

San Pedro Bay Historical Society

SUMMER 2022

AUGUST

San Pedro Native Son, Nicholas Lovrich



Nicholas Lovrich with Stephanie Mardesich (L) and Mona Dallas Reddick (R)

What a terrific summer event! A standing-room-only audience gathered in the Brass Room of the Maritime Museum on August 20 to hear native San Pedran Nicholas P. Lovrich. Nick is a Regents Professor Emeritus in the School of Politics, Philosophy and Public Affairs at Washington State University, Pullman. A string of other titles attesting to his accomplishments would follow here if space permitted. Nick and his wife, Katherine, were in town for his sixtieth high school reunion. The timing was perfect to invite him for a talk.

Nick delivered a heartfelt account of the boyhood experiences in San Pedro that ultimately led to his academic pathway and the doctoral research he carried out on the town's Croatian and Italian communities. Born to immigrant parents, he grew up in a home where mostly Croatian was spoken. His father fished and was part-owner of the fishing vessel *Del Rio*. His mom was the family mainstay during the long periods when his father was at sea. Nick served as an altar boy at the old Holy Trinity Church on O'Farrell Street and attended Bandini Elementary, where through good friendships and the encouragement of his teacher, Mr. Lilley, he thrived in a diverse setting. Some hard realities, however, penetrated the warmth of the supportive neighborhood, for along the way he learned that people of color were excluded from certain events and opportunities—even in San Pedro.

Devoted to baseball, Nick played on a nearly unbeatable team, the Bandini Giants of the Little Coast League, continuing with the sport through high school under Coach Jerry Lovarov. A baseball scholarship won him a place at Stanford University, where with the advantage of bilingual skills he majored in International Relations. He enjoyed a year in Florence as part of *Gruppo XII* of the Stanford-in-Italy-Program. Katherine was in the program as well. Their romance and marriage precipitated a career change for Nick. Instead of tracking towards a future with the Foreign Service, he enrolled at UCLA to earn a doctorate in Political Science.

After completion of the required graduate classes, it was time to propose a dissertation topic. See "Lovrich Talk," on next page.

First SPBHS Landmark Plaque

On April 21, the first SPBHS landmark plaque was unveiled at Deco Art Deco, the two-story building anchoring the northwest corner of 8th Street and Pacific Avenue. Built in 1930, it was originally a Montgomery Ward's Department Store. Today it is the museum-like home of George Woytovich and Patti Kraakevik, serving also as an event venue. About thirty people attended the unveiling. Fifteenth Council District candidates Tim McOsker and Danielle Sandoval plus *Random Lengths* publisher James P. Allen commended the preservation efforts of the historical society, each stressing the value to the community of San Pedro's diverse architectural heritage and landmark structures.

Inquiries for plaques on other buildings in the downtown area are now coming forward. The Landmark Plaques Program includes commemorating residential structures as well. If you would like more information about whether your building or residence is eligible for a plaque, please send an email to: sanpedrohistory@gmail.com



George Woytovich and Patti Kraakevic at landmark plaque unveiling

**Gather for the Fall
Wine & Beer Taste!**
Saturday, October 1
3:00 - 6:00 p.m.
Muller House Museum

*See accompanying flyer or email:
sanpedrohistory@gmail.com*



Neighborhood Councils Award Grants

The neighborhood councils of Coastal San Pedro and Central San Pedro generously awarded funds to the SPBHS this spring. From Coastal, we received \$2,400 for native and drought tolerant landscaping of the the east slope below the Muller House Museum. The grant also covers the purchase of planting supplies. The project is designed to control erosion on the slope, support native habitat, and enhance the appearance along this busy stretch of Miner Street.

The photo at left shows the planting area, with numbered yellow circles coding for

the first placement of plants such as lemonade berry, sages, artemisia, toyon, and ceanothus. Work will begin in the fall, when temperatures drop and plant availability increases. We are in need of volunteers for this planting project. If you're interested, please leave a message at the Archives (310) 548-3208 or email mdalred@gmail.com.

From the Central San Pedro Neighborhood Council, we received \$1,258 for the purchase of a high-quality scanner capable of handling the hundreds of large format negatives in the SPBHS Archives collection. The age of the negatives and natural decomposition processes have put some of them at risk. We're excited to get started on this "rescue" project and expect to reveal images not viewed for decades as no positives exist. In addition to the negatives, we will also scan many one-of-a-kind photos, some more than a century old, like this 1906 photo at the right of Fifteenth Street Elementary School eighth-graders posing somberly for the class picture.

Lovrich Talk cont'd.

With promise of Fulbright funding, he proposed a study of identity formation among the ethnic groups of Yugoslavia, a nation created at the end of World War 1. It would have made a great dissertaion topic, but the U.S. State Department quashed it because Nick's honest answers on an application disclosed that he had communist relatives there. At the suggesetion of his advisor, he pivoted to a comparative study of San Pedro's Italian and Croatian communities.

Drawing on many local sources of help and information, he found few differences between first and second generation Italian-Americans and Croatian-Americans. Likewise, they differed little from "non-ethnic" San Pedrans. While ethnic identification was in evidence across generations, language acquisition and historical knowledge were largely absent beyond the immigrant generation. He turned up various and sometimes opposite interpretations of what it meant to pursue the "American Dream." The dissertation, completed in 1971, formed the basis for his 1977 book, *Yugoslavs and Italians in San Pedro: Political Culture and Civic Involvement*.

A few expressions of thanks are in order: Stephanie Mardesich for putting Nick in touch with the SPBHS. (Stephanie is a co-producer of the oral history series "Stories of the Los Angeles Harbor Area.") Councilman Joe Buscaino and Supervisor Janice Hahn for scrolls of commendation presented to Nick. And Marifrances Trivelli, director of the Los Angeles Maritime Museum, for making the Brass Room available and the museum staff for the room set-up.

SPBHS Wish List

For the Archives, a **laptop computer** of no more than five or six years of age to expand scanning capacity. At the Muller House, a few **vintage tablecloths** in good condition for the dining room and kitchen. And for the garden, a small to medium-sized sturdy **wheel barrow** and a **garden cart**. To donate any of these items, please contact us at: sanpedrohistory@gmail.com.



Fifteenth Street Elementary students, 1906

Welcome to New Members

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Sandy Bradley | Katherine & Nicholas |
| Claire & Jack Kennedy | Lovrich |
| Karen Klebingat | Diana Nave |

Membership Dues

Your timely payment of membership dues is appreciated as it saves on the cost of mailing reminders. To ensure that your dues payment reaches our P.O. box, please omit affixing a return address label.

Passings

Fondly remembered by their Society friends are:

Georgia Cordero – Georgia served on the SPBHS board and was for many years the Muller House Museum docent coordinator. She was also an officer and board member of the Friends of the San Pedro Library.

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Dorothea Gillingham | Andrew P. Marincovich |
| Ernest E. Lowe | Margaret Jean Sullivan |

Writing, photos, and production: Mona Dallas Reddick
Mailing team: Mary Jo Walker, John Mattson and Archives volunteers.