President of Novato Historical Guild Dies

Kathryn E. Hansen April 2, 1943 June 8, 2022 Kathryn passed away of pancreatic cancer after a short illness.

Kathryn was the daughter of Esther Silacci Keena (Petaluma) and Bernard Keena (Novato). She is survived by four siblings: Peggy Ann Pogetto (Lee, deceased), Mary Grillo (John), Carol Aregger (Richard), Grace Koch (Mark) and their families. Her husband Henry Hansen and brother Michael Keena predeceased her. She is also survived by many Keena and Silacci relatives of Marin and Sonoma.

Kathryn was born and raised in San Francisco. She attended Corpus Christi Grammar School and ICA Cristo Rey Academy. In high school, Kathryn was on the San Francisco Marionettes, a synchronized swimming team. She went to San Francisco City College and San Francisco State University where she majored in English Literature and Accounting. She also earned a lifetime teaching credential.

Kathryn was married to Henry D. Hansen from Chicago for 40 years, from 1970 to 2010. She had various job positions over the years, including long-distance operations for AT&T, bookkeeper for Kuchel & Sievers Electric, Eppler's Bakery, J.S. Baker Exporter, and Kaiser Engineers.

She earned her CPA license and worked for Rooney, Ida, Nolt & Ahern CPAs, and Guild Dogs for the Blind.

In her spare time, she enjoyed gardening, hiking, camping and traveling. Kathryn served on the Boards of Cornerstone Community Homes, Lucid Art Foundation, Marin Ballet, Novato Foundation for Public Education (dba School Fuel), and Novato Historical Guild in her retirement years. A "Celebration of Life" was held from on July 23, 2022. You can donate to your favorite charity or to Novato Unified School District (NUSD) School Fuel, Kathryn Hansen Fund, 448 Ignacio Blvd., Suite 410, Novato, CA 94949; or to the Novato Historical Guild, P.O. Box 1296, Novato, CA 94948.

Ray Dwelly
Named Novato’s Citizen of the Year 2021

General Membership Meeting

Novato Historical Guild. Saturday, September 10, 10:00 to 12:00 A.M.. Hamilton Field History Museum—555 Hangar Ave., Novato

The speaker will be Michael Blodgett presenting on Operation Nickel Grass, which was the aerial resupply of Israel during the 1973 war. The Air Force, including reservists from 349th, featured prominently in this operation.

Hope you can make it, bring some friends. Looking forward to seeing you there. Guild Members and anyone interested in Novato History are welcome.
President’s Corner
Jim Crumpler
President, Novato Historical Guild

Our condolences go out to Kathryn Hansen’s family. She was one of our greatest supporters. Kathryn joined the Board about 2009 and for most of the next 10 plus years, do to her experience, was our Treasurer. In 2020 Kathryn became President … during the difficult time of “Covid”! Covid presented an never ending number of new problems: “In person meetings” or “Zoom” meetings? What is a “Zoom” meeting and how does it work? Should the Museums be kept open? When will the Museums be able to open what will be the protocol? When will the docents be comfortable enough to return to the Museums and how do we protect them? Kathryn seemed to take these difficulties in stride and did a terrific job. Above all Kathryn was a dear friend to all who knew her and will be sincerely missed.

In June Ray Dwelly became “Citizen of the Year” at Novato’s 62nd Birthday Party, Paint the Town Red. This award was not a surprise to anyone that knows Ray. He is not only the “father” of the Hamilton Field History Museum, by being one of the principal people responsible for the actual reconstruction and design of the Museum but he also has spent countless hours managing the Museum since it’s opening in 2010. Ray was also employed by and then volunteered for the Novato Fire Department. Congratulations Ray, couldn’t have happened to a more deserving citizen.

I would like to thank Lynn Dawson and her “Pacheco Team” of Leadership Novato on the production of the video “History of Novato from 1950 to 1970”.

Lynn and her team filmed and interviewed a handful of Novato residents about their memories of Novato during that time frame. The 9 minute video will be available at both museums for viewing.

The next Membership Meeting will be Saturday, September 10 at the Hamilton Field History Museum. The meeting will be from 10 to 12 and feature a talk by Michael Blodgett discussing the 349th involvement in the resupply of Israel during the 1973 war.

Thanks to all our wonderful volunteers for doing what youdo, we wouldn’t be here without you.

Jim

2010 picture if Jim passing the gavel to new incoming president Kathryn Hansen.
Novato – 50 Years Ago
(July, August & September 1972)
by Michael Read
Go to https://novatoadvance-ca.newsmemory.com/
For 50 years ago stories weekly in the Advance


Grading started at the Olive Ridge Tennis Club site off Olive Avenue. Tennis courts and parking will be provided in the flat area in front of the low ridge (in the background which will contain later a 5000-seat stadium for major West Coast tennis tournaments and clubhouse.

An F-106 jet from Hamilton Air Force Base landed with gear damage, causing it to skid off the runway out of control for a distance of four blocks past parked planes, between hangars, and stopping just short of a street on the base,

Residential area surrounding Olive School 1972

Novato in 1870’s, red building in the center is on South Novato Blvd.
July 1972 saw the start of construction of the freeway by-pass

Michael Pinckney open a lemonade stand in 1972, his clientele was the men who work on the freeway construction site.

Construction in front of Jack’s 66 gas station, the Sportsman Lodge and Shipwreck Pete’s restaurant

Elmwood street

DeLong Ave overpass

Cutting down a hill
**Novato High Schools JROTC Program-1966-2021**

By Michael Corlett

The newest display at the Hamilton Field History Museum documents the history of the Air Force Junior ROTC Program (JROTC) at Novato High School. The exhibit was created by HFHM docent Roy Pfeifer, a Terra Linda High School graduate, retired Air Force Major and a former instructor and JROTC Program Commander at Novato High.

Novato High was one of the first twenty high schools selected for the program in 1966, designated CA-011 and the first established in California. Presently nearly 850 high schools participate in the program nationwide with approximately 125,000 JROTC cadets. Retired USAF instructors and Non-commissioned Officers teach the programs. Topics include aerospace history, aerospace science, leadership and other character-building topics.

Unlike the college and university ROTC programs that train students for military careers, the JROTC is not a USAF accessions program. Cadets are never under any obligation to join the military. Instead, the program is designed to educate and train high school cadets in leadership, citizenship and community service and to instill personal responsibility, character, integrity and self-discipline. The program achieves this through classroom education in air and space fundamentals, hands-on learning opportunities and exciting and challenging extracurricular activities. Some formal activities included a standard marching drill team, a Spin Rifle drill team that competed against other JROTC units in the Bay Area, flag presentation services for veterans, the Novato 4th of July parade and other civic events. Besides the formal events, cadets also volunteered for trash pick up during the Clean and Green day. They assisted at other community events to help them understand the importance of community involvement.

Initially, the program was open only to males; however, female cadets now make up 40% of the corps nationwide. Novato High School’s most famous JROTC graduate (1977) is Dr. Yvonne Cagle, Colonel USAF. In 1966, she trained as Mission Specialist for the NASA Space program.

Students from other local high schools would come to NHS to participate in the program, including San Marin, San Rafael and Marin Oaks students.

In 1975, when Hamilton closed and military families began moving out of the area, the number of cadets in the JROTC program at Novato High started slowly declining. Due to budget constraints in the 2006 to 2007 timeframe, the program barely avoided being cut. The Drill Team would perform their routines at the middle schools in the area to stimulate interest in JROTC. The program met the minimum enrollment of 100 students, but then came the Pandemic. The students were schooling from home, and the outdoor activities, drill team, etc. were not allowed. The National JROTC Organization requires that at least 100 cadets be enrolled in the program for at least two consecutive years. Still, the pandemic, along with decreasing enrollment numbers, made it clear to the last instructors, Colonel Hiroshi Yamaguchi and Master Sergeant Rich Muench, and the Air Force and Novato High School officials that the program could not be sustained.

After a 55-year run, the JROTC program at Novato High, “Marin’s Own Air Force,” was shut down at the end of the school year, June 2021.

Reflecting on the program, Pfeifer commented, “The overarching benefit of the JROTC was that the kids came out of the program with an understanding of how to better manage their lives with leadership skills and just general confidence in every task they tackled, which for many would not have been possible because of their situation or personality. I don’t think the community generally understood the benefits of JROTC other than those parents whose kids went through the program. The parents were very impressed with how their children had matured and grown, ready for the next phase in their lives. It’s sad that it is gone and is a loss to the community and those kids who would have benefitted greatly.”

The new exhibit features ribbons, a cadet drill book, a listing of cadets’ Rights and Responsibilities, photos, posters, and other memorabilia.

Museum hours are Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday, 12-4 pm.

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I took a wonderful informative tour of the Hamilton Field History Museum as a new member of the Novato Historical Guild. Thanks to Barry Smail, assisted by Ray Dwelly, I learned more about Novato history than I had, living here since 1981.

Learning about Lt. Hamilton and General Hap Arnold really brought out proud feelings about Hamilton Field, later named Hamilton Air Force Base.

The private accounts by the servicemen in the Bataan death March grabbed my attention and I plan on returning to the museum soon to read this entire account.

Thanks for setting this up and I look forward to my visit to the Novato History Museum and the next Novato History Guild meeting in June.

Darlene Purcell
Life in old Ignacio

By Stephen Perlman

Today, Ignacio is a vibrant suburban community of stores, restaurants, a golf course, a middle school, the College of Marin and beautiful, upscale homes. But the Ignacio I remember was a smattering of tiny homes strung along a (then) narrow 2-lane road with nothing around us, except rolling hills and miles of countryside.

My parents and I were among the first residents of a new development for military families, called Rafael Village in 1951. My dad, Jerome Perlman, was a decorated Air Force Officer in World War II, and stationed at Hamilton Air Force Base. When he was later deployed to Korea, my mom and I were left to experience a unique life of stark beauty and discovery.

We lived on a semi-circular street called Ransome Drive. Just north of our home were rolling hills that became invitations for exploring. To the south and west were endless fields of grass, streams, ponds, flowers, trees and more hills that beckoned.

I attended Pacheco School from 1951 as a kindergartner to 1954 as a 2nd grader. Pacheco was an amazing place for learning and in 1953 I was fortunate to have Mrs. Smith as my teacher; the wife of W.J. J. Smith who was later appointed Superintendent of Schools.

Mrs. Smith had a profound influence on my life. She instilled in us values that I tried to follow my entire life. Be kind and respectful to others; be a conservationist; be an original and do worthwhile work. My mom, Lillian Perlman, would echo and instill those values as I grew up.

After becoming very successful in several professions, I became a humanitarian, working with non-profits here in the U.S. and in different countries. I wish I could thank Mrs. Smith for how she impacted my life.

Memories of Rafael Village flood my mind. Bike riding with my friends through the neighborhood and down the low-sloping hills, skinning our knees and legs more than once; picnics with my mom and other families in the fields where the College of Marin now stands; and hiking with my dad to the top of the hills, looking down at Rafael Village and realizing how isolated we were.

We often took day trips up to the Russian River where the car radio was always on, spinning out the popular songs of the day like “Bewitched bothered and bewildered” and “Baby it’s cold outside.” I learned to sing those songs by heart and with my mom’s encouragement, became immersed in music.

My mom was quite active in the Novato community. She helped organize a ‘Great Books Club’ and in June of 1951, she and other Novato women visited San Quentin Prison for a discussion of “Hamlet” with interested prisoners. She was active politically and became a local organizer for Adlai Stevenson’s Presidential campaign against Dwight David Eisenhower in 1952. In 1954, my mom decorated the children’s wing of Hamilton Air Force Base Hospital, painting circus murals for the children.

Once a month mom drove me into San Francisco where I modeled boys’ clothes at department store events. Being a shy kid, the modeling experience gave me more confidence, and riding over the Golden Gate Bridge was always a thrill.

Sometimes my mischief got the better of me. I once plastered “I like Ike” (Eisenhower) stickers all over our Pontiac at the Hamilton AFB Commissary parking lot while my mom was inside shopping. When she came out and saw my stickers over her Adlai Stevenson car banners, I knew I was in trouble.

When we moved onto the base in 1954, the idyllic peaceful setting of Ignacio was replaced by the constant hum of airplanes arriving and leaving Hamilton. I attended Hamilton School during that time and while I enjoyed my subjects, I missed the compassion and inspiration of Mrs. Smith at Pacheco.

Hamilton School still operates today, but the buildings where I had classes is gone. Years after I left, a fire broke out in that section from poor electrical wiring. One of the men who helped extinguish that fire was Ray Dwelly. Today, Ray Dwelly is the Director of Operations and Maintenance at the impressive Hamilton Field Museum.

One event at Hamilton AFB I always looked forward to was Open House for families and guests to view their aircraft. As a kid, it was exciting to step into and inspect a bomber like the B-17.

Today, I try to give back to the community that was instrumental in shaping my life. A

Continued on page 7
plaque outside the Hamilton Field Museum honors my dad’s service in the air force. I maintain a street island on Ignacio Boulevard with a simple memorial sign to honor my mother. At Pacheco Pond, near the College of Marin, I periodically report the number of threatened Western Pond turtles I observe to the Marin Water District’s environmental program. I have made gifts to Marin County Parks, earmarked for the protection of endangered frogs that inhabit the area.

I adopted and help maintain Hillside Park in the lower Ignacio hills. After my work, I’ll sit at the picnic bench beside a large, old tree and look down the hillside which is now surrounded by up-scale homes. About a hundred yards from where I sit was our tiny house on Ransome Drive. Everything’s gone now as Rafael Village was demolished in the early 1980s. But if I close my eyes and tap into my memories, I can go back in time, see myself running down this same hill past this tree and waving to my mom who was always there to greet me.

When I do that, I’m at peace.
Dr. Ralph Weseman who officially retires next Tuesday from a practice that has spanned 37 years here.

Dr. Weseman was a young physician in search of a practice back in 1935 when he received a letter from Dr. Al Tunnell of Novato. Tunnell was the only doctor here in those depression days and he was leaving to return to his hometown of Lodi. Would Dr. Weseman like to take on Novato and its five or six hundred souls? Dr. Weseman would and did. He had just completed a stint as camp doctor with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and was at loose ends in southern California.

Ready to Return
He and his wife, Gladys, were both anxious to return to the Bay Area where they had met and married in Mountain View.

Novato was close enough.
The doctor, a native of Orfino, Idaho, had moved his family to Mountain View when he was 13 and received his medical degree as a general practitioner from Loma Linda University. When he arrived in Novato in June 1935, he found a town with one drug store (run by Otto Oldham) no hospital or clinic and of course, no other doctors.

He and his wife moved into a little house on East Grant Avenue next door to where the Red Barn furniture warehouse now stands. His office was in another little house next door. Both houses were later moved to the little alley known as Cain Lane behind Grant Avenue where they still stand.

Two or three days a week Dr. Weseman would share his office with a Dr. Cuthbertson who came from San Francisco to tend to Novato’s dental needs.

Paid In Produce
Cash was scarce in those days and Dr. Weseman recalls getting paid in produce more than once. "We always had plenty to eat... eggs, chickens, fruits and vegetables. But Mrs. Weseman doesn't remember it that way. She says the doctor "either got paid or didn't get paid" and the gifts of produce were just that, gifts not payment.

Both agree he spent almost as much time driving as he did doctoring in those days. House calls were the rule rather than the exception and the doctor had patients as far west as Point Reyes station and as far east as Lakeville.

He has long since lost count of how many babies he's delivered and until the late 1940's "practically all" of them were home deliveries.

San Rafael Hospital
The nearest hospital was in the old Cottage hospital in San Rafael although Dr. Weseman also had patients at the Ross Hospital. In the late '40's he joined a steering committee to help build Marin General in Greenbrae.

During that period Dr. Weseman took on a number of associates and in 1955 they built the Twin Brook Medical facility at Grant Avenue and Fourth Street. It contained a laboratory, X-ray equipment and offices.

In 1960 Dr. Weseman was instrumental in gathering Novato's doctors together... there were nine by then... to form a corporation and sell shares to build the Novato General Hospital. They were joined by several doctors in San Rafael, pharmacists and some laymen including the Grossi family and the Nunes brothers.

The hospital opened in January 1961. In 1962 Dr. Weseman saw the fruition of a "hobby" when Novato got its first locally owned finance company, the Novato Savings and Loan. Dr. Weseman was a director and founder of that institution which, of course, was subsequently sold to Colonial Savings and Loan and is now a part of Home Savings and Loan.
Ironically, this, his last week of practicing medicine is being away from Novato. He and Mrs. Weseman left Sunday for Vancouver, British Columbia, in Canada, where Dr. Weseman is serving this week as camp doctor for a youth camp called "Young Life," a Christian-oriented camping opportunity for underprivileged children.

November 28, 1973 Advance
Dr. Ralph J. Weseman, a Novato physician since 1935, died this morning at Novato General Hospital following a long illness. He was born 67 years ago in Orfino, Idaho, and later moved with his family to Mountain View. He received his medical degree at Loma Linda University. In 1955 he and a number of associates who had joined him here built the Twin Brook Medical facility at Grant Avenue and Fourth Street. The complex was renamed the Weseman Medical Clinic earlier this year in honor of its founder.

In addition to his wife of 41 years, he is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Fern Redden, and two granddaughters, Linnea Redden and Jerda Redden, all of Corte Madera.

25 Doctors
Now the opening of the Novato hospital induced more doctors to come here and at latest count there were 25. Dr. Weseman's facility at Fourth Street and Grant Avenue will, of course, continue to be operated by his associates, Dr. Merton Shelton (who's been there since 1956) and Dr. John Elloway and Dr. Elwyn Rexhger. They are at the moment busy recruiting another doctor to replace Dr. Weseman.

There have been many changes in the practice of medicine since Dr. Weseman arrived here 37 years ago and not all of it good in the doctor's opinion. He agrees specialization had to come with the vast increase in medical knowledge but he regrets the passing of the "old family doctor."

Whole Person
"Specialists tend to be interested in only little segments of a patient ... not the whole person ... the patient in fact becomes just a number..." Socialized medicine he also feels is inevitable ... "in fact it's already here." Dr. Weseman concedes that impersonal or not, medicine as it's practiced today can accomplish feats undreamed of when he got his degree.

He is particularly impressed with the advent of open heart surgery which has saved many a formerly "hopeless case." Dr. Weseman began cutting down on his practice more than a year ago when he developed heart trouble himself. He now wears a pacemaker to regulate his heartbeat and is looking forward to spending his retirement "just fishing and maybe watching baseball." Dr. Weseman gets to Candlestick Park whenever he can.

He also enjoys the company of his daughter, Mrs. Fern Redden of Corte Madera and his two grandchildren.

Mexican Service
Except for a six-months' stint in Mexico in 1962 the Wesemans have rarely left Novato for long. Nor was the sojourn in Mexico exactly a vacation. Dr. Weseman served as a physician at a mission hospital run by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church near Monterey, Mexico. He and his wife remain active in the SDA church in Novato where he is an elder and past chairman of the building committee.

HOSPITAL OFFICIALS — The nursery was the center for a brief conference between (from left) Dr. Joseph Sereda, chief of staff; Dr. John Siemens, hospital director, and Dr. Ralph Wiseman, president of the board of directors, Novato General Hospital. IJ photo
Welcome New Guild Members

Novato Historical Guild Membership Report September 2022

Individual Membership
J. Mark Ashe
Karen Betlejewski
Debbie Brusatori
Ryan Forbes
Eric Lucan
Phyllis Gray
William Kinane
John Kellerman
Larry Pualger
Nicolas Ruiz
Ronele Schaefer
Paula Spillane
Christina Stroeh

Family Membership
Tim Amyx and Florencia Gascon
Richard and Janel Locke
John F. Davies and Marianner Haas
Bruce and Gail Mack

Life Membership
Linda Almeida DeLong

Novato Historical Guild Speakers Series Free Event:
June 8, 2022, 7:00 p.m., Novato City Hall (old church building) 901 Sherman Ave.
“Our Hamilton Wetlands Restoration: A Brief History and Where We Are Now”
Alycia Matz and Stacey Pogorzelski, with Novato Baylands Stewards, will present a slide show and talk on the efforts to save these beautiful wetlands in Novato’s backyard. (free event)

July 13, 2022 7:00 p.m., Novato City Hall (old church building) 901 Sherman Ave.
“Ukraine and Russia”
William Kinane’s 34-year career with the F.B.I. was spent focused on the former Soviet Union and included serving several years with the American Embassy in Moscow. He will shed a light on understanding this part of the world. (free event)

Take time to work.
It is the price of success.

Take time to think.
It is the source of all power.

Take time to play.
It is the secret of perpetual youth.

Take time to read.
It is the foundation of wisdom.

Take time to be friendly.
It is the road to happiness.

Take time to love and be loved.
It is the privilege of the Gods.

Take time to share.
Life is too short to be selfish.

Take time to laugh.
Laughter is the music of the soul.

Please support our Guild Business Members:

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Valley Oak Wealth Management
Valley Memorial Park Cemetery & Funeral Home
Zenith Instant Printing

If you have questions about membership, call
Lane Yee, Membership Chairman,
415 – 898 – 0444

The following poem was at Kathryn’s Hansen celebration of life.
The author is Martin Greyford, who hails from Zambia. The wording and order of the stanzas on the program is somewhat different than the version found online. Maybe Kathryn edited it.
MEMORIAL GIFTS
You may make a gift of appreciated securities (stocks, bonds, mutual funds) to the Novato Historical Guild. Your gift is not only tax-deductible, but if you have held the shares for more than one year, your tax deduction will equal the full value of the securities on the date of the gift.

MEMORIAL PLAQUE GIFTS
You may honor a friend or loved one by having his or her name engraved on an individual brass plate on the Memorial Plaque in the History Museum. Please call the Museum at (415) 897-4320. All contributions are tax deductible. Plaques cost $250 per person named.

MEMBERSHIP FORM
Please mail checks to Novato Historical Guild. P.O. Box 1296. Novato. CA 94948.
Yes, I want to join the Novato Historical Guild and help preserve Novato history!

- [ ] new    - [ ] renewal
- [ ] Individual membership $20 year
- [ ] Family membership $30 year
- [ ] Life membership, individual $350
- [ ] Life membership, joint $500
- [ ] Business membership $100 year
- [ ] Free for 90+

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Volunteer Opportunities:
The Novato Historian has an opening on the Editorial Board. If you like writing and/or editing this is the position for you. Please contact the Guild at info@novatohistory.org or Ask for Michael Read at 415-717-1412

In Memoriam
Roger Antongiovanni
Kathryn Keena Hansen
Bill Koenig
James Eugene Neighbors
Noel Roach

Contact Us
Hamilton Field History Museum
Manager: Ray Dwelly
Museum phone: 415-382-8614
Email: Hamilton_museum@att.net
https://www.facebook.com/HamiltonFieldHistoryMuseum/

Novato History Museum
Manager: Susan Magnone
Museum phone: 415-897-4320
Email: info@novatohistory.org
https://www.facebook.com/NovatoHistoryMuseum/

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THE GUILD EXTENDS SYMPATHY TO
The Antongiovanni family on the loss of Roger Antongiovanni
The Hansen, Keena and Silacci families on the loss of Kathryn Hansen
The Koenig family on the loss of Bill Koenig
The Neighbors family on the loss of Jim Neighbors
The Roach family on the loss of Noel Roach
General Membership Meeting ~ Novato Historical Guild
Saturday, September 10, 10:00 to noon

In person only
Hamilton Field Museum, 555 Hangar Ave., Novato

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Hope you can make it. Bring some friends. Looking forward to seeing you there.
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