



**McHENRY
MUSEUM**
& Historical Society



Newsletter

March 2022

Please call us at:
(209) 618-5387



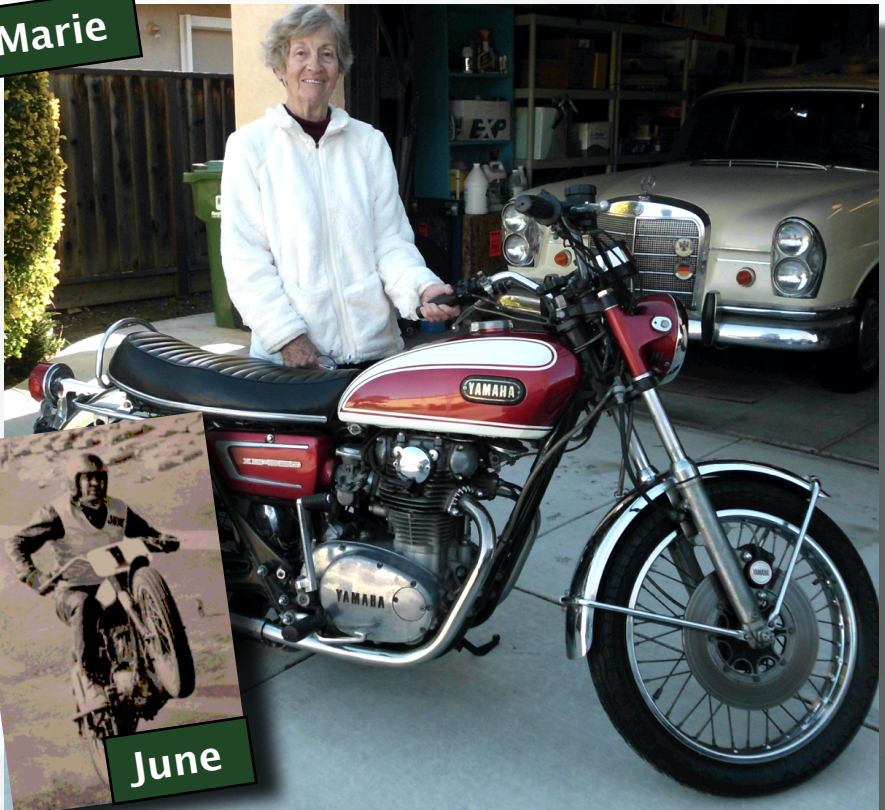
HISTORY LESSON

March is Women’s History Month. In this month we celebrate the contributions of women to the great tapestry of our past. The struggle of women to make a name for themselves and find a place in the professional male-dominated world was not always easy. In the past, opportunities were limited for women in the work force. For this newsletter, we at the MM&HS want to highlight a woman who called Modesto home for many years. Who, along with her husband, operated a local motorcycle dealership in the heart of Downtown Modesto. This is the story of Marie Jewett, who this spring celebrates her ninety-fifth birthday.

Marie Frederick was born in Gillette, Wyoming on May 21, 1927. She worked in her family businesses as a youth, which included a Pontiac Car dealership. Her first job on her own was working for Western Union as a telegram transcriber during World War II. After finishing training for Western Union, she moved to Seattle, Washington. In Seattle, she met June Jewett, a native of Santaquin, Utah, who was serving in the Navy during the war. June was in the process of getting his electricians training in Seattle. The War brought them together and they married on July 19, 1946.

Marie and June settled in Salt Lake City, Utah where they would have five children, Mike, Laura, Gordon, Rodney, and Diane. June Jewett was a motorcycle enthusiast. He was an excellent racer, not only in scrambles but uphill climbs and enduro racing.

Marie



June

The Jewett Family arrived in Modesto in the late summer of 1959. The Jewett children attended John Sutter Elementary School. June and Marie soon opened the first location of Jewett Motors in an empty gas station on tenth street, now the location of a city equipment yard. June put his own Harley on display. June’s dream was to operate a Harley franchise in California, and Modesto seemed the only location available. Though, he was not able to procure a Harley franchise, June did get a Birmingham Small Arms Company Limited (BSA) franchise in Modesto. He sold his beloved Harley to invest the money into several new BSA Motorcycles for the showroom floor. Though the business had a few lean years in the beginning, it expanded. The business was able to move a few blocks west to 1312 Tenth Street to a larger location. Always present was Marie, helping run the business and working as the bookkeeper. Marie kept the books, did all bank deposits, and took care of all DMV paperwork, worked in the parts department. She mastered all catalogs and became quite savvy on how motorcycles ran. Their children also worked as devoted employees. Mike worked as the custodian, washed the bikes, and ran errands.

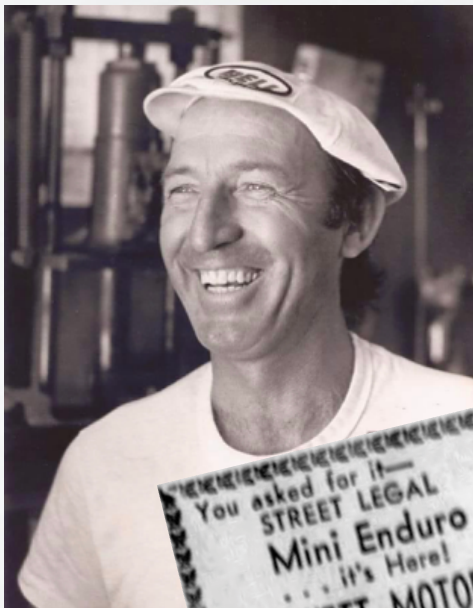
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2---->



June & Marie Jewett



June Jewett



Ray Huff

In the 1960s, Japanese Motorcycles became the new rage in the United States. First was Honda. Honda opened the American motorcycle market with the small Honda 50 with the slogan "You meet the nicest people on a Honda." As the English motorcycle market failed, Jewett Motors switched to Yamaha Motorcycles. Sales boomed and Jewett motors finally became a success. The Jewett's advertised on Modesto's most popular local radio station KFIV and held a big contest giving away a Yamaha.

The third, final, and best-known location of Jewett Motors was at 1410 Ninth Street across from Modesto Junk Company. It was there the business found its permanent home. There, Ray Huff (1930-2004) worked as lead mechanic. Ray became known throughout Northern California as the fastest motorcycle racers, a passion he held until his death at age 73.

Jewett Motors continued to thrive and added additional brands including BMW from Germany and Ducati from Italy. June and Marie Jewett were motorcycle and motorcycle racing pioneers in the Central Valley. They sold Jewett Motors to A&D Yamaha in 1976. After going many years without a vacation, June and Marie made travel a priority. June worked in engineering and Marie for another prominent Modesto business.

Marie befriended George Walton Lucas Sr. owner of L.M. Morris Co. (story featured in MM&HS's December 2021 Newsletter). She became his personal driver to and from work as his health declined and became a bookkeeper for the store. Marie could be seen working behind the counter as well until the store closed its doors in the early 1990s.

June Jewett died after a brief illness. On December 22, 1998, in Modesto. Marie remained local, still embracing her and her husband's favorite past time motorcycles. Marie Jewett currently lives in Fremont, California with her son Mike. Her greatest legacy is her family. Sons Mike and Gordon also raced motorcycles and went on to become UC Berkeley trained engineers, which started by them assembling bikes as they arrived at the shop. Other son Rodney became California Junior Bicycle Road Racing Champion at ages sixteen and seventeen. He later became president of Bianchi America Bicycles. Younger daughter Diane became a dental hygienist. Older daughter Laura, like her mother, did bookkeeping for the shop and later went on to become a medical transcriptionist. Marie has enjoyed an amazing life, but to the people of Modesto, she is and will always be our original Motorcycle Mama.



KFIV at Jewett Motors



**Jewett Motors Building today
1410 9th Street**

*All information for this article comes from phone interviews with Laura Jewett Padgett January-February 27, 2022. Also, Correspondence with Mike and Marie Jewett, February 20-February 27, 2022.

Updates



Johnny Big Ears

- The Museum Store is ready for St. Patrick's Day, please come check it out.
- The Museum Store is now carrying the books and swag of local author John Paul Padilla who promotes anti-bullying with his book "Johnny Big Ears," we not only carry his original book, but his sequel, as well Johnny Big Ears plush dolls.
- The Museum Store is honored to carry the original watercolors, as well as prints and greeting cards of beloved local artist Virginia White. She has been a treasure of the Central Valley for over fifty years.
- The MM&HS would once again like to thank our loyal docents and those volunteers who helped keep the Museum Store running in the month of February, Janice Lane, Nancy Norton, Athena Galexia, Richard Cato, and Leslie Thompson.
- The Museum's changing exhibit this month is photography from the local group, "The Photo Collective."
- We would like to thank MM&HS Board Member Doug Nutson for helping us hang the new Virginia White Artwork in the Museum Store.
- The next Board Meeting of the MM&HS will take place on St. Patrick's Day, March 17, 2022.



ART OF VIRGINIA WHITE

