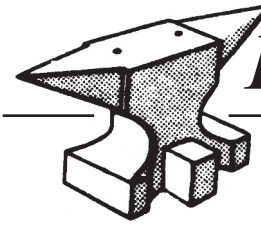


Mil was born in 1907 in Puyallup, Washington, was raised in the Portland area, and graduated from Benson Tech High. He attended Oregon State University, where he met a San Francisco girl named Janet. She coincidentally was born on the same day as Mil. Janet returned to the Bay Area after three years of college and so did Mil. Mil got a job in sales for Bridgeport Brass, then married Janet. They had a daughter Betty and a son Rob. Rob is now retired in Lake County and supplied much of the data for this biography. When WWII began, Mil had a wife and two children and was 34 years old. He volunteered for the Marines but his poor eyesight disqualified him.

Mil attended that Good Government League neighborhood meeting in 1945 and volunteered to be a candidate for the City Council. After the successful election and his appointment as Police and Fire Commissioner, it fell to Mil to “discourage” the gambling that was rife in our community. The story is still told of the arrest of Sally Rand at a local club because the bubbles for her Bubble Dance were deemed insufficient to keep her decent. Late one night the phone rang. It was for Mil. Lots of noise was coming from the it Club at Central and San Pablo and there was suspicion of gambling. Mil and an officer rushed the place only to learn the chatter coming out of the Central Avenue window was from the ladies in the powder room.

As Police and Fire Commissioner, Mil instituted bicycle licensing with his son Rob offered license number one. Rob declined as he said his favorite number had always been two. He got bike license number two. After his two terms on the City Council, Mil became half-owner of Milmac, a metal sales firm in San Francisco. After retirement he moved to Bolinas, where he served as President of the Lions Club and President of the Rod & Boat Club. He passed away in 1985 at age 78.

When some changes were made to the Alta Punta Terrace and Richmond Sea View subdivisions in 1952 the council members were offered the opportunity to name streets after their wives. The Heinkels accepted the offer so today we have a street named Edna but the Bostocks declined so we don't have a street named for Mil's wife Janet.



El Cerrito Historical Society

P O Box 304, El Cerrito, CA 94530
elcerritohistoricalsociety@yahoo.com
www.elcerritowire.com/history

Vol. 27
No. 2

The Forge

August 2011

The Official Publication of the El Cerrito Historical Society, Copyright © 2011

OUR NEXT MEETING: A HIKE THROUGH HILLSIDE NATURAL AREA 11:00 AM SATURDAY, AUG 20

Join us for a historical hike through the Hillside Natural Area on Saturday, August 20, 2011 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Hillside Natural Area is one of El Cerrito's showcases, featuring wilderness trails in the middle of our city. Join us for this two-hour **steep and rigorous** hike. We will learn about historic quarries, visit two Memorial Groves, hear some amusing stories, discover the beautiful stairway to nowhere, and talk about the park's future. Tour docents are Dave Weinstein and Paul Grunland

- Reservations are required and there is a limit of 40 people
- If you want to attend please RSVP to davidsw Weinstein@yahoo.com/510-524-1737
- The meeting place for the hike is at the eastern end of Portola Avenue at Navellier Street, across from the former Portola Middle School

Wear good walking shoes and bring cold water. Bring your lunch as well if you'd like to stay for a post-hike picnic. Refreshments will be served.

The El Cerrito Historical Society is a volunteer, non-political, non-profit corporation that has as its purpose the preservation and appreciation of the history of El Cerrito. It does this by providing educational and research opportunities; by the collection of historic photographs, documents, artifacts and cultural objects; by advocating the preservation of historic resources in the city; and by encouraging others to help further these aims. Anyone may join; dues are \$20 (Household member), \$50 (Sponsoring member), and \$250 (Life member).

Mil Bostock and Mel Heinkel of the Good Government League

by Rich Bartke

There have been some important elections in El Cerrito. The election of 1917 was important not only because it was the election at which the local citizens approved the formation of the City of El Cerrito, but also because they elected a woman as City Clerk. This was quite unusual in those days, it being almost two years before the 19th Amendment was ratified. The election of 1956 was a watershed event because for the first time a woman, Doris Hormel, was elected to the City Council.

But perhaps the election that most influenced the present state of our City was the election of 1946. According to children of two of the participants, this is how Millard Bostock and Melvin Heinkel got involved. From 1942 to 1945 the City Council made several decisions regarding development near the top of Fairmount Avenue. These were matters of concern to the local residents, since they had bought their homes on the assurance the neighborhood would remain largely residential. When the residents tried to address the City Council, they usually came away thinking the Council had ignored their concerns.

In 1945 five men, Emmett Weigmann, Warren Kinney, George Mohr, Millard Bostock and Melvin Heinkel, agreed to try to change this. Bostock and Heinkel, residents of the Ramona neighborhood, agreed to run in the 1946 council election. The group grew, naming itself the Good Government League, and Weigmann became the President. The group also launched a recall campaign against the three councilmen who were not up for reelection. The Good Government League's efforts were quite successful, with Bostock and Heinkel being elected to the two contested posts and the other three council members being recalled.

Customarily, the top vote getter becomes the Mayor. But the two gentlemen agreed to ignore that rule and instead flipped a coin to determine who would become the Mayor and who would become Police and Fire Commissioner (a position of considerable power in its own right). Heinkel won the toss so at the council meeting where the new mayor was elected the position was given to him. He served as mayor from 1946-1948 and then again from 1952-1953. Bostock served as mayor from 1948-49 and then again from 1953-54. When the election was held to replace the recalled councilmen, three more men from the Good Government League were elected.

Melvin C. Heinkel.

Late in 1945, Mel was invited to attend a Good Government League meeting. He had just returned home after WWII and probably would have enjoyed staying home with his wife and children. But neighbors whom he respected urged him to attend, so he decided to go. Mel didn't have any proper civilian clothes handy so he went to the meeting in his Army uniform. He spoke up about the cavalier attitude of the City Council, which got him nominated as a candidate in the upcoming April 1946 election.

Born in Ohio in 1914 and raised in Southern California and Alameda County, Mel graduated from Castlemont High and then, in 1936, from U.C. Berkeley with honors in Electrical Engineering. He went to work for Standard Oil. Also in 1936 he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Reserve – Ordinance Department. By 1941, Mel was a major and during WWII he served in North Africa and in France. By the time he retired after the war he was a Lt. Colonel. Mel then returned to Standard Oil and was assigned to the manufacturing department in Richmond. He eventually moved to the San Francisco office and became Vice President of the Specialties Department. He retired from Standard Oil after 44 years.

Mel and his family moved from Albany to El Cerrito in 1940. The family lived in El Cerrito for 28 years and then relocated to Moraga. Mel was a member of the Mira Vista Country Club, where he and his wife won many couples golf tournaments. Mel died in 1992 at 78 years of age. He was survived by his wife Edna, their daughter Marilyn Bracelin of El Sobrante, who supplied much of the data for this biography, and their son William.

Millard E. Bostock

There was a loud BOOM and neighborhood homes shook. It was WWII, but the town was not under attack. There had been an explosion at the monument works near the intersection of Fairmount and Carmel. Mil was the Block Warden so he donned the helmet, arm band, and Special Police badge given to him by the City. He then posted himself on Fairmount Avenue and directed traffic around the emergency site. The neighborhood kids were mightily impressed by him.