

**MC HENRY  
MUSEUM**  
& HISTORICAL SOCIETY

# MM&HS Museum Monthly

*A Publication of the McHenry Museum & Historical Society*

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## Society Spotlight: Sergio Chevalier, Volunteer



On November 6, 2021, the MM&HS received an email via our website from a college student asking for volunteer opportunities: Sergio Chevalier. Sergio was born in 1994 in St. Louis, Missouri. He moved to Modesto in 2000 and graduated from Beyer High School in 2012. He is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts Degree in history from California State University, Bakersfield.

One of his college professors had recommended to his students to consider volunteering at local museums. Since his passion is history and philosophy, the McHenry Museum seemed appealing. Sergio initially began volunteering in our store and received his official docent name badge in September of 2022. Sergio is always on call to fill-in in a pinch, and is one of our most dedicated volunteers.

## Ken White, Modesto historian and author

In the ‘Stanislaus Selections’ in-museum store, we carry several titles by local author, Ken White. With the holiday season approaching, we highlight his three holiday themed titles:

***Twelve Days of Central Valley Christmas*** is a children’s picture book that retells the traditional Christmas carol from a uniquely Central Valley of California point-of-view.

***That Happiness Thing: A Hometown Fable*** is also a children’s book. It is about a ten year old boy seeking to find the meaning of happiness in 1958.

***Counting on Christmas*** is for mature readers. It is the story of a shop owner who tries to instill the spirit of Christmas through songs, art, and stories of her hometown - Modesto, California.

Each book is available for purchase in our store. Ken is also responsible for the museum’s current temporary exhibition display on ‘The Mud Bowl’. He will share more about in our December 2023 newsletter.



# Mexican-American Community Becomes a Growing Voice in Stanislaus County 1945-Present

By David Seymour

World War II and the advent of the Mexican Farm Labor Agreement of 1942 (also known as the Bracero Program) forever changed the population of Stanislaus County. The Bracero Program promised workers sanitation, adequate shelter, food, and a minimum wage of thirty cents an hour early on. The total population of Stanislaus County according to the 1950 United States Federal Census was 126,765. With each passing year, more farm workers were needed to continue to work in agriculture. On August 26, 1953, a total of 3,500 laborers from Mexico would be supplied to Stanislaus County, adding to the 1,000 already in the county. Over the next decades, hundreds of thousands of immigrants from Mexico would make California home. The second half of the twentieth century ushered in an era of many firsts and strides for advances for the Mexican-American population locally.

Segregation of racial and ethnic minorities was rampant and legal in the United States in 1945. However, like many struggles for liberation around the world and in this country, the experiences of members of oppressed and marginalized communities fighting tyranny abroad emboldened them to fight injustice at home. For the Central Californian Mexican American Community, the end of World War II signaled the beginning of a struggle that would include community organizing, collective action, and political activism. Many individuals and groups found the need for change and fought for the rights of the Mexican American Community. This was no exception in Stanislaus County. This is the story of individuals and a community fighting for equality and a better life in a place that did not see them as equals.

The first organization to fight for the rights of the Mexican American Community following the war was 'The American GI Forum' (AGIF). In 1948 in Corpus Christi, Texas Senator and future



**Felix Longoria**



**Joe Cardenas**

president of the United States Lyndon Baines Johnson (1908-1973) was approached when a 'Whites Only' funeral home refused to arrange a funeral for Felix Longoria (1920-1945) an army private killed in action during the liberation of the Philippines. The man who approached Senator Johnson was Dr. Hector Garcia (1914-1996), the founder of the AGIF. Because of Dr. Garcia's efforts, Private Longoria was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery and the AGIF became nationally known. When Dr. Garcia died in 1996, local chapters of the AGIF were founded in 24 states. Stanislaus County founded its own chapter in the late 1940s. It is one the county's oldest continuing organizations for the Mexican American/Latino community.

Earlier organizations who worked to help the underprivileged usually were founded through local Catholic churches. An early community organizer was Maria 'Mary' Paris (1905-1999). She came to the area from Mexico in 1927 and in 1935 joined 'Sociedad Morelos Mutualista de Obreros Mexicanos Sucursal No. 5' (Sociedad Morelos) which was a local organization dedicated to helping Mexican workers and the unemployed.



Sociedad Morelos was the first organization to organize local Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day Celebrations. Paris went on to found her own non-profit 'Comite Mexicano de Beneficia' (CMB). CMB provided assistance for burials of loved ones for members. Mary Paris and her husband Louis (1913-2003) also used popular culture venues to assist, educate, and even entertain the community. In 1974, Mary Paris was recognized by Assemblyman John Thurman (1919-1983) for her work for the betterment of Stanislaus County.



Mary Paris



Louis & Mary Paris

In the 1950s, de-segregation in sports began to slowly advance. In California, many Mexican American baseball leagues were formed. A semi-professional California Mexican league included the Paris' team the 'Los Parises.' Other teams in local and state leagues included Modesto's 'Caballeros.' An early participant was a man who became a significant community organizer, Joe Cardenas (1930-2008) a Korean War veteran who went on to found the Mexican American Semi-Pro Baseball League of Central California, and later served as its commissioner (1972-1982). Cardenas also worked extremely closely with AGIF.



Joe Cardenas with Caballero's umpire, Modesto Police Detective Charles Garcia (1930-2003)



Joe Cardenas



Bee Photo

Many equally early organizations operated to help the less fortunate in the community as well as celebrating and preserving a sense of heritage and community. Lupe Hernandez (1928-2020) and his wife Manuela, known as 'Neli' or 'Nellie' helped found 'Comite Patriotico Mexicano de Modesto' (Mexican Patriotic Committee (MPC)) in 1959. The MPC sponsored dances for Cinco de Mayo in May and Mexican Independence Day in September as well as other times of the year. Most events were held at the California Ball Room in Modesto, others in larger venues like the Stanislaus County Fairgrounds in Turlock. Each year a queen was elected by the committee. The last Cinco de Mayo celebration coordinated by the MPC was held in 1975.

**CANCIONERO MEXICANO**

de **Producciones Hernandez**

**SU PROGRAMA FAVORITO**  
The Mighty Casey Radio

KCEY 1390  
**TURLOCK, CALIFORNIA**

Todos los Domingos de  
2:00 P. M. • 3:00 P. M.

GUADALUPE Y NELLIE HERNANDEZ  
Los Amigos Sinceros de Los Mexicanos  
Res. 801 Lombardi • LA 4-3732 • Modesto, Calif.  
KCEY LA 94000  
92.5 FM • HE 2-2428

Musica y Canciones de Mexico  
Anuncios Comerciales, Locales y Nacionales

Por Cortesia de **Burgermeister** **Refrescante**  
REFRRESHINGLY LIGHT BEER

**Sabrosa hasta el ultimo Traguito!**

La Cerveza Mucho Mas

Lupe & Neli Hernandez

Involving the community through media became a passion for some like Lupe Hernandez, who was a former cannery worker for Tillie Lewis and Stanislaus Foods. He became a pioneer in Spanish language radio and television. Lupe and Neli started off in the early 1960s doing 90-minute live simulcasts Sunday mornings on KLOC radio and television stations (it later became KCSO, channel 19). Their daughter, Adelita Ramona was the first Mexican American woman with a class A broadcasting license. At the same time, Abel Pulido (1912-1992) of 'Frank's Market' and 'Abel and Lupe's Café' on South Ninth Street also presented Spanish language programs. Abel began broadcasting in 1945 and worked for KCEV Radio in Turlock before moving to KMOD in Modesto, which became KFIV, and later KTRB, he broadcast for forty years before retiring. Lupe and Neli Hernandez and Abel Pulido became the voices of the community to many Spanish speakers in Stanislaus County.

**Adelita Ramona Hernandez**



**Lupe & Neli Hernandez**

As the backbone of Stanislaus County's economy is agriculture, a growing advocacy for agricultural workers came about as the Bracero Program brought an influx of workers into the county who worked sometimes without portable toilets, access to water, and shade. These are some of the essential, basic amenities labor contractors wanted for their workers, Connie Amarillas of Empire told the McHenry Museum & Historical Society (MM&HS). Connie's husband Pedro 'Pete' Amarillas (1926-2000) was a labor contractor in Stanislaus County.



**Abel Pulido at KFIV & KCEY**

Reform and advocacy for agricultural workers found a new and powerful voice in 1962 when Cesar Chavez (1927-1994) and Dolores Huerta founded United Farm Workers (UFW). A merger of the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC) and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) and was headquartered in Kern County. Huerta, a Stockton native, had tremendous knowledge of the Central Valley, so Stanislaus County would indeed be on the frontlines.

There were some existing migrant worker camps in various communities in Stanislaus County during this time. By 1973, there were twenty-six migrant farm worker housing centers in California, and three were in Stanislaus County: located in Empire, and Patterson, and Westley.



**Pete Amarillas**



Patterson's official housing camp was located near the city center and another on Marshall Road was built by Dave Arredondo (1919-2012). The Arredondo family is one of the earliest Mexican immigrant families to settle in Patterson. Dave worked in construction and was later a labor organizer but did something which got him noticed. When he married his wife Zora (1925-2022) in 1945, the community was shocked as she was a Caucasian woman he met in Kentucky, where he was stationed during the war. As their son Ralph told the MM&HS, this was not something which was accepted. The Arredondos married before Lucille Ball (1911-1989) and Desi Arnaz (1917-1986) broke convention when they appeared as a married couple on television in 1951. Zora Arredondo worked and helped feed workers at the Arredondo Labor Camp in Patterson for over 50 years. At its peak, well over one thousand were fed daily. Advocating for the Mexican American Community in the county's West Side led to Zora Arredondo being named a living pioneer in 2006.



**Zora & Dave Arredondo**



**Arredondo Labor Camp, Patterson, CA**

At the Empire Farm Labor Center, Connie Amarillas assisted in education. Stanislaus County, at the time, had subsidized programs for seasonal labor and resident farm workers. One of those programs was to include health, education, and welfare programs. Connie Amarillas was part of the day care and preschool program at the Empire Farm Labor Center.



**Connie  
Amarillas  
& Students**

Dale Butler, a former migrant farm worker and community leader and advocate for the past fifty-five years, who was the first Latino to serve on the Stanislaus County Fair Board (1977-1981, 1982-1986, and 2000-2012), spoke with the MM&HS. Butler is the example of a lot of firsts for the community. It began when he founded the 'Mexican American Club' at Modesto Junior College in 1968 and became the first Mexican American Student to be elected to the Associated Students of serving as Vice President in 1969. His passion to help his community continued with his co-founding of 'El Concilio' of Stanislaus County in 1972. Sponsored by the Catholic Archdiocese of Stockton, which oversees Catholic Churches in Stanislaus County, the organization was founded as an advocacy group for education reform.

*Bee Photo*

**Dale Butler**



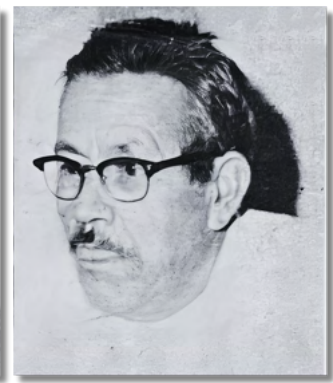
*Dale Butler Is The First MJC Student  
To Reach Finals For 'Man Of Year'*



Salvador Morales (1934-2000) was chosen as 'El Concilio's' first president. Salvador Morales served as the minority outreach coordinator for Modesto Junior College, where he and Abe Rojas of Turlock would eventually become the first Latino Trustees elected for the Yosemite Community College District Board of Trustees to serve full terms. Morales served from 1996-2000 and Abe Rojas served 1996-2020 (Rojas also served a partial term as appointed trustee to succeed Carmen Jackson of Turlock (1907-2002) in 1988). Also of note is Linda Flores, the first Latina woman to serve on the YCCD board from 2000-2016. Morales also broadcasted a radio program on KCBY and ran for Modesto City Council. Louis Paris was the El Concilio's first secretary and Dale Butler its first Treasurer. Butler followed Morales as President, and William Catzalco (1927-2019) a teacher at Ceres High School, served as the organization's third President.



**Salvador Morales**



**Louis Paris**



**Dale Butler**



**William Catzalco**

An objective of 'El Concilio' was to encourage Modesto City Schools to adopt an affirmative action program and to hire a coordinator for the program, Catzalco told the Modesto Bee in 1976. The organization offered counseling and advocates for Spanish Speakers and English as a second language courses at the King-Kennedy Center. The organization opened its offices at 122 'H' Street. 'El Concilio' of Stanislaus County ceased to exist after several years. 'El Concilio' of San Joaquin County operates a branch office in Modesto and continues to provide a variety of services which impacts the lives of over 75,000 individuals a year from all cultural backgrounds in the Central Valley.

Pete and Connie Amarillas assisted in the UFW March which passed through Modesto on March 1, 1975. An estimated 8,000 attended the March which was part of a collective event of mass protest throughout the State led by Cesar Chavez. Two and a half miles of the march included a pass around E&J Gallo Winery and down McHenry Avenue. Singer Joan Baez performed for the group at a rally held in Graceada Park.



**1975 UFW March**

*Bee Photos, courtesy of the McHenry Museum*

In 1983, the Mexican American Chamber of Commerce was founded to assist local businesses and help with unemployment issues. A similar organization which followed is the 'South Modesto Businesses United Inc.', which became a chartered non-profit organization in 2011. Other organizations were established to benefit Spanish speakers in Stanislaus County include 'the Hispanic Leadership Council,' which began to organize in the late 1980s. 'the Latino Community Roundtable' (LCR) registered as a non-profit organization in 1997 and 'the Latino Emergency Council' (LEC), founded in 2006 and, with a "commitment to improving, political, social, and economic conditions for Latinos in Stanislaus County". For Spanish Speakers in the media, several Spanish-Language Newspapers have been published. 'El Sol 2000' from 1995-2005 and 'Vida en el Valle' since 2005.

Activism led to changes in the county. For the first-time, individuals from not just the Mexican American community but from the entire Latino community were appointed or elected to political office.

- In Oakdale, Elmo Garcia (1935-2010) became the first Latino city council person in 1968, the first Latino mayor (serving from 1984-1994); in fact, this was a county-wide first for both city council position and a mayoral position.
- Eusebio 'Sam' Cuellar (1945-2011) was the second Latino councilperson in Stanislaus County in Patterson, being elected first in 1974; after his 1979 retirement, he won the seat again in 2004 and held it until 2010. Cuellar was a community development specialist for twenty-four years, working on housing for low-income individuals and families.
- Charles Aguilar (1926-2012) was appointed the first Latino municipal court judge by Governor Jerry Brown in 1977.
- Becky Campo was Patterson's mayor from 2006 to 2010, the first Latina mayor of a city in Stanislaus County; Virginia Madueño became the second when she served from 2009 to 2012 as Mayor of Riverbank.



**Elmo Garcia**



**Charles Aguilar**



**Sam Cuellar**



**Becky Campo**



**Virginia Madueño**

This is an article of some historic firsts for the Mexican American and the entire Latino community in Stanislaus County which makes up close to fifty percent of the population. Each and every individual who wanted to play a part in assisting other deserving individuals deserves credit for changing history. History is the study of the progression of human events. It is important to understand that the history of racism and segregation experienced by the Latino community in Stanislaus County specifically and California and the United States more broadly has meant that much of the history of this community remains undocumented. It is vital that these histories, until now told orally, are preserved and passed on.

Over the past three months, the McHenry Museum & Historical Society has had a desire to highlight to the best of our abilities a history of Stanislaus County which has not received its well-deserved recognition. We are deeply grateful to those who have contributed to this series for sharing their stories and those of their families. We look forward to hearing more stories to continue to add them to the rich tapestry of the Mexican American History of Stanislaus County.

\*Information for this article comes from various Modesto Bee articles, Stanislaus Historical Quarterly, Summer 2014, by Robert LeRoy Santos. Other information was provided by interviews and photos provided by: Connie Amarillas, Ralph Arredondo, Brian Beltran, Dale Butler, Becky Campo, JoLynn Cardenas, Reyes Cuellar, Rebecca Harrington, Sally Lara, Maggie Mejia, Adrian Mendoza, and Mario Pulido.



# Joan Hart, a McHenry Museum original docent in 1972



Soon after the Museum opened on July 4, 1972, Joan Hart decided to volunteer. She remembers how the museum was originally housed behind the former police station. She was always amazed at what an amazing community activist Heidi Warner, the museum's founding director, was in her time. She remembered her insistence on preserving the McHenry Mansion as well as the McClure Country House.

The museum gave Joan the Christening outfit for her son. As a pioneer family who donated clothing the museum could not use, it was given to Joan at a baby shower. Joan volunteered once a week and was very active on the McHenry Museum Society Guild to help raise money. She also served as president of the guild.

In 1977, to help raise money to assist in the restoration of the McHenry Mansion, Joan was instrumental in the creating and marketing of a 128-piece jigsaw puzzle of the mansion. The puzzle was sold at the Gottschalks department store in Vintage Faire Mall at a cost of \$3.50. Gottschalks gave the McHenry Museum Guild fifty cents for each puzzle sold. Joan served as president of the McHenry Museum Society at the time of the installation of the elevator to the McHenry Museum in 1982. She continued to volunteer with the organization until she went to work in 1987.

## **McHenry Museum's original docents:**

Doris Anderson (1925-2004), Jane Barnett (1922-2005), Willodean Binna (1911-2000), Lois Camp (1936-2016), Jean Carrere (1910-2006), Ruth Fletcher (1901-1977), Herbert Florcken (1892-1989), Esther Gnesa (1927-2001), Dorothy Hansen (1924-1999), Gerda Hatch (1915-2008), Mable James (1908-1989), Pearl Johansen (1920-2001), Evelyn Joliff (1929-2018), Louise Lewis (1913-1993), Gertrude McDonald (1901-1989), Mildred Nelson (1910-2004), Lois Sanchez (1907-1985), Bette Belle Smith (1921-2009), Phyllis Snyder (1929-2023), Adah Stewart (1899-1979), Irma Whitehead (1905-1991), Phyllis Wiegman (1922-2014), and Ronald Wilson (1919-2004).



# MM&HS News

## • November 2023 •



McMobile Museum  
October 6, 2023



Shel Thompson & Ken White set up 'The Mud Bowl' temporary exhibition



1923



1953

1973

- On Friday, September 6th, the MM&HS McMobile Museum popped up for the last time in 2023 at the Downtown Modesto 'DoMo' First Friday' street faire on 10th Street in front of Brenden Theaters. Thank you to Mike & Kim Cobleigh for allowing us to re-share local items and for their help with the entire run of the McMobile Museum. Thank you to Jennifer Aoyama, Christopher Nunes, and James Varble for volunteering at the McMobile.
- The McHenry Museum is displaying the 60 year history of 'The Mud Bowl' in the main room of the Museum through December. Historian Ken White will share with us a history of this local annual Thanksgiving Day football game in our December 2023 newsletter.
- On November 11th at 2:00 pm, MM&HS' *Second Saturday 2023* Fall lecture series continues. Modesto Junior College Professors Eva Mo and Eileen Kerr will present 'Housing Segregation: A Local History.'
- The *Children's Holiday Craft Faire* is scheduled at the Museum on Saturday, December 2nd from 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Admission is free, and will include crafts for children of all ages! The Stanislaus County Library will be hosting childrens' Story Time at the event. Please mark your calendars!
- The MM&HS' annual Soup Supper and Holiday Sing-A-Long is scheduled for December 10th at 5:30 p.m. Members, please look for your invitations in the mail in the upcoming weeks.

## It Happened When...

- On November 29, 1923 thirty-two members of the T.K. Beard family met for a reunion on Thanksgiving. The family gathered from all over the country and converged toward the large house at 107 Sycamore, Modesto. The house was demolished in 1957.
- On November 23, 1953, just a month after opening its doors, the McHenry Village Shopping Center gave out free raffle tickets, with or without purchase, at village stores for a drawing in which twenty-five lucky winners would receive a free turkey for their Thanksgiving table.
- Ever noticed all of the palm trees at the 'Windmere' Apartments on Roeding Road in Ceres? That is because when the complex opened on November 16, 1973, it was called 'The Palms'. At the time, the highest priced two-bedroom, two story furnished apartment there was \$185 a month.



# Get Involved Today!

**The McHenry Museum & Historical Society (MM&HS) is the support organization of the McHenry Museum, your community museum. We bring Stanislaus County history to life!**

## • Volunteer!

Our docents volunteer in four-hour increments to greet and guide guests and visitors during the museum's open hours. Our acquisitions committee explores and evaluates items for the museum to obtain and retain. Volunteer staff runs our in-museum gift shop book store, *Stanislaus Selections*, and help at the intra-County destinations where our *McMobile Museum* visits. There are more behind-the-scenes opportunities to help as well! Email [info@mchenrymuseum.org](mailto:info@mchenrymuseum.org) or send a message at [McHenryMuseum.org/contact](http://McHenryMuseum.org/contact)

## • Become a Sustaining Member!

MM&HS members are invited to our annual Summer Social annual meeting, and our December Soup & Sandwich supper. Donors who give \$150 or more are recognized on our website for their contributions. Join now: [McHenryMuseum.org/support](http://McHenryMuseum.org/support)

## • Get the Newsletter!

Discover more ways to connect to local history regularly with our free, monthly newsletter, featuring fresh articles on local history: the *MM&HS Museum Monthly*. It's the one email you'll look forward to opening each month! And its free! [McHenryMuseum.org/contact](http://McHenryMuseum.org/contact)

**Your participation helps bring local history to life.  
Get involved. Today!**