



Luther Burbank Branch 17

Santa Rosa, CA

Website: [www.sir17.org](http://www.sir17.org)

THE REDWOOD BARK NEWSLETTER

For MAY 2021

## All members are invited to attend our next SIR “Luncheon” Meeting on Thursday, **May 20, 2021** using Zoom.

A link and password will be made available from BIG Sir George Traverso to you before the meeting.

Directions on how to use Zoom can be found on our SIR17 website, or click on the following:

[http://www.sir17.org/uploads/1/2/3/8/123881033/how\\_to\\_join\\_a\\_sir17\\_Zoom\\_meeting.docx](http://www.sir17.org/uploads/1/2/3/8/123881033/how_to_join_a_sir17_Zoom_meeting.docx)

### May 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting Schedule via Zoom!

**Social Hour:** 11:00 am Please check in about five minutes early to be ready to avoid the last minute rush.

**Program:** Jim Sweeney, Editorial director of *The Press Democrat* newspaper.

**Announcements:** An introduction of new members and the winner of the Birthday Boy lunch.

### May 20<sup>th</sup> Lunch Menu

Same as the last 11 months have been,

Fix your own sandwiches--at home!

Beverages: Your choice...

### BIG Sir George Traverso's Message

[geosan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:geosan@sbcglobal.net) 528-6987



Many of you know that I am a history buff. I am especially fond of always discovering and appreciating Sonoma County history. Gaye LeBaron is my “go-to-historian” if I really want to know some fascinating details of our area’s history: she has investigated the development of the famous Bodega red potatoes to the Julio Carrillo family to the famous hanging of two individuals at the Santa Rosa Rural Cemetery in 1922 and many more interesting events.

To add to my interest and knowledge of Sonoma County history, I joined the Sonoma County Historical Society several years ago. As a member of the Society, I receive the quarterly magazine *Sonoma Historian*, which highlights interesting stories. An account by Alice van Ommeren in the recent *Historian* stirred my interest in a special local spot. The Italian Swiss Colony winery located in Asti, just north of Healdsburg on the old Redwood Highway was established in 1881 as an agricultural community. Italian immigrant and successful San Francisco banker, Andrea Sbarbaro, founded the Colony and it soon flourished as a popular winery and respected agricultural facility. My family

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### Little Sir Gordon Boulton's Message

[gboulton@aol.com](mailto:gboulton@aol.com) 584-8063



We are all used to dealing with risk in our lives. After all, we live in California where we live with the threats of wildfires, floods, earthquakes and now COVID-19. And we are getting up in years where we might have the risk of falling in the shower or forgetting where we put our car keys!

But according to an article by Kirk Teska in the April/May edition of *Mechanical Engineering* magazine, “studies have confirmed people are horrible at assessing risk. Indeed, most things people worry about never occur. As the comedian John Mulaney has joked ‘I always thought quicksand was going to be a much bigger problem than it turned out to be.’”

The humorous gist of Teska’s article is that fear, even unreasonable fear, can lead to innovation. He cites U.S. Patent No. 8,408,959 for “a collapsible flotation system for assisting a person caught in quicksand.” Problem solved. There are multiple patents for devices to protect you from shark and piranha attacks and fire ants. Fear of being buried alive is named taphophobia (from the Greek taphé for grave—I looked it up!).

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**SIR Luther Burbank Branch 17 is in Area 10 of Region 3.  
The following is a list of your 2021 Officers and Directors.**

OFFICERS:	EMAIL:	PHONE:	DIRECTORS:
<b>Big Sir:</b> George Traverso . . . . .	<a href="mailto:geosan@sbcglobal.net">geosan@sbcglobal.net</a> . . . . .	707-528-6987	Ken Johnson
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			<b>WEBMASTERS:</b>
<b>STATE PRESIDENT</b>	<b>AREA 10 GOVERNOR</b>	<b>REGION 3 DIRECTOR</b>	Dennis Mangan
Stu Williams	Robert Reuther	Dennis Pangburn	Jim Fenstermaker

**BIG Sir George Traverso's Message** *(continued)*

recounted to me years ago that Mr. Sbarbaro, obviously a wine promoter, petitioned the State of California not to tax wine as a beverage. His argument stated that wine is a food and not a fortified alcoholic drink. However, the case was dismissed and the rest is history. When I received my driver's license in 1962, one of my first drives was to Asti and the famous winery, together with my Dad, and a visitor from New York City. He enjoyed our beautiful county and we gave him a special visit and tour of the Colony winery. Our friend was amused by the big sign outside the facility: "Italian Swiss Colony since 1881." He quipped that his birth year was the same as the winery and he wanted me to photograph him in front of the sign...after all, he jokingly said, "I'm from 1881 too!"

Returning to the article in the *Sonoma Historian*...

With more than a dozen people, the tasting room and the continuous winery tours were busy seven days a week. In the late 1950's and early 60's "it was estimated that ten percent of the cars traveling along the Old Redwood Highway, now known as Highway 101, would turn into the winery." The account continues to state that after Disneyland, the Italian Swiss Colony winery was one of the State's biggest tourist attractions. This is remarkable for our county to have had such a distinction.

The employees wore traditional Italian and Swiss wear and a free tasting was available to adults 21 and over. Today, a "free" tasting in the Wine Country is difficult to find. The most popular wines, a Tipo Red and a Tipo White, were presented in raffia wrapped bottles. Typical of the Italian-Swiss style, the purchased bottles would become souvenirs at home as vases or candle holders as lingering memories of a visit to Sonoma County...and for me, a fond recollection of a wonderful day in Asti.

**Little Sir Gordon Boulton's Message** *(continued)*

Patent No. 652,934 describes a casket with "a wire bent in close proximity to the chest of the supposed corpse. If a person in the casket breathes, his raising chest completes a circuit and rings an above ground bell." Saved by the bell!

There are also patents for devices to save you if you drive off a pier, and to protect you from the dangers of untied shoelaces.

As the sergeant on Hill Street Blues said, "Let's be careful out there," but as Teska concludes "also enjoy life without undue worry and fear." Food for thought as we safely resume in-person Branch 17 activities!

**WE ARE GROWING!**

**GOOD NEWS...**I am thrilled to have received now four applications for new SIR members. It is truly remarkable because of the restrictions. This growth is a signal that we are healthy and vibrant. Three names and sponsors of these individuals were presented for review at the BEC meeting on April 1<sup>st</sup> and they were all approved. Two candidates were formally inducted at our Zoom "Luncheon" meeting on April 15<sup>th</sup>. David Harris was our first candidate, sponsored by Sir Gary Bondi and Sir Fred Rose; our second candidate was Randy Coleman-Riese, sponsored by Sir Rich de Lambert and Sir John Gnam. Our third new member, Marc Perl, sponsored by Sir Fred Rose is to be inducted at our May 20<sup>th</sup> Zoom meeting. The fourth application from Neil Wheeler, sponsored by Sir Dennis Mangan, will be presented to the BEC for review at May 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. Neil will hopefully then be inducted at the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

I am looking forward to meeting all of our new inductees and I wish to personally thank each of the sponsors in their pursuit to strengthen and build our organization with talent and vigor.

*(Article by BIG Sir George Traverso)*

## Coffee Club Chat Zoom Meetings

It is with great sadness, after speaking with my Coffee Club co-host, Rich de Lambert, we have decided to postpone our Wednesday Coffee Club Chats on Zoom. With low weekly attendance and



participation, we feel that our coffee chats should be momentarily cancelled. We would like to thank the SIR members who have consistently zoomed into the weekly chats. Currently, as social interaction becomes more relaxed and anticipated news from our California State Governor Newsom to possibly opening business completely in June, our feelings are that our coffee meetings on Zoom have lost considerable interest. SIRs are social beings. As such, person-to-person coffee chats are so important and necessary for maximum enjoyment. We look forward to possibly meeting under strict legitimate SIR protocol in a physical space in the near future. All our best wishes!

*(Article by Big Sir George Traverso & Sir Rich de Lambert)*

## Our Future Meetings, via Zoom

The 2021 regular “luncheon” meetings for now will be held on our usual dates of the third Thursday, starting at 11:00 am.

**May 20<sup>th</sup> June 17<sup>th</sup> July 15<sup>th</sup> Aug 19<sup>th</sup>**

The BEC meetings will be held on the first Thursday, starting at 10:00 am.

**May 6<sup>th</sup> June 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1<sup>st</sup> Aug 5<sup>th</sup>**

A special Thank You to members Gordon Boultee and others for helping me by spotting all my errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling and any other boo-boos I have made before the final edition goes to press and you see it.

Jim, the Editor

Check out the **SIR Branch 17** website for the revised membership roster listing the new members that have been inducted at the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## Upcoming Speakers

**June 17:** Our own **Sir Rich Osbourne**, VP of the North Bay Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America, will give a presentation on hearing loss.

## The Poem of the month for **May**

### May Day

by Sara Teasdale

A delicate fabric of bird song  
Floats in the air,  
The smell of wet wild earth  
Is everywhere.

Red small leaves of the maple  
Are clenched like a hand,  
Like girls at their first communion  
The pear trees stand.

Oh I must pass nothing by  
Without loving it much,  
The raindrop try with my lips,  
The grass with my touch;

For how can I be sure  
I shall see again  
The world on the first of May  
Shining after the rain?

*Congratulations to our **April 2021**  
free lunch winner: **Robert Reuther***

## List of the **May Birthdays**

**We will celebrate all birthdays whenever we are back to our regular meetings again, but when that will be is???**

Davis Bullwinke  
Bud Morgan  
Claude Schwarz  
Roy Thuestad

John Hafner  
Mike O'Neill  
Lance Thompson  
Paul Willihnganz

★ **HAPPY** ★  
**BIRTHDAY!**

All members are invited to attend all of the meetings. Call Big SIR George Traverso at 707-528-6987 or email to [geosan@sbcglobal.net](mailto:geosan@sbcglobal.net) Directions on how to use Zoom can be found on our SIR17 website at: [http://www.sir17.org/uploads/1/2/3/8/123881033/how\\_to\\_join\\_a\\_sir17\\_Zoom\\_meeting.docx](http://www.sir17.org/uploads/1/2/3/8/123881033/how_to_join_a_sir17_Zoom_meeting.docx) or click [here](#).

## SIR Branch 17, Member Profile:

**Tom Johnson**, Badge # 148

Tom likes people ...all kinds of people, old and new. Tom is an anthropologist. Anthropology is the science that promotes an understanding of humanity by exploring human nature from its beginnings to the present. So, of course, the first question I had for Tom was, "how did you begin?" Tom said, "I grew up with lemons." I thought that was a terrible thing to say about his family, but then he clarified he was referring to citrus orchards surrounding his childhood home just east of Los Angeles in Duarte CA. Tom's mother's family settled there a long time ago, and his grandfather was in the first graduating class from the school building, which is now an Old Spaghetti Factory. The walls of the restaurant are decorated with old photos of kids who went to school there, including a very adorable Tom when he was in kindergarten.



Tom finished high school and then headed north to the Bay Area to study anthropology at Stanford (undergraduate) and Berkeley where he earned his PhD in 1970. While at Stanford, he did a study abroad year in Japan. Living in Japan was both a thrill as well as a culture shock. He was only one of three Americans in his Tokyo dorm, and he needed to quickly learn how to speak and write Japanese. While later doing dissertation field research in a small village in Japan, he put his language skills to work and struck up a conversation with a cute girl named Kimie. He apparently knew enough of the right Japanese words to impress her because she later became his wife.

After college, Tom considered several offers to teach at universities before accepting an offer at Chico State where he remained for 30 years. Upon retirement, he came to the Santa Rosa area to be close to his parents living on a vineyard in Healdsburg. He continued his research in anthropology and was writing a textbook when his house was destroyed in the 2017 Tubbs Fire. Despite this setback, Tom persisted in studying anthropology in two focal areas: 1) looking to find what we can learn from kids playing together in the absence of adults, and 2) advancing evidence-based, high-quality medical care for

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## Member Profiles:

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transsexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming individuals. He has published over two dozen articles on these topics in medical and psychology journals. Tom worked on the statewide curriculum committee writing the History-Social Studies Framework for K-12 schools listing what kids should learn in 6th grade about the origins of humanity through the era of the Roman empire.

Woody Pitts got Tom interested in SIR Branch 17, and he joined in 2015. As you might expect, Tom has been and continues to be very involved in the Global Forum, now chaired by Marvin Mai. Tom likes our Branch because of the diverse points of view in our club members. He deliberately sits at different tables at SIR luncheons in order to meet and talk with a wide variety of guys. Tom says he is looking forward to meeting in person again and "mixing it up...talking with everyone." Diversity is a strength of our club, and we hope to continue to recruit culturally diverse men, including more Hispanics and African American blacks. Tom will have much to say to and hear from all of us when we gather again. (Article by Dennis Mangan)

## Our guest speaker for our **May 20** Zoom meeting will be **Jim Sweeney**.

Jim Sweeney is editorial director of *The Press Democrat*. He has worked as reporter, editor and editorial writer at California newspapers for almost 40 years. In his present role, he is responsible for *The Press Democrat's* daily opinion pages, the Sunday Forum section and the opinion section of the web-site [www.pressdemocrat.com](http://www.pressdemocrat.com).



He regularly writes about a wide range of issues including local, state and federal government, education, criminal justice, energy and politics.

He previously worked as night city editor and as a reporter for the paper. Before joining *The Press Democrat*, he was Sacramento bureau chief for the *Los Angeles Daily News* and started his career at the *Auburn Journal*. A native of Minneapolis, Jim graduated from California State University, Sacramento.

He lives in Santa Rosa with his wife and son and, as earnestly as Linus keeps his vigil for the Great Pumpkin, Jim waits every October for the Oakland A's to win another World Series.

## ACTIVITIES:

Since the health department has placed restrictions on gatherings we have been unable to get together for our meetings and most of the following of our activities have been on **HOLD**, until we receive new instructions.

**Bocce, Bowling, Boys' Night Out, Bridge, Camera Club, Couples' Night Out, Free Comedy, Picnic, Poker Fest, Travel Golf, Wine, Beer and Spirits**

All just waiting to restart again soon--hopefully!

## GLOBAL FORUM: (Article by Marvin Mai)



Today we are instantly connected to the World through the constant 24-hour news feeds. We also have instant communication via the Internet. We're all aware of how much the new communication abilities have changed the world.



Have you been keeping up with the global news? Can you identify the major issues facing the talks between the U.S., the EU and Iran? Do you have an understanding of the China and Hong Kong integration? How about Taiwan or the South China Sea and the island disputes with the Philippines? What are the issues in Central and South America? What about the new dam on the Nile and its impact on Egypt? What's the major issue with Northern Ireland and the UK after Brexit?

Join the discussions on these and many other issues facing the world during the bi-weekly Global Forum on Zoom. If you'd like to be included in the next Zoom meeting on **Friday, May 14<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am** for the Global Forum meeting, then contact Marvin at [maimarvin57@gmail.com](mailto:maimarvin57@gmail.com) or give him a call at 545-2224. He needs to know who is going to attend so he can send you an email with the "link and password," plus any others instructions.

Below is the schedule of dates for SIR Branch 17 Zoom Global Forum discussions slated for every **2 weeks** in 2021. Time: **10:00 am** Pacific Time.

**Fridays: May 28<sup>th</sup>, June 11<sup>th</sup> & June 25<sup>th</sup>**

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## GOLF:



Well golf enthusiasts, we may be getting a little closer to resumption of our regular Monday outings, as well as State SIR competitions. Before we can officially begin there are some important safety features to address while we are still experiencing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For old and new members, a reminder that any local SIR sponsored activity must be formally approved by the local Branch Executive Committee (the BEC). Given COVID-19 concerns, the State board approved a statewide Golf Protocol governing most things we already abide by: social distancing, mask requirements, etc., plus some additional precautions.

At our May 6 BEC meeting, the protocol will be an agenda item for consideration by the board. The SIR Branch 76 BEC is also considering adoption of the very same protocol. At a minimum, for our mutual clubs to resume competitive play, adoption is an absolute requirement.

We are also aware that the State board has recently issued additional guidelines for both indoor and outdoor activities. We will advise our membership about those items once it has been reviewed by the Branch 17 BEC.

In anticipation of our first State SIR competition, our Area 10 golf chairman has announced the date and place for the Team Scramble: Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup> at the Bennett Valley Golf Course. The winner of that event will then compete for the State Championship on Monday, August 9<sup>th</sup> at the Rancho Solano Golf Course.

I expect applications to be made available immediately after the May 6 BEC meeting date. Hopefully, this will give players sufficient time to consider teammates based upon May 1 indexes.

**A** player, 0 to 17.0; **B** player, 17.1 to 22.0;

**C** player, 22.1 to 27; **D** player, 27.1 to 45.

Play well in the meantime, and we will notify everyone asap regarding rules and protocols governing a safe golf experience.

Jim Gurke

707-303-0989

[ljgurke@gmail.com](mailto:ljgurke@gmail.com)



## Recap of April 15<sup>th</sup> Luncheon Speaker

April's guest speaker was Ben Stone, president of the World Affairs Council of Sonoma County (WACSC). Ben, who retired last year as Director of the Sonoma County Economic Development Board, told us that the WAC was started after World War I. It is a non-profit, non-partisan educational organization whose purpose is to promote study and public education in world affairs, and to contribute to improved international understanding and relations. There are nearly 100 Councils in the United States, of which eight are in California. Some have paid staff, whereas the WACSC is an all-volunteer organization. They have monthly luncheon and dinner presentations by prominent guest speakers including ambassadors, other diplomats, journalists, academics and business leaders. Most functions are open to members and non-members alike. They also have group travel opportunities. More information can be found on the WACSC's website: [www.wacsc.org](http://www.wacsc.org).

(Article by Gordon Boulton)

## Sunshine Report:

We need your help to tell us before the monthly meeting if any of our members are sick or if some member has died.



All you need to do is call Kurt Wehrmeister, our Secretary at **630-461-2715** or send him an email to: [kurtwehrmeister@gmail.com](mailto:kurtwehrmeister@gmail.com).

## Joke of the Month



Two engineering students were biking across a university campus when one said, "Where did you get such a great bike?"

The second engineer replied, that he was walking along yesterday, minding his own business, when a beautiful woman rode up on this bike, threw it on the ground, took off all her clothes and said, "Take what you want."

The first engineer nodded approvingly and said, "Good choice: The clothes probably wouldn't have fit you anyway."

## NON-RESPONSIBILITY DECLARATION

All activities arranged for, or by, or sponsored by, SONS IN RETIREMENT, INC., and its Branches, are for the convenience and pleasure of the members and their guest who desire to participate. SONS IN RETIREMENT, INC., and its Branches do not assume any responsibility for the well being or safety of the participants or their property, in any matters pertaining to said activities.

The May 2021 edition of

**SIR HAPPENINGS**

is now available to view online.

This is an informative newsletter produced by SIRinc with articles re-published from many of the SIR Branches throughout the state. There is a lot of new information about branches who are using Zoom for their meetings. Look especially at page 15 which is a reprint of our Big SIR George Traverso's article from our **BARK** newsletter for March. There are many stories on various subjects that I am sure you will learn something. Most of which are reprints from other Branches and sources.

To view the newsletter go to [www.sir17.org](http://www.sir17.org) then click on the "News" tab, now scroll down to near the bottom of the page. Click on the **SIR Happenings for May-2021** underlined area. This should now open the article in your PDF file program for you to look at. You might be asked to open or save this PDF file. It is best to select "Open." You can always save if you want, for later reading.

