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See suckhillphotos.org or many of her photos at the Mill Valley Public Library.

Marin Civic Center shootout—Courtesy of Marin Independent Journal.

All current photos—Courtesy of Jim Stephenson.


ERRATA—In the 2006 MVHS Review, Mill Valley's Gut Costigan, was mistakenly identified as the builder of a home at the corner of Lagunitas and North Roads in Ross. Mr. Costigan's homes and business construction are sprinkled throughout Mill Valley. His style is easily recognized with the use of heavy redwood beams, wood brick, and solid Dutch doors. Thank you to Richard Torney, Historian for the Marin Library/Ross Historical Society, for correcting the correct builder. The Ross home was built by Ray Thomas Olsen, a style referred to by him as “Timbrick.” Mr. Olsen also built the Bottle House at the Marin Art and Garden Center in Ross.
We are fortunate to have a multitude of local materials in the historical room at the Mill Valley Public Library that provide a picture of life in years past. Newspaper accounts, primarily from the Mill Valley Record, form a backbone of the research for this article about crime in Mill Valley since just before its incorporation as a city in 1900.

The oral history project of the Mill Valley Historical Society spans three centuries. One of the first interviewees was born in 1880. Some 150 or so interviews have been completed, and are available to be read in the library, or checked out.

Founded in 1899, the Marin County Enterprise later became the Record-Enterprise, and in 1917 the name was abbreviated to the Mill Valley Record. Until 1991 it would be the major source of local news and information in town. Its most famous and successful publishers came as a pair: Katharine and Ned Mills.

For over twenty years, these tender-aged local children have gathered research in the History Room at the Mill Valley Public Library, and for some, interviewed a person affiliated with their topic.
We are fortunate to have a multitude of local materials in the Lorecia Little History Room at the Mill Valley Public Library that provide a picture of life in years past. Newspaper accounts, primarily from the Mill Valley Record, form a backbone of the research for this article about crime in Mill Valley since just before its incorporation as a city in 1900. However, a treasure trove of local information is within the oral histories of two of our previous police chiefs of Mill Valley, which provide a rare perspective of crime in a small town for this article. Since 1969, the Mill Valley Historical Society (MVHS) has collected oral histories from many of its citizens. The chiefs tell us in their own words, what was important during their tenure.

Before Law & Order

What would become Mill Valley must have seemed idyllic to John Reed in 1834 when he was granted 4,428 beautiful acres here by the Mexican government. However, it would take years to have the ownership of Reed’s lands settled. One of the first recorded local land disputes was over six acres near the present day Park Terrace development. Ownership of the small parcel was eventually settled with the assistance of local constables, but it began with “fisticuffs and the drawing of weapons.” Land was at the root of many alterations then, and they increased significantly after the pressures of property-seeking settlers who came to northern California after the Gold Rush of 1849.

During the 1890’s, summer camps dotted Mill Valley’s open spaces for those hardy enough to take a ferry across the bay and sleep out in the wilderness. Reports of “crowding, vandalism, and noise,” at the camps were a constant. A picture familiar to many from the archives of the history room at the library is of James McDonald, the town’s first Marshall from 1906 to 1907. Astride his horse in front of a redwood stump in Old Mill Park, Marshall McDonald should have had an easy time of enforcing the peace. The town was founded and advertised as dry, and alcohol was not to be sold within the city limits. Yet, that didn’t prevent it from being brought into town by visitors or from saloons being built outside of the city limits. At that time, the eastern town limit was near East Blithedale and Hill Avenues, so the saloons marched eastward, with Marshall McDonald becoming an owner of one of the drinking establishments. As a result of his newly found second occupation, he was fired from his first.

That area, known as Jagtown, was the center of “cockfights, chicken shoots, brawls and the like.” Barry Spitz wrote in his history of Mill Valley, that “jag,” was a colloquial term for intoxication. It is doubtful that proper Mill Valleyans would have been seen there. Alcohol fueled these recreational activities and the societal impact of alcohol nationally would bring about the passage of the Volstead Amendment, or Prohibition.
Marshals would continue to serve the city until the first Chief of Police, Alex McCurdy, was hired in 1926. Duties for the chief extended to serving as the tax collector, building inspector, city clerk, as well as serving all of southern Marin County as a deputy sheriff.

Prior to McCurdy's hiring, a 1921 crime called from the Mill Valley Record reported that a vacuum cleaner salesman pleaded guilty in court to making improper advances to Mill Valley women. And "rowdies and hoodlums" continued to abound. Hunting was still common in Southern Marin and poaching was not unusual. In 1929 it was reported that large plants were illegally removed from the Outdoor Art Club during the Christmas season. Murders were rare, and usually occurred outside the city limits.

Crime continued, whether fought by marshals or police chiefs.

Mill Valley's First Long-Term Police Chief
By 1937, Mill Valley hired former Sausalito police chief, James McGowan, who would serve the city as its police chief until his retirement in 1961. McGowan was proud to say that in his first twenty-four years as chief, there were no murders in Mill Valley. Unfortunately, two murders did occur just before his retirement, one in December of 1950, and another in January of 1961. It was shocking for a community of its size and quietude.

McGowan was a warm and friendly presence, known to almost everyone in town. He was also known to give errant kids two chances, but not a third. He and his wife had a quaint cottage with a luscious rose garden at 201 Miller Avenue, which was then the main street in town.

As Chief McGowan was readying for retirement in 1961, he described a more tolerant view of alcohol then. "We had more drunks in 1937 than now. We would lock them up awhile and let them cool off." Often, the beat patrolman would circle the bars in the downtown area at closing time, and make sure that anyone who had imbibed too much alcohol got a ride home.

McGowan was respected throughout the community and ran a tight ship. The budget did not provide for the head of the department to have his own car, so a patrolman in the one unmarked police car would pick him up in the morning, deliver him home for lunch, pick him up after he dined, and bring him home again at night. Late in 1953, the department acquired a second vehicle and Mill Valley then sported one green and one red police car. One of the spotlights on the cars had a red lens, which was the only official distinguishing mark. At that time, patrolmen issued at least five speeding citations each month from those cars!

Heaters for the police cars seemed an unaffordable luxury. A patrolman would sit downtown at the corner of Throckmorton and Miller Avenues during the graveyard shift and watch for the red light on a pole at the bus depot to flicker, indicating that a phone call had been made to the department. There was no radio to communicate to the patrolmen in the field either. It was so cold that one policeman wrapped his chest and legs in newspaper beneath his clothing to retain his body heat.

Apparently, the chief thought that a heater might make a man drowsy. After prisoners began being transported to San Rafael instead of staying in one of the cells in the Mill Valley City Hall jail, heaters were installed in police vehicles.

When McGowan retired in 1961, the department totaled twelve men. His successor's challenges would be very different and he would fight to add men to the force. Crime was minimal, although there was the occasional burglary or car theft. For the most part, it was a peaceful time.
Over the years, one important advantage for the safety of Mill Valley's residents and property is that all of the chiefs since McGowan's retirement have worked their way through the ranks. They all served as patrolmen, learned about the community, and what made it unique, before being placed in that important position of responsibility.

Dan Terzicich was hired by McGowan and served as chief from 1961 to 1972. It is important to place in historical context that Mill Valley's first black family moved to Mill Valley in 1956, and its first black teacher was hired in 1960. The tensions between white and black students would surface at Tamalpais High School and Mill Valley would share in the painful racial awareness with students from Marin City, as well as working for racial reconciliation.

In the early 1960's, officers were called to Tamalpais High School or C's Drive-In on Miller Avenue to break up racially motivated fights. No fatalities resulted, but an undercurrent of violence could be felt on the campus.

Locals said that children no longer respected law enforcement and legal restrictions prevented police from punishing a student by having him wash police cars or sweep the police station as they had under the previous chief.
However, the most dramatic event to occur while Terzich was in office, was when he made a routine trip to the San Rafael Civic Center with parking tickets and two arrest reports. The date was August 7, 1970, and the police investigator who was scheduled to make the trip was on vacation. Dan took a local merchant with him to the new Hall of Justice to give him a tour. As they were walking down a hall, a sheriff's deputy ran towards them calling, "There's a man in Judge Haley's court with a gun." Dan replied, "I'll go with you." He then told the merchant who was with him to stand over against the window.

"Just then, the judge, the jurors, and the assistant district attorney, all wired together, came out of the courtroom with five men holding guns on them. One of them was only seventeen years old. They were all blacks, threatening to kill everyone in sight and ordering us to put up our hands. One man put a .357 Magnum in the back of my head and the seventeen year old slammed a machine gun into my stomach and relieved me of my revolver."  

Carl Munder (longtime Mill Valley resident, merchant and MVHS interviewer), "Were you in uniform?"

Dan Terzich: "No, I was in civilian clothes. If I had been in uniform, I think I would have been taken. The judge was murdered, three of the black men were killed, the assistant district attorney was shot through the spine and paralyzed from the waist down."  

The picture included with this article of the "San Rafael Civic Center Massacre," foretells a heartbreaking story that would reflect the national angst over racial issues between white and black.

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In April of 1971, a bomb exploded at the Bank of America in downtown Mill Valley in protest of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. The Bank of America had been a target throughout the state for these types of protest. The bomb went off just after 8:00 a.m., moments before employees normally came to work. A bomb also exploded at Tamalpais High School in the same week, slightly injuring a student. A student at the high school was later arrested for both of these incidents. Two unmarked police cars were later targeted with different types of bombs. It was fortunate that there were no injuries as a result of the later bombings.

Bill Walsh was a hometown boy who began at the Mill Valley Police Department (MVPD) in 1955 as a patrolman. Raised in Homestead Valley, he grew up hunting and fishing locally. His career would span four decades. Intensely loyal, Bill was appreciative of the opportunities afforded him by former chief McGowan and would visit him after his retirement.

Budget pressures would cause the city to explore combining police and fires services, thereby eliminating the salary of the fire chief. Walsh served as police chief from 1972 to 1976 and Chief of Police and Fire from 1976 to 1986. Combining the two most important public safety functions was a huge challenge. At the time, only a few communities in the nation considered such a strategy.

One memorable event for Lieutenant Walsh was in early January 1966. Merchant Ted Holmbee of Strawbridge's, located at 86 Throckmorton Avenue, accepted a $50 traveler's check from a customer, but noted that the signatures did not appear to match. Excusing himself from the store to get change, he quickly walked to the police department at city hall to ask for assistance (newspaper articles don't explain why the merchant returned to his store alone without police assistance). On the way back to
Strawbridge's (with the customer still waiting), he stopped off-duty Bill Walsh and asked for his help. With the customer's driver's license in hand, Bill observed that the two staple marks that were a standard in all licenses at the time were not visible.

Even with the police department just a block away, one might wonder why an armed robber and ex-convict, who had stolen $73,000 worth of traveler's checks in Hawai'i, would wait around for change. Yet, wait he did. Asking the professionally dressed man to accompany him to the police station, an arrest was quickly made of the ex-convict who said to Walsh, "You've got yourself a big one this time, Lieutenant."

Other events would encroach on the usually quiet town that would punctuate a decade or a career in the MVPD. In 1973, a teenage boy taking above the golf course found a small jawbone. Notifying police, they discovered the scattered remains of a five-year-old child who was never identified. Forensic specialists were called in to assist the MVPD, but although they could identify the age of the child, they were unable to determine the cause of death.

Probably the most personally wrenching event for all members of the MVPD when Walsh headed the department was the 1974 shotgun murders of a longtime reserve police officer, his wife and son, by a local teenager. Almost every member of the force was involved in the investigation, although criminologists and other local police agencies were recruited. Walsh formed five department investigative teams and the suspect was swiftly arrested without incident. This sad event had a reverberating impact on many people in the community for years to follow.

An event of national significance that occurred during Bill's tenure as chief was the theft of a few boxes from the Mill Valley home of former Pentagon Analyst, Daniel Ellsberg. Ellsberg was known for the release of the Pentagon Papers, a top-secret study of the United States' military involvement in Vietnam. The FBI expected Walsh to supply information about the burglary and exactly what was stolen, but he maintained that he would not release any documentation until ordered to do so by the courts or given permission by Mr. Ellsberg. The perpetrator of the theft was arrested and the boxes and contents were recovered. Ellsberg said that he would not object to the contents' release, and also supported the information being made public. Four briefcases, one small zipped case, and one cardboard box were given to the counsel of the House Subcommittee on Foreign Operations and Government Information. The burglar, who was later convicted of the robbery, was a local man who had committed a string of home robberies.

Building the public safety building is a story in itself, and one of Walsh's significant contributions. He knew from talking with others who managed similar projects that the community's needs would soon outgrow the proposed building, so he lobbied for one that would suit the city for years to come.

In 1978 Walsh conducted an analysis of crime in Mill Valley, and our city with a population of 12,000 had a crime rate relative to that of a city of 35,000. For a five-year period in the 70's, there were four to five hundred residential burglaries each year. Clearly, it was not a crime free town.

Crime outside the city limits certainly had an impact on the MVPD, even if its staff wasn't directly responsible. The Trailside Killer in the late 70's and into the 80's killed two Mill Valley women on Mt Tam, which required some involvement from the MVPD, but Mill Valley remained protected in its cul-de-sac from many nearby crimes.

It was also when Walsh was in office that technology became a significant tool to fight crime and educating the force in contemporary prevention and enforcement techniques became an important goal for him. The evolution made for a radically different police presence than what lone Marshall James McDonald represented on his horse. After Walsh's retirement in 1986, another homegrown policeman would lead the fight against the next century of crime.

We're listening. In a sense, the oral history project of the Mill Valley Historical Society spans three centuries; one of the first interviewees was born in 1880, and here we are in 2007. We are, it seems fair to say, making great strides slowly.

When I was convivially cajoled a year or so ago into heading up the oral history division, it was my intention—indeed, it remains my intention—to branch out (not an unifying metaphor in a field brimming with family trees). In addition to interviewing individual residents largely on the basis of their long-time associations within Mill Valley, I thought it would be interesting to interview people around the structural basis of these: Oh, about a hundred such charmers presented themselves: from real estate to teachers to environmentalists to yuppies to...

As benefactor dictator of the project, I chose two themes that interested me the most: Rock and Roll, and War and Peace. Under the first theme, I pictured veterans of any war, and peace activists of the same.

Well, I'd say we are still at the opening act/initial skirmish stages of both. We have completed an interview with John Goddard of Village Music (see excerpts), which was completed just before his announcement he is (oh no) closing shop, figuring that 40 plus years behind his own counter is enough. And we have completed an interview with World War II nurse Bertha Cashin.

We hope soon to schedule more interviews with veterans and peace activists (sometimes both are the same in one person) and with the more than local luminaries in music. Whoever can get Bonnie Raitt to sit still for half an hour for us to gain a free year's membership in the Mill Valley Historical Society. How's that for cooperation?

Meanwhile, interviews with the Mill Valley elders continue space. What is holding us up from making great strides rapidly?

Two things: Loose ends and time.

First, as my colleague and historical society board member Cathy Blumberg and I have found, there were a great deal of loose ends to set aright—such as interviews conducted but not transcribed, interviews transcribed, but not proofread by the interviewee, interviews proofread but corrections not retyped. We do feel we are nearing the end of the past, and emerging blinking into the present, and future.

Secondly, with only a finite amount of time for two volunteers to devote to this ongoing project, we also needed to step back to do a general housecleaning involving testing equipment (usable and not), and trying to organize various mysterious scraps of effluvia (can), conduct a training for interviewers (me), buy digital recorders to augment our old-fashioned analog recorders (Cathy), figure how to use same (us, with many thanks to David Grossman in the History Room), line up transcribers (paid or volunteer), who work with either cassette or MP3 digital files (us), ready release forms, title pages, and so forth (Cathy). Oh, and assigning interviewers to do interviews (mostly me). Oh, and doing the indexing (Cathy).

Organizing all the above: Keeping track of which interview is at which stage of being ready for Mill Valley prime time?

Don't ask. But do feel ready to hop in and help: with suggestions of people to be interviewed, with doing some interviewing yourself, with indexing, or with, need I be more blunt, organizational skills.

Where? oralhistories@millvalleyhistoricalsociety.org is the place to find us. Some 190 or so interviews have been completed, and are available to be read in the library, or checked out. Our goal, among others, is to make them, and the new ones, available to be read, and listened to, on-line.

They are, in a word, a mixed bag, reflective of the circumstances of the interviewer, the interviewee, and the circumstances that effect both. Some may be mined for local history, others for sociological opinions of an earlier era, others for a wider worldview. Many show what good oral histories should: that one person's world can be a microcosm of a wider one, and that within the wider one are the intimate connections tying us to a place, and to each other.
ORAL HISTORY EXCERPT . . .
Cornelia Jipsen Aberson

"There was an election, and I went down and cast my vote. Then I stood (outside the polls). When the women came out, I asked, 'Is there any body interested in this proposition?' Well, about ten were, so I said, 'Come around and follow me.'"

Don't ask. But do feel ready to hop in and help with suggestions of people to be interviewed, with doing some interviewing yourself, with indexing, or with, need I be more blunt, organizational skills.

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ORAL HISTORY EXCERPT . . .
Kohn Godard

"I went and saw Little Richard when I was 13 and it changed my life. That was the first rock-and-roll show I went to. I got that feeling the first time I saw Janis Joplin. I got that feeling the first time I saw Ry Cooder, got it the first time I saw Jerry Lee Lewis, got it the first time I saw Otis Redding. I got big time when I saw Judy Garland. I got big time when I saw Frank Sinatra. It covers a lot of areas, there's a couple of gospel shows that just turned my head around. There's a lot of different kinds of music that have done that to me through the years."

ORAL HISTORY EXCERPT . . .
Valborg Gravunder

"For a long time we came over here [Mill Valley] on weekends. We camped in a tent under the oaks while Mr. Gravunder built the first house. He built it partly so we would have a place to stay overnight and partly so he could have his workshop here. He started building here."

Mill Valley Historical Trivia

Answers can be found on www.millvalleymuseum.org: in the 2000 Mill Valley Historical Society Review; available in the Mill Valley Historical Society's History Room; or on page 12 of this issue.

1. How many phones were there in Mill Valley in 1900?
2. This boy's organization was founded in Mill Valley in 1910.
3. What elementary school opened in Mill Valley in 192?
4. When people could drive over the Golden Gate Bridge, many more people moved to Mill Valley. What year was the bridge completed?
5. What year did passenger trains stop coming to Mill Valley?
6. In 1956, it cost a quarter for the teaspoons Theatre's Kaddie Matinee. What movies were playing then?
7. What was the population of Mill Valley in 1962?
8. In 1974, Jenny Fulle became the first girl in Mill Valley to play this sport. What is the sport?
9. A film about Mill Valley's crooked railroad to the East Peak of Mt. Tam was made in 1988. What is its name?
10. How many children did the Mill Valley Soccer and Little League Clubs have enrolled in 1991?
At the turn of the 20th century there were a handful of newspapers published in Mill Valley. The Mill Valley Times was the town’s first publication in 1893 and targeted the summer residents who would swell the local population when school let out, and anyone who could, escaped the summer fog of San Francisco. Founded in 1899, the Marin County Enterprise later became the Record-Enterprise, and in 1917 the name was abbreviated to the Mill Valley Record. Until 1991 it would be the major source of local news and information in town.

By early 1963, thirteen different publishers had applied their various skills and talents to produce this local weekly paper, but its most tenacious and successful publishers came as a pair: Katharine and Ned Mills. Their combined professional backgrounds, as well as the spirit of the time, led them to create a new life in a small northern California town, publishing a weekly newspaper.

Within a few weeks of purchasing the Record, they began publishing the city council agenda prior to the meetings. Within a few months, Katharine was writing her Notes For the Record, a series of homely common sense vignettes that would continue until they sold the paper in 1987. While Katharine would exercise the editorial content and control, Ned would beat the streets for newspaper advertisements, always with the goal to increase circulation. Katharine’s Notes was usually the first page that readers would turn to and that fostered Ned’s success with his impressive 25% circulation increase.

If you ask Ned, as I did, he’ll tell you that one of the Record’s accomplishments of which he is most proud was influencing the change of city council meetings from Wednesdays to Mondays, so that the Record could report the proceedings in time for its midweek publication. Few small towns received that level of committed reporting from a local newspaper. Another innovation that the Mills’ introduced was to bring the Record to newsstands, instead of just the customary home delivery.

To learn more about the Mills, one can read their shared oral history at the library, or even borrow it. Katharine Sherwood was raised in Beatrice, Nebraska, close to where her great-grandfather had homesteaded. She graduated from Scripps College, a women’s school at Claremont, California founded in 1926 by newspaper publisher Ellen Browning Scripps. Katharine’s mother had met Ms. Scripps at the time she was talking about her idea for a women’s college. The founder confided that she didn’t know if anybody would come, but Katharine’s mother assured her that she had two daughters and that they would come. Katharine would attend, but her sister would graduate from Vassar.

It seems natural that Katharine became a journalist, even a newspaper publisher, with her mother’s encouragement. After graduating from college in 1939, she went back to Beatrice to be with her father and younger sister. Her mother had died five years earlier. She became the women’s editor of the Beatrice Times at a time when jobs for women were scarce and her newspaper career was launched.

Her sister, ten years younger than she, accompanied Katharine to New York a year after their banker father died in 1944. “Through a series of lucky breaks” Katharine was hired at the Newspaper Enterprise Association (NEA). Although she eventually quit working full time after having children, she continued writing a column for the NEA until her work at the Mill Valley Record required too much of her time and effort.

Ned is a native Californian and attended public school in Los Angeles. However, his family’s Virginian roots called him back to
the University of Richmond in Virginia. He was hired by the Richmond News-Leader upon his college graduation. After a five-year stint there, he joined the Army Air Corps and when the war ended joined the NEA, where Katharine and destiny awaited him.

Katharine's marriage to Ned Mills was the result of an office romance. They met just after the war in 1946, since their desks were across the room from one another at the NEA. She headed the women's desk, and Ned, the sports desk. They were married in 1947.

Ned described the headiness of the time during their lives in New York. They enjoyed attending the flood of functions available free to journalists at the time. It was during that period that Ned moved from managing the sports desk to the business aspect of newspapers. This experience would become crucial when the Mills later purchased the Mill Valley Record. They moved with the NEA to Chicago, but Ned's plan to become president of that organization didn't come to fruition, so a subsequent move would bring them West. By then, they had three children.

Katharine and Ned shared a dream of owning a small town newspaper and were ready for life's next adventure. Searching for a small town paper took Ned to Sausalito, California, dusty Salinas Valley home to a state prison. Even though John Steinbeck's novel, Of Mice and Men is set in Sausalito, it wasn't the cultural setting that Katharine and Ned wanted for their family.

Although Ned had not been to Mill Valley before, a newspaper hanker wanted him to learn about the possibility of purchasing the Record, even though it wasn't for sale yet. Ned reported that, "We came up at about 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon. It doesn't take a salesman to sell Mill Valley's beauty."

After the move, the Mills immersed themselves in the newspaper and their pride in the Record is reflected in their 1978 oral history. Katharine: "One of the changes that was exciting to us personally is the change in our production methods. When we bought the paper in 1965 it was in the building at 21 Corte Madera, and the old Masonic Hall had grown up around it. The press was an old flatbed and was forever breaking down. You'd call the welder in the middle of the night to weld it together again. Then we began to grow in 1966. We moved to 78 East Blithedale. We hired a welder to break up the old flatbed, and we bought an old rotary press in Sacramento."

"It was a marvelous sight when they pulled out the old linotypes and mounted them on a big truck in front of the Mill Valley Market. To see them going down the street... they looked exactly like old dowagers going to the opera. Great bosomed linotypes sailing down the street." —KATHARINE MILLS

Former Mill Valley Record employees report that working there was an exceptional experience. Matt Stafford, who is now the Entertainment Editor of the Pacific Sun, said: "The bond with the experience was, of course, priceless; and working at the Record was easily the best job that I ever had."

The Mills were acknowledged for their contributions to the creative life of Mill Valley with a Millley Award in 1997. Even after they sold the newspaper in 1987, after twenty-four years of service to the community, they continued to participate in the activities of their adopted hometown.

While Ned was leading the charge to make the business viable, Katharine steadfastly held the editorial vision to a high standard, mentoring many young women and men along the way. Ned said that it was a conservative paper when they came to it, and they steered it in a much more moderate direction. They championed women's rights, affordable housing, and other causes not previously associated with the Record. They supported building the middle school and the public safety building, and their causes were not always popular.

They later moved from East Blithedale and Forrest to 438 Miller Avenue, where Ned could report by 1978 that all they had in that building were people, typewriters and a Xerox; no printing press. The newspaper publishing business changed dramatically in the twenty-four years that they were there to guide it.

Katharine died in April 2006, and Ned still lives in the family home in Mill Valley. As former employee, Matt Stafford, said in a tribute after Katharine's death, "That was a newspaper."
It's springtime in Mill Valley and the acacia trees have spent their yellow blooms and third graders' parents have sped off to their workdays. The Mill Valley School District's fifteen third-grade teachers are preparing their students for an annual research and writing assignment about the town's history. For over twenty years, these tender-aged local children have gathered research in the History Room at the Mill Valley Public Library, and for some, interviewed a person affiliated with their topic.

Readied for research by their teachers, the Children and History Room Librarians, as well as volunteer docents, over three hundred students will explore Mill Valley history. They are offered multiple topics from which to choose. For many, it is their first research undertaking. Parents are also required to put forth some effort in this important language arts project.

Old Mill School teacher, John Selix, has shared samples of students' works. Visit www.millvalleyhistoricalsociety.org for the third graders' 2007 history projects after their completion. Here are just a few samples of their work.

**THEN**

The History of Scout Hall

I'm writing about Scout Hall's history because I'm a junior and my dad is the park leader. Scout Hall is a cool building to write about. Scout Hall was an interesting history. Scout Hall used to be a house. Scout Hall was used for example, a laundry place and a horse stable. Can you imagine a stable in Mill Valley?

**NOW**

The History of Scout Hall

Today Scout Hall is used for many other things such as Scout Troop Play, and it can be rented out for a dance and the local neighborhood meetings. On the second floor there are a bunch of storage closets.

**THE HISTORY OF SCOUT HALL**

by Laird Grant

**THEN**

MILL VALLEY RECORD

by Bridget Lowry

The Mill Valley Record started October 1899 and covered every event from school to the Diaspora race plus it was written by hand until 1915. Staffers bought a typewriter machine. After the first year the newspaper grew fast. By the next year it took over the Belvedere-Hillside Record, then the Record grew in size. The Record changed for the worst of all because the Record stopped. Then came the day the Record gasped for air. The Record stopped Wednesday September 4, 1992.

**NOW**

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The Record started as a weekly newspaper in 1991. Before the Record stopped, the Record was stopped. The Mill Valley Record started October 1899 and covered every event from school to the Diaspora race plus it was written by hand until 1915. Staffers bought a typewriter machine. After the first year the newspaper grew fast. By the next year it took over the Belvedere-Hillside Record, then the Record grew in size. The Record changed for the worst of all because the Record stopped. Then came the day the Record gasped for air. The Record stopped Wednesday September 4, 1992. The Record stopped Wednesday September 4, 1992.
THE MILL VALLEY
POLICE DEPARTMENT
by James Tambadore

The first police force in Mill Valley was called a Martial. Its name was James McDonald. He was elected August 26, 1900. He sold a home because city council's insurance only covered his house. His house was sold by 1902. The first Mill Valley Police Chief was Lincoln Hall from 1897 to 1899. Other Chiefs were: James S. Hopper (1871-1872), William Walsh (1872-1874), and Ed H. Valley (1874-1877). The police force was City Hall, downtown in Mill Valley until 1997. In 1997, the police moved to a new building called the William Walsh Public Safety Building near Hinkle Park. It has been the police and Fire Department. A long time ago before police had radios, Mill Valley Police had a bell on top of a building near a house. They would ring it when it was an emergency.

THEN

The Mill Valley Police Department
by James Tambadore

On April 24, 2007, I interviewed Captain John Blohm of the Mill Valley Police Department. He grew up at the station. I met an officer named with a name no one can remember and he is a very tall 12-year-old boy. Now, the Mill Valley Police Department is named from Hinkle Field. The Chief now is Chief Robert Warner. He is the Chief of police. Now, the police have computers in their police cars. Now, someone who are police officers. Now, the Inspector and the job are in Marin County officers in the Mill Valley. Now, the police were a member of the Mill Valley Police Department. The police were a member of the Mill Valley Police Department. Now, the police were a member of the Mill Valley Police Department. Now, the police were a member of the Mill Valley Police Department. Now, the police were a member of the Mill Valley Police Department. Now, the police were a member of the Mill Valley Police Department.

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LYTTON SQUARE
by Danielle Howard

Lynton Square is the center of town. Most people use the plaza next to the Library in Lynton Square, but it isn't. It only in the "island" in the middle of the town. It is called Mill Valley. There is a tree and a statue. Lynton Square is named after Lynton W. Stuart, the first local mayor who died during World War II. Lynton Square was named in his honor on Memorial Day 1918.

There was a lot of growth in Mill Valley when a railroad was built in 1903. It is the center of town, with train tracks and all over Main. The Lynton Square received, which was the "central railhead in the world", ran from the town center to the central town. Between 1903 and 1917, the railroad stopped in Mill Valley, causing the town to become a train station. Then a parking lot was created, and people hung out in the early 1900s. Today it is the center of town. It is the center of town. It is the center of town. It is the center of town.

NOW

Lynton Square
by Danielle Howard

The Place is the heart of Mill Valley. It is the main place to meet and play. Do you want to know why? Because you can play in the city library, skate park, and basketball courts. In the Daylight, I learned to go to sleep and clean up the town. In the Daylight, I learned to go to sleep and clean up the town. In the Daylight, I learned to go to sleep and clean up the town. In the Daylight, I learned to go to sleep and clean up the town. In the Daylight, I learned to go to sleep and clean up the town.
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415-388-1868 fax

David R. Peck, President
dpeck@isugroup.com