



August, 2019

President's Report

We have a big issue here, and I hope you find something enjoyable to read.

First, I would like to invite you to attend our Board meetings. We get together at 11 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month at the Visitor Center on Harbor street, except for months when we have a quarterly member meeting (like August). Put it on your calendar, and come see how the sausage is made.

We always need help doing projects. There are lots of different ways you could get involved with your neighbors to highlight the history of Morro Bay. We have a special need for someone who would like to work on collections. Roger Castle has put together an outstanding system that can get us truly organized!

I am sure you remember Botso Korisheli. Our August member meeting program is titled *From Tbilisi to Morro Bay to the Big Screen*. The making of the Botso documentary is the topic Tom Walters will present on Sunday August 18, 4 pm, in the lower level room of the Morro Bay Presbyterian Church. Tom is the guy who made the movie, so you'll get the first hand experience of how you follow the life of an amazing character, and put it on the screen.

In this issue we have stories about our past and what we are doing going forward. Included:

- A brief bio of Botso Korisheli from his wife Margaret.
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- A report on how the City contributed to the making of the Botso movie, and why it was important.
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- Board member Cathy Ryan's memories of Botso.
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- A story about the little red cottage where Nadine Richards lived on the Embarcadero for over 30 years. You can still see the cottage on the Embarcadero, near the Tideland's boat launch.
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- Roger Castle's reminiscence about "up town" Morro Bay in the 1950's.
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- A story about one of Morro Bay's former Citizens of the Year, in 1989: Don and Mary Jane Puett.

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- The first of many introductory stories on Hidden History topics written by Cal Poly students from Sean Green's course on writing for engineers. This time we'll get some reminders about the history of Happy Jack's.
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- Announcement about the newest Hidden History panel, telling the story of the Tidelands and the ownership of the Embarcadero.

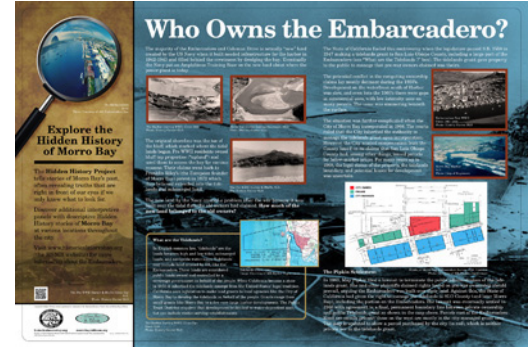
A lot going on and still there's more to do. Please get in touch with us and let us know how you'd like to help!

See you on August 18th.

Glenn Silloway
President, HSMB

It wasn't until 1968 with the settlement of the Pipkin, et al, lawsuit that the matter of the boundary of the Tidelands Trust was settled. This new panel tells the story, and coming soon there will be a much longer version on our website at <http://historicalmorrobay.org/who-owns-the-embarcadero/>.

As always, your input is welcome (we can always change the online story).



The new panel will be ready in September, and will be on the waterfront near Grey's Inn. Special thanks to Todd and Tamara Baston, and to Cathy Novak, for making the panel possible.

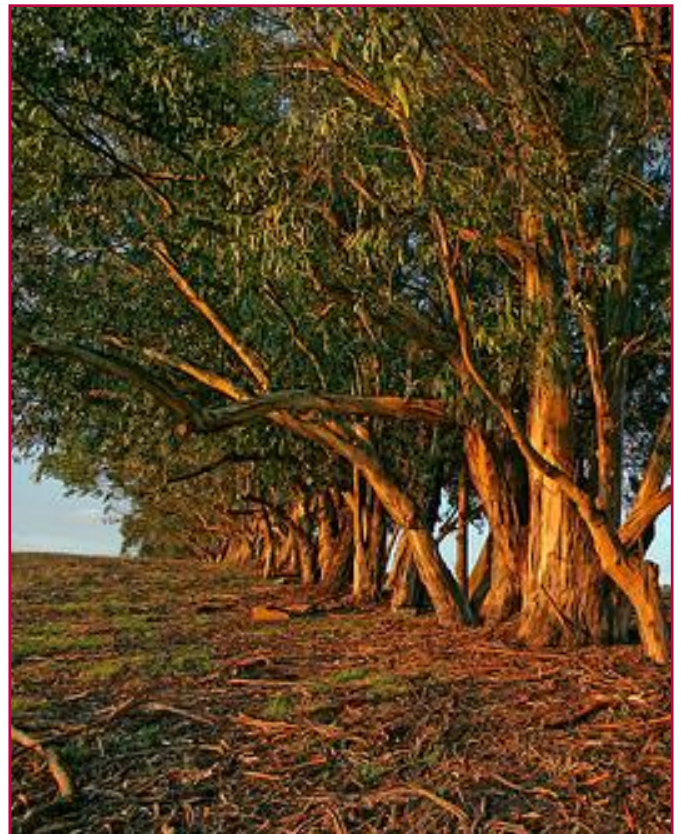
Who Owns the Embarcadero?

by Glenn Silloway, President, HSMB

Some people still remember personally how we fought over the Embarcadero!

After World War II, the new harbor built by the Navy left new land and infrastructure that could support a lot of development. The question was, who was going to do that development, and how?

Our newest Hidden History panel summarizes the battle over the Tidelands. On one side, the private property owners who had bluff top parcels before the war felt they had the right to develop the Embarcadero. But the State of California passed a law that made most of the Embarcadero, plus a lot more land, part of the Tidelands Trust, to be managed by a public entity.





Botso Korisheli:

The Man from
Tbilisi

Wachtang “Botso” Korisheli, born in Tbilisi, Georgia, was introduced to art and music by his parents at an early age. He received his BA in music from the University of California, Santa Barbara and completed his PhD in musicology at Albert-Ludwigs-Universität in Freiburg, Germany.

Botso moved to Morro Bay, California in 1957 to found the music program at Morro Elementary School. In 1965, he expanded music education in the county by creating the San Luis Obispo Youth Symphony, which performed three concerts a year in San Luis Obispo and other communities. There, he taught a host of students who have gone on to perform as professional musicians and conductors. In 1966, he started a string orchestra at Morro Bay High School and toured the California coast with them.

In addition to music, Botso expressed his creativity as a stone sculptor and exhibited his work both locally and internationally. The City of Morro Bay commissioned him to create a 5-foot granite “Pelican Family” sculpture for the Centennial Stairway, dedicated in 1975. Shortly thereafter, he designed and built a giant chessboard with figures for the City of Morro Bay as well, followed in 1983 by a 3-foot black serpentine sculpture for the Morro Bay Library. In 1991, the Cultural Minister of the Republic of Georgia commissioned Botso to sculpt a 6-foot high green sandstone sculpture as a symbol for Tbilisi, the city of his birth. In 2010, he created a 12-foot granite installation, commissioned by the City of Morro Bay that stands at the entrance to the city at the intersection of Morro Bay Boulevard and Quintana Road.

After retiring from the public schools in 1986, Botso taught music, humanities, and sculpture at Mission College Prep in San Luis Obispo. From the time he retired from Mission until his death on July 27, 2015 at the age of 93, Botso enjoyed teaching sculpture and piano students in his private studios. He also pursued his love of philosophy, reading widely and writing both an autobiography and an unpublished collection of essays and poems. In appreciation of Botso’s unique and inspiring life, local filmmakers produced an award-winning documentary about him, entitled Botso: The Teacher from Tbilisi.

The City Contribution to the Botso Movie

By Susan Stewart, HSMB Board Member

Way back in the dark ages (okay, it was only about seven years ago) Morro Bay had a Community Promotions Committee. It was replaced by the Tourism Business Improvement District.

We had a bit of money left in our budget and decided to go out with the biggest impact we could, for events that supported the community and brought attention to the Central Coast. Here is an excerpt from a final report to the City Council: At our last meeting, we elected to use unencumbered capital to fund several large projects that should have long term and far-reaching benefits for the community.

[Among other things] we voted to support the feature length documentary “Botso”, filmed in Morro Bay and the Republic of Georgia, about our own local internationally famous musician, artist, and teacher Botso Korishelli.

This movie was shown at the Cannes film festival. The potential is huge to produce long-range national and international promotion results for the community. The “Botso” movie was a project that resonated with me, as the story of an artist and musician, an immigrant who found his way to our tiny town and had such an impact at an individual and global level.

He brought the joy of music to so many people, and the powerful lessons of persistence and positive thinking to a community. I also knew that this movie could have far-reaching affects in countries where people travel to visit the homes of great artists and teachers.

I am proud that the City of Morro Bay contributed in it's own small way to the production of this movie.



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Contributing Authors

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Botso and Me

By Cathy Ryan, HSMB Board Member

As a child entering music class or band for the first time, it calls for uncertain feelings or just plain scary!

Entering a room where the person in charge was this little short, bearded, stern-looking man that spoke with a heavy accent.

His name was unusual, Mr. Korishelli, who I would later know as Botso. He was from some faraway place in Russia, called Georgia. I had no idea where that was or cared. I would later learn he was a very special man to anyone who had the honor to know him.

As time went on, I learned many things from this man that would become part of my character in later years. He taught everyone patience, understanding, compassion, gave us motivation and let us experience failure and success.

He taught these things to us and many more emotions, along with sharing his many talents.

Mr. Korishelli loved life. He was always grateful for all he was given. He thought he was the lucky one to have chosen Morro Bay to live his fulfilling life.

He had many talents, he shared with his students and friends, including music.

I believe this man was brought to Morro Bay to teach each of us to be grateful for what we have and to give to others without wanting anything in return. I have lots of warm feelings for this man and am forever elated for knowing him.





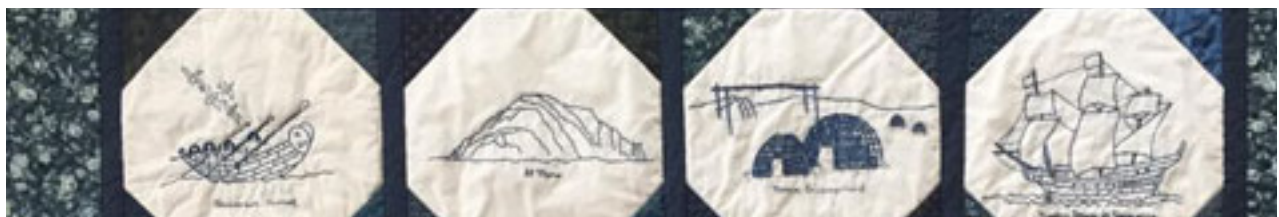
The Little Red Cottage on the Embarcadero

Do you know the little red house at the south end of the Embarcadero, near the boat launch at Tidelands Park? From the launch, look east to the bluff, behind the fence.

That little house at 683 Embarcadero was built at 285 Main Street by Nadine Richards in the early 1940's. Nadine did all the work herself, including making pieces of lumber for her cottage. After World War II she completed the lower level for a studio and in about 1952/1953 moved the whole building to the narrow strip of land her parents owned at the foot of the bluff. The Embarcadero built by the Navy provided a safe foundation for the little house.

Nadine lived in the cottage, working as an artist and poet, for many years. She was an active part of the Morro Bay artist colony, working with people like Aaron Kilpatrick, Charles Robinson, Harold Knott and Charlotte Skinner, and weaver Miles Castle. In fact, Castle provided plumbing services to Nadine at one point, helping make her cottage more comfortable.

Nadine transferred ownership of the cottage and land to the current owners in 1996, ending a 35-year residence on the Embarcadero. She and her house are definitely important parts of Morro Bay's history. We are grateful to the Morgan Family, and to Nancy Farrell and Betsy Bertrando of Cultural Resource Management Services for the research and report we have relied on to bring the little red cottage to you.



Uptown

by Roger Castle

"I'm going up-town, Mom," I shouted. "OK, dear. Be careful," she called after me. She knew exactly where I was going. The 'up-town' of my youth included all the shops and business along Morro Bay Blvd. (then 5th St.) and Main Street. Before the freeway, this route through town was part of Highway 1. The Embarcadero, the waterfront, was a different destination, separated by function and geography. North Main, although part of Morro Bay, was known to many as 'Atascadero Beach'.

My frequent trips to town began with a walk or bike ride from my home (near the today's high school), south along Highway 1, which became Main Street. The streets there were much different before the freeway. Today's frontage road (Main St.) was Highway 1. Little Morro Creek Road met the highway about where the city's new bike path begins. At about Lemos Feed store the highway ran up a steep hill into town. The hill was closely lined on both sides by eucalyptus trees. This steep, dark, often damp and drippy, slope marked my entrance into town. Once I reached the top of this hill I could remount my bike and coast.

One of my first stops was the service station at Beach and Main, where the Lamplighter motel is now. Now at that time gasoline dispensing was not synonymous with convenience store. Most service stations sold cold sodas, in glass bottles, with pry-off tops. Some also sold cigarettes. The remainder of the merchandise was car related: oil, fan belts, radiator and gas caps, and fuzzy dice.

It was free air for my bike tires that brought me to the station. A well-filled tire ran swiftly on the sidewalks of town. After leaving the station I had a choice to make. Right, down Beach St., would take me to the waterfront; left would take me up to the grammar school. Or I could go straight,

up the last bit of hill, into town. At the top of the hill (Main and Dunes) was Coy House's Morro Bay Dry Cleaners. Coy could often be seen in the window, puffs of steam venting as he worked the shirt press.

In the next block was the Ocean View Garage and on the corner Happy Jack's, now the Siren. Even in my high school years it was still considered a rough establishment. For more about Happy Jacks, see the Hidden History story below.

Only slightly less seedy, diagonally across Main Street, was the Circle Inn, now Legends. The Circle Inn was most notable for its corner front door. Above the door was a large circular portico-ah-la-marquee. This was ringed with neon which always seemed to be in some state of disrepair.

On the Harbor Street side of the Inn, and up two or three stairs because of the slope of the road, was a large room with a high ceiling and a wooden floor. It was, at various times, a skating rink, a ballroom, and, in my memory, a dance studio where my parents strongly encouraged me to take ballet and tap dance lessons.

Back down Main Street, in the building that is now Coalesce Bookstore, was the Morro Bay library. My mother was an avid reader and later a librarian so my trips to this tiny brick building began early. I remember that as soon as I could sign my name I got my own library card. I would pour over the shelves of wonders and select an old friend or a new adventure or two. Mrs. McKennon would stamp the books and a card for each one, with the due date. The patron



then signed the card next to the new stamp. You could tell which of your friends had recently

Photo: Google

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read a book by looking over the card.

The last business on the block, the corner of Main and 5th was the Bank of America. Now the Haven Properties, it was notable for its tiny, off street, parking lot and for its exterior decorations. The top corners of the street sides of the building are still adorned with bas-relief, circular plaster ornaments. About 4 or 5 feet in diameter,



Happy Jack's bar was an institution in Morro Bay, starting a 90-year run of having the same kind of business at the same location.

The article below was written by a team of Cal Poly students in Sean Green's Technical Writing for Engineers class for Spring 2019 (Sean has been at Cal Poly for 5 years). The Historical Society has not made editorial changes on these articles—they are drafts by amateur historians (like almost all of us!).

If you see ways to improve this article, or have memories about Happy Jack's of your own you'd like share, please get in touch with us.

Hidden History Stories: Happy Jack's

By John Walter Takiff, Sophie Claire Moffatt, Sophia Victoria Jessum, and Pearse Lipscomb

Happy Jack's, The Fuel Dock, and The Siren. The legendary bar has been called multiple names over the decades, but its iconic stature remains. Today, the bar remains in operation as the longest continuously operating business in Morro Bay. The bar was first opened in 1929 by Mr. Jack Williams, a farmer from Burrton, Kentucky.



But Jack wasn't just any old farmer. According to Vic Lawrence, a current resident of Morro Bay who knew Jack: "At the tender age of thirteen Jack left his home because of the strictness of his grandfather." Jack began his career in California working on a ranch in Adelaide, a community in San Luis Obispo County. He eventually decided to move on from the farming life, so he moved closer to the beach, where he met his wife Emma Silacci. In 1929, he purchased the building located just down the street from the water. He named it "Happy Jack's" after himself, for he was known throughout the town by his smile and good nature.

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Jack purchased his bar at the beginning of the Great Depression, so times were hard for him and his business. Jack focused on supporting his establishment while doing what he could to support his family as well as the Morro Bay community. It was even said that Jack “bought beer one case at a time, and when it was sold he bought another.”

He would buy beer one case at a time to make certain he had enough for his monthly payments on his establishment. With whatever money he had afterwards, he would use it to provide food to families who needed it. It was noted on the Old Morro Bay website (a website dedicated to telling the history of Morro Bay) that “Jack was by nature a very generous person.” The website added that “although he was having somewhat of a difficult time himself, he provided some families with food and also shoes for their children” Through the tough times, the bar helped boost morale as one of the most popular social venues in the area and helped bring the Morro Bay community together. The advertisement, pictured above, was one of many that popped up in the SLO Tribune around the 1930s advertising social events held at the bar.

Hard times also brought rough people. In 1937, a boxing ring was set up in the bar to occupy and entertain the bargoers. Vic Lawrence recalled “Before and during the war, Happy Jacks was a rowdy place. A French crew came in off a [Standard Oil Company] tanker, one of the crew took a bite out of a glass and ate it.” This type of rowdy crowd filled the bar from the time that it was owned by Jack to even in the years prior to his selling of the bar. Dell Franklin, a bartender at Happy Jack’s spent his time after work their retelling stories of the rough crowd. Despite the rambunctious reputation the bar had, it was still a very popular spot in town and created a family-like community.



Jack had owned the bar for a total of 12 years when he decided it would be best to sell. After this many years, he had become tired of the bar business. He also wanted to get back to his roots and the simple life of farming in Kansas akin to that of his childhood.

Happy Jack’s has had many owners and has even gone through a few name changes over the years. In 1968 David W. Tope purchased the bar and ran it until 1998; all the while it was called Happy Jack’s. After Tope, the new owners (names unknown) changed the name to the Fuel Dock, and then sold it in 2014. The current owners, Paul and Kelly Boisclair, have had the bar since 2014 and made a name change to The Siren. Before it was The Siren, it was known as The Fuel Dock Saloon for a period of time.

Though the original name may be gone, the legacy of Happy Jack’s Saloon still lives on. Today, the bar can be found sporting its new look and new name: The Siren.

The Boisclairs have worked hard to maintain the bar’s original structure and preserve its history while giving the bar a few key upgrades. After purchasing the venue in 2014, they spent three years and three million dollars towards renovating the building and changing the aesthetic, while still maintaining the vintage vibe. Since its grand re-opening in 2017, The Siren has functioned as both a restaurant and a popular music venue, hosting local talent as well as serving as a stop for state and national tours. This liveliness of The Siren will assure the bar stays open and bustling for generations to come, thus carrying the legacy of “Happy” Jack Williams.



In our first newsletter of 2019 we shared the list of residents that were selected as Citizen of the Year by the Morro Bay Chamber of Commerce going back to the first one, Bill Payne in 1975 and Living Treasure going back to 2002. We hoped that in future issues of the Historical Society Newsletter we could highlight and celebrate some of the achievements of the people on the lists that helped to create our history.

Our research leads us to the 1989 recipients of the honor of Citizen of the Year and the story of Don and Mary Jane Puett. Don and Mary Jane were widely known in Morro Bay as the husband and wife team that owned Flippo's Skate Harbor the local roller skating rink. The couple had two sons who were enrolled in local schools and they were involved deeply in the community in many aspects. Mary Jane and Don were involved parents, and they were concerned for other children as well.

They were active volunteers and supporters of the Morro Bay PTA, McGruff Crime Prevention Program that was aimed at crime prevention in early education. The couple were advocates of the program and at a time before the internet, they had a high desire to be sure that all parents were connected with fingerprint protection for their children.

The couple sponsored weekly subsidized skate session; and co-sponsored a Halloween Night and a Haunted House at Flippo's Skate Harbor. Mary Jane served for 5 years as on the board of directors for Neighborhood Watch an organization that aims to prevent crime. She was awarded the California State Attorney General's Award of Commendation for her dedication to crime prevention in Morro Bay in 1987 and 1988.

When it came to crime prevention Don and Mary Jane were tops. They supported the Morro Bay Crime Prevention Fair by donating time, food and their expertise organizing the BBQ that made the program a success. They also donated skate time at their business in support of Morro Bay Police fundraising activities.

A January 25, 1990 Sun-Bulletin, article by Bill Mazzacane, was titled "Don and MaryJane Puett, Citizens of the Year – Because they're here, life's better in Morro Bay" The article quoted several of the nomination papers submitted in an effort to have the Puett's recognized. (Col.) Chuck Clark, Recreation and Parks Commissioner was quoted as writing, "The Puett's are widely known as two deeply involved, sincere, caring people who love Morro Bay and contribute an awesome number of hours from their personal lives to enhance the quality of life here".

Please join us in preserving the history of this town . Members received discounts on books, free admission to presentations, and the pride of knowing we have contributed to this towns' heritage.

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Don and Mary Jane Puett. continued

The accolades didn't end there, Penny Oaks, The City of Morro Bay's Crime Prevention Officer wrote, "Foremost...is their commitment to make Morro Bay a good community and a safe and fun place for the City's youth."

Mary Jane said "We live in Morro Bay. Love the community. We were honored to receive citizen of the year. We loved running the roller skating rink "Flippo's" and helping out in the community whenever we could."

So, it can be said that the selection of Don and Mary Jane Puett as 1989's Citizens of the year was a good one. The Puett's were true champions of Morro Bay and will always be a part of the historical line of people that have helped to shape the community through kind deeds. These are two of the people that have helped to create the places and moments that form the history of Morro Bay.