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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Richmond CA 94804

Mail: P.O. Box 1267

Richmond CA 94802

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**Richmond Museum of History**

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