

## Life in the 1960's



### City Growth & Schools

The construction boom of the 1940s and 50s tremendously expanded the population of South San Francisco. City population doubled in the 1950s to become 38,762 by 1960. This created a shortage of elementary and high schools for the post-war baby boom. The 1960 student enrollment was a record 10,124. New schools completed in 1961 were Parkway Intermediate School, El Camino High School, Ponderosa Elementary School, and Serra Vista Elementary. In 1966 and 1967, Monte Verde School, Foxridge Elementary School, and Skyline Elementary School all were built. Two older schools- Magnolia Elementary School, and part of Spruce Elementary School - were closed because the buildings were seismically unsound.

### Westborough

Controversy developed over the annexation of Callan Park in the early 1960s. South San Francisco did not want to provide schools for the development, and the "Old Town" population feared that city funds would be inadequate to provide services to all families living in the development. The development covered 659 acres, and cost \$150 million. It was later opened as Westborough Development in the late 1960s.

### City Development

Oyster Point Marina was developed as a yacht harbor by Healy Tibbets Construction Company, and was completed in 1962. South San Francisco Produce Mart opened in 1962 next to the Bayshore Freeway and South Airport Blvd. with \$4.5 million in construction costs. Kaiser Hospital on El Camino Real was completed in 1966. It replaced the old hospital building at Spruce and Grand Avenues. "TV Farms" -radio and television aerials- were planned for San Bruno Mountain.

### Library

The Main Library property on West Orange Avenue, formerly the site of a horse ranch and golf course, was purchased in 1963. The new building was completed in 1967.

## **Airport**

San Francisco International Airport expanded, and the first complaints of jet noise were lodged by local residents. This conflict would later develop into lawsuits- resulting in sound-resistant window replacement in houses and schools.

## **Impact on Industry**

There was a general slowdown of heavy industrial production in South San Francisco and across the nation during this time. Bethlehem Steel began closing departments and cutting back production, finally ceasing production completely in the 1970s. The Bethlehem Steel building was torn down in 1981.

## **Light Industry**

The old stock yard and Swift meat packing plant ceased production. Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes Industrial Park was developed on the site of the plant, opening in 1967. It was a 600 acre development that included a hilltop sculpture by Aristides Demetrios. It housed light industry and firms such as a Woolworth's warehouse, Gallo Sales Inc., and Koret of California. Many firms chose the location because of its proximity to San Francisco International Airport. Armour & Co. Industrial Park also opened in the early 1960s.

## **Chemicals**

Merck and Company's Marine Magnesium Plant- maker of Milk of Magnesia- expanded their facilities. The labs were later bought by the newly formed Genentech biological research firm, and used as a base for the growth of the biotech industry that is now the largest employer in South San Francisco.

## **Law Enforcement**

The old guard changed as Police Chief Louis Belloni retired in 1960; Belloni had been Police Chief and volunteer fireman for over 50 years. He was replaced by John Fabbri, the first graduate of the FBI Academy in the department. Civil service and affirmative action begin to change the makeup of city departments. Longtime Fire Chief Welte retired in 1961 and was replaced by John Marchi.

## **Political Turmoil**

President John Kennedy was mourned in 1963, and his brother Robert visited SSF during his presidential campaign. Leo Ryan, a newcomer and former English teacher, became mayor. He had been elected to city council in 1956. He resigned in 1963 to join the state assembly, and became a United States congressman. Ryan was killed in Guyana while investigating complaints about the People's Temple and its founder Jim Jones.

## **Civil Unrest**

The era's social upheaval reached our doors. City Council backed the Vietnam War, sex education was

debated in the schools, and the city was sued for racial prejudice in choosing tenants for its Lindenville government housing. Gang activity and school vandalism appeared.

### **Counter-Culture**

While not the center of the counter-culture revolution of the 1960s, South San Francisco was affected by the social movement. A youth drug treatment program called Damian House was located here, a local school boycotted goods from Alabama in a civil rights protest, a rock concert was held in Orange Park in 1969, and 60s cult films "Skidoo" and "Harold and Maude" were filmed here.