

BACK IN TIME

The 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition and my grandmother ‘Katie’ Byrne

BY EVELYN BYRNE WILLIAMS WITH JANEEN SATHRE

I was 13 years old when a trip was planned by my family to attend the 1939 Golden Gate International Exposition, a World’s Fair in San Francisco that celebrated, among other things, the city’s two newly built bridges. I had not been that far away from home before so the trip was very exciting to me, especially the visit to our relatives living near there. I would be seeing my paternal grandmother, Mary Catherine “Katie” Byrne, who I had not seen in ten years.

Of course, we needed a bigger and better vehicle in which to make that

long journey being as there were six of us going: my parents, brother Morris, his wife Florence, my sister Gladys, and I, plus our luggage. Mother had purchased the car in the summer of 1939 while Dad was still posted on Tallowbox Mountain, the forest service’s fire lookout. He trusted her in doing such an important task and she came home with a used 1935 V8 Ford sedan, all shiny, a dark-tan color with black fenders. Gladys and I said it was the “cat’s meow,” an expression commonly used then.

Preparations for appropriate clothing kept mother busy at her sewing machine

making our dresses. I got a wonderful coat with a real fur collar (*see photo*), a hand-me-down from an older girl cousin.

By the first part of October, mother had everything ready for the exciting trip. So much of this has escaped

my memory, especially where our luggage was put. That is a mystery. There was no trunk for it and I know it was not on top of our vehicle so it must have been secured to the back with the spare tire.

We left October 19 in the wee hours of the morning. Morris was the driver with our parents in the front seat and Florence, Gladys and me in the back. For some reason, I recall little of that long ride. Why I don’t remember stopping for lunch or points of interest along the way is strange. The only part I remember well is seeing all those many distant city lights when arriving late that night at Pinole, California, where Dad’s sister, Stella, her husband Emmett O’Brien, and Grandma “Katie” lived.

The next day, I spent much time getting reacquainted with my grandmother. She had come to visit us for a time when I had my third birthday. She gave me a doll buggy and a small table with two chairs and teacups (I still have them). Because tea was her favorite beverage, we had tea parties at that table. Mother said I became terribly spoiled by Grandmother during that visit. I remember being so impressed with her very thick white hair coiled on top of her

head—the most hair I had ever seen.

Days at Pinole went by with much visiting. Then we went to San Jose where Dad’s sister Maud and husband Harold Watson lived. On October 26, they escorted us to the fair on Treasure Island, which was built specifically for the exposition. I know we saw many interesting things so new to us. Mother enjoyed the Singer Sewing Machine exhibit and was given an attachment for making rugs on the sewing machine. The only problem was she just had an old treadle Minnesota machine and it would not accept the rug maker.

I was more interested in the outdoor artist doing quick pastel landscape paintings and I begged Mother for one. I know the price must have been low because she bought me one. Sad to say, after many years it disappeared from our household, probably because it was never framed.

Time has taken its toll on my memory so these are just bits and pieces of that delightful trip and time spent with those dear relatives, back in time.

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Left to right: Uncle Emmett O’Brien, Grandma “Katie” Byrne, John Byrne, Aunt Stella O’Brien, Aunt Maud Watson, Gladys Byrne, Florence Byrne, Pearl Byrne, Evelyn Byrne (and her coat with the fur collar), and Uncle Harold Watson.

Sanctuary One and Ruch K-8 Community School forge new partnership

BY DELLA MERRILL

Sanctuary One’s new collaboration with Ruch K-8 Community School just goes to show that things happen when the time is right. Sanctuary One contacted the school in 2010 in hopes of generating interest in working together. Nothing happened until the winter of 2012 when Cindy McDonald, Ruch Elementary School teacher, suggested a partnership. We were ready and so were they.

The partnership evolved because of the school’s commitment to provide their students with opportunities in place-based education. This approach forges strong ties between local, social and environmental organizations incorporating several goals, among them: helping to improve quality of life and economic vitality, emphasizing learning through participation while integrating core curriculum areas such as math, science and language arts. And the bonus: This approach has proven to re-energize teachers!

“I feel that Sanctuary One offers students the opportunity to be connected with the land and their community,” says Cindy McDonald. “As we carry on, we want to strengthen students’ understandings of their potential to make an intentional, meaningful contribution.”

Last January, two groups of seventh- and eighth-grade students began volunteering every week. They participated in all aspects of the farm: walking and socializing dogs, hanging out with farm animals, mucking the pastures, bucking hay and helping tend the gardens.

During the first few months of the program, the kids were accompanied by Ryan King, a student teacher from Southern Oregon University. King not only provided reliable transportation and supervision, but he also helped create a bridge between what they experienced at the farm and the lessons he taught in the classroom. For example, in his compost

science class, students learned the basics of how to create a balanced hot compost pile, then examined samples under a microscope in class.

By all accounts our first year of partnering was a success. “Almost universally, the reactions were enthusiastic. I don’t think a student ever came back complaining about

the more hum-drum aspects of what they were doing,” said McDonald. “When they reported that they’d mucked the pasture and I’d ask how that was, I often got a shrug and comments like ‘It felt good to work today’ or ‘Hey...it’s a farm. It needs to get done.’”

Success showed up in different ways as well. McDonald noticed that a few students who volunteered seemed more willing to participate at school in ways they hadn’t before. “Some began volunteering more in work parties at school centering on our community garden. Some took an elective course in compost science.”

Of course, not only did students gain lots of cool experience, but the people, animals and the earth at Sanctuary One also gained. For staff and interns it was particularly useful and fun to see the same familiar faces showing up every week to help. The animals also gained confidence as they grew to recognize and trust the young humans who visited and helped care for them. And, of course, we made great gains in the garden as once again we learned that many hands make big jobs very manageable.

Once King’s student teaching stint was over, one of the biggest challenges was finding folks who were willing to not only provide transportation for the kids, but also stay for the time they were at the farm to help supervise. “In order for the program to be successful, we’re going



Students help move hay to the animal barn at Sanctuary One.
Photo: Della Merrill.

to need a few volunteers who are willing to stay with a group of enthusiastic middle-schoolers for an afternoon,” said McDonald.

Another challenge for McDonald was finding the time to meet with the small volunteer groups to evaluate assignments and schedule time to go off-site without missing key content in other classes, like math.

So what does next year hold in store? “I see this partnership working at its finest when we have people who can help students evaluate their progress toward learning goals,” says McDonald. Likewise, we at Sanctuary One, would like to see this program grow and deepen. Our mission of providing an opportunity where people, animals and the earth come together for mutual healing offers the perfect combination for young people to come together and put their education to work in real and meaningful ways.

On the last week of school we sat down with the kids and asked them how we can improve the program. Many voiced a desire to learn about cooking food grown in the garden, others looked forward to serving as mentors to next year’s participants and, unanimously, they all wanted to come back.

If you would like to volunteer for this school year, please contact me.

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Students examine microorganisms in a sample of compost. Photo: Ryan King.



Students plant lettuce starts. Photo: Ryan King.