



DANA POINT  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

# The News Drogher

Autumn 2020

## November 18 Virtual Presentation With Eric Plunkett



Eric Plunkett, left, will present a virtual presentation on **Wednesday, November 18, at 7 p.m.** featuring highlights of his forthcoming book, *Saint Junípero Serra and the Founders of San Juan Capistrano and Orange County*. He will guide us through Serra's journey in Orange County in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (shown in green on the map, right). Eric is a teacher and historian with a special



interest in the Spanish and Mexican eras of California history. He has published several articles and maintains a blog at [www.visionsofcalifornia.blogspot.com](http://www.visionsofcalifornia.blogspot.com). A native of Placentia, he graduated with a degree in history from California State University, Fullerton, in 2008. **Society members need to go to <https://tinyurl.com/juniperoserra2020> to RSVP for the evening's presentation.**

## Waterman's Plaza Update

The statue of surfing legend John Hugh Severson (December 12, 1933 – May 26, 2017) was installed and dedicated in Watermen's Plaza at the South Cove Linear Park in October. The dedication ceremony was limited to family and a few very close friends. Ironically, Surfer Magazine, started by Severson in 1962, published its last issue the same month this statue was dedicated. The city has announced that the next honoree will be renowned surfer Joyce Hoffman, considered a pioneer in her sport. She is regarded as the first female international surfing star and was one the earliest inductees to the International Surfing Hall of Fame.



Installation photo by Brian Cherkas.

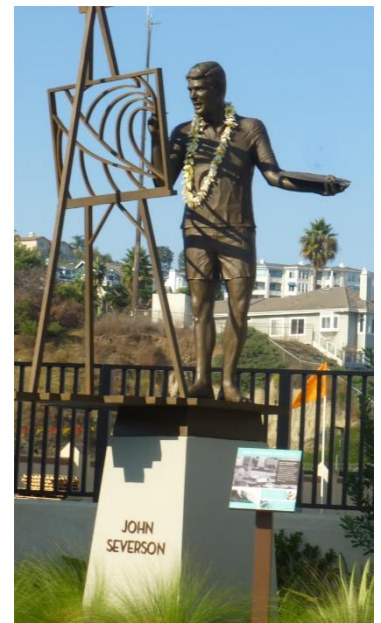


Photo by Keith Johannes

## President's Message

### Signs of the Times



Pacific Coast Highway, Del Prado Avenue and Doheny Park Road continued to be the main commercial streets in Dana Point and Capistrano Beach after World War II. These were the same thoroughfares used by motorists between Los Angeles and San Diego until the opening of the San Diego Freeway in the late 1950s. As Dana Point developed, so did the number of service stations, hotels and restaurants. The Dana Point Hotel opened downtown on Del Prado in 1947 featuring the Galleon Restaurant where Jack's Restaurant is now located. The Plantation Motor Hotel had opened earlier on Pacific Coast Highway and the Swallows Inn advertised its location across Coast Highway from

the Capistrano Beach Club.

According to the 2016 Dana Point Historic Resources Inventory Update, the historic survey report by Architectural Resources Group (ARG), "Many of these businesses featured prominent, eye-catching signs that were intended to draw the attention of passers-by." In her book, *Dana Point*, Doris Walker featured her 1960s photograph of crowded advertising signs located between Del Obispo Street and Doheny Park Road that included the RICHFIELD tower and a Gulf gas station competitor across the street advertising gas at 33.9¢ a gallon. Two of those classic and historic mid-century signs still remain and are featured in the ARG report: the Dana Point Nursery sign, which features a clock and "Since 1947," and the El Patio Café sign on Doheny Park Road. Both landmark signs belong to businesses run by long-time residents and their families. While Harry Otsubo's Dana Point Nursery continues to operate as most of their plants are outside, Lucy's El Patio Café now has an additional sign out front: *For Sale or Lease*.

El Patio Café opened in its current spot in 1951 when Lucy's former restaurant had to be demolished for the Beach Cities connector to the I-5. The new location had been a fruit stand, which was expanded for the restaurant. Lucy had been in the business since 1937 when she assisted her grandmother as a cook for the hundreds of Cotton estate workers in San Clemente. Her son, Jack Saunderson (pictured below at last year's scholarship fiesta), continued to operate El Patio Café with his mother's recipes for 80 years until the pandemic guidelines



required him to close. Local residents were regulars, along with old-time watermen and anyone who liked Mexican food. When Lucy passed away, son Jack and his family decided to ask the Dana Point Historical Society to create a Lucy Chavarrias Saunderson Scholarship with money donated in her memory. In 2001, then DPHS President Beverly Sels, the Board of Directors and volunteers held the first college scholarship fundraiser to build the fund and awarded the first two memorial scholarships in Lucy's name the following year to graduating seniors in Dana Point. Jack also donated his taco-cart cuisine to the Historical Society's El Camino Capistrano Home Tour in 2008. His staff has catered our Fiesta Scholarship Dinner fundraiser at cost



for the past seven years, and he has donated El Patio Café merchandise to our raffles — all to raise scholarship funds. Jack called last spring to let me know his closed business would not be able to cater our annual scholarship fundraiser this year. As it turned out we were not able to hold the fundraiser because of Covid-19 guidelines. In early July, to answer questions about El Patio's reopening, Jack announced via Facebook that he

had been considering retirement at some point in the future. Pandemic closures have wreaked havoc on small businesses such as El Patio Café, and after months of quality time at home with his wife and children, Jack decided to retire from the restaurant industry. He went on to write, *"I'm going to miss . . . each and every one of you – customers, staff and [this] amazing Capo Beach town. It is with mixed emotions and tears from the heart that I officially announce my retirement and sale of the forever famous El Patio Café (aka Lucy's)."*

Of course, we hoped Jack might change his mind, but when the *For Sale* sign was posted on the building it was final. We will miss the El Patio Café and its staff, and especially their taco-cart catering. We wonder where Uncle Harry's ukulele crowd will meet on Wednesday nights, when social distancing is over. Jack hopes a new owner will choose to continue the tradition of Lucy's El Patio Café as a historic mid-century landmark in Capistrano Beach and as a tribute to the longest-running business in Dana Point.



*Photo from OC Public Libraries*

the restaurant *Lucy's*, a tribute to her cooking, hospitality and to the industrious, second-generation Mexican-American woman who made the restaurant a success. To quote Steve Pezman's September 25<sup>th</sup> Letter to the Editor in the *Dana Point Times*, "El Patio: Lucy's Mexican Food was one of the iconic businesses of the Capo Beach area since the 1950s. No one ever considered that the pandemic might take El Patio out."

The Dana Point Historical Society is thankful for our partnership with Jack, his family and Lucy's El Patio Café. We wish Jack a well-deserved retirement and we hope he and his family will continue to be active with the Dana Point Historical Society. We look forward to a future Society program with Jack telling his mother's story, complete with family photos and family memories of El Patio Café. We know the many recipients of the Lucy Chavarrias Saunderson Scholarship are appreciative of the help they received with their college expenses because of a scholarship honoring Lucy's hard work as a pioneering entrepreneur.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Society's Board of Directors and all of our members for their contributions, dues and support during a year limited by the Covid-19 virus. We hope you will join us for our first virtual meeting on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. My sincere wishes for Thanksgiving blessings and a safe and happy Holiday Season to each of you and your family.

*Barbara Force Johannes*

To learn more about Lucy, the El Patio Café and the surfers and celebrities who met there, read *"El Patio Café Still Cooking After 76 Years"* by David Bro, a June 1, 2013, article in the Orange County Register: <https://www.oregister.com/2013/06/01/el-patio-cafe-still-cooking-after-76-years/>. Also visit YouTube and watch *OC Surf Stories-Lucy's El Patio Café*: <https://youtu.be/f0XiOP1H0bY>, an OC Public Library video interview with Jack Saunderson.

## Historical Woodruff Tract Office Renovation

The owner of the Woodruff Tract Office at Del Prado and PCH, Paul Hofer, has received city permits for roof repair that include new underlayment while keeping as many of the original roof tiles as possible. Replacement tile will



match the original and be located in obscure areas. Mortar packing of the tile is to be consistent with the design from the 1920s. Additionally, some work is being performed on the Del Prado side of the building to bring it back to its original configuration by the removal of a makeshift wall that enclosed a covered alcove that was once the original exterior

of the building (shown right with the makeshift wall and above with the wall now removed). Also, the renovation will include re-opening an end wall that originally included patio-style windows but was later boarded up (pictured below). John Ciampa, Senior Planner of the city's Planning Division, reports that the city also will be doing a final inspection to ensure all of the work is historically appropriate for the structure. Read about the building's history at: <http://www.danapointhistorical.org/will-this-historic-landmark-survive/2898/>



## Update on the Seaside Inn, Formerly the Swallows Motel

As you may have read in our summer *News Drogher*, we had concerns about what would happen to the Capistrano Seaside Inn (originally the Swallows Motel, c. 1940) after the Sunshine Group LLC owners filed for bankruptcy in 2019. The dilapidated property was put into receivership and we are happy to report that Miken Construction has taken possession of it and is seeking to immediately clean it up and prepare either to refurbish the 1940s inn or sell it to an owner who will remodel and update the property following historical guidelines. You can read all about its history on our website: <http://www.danapointhistorical.org/will-the-seaside-inn-be-saved/2885/> or read about the update in the Dana Point Times: <https://www.danapointtimes.com/construction-starts-remediate-nuisance-conditions-capistrano-seaside-inn/>

## Deffenbaughs Honored

As featured in our summer *News Drogher*, Geody and Richard Deffenbaugh (shown right) were chosen as the Dana Point Historical Society's Founders Day honorees for 2020 in May. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Society has been unable to present them with their awards or hold a reception in their honor.

So, on October 29, we held an impromptu safe gathering to present their proclamations. Mayor Richard Viczorek presented congratulations on behalf of the City of Dana Point and OC Supervisor Lisa Bartlett's Community Relations Adviser, Sergio Prince, read her proclamation saluting the Deffenbaughs contributions to local history. Joining DPHS board members was a group of special guests from the city and chamber of commerce.



The gathering occurred outside of the Deffenbaugh's Dana Point Auto business.

You can view the article about their lives and history in Dana Point at our website [www.DanaPointHistorical.org](http://www.DanaPointHistorical.org) or on our Facebook page.

## Dana Point Chamber of Commerce Donates Historic Collection to DPHS

The Chamber of Commerce has given the Society 21 scrapbooks and albums containing photos, newspaper clippings, programs and artifacts. Most date from the 1980s and 1990s, although one goes back to the 1960s. We welcome any members who would like to make an appointment to look them at our museum and perhaps identify individuals in photos and news clippings. The Society intends to archive the most important materials for future reference.



## Tile Wall Installation

This summer we saw another installation of tiles at Baby Beach. Pictured are Mike Choate, right, the professional installer who donates his time to the Society. Next to him, sitting, is the Society's Tile Wall Chair, Jeff Huston, and Mike's friend and assistant installer Randy Roberts is on the far left.

Anyone interested in preparing a tile for installation can call the Society at 949-248-8121 for information, or simply to go *Fired Up!* in San Clemente (949-498-3929), where they will help you prepare a tile to be fired. The cost is \$50 and the Society typically has installations once or twice a year, depending on the number of tiles prepared.

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## 2020/2021 DPHS Calendar

**November 18** J. Serra Virtual Presentation    **January** Annual Meeting

## Membership

**Welcome new members Sue Bell, Jean Dunkerly, James Shockey!**

**As a reminder, the annual dues for 2021 are due in January.** The membership categories are:

Individual	\$25 annual
Family	\$30 annual
Business	\$50 annual
Patron	\$100 annual
Life	\$500 lifetime

**Please remit your dues via mail at P.O. Box 544, Dana Point, 92629.**

All contributions are tax deductible as the Historical Society is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

Questions? Contact me at [rmlarusso@msn.com](mailto:rmlarusso@msn.com)

Marsha LaRusso

## Thank You, Members!

Many people ask us how many members the Dana Point Historical Society has. Our membership chair and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Vice-President of our board of directors, Marsha LaRusso, reports that we currently have 307 members in seven membership categories. They include eight Business memberships totaling 10 people, 59 Family memberships totaling 118 people, and 48 Individual memberships. We also have a whopping 75 Lifetime memberships equal to 111 people and five Patron memberships totaling eight people. Lastly, we have eight Honorary memberships totaling 12 people and 78 Complimentary memberships. The last two categories are typically given as memberships to other nonprofits and individuals or companies that have contributed to Dana Point history.

**Also, please remember to keep your email updated with us. During this time, it is our best way to keep you informed of our organization's news. Contact Marsha LaRusso with any changes: [rmlarusso@msn.com](mailto:rmlarusso@msn.com)**