

Sparks November 2021

The Historical Society mourns the passing of Chris Treadway, longtime journalist, historian, and the society's vice president. Chris died of pancreatic cancer on November 11.

A memorial service will be held 1:30 p.m. Sunday, December 12 at St. Jerome Church, Rohan Hall, 308 Carmel Ave., El Cerrito.

The society's vice president, Chris Treadway, is honored by the El Cerrito City Council. For three and a half decades Chris Treadway has been recording historical events as they happen, as a reporter and editor for newspapers in the East Bay. As a historian, writer and collector, he has also been delving into stories from the past, focusing much of his effort on El Cerrito, where he has lived since 1985.



Chris Treadway, right, enjoyed manning the Historical Society's booth during the city's July 4th celebration.
Photo by Dave Weinstein

At its November 2 meeting, the council issued [a proclamation thanking Chris](#) "for his efforts and writings over the past many decades that have commemorated our City, questioned our elected officials, and educated our residents in ways that have made us all proud to be El Cerritans."

It was a truly moving experience for Chris's friends and colleagues, and for Chris and his wife Diana, as each member of the council and several friends spoke of Chris's contributions to the city, and in some cases, to their lives. Chris is facing a serious health problem.

As a longtime member and later vice president of the society, Chris has contributed much. Few people in town know as much about the city's history as Chris.

You could walk with Chris through town and picture what it looked like in 1920 or 1930, because he would know just what nightclub stood at what street corner, what gambling den stood next door. And he could tell you who owned them, and tell you colorful stories about them too.

Oh. And show you some pictures, menus, and matchbook covers from the places.

Chris, an Oakland native, knew he was a journalist early on, publishing his first newspaper in the 4th grade.



Chris Treadway as a young reporter. Courtesy of Chris and Diana Treadway

He went on to report for the El Cerrito Journal, The Montclarion, and the Berkeley Voice from 1986 to 2002, then for the Contra Costa Times, West County Times, and East Bay Times from 2002 to 2018. He was also an editor at the West County Times from 2012 to 2015.

In addition to Chris's news coverage, he has run a very popular Facebook page "[Lost Mastheads](#)," that deals with the East Bay, including El Cerrito's history. He also co-administers the [society's Facebook](#) page. Chris has given historical talks on behalf of the society and for other organizations.

He has written many articles for the historical society's publications, and also wrote many articles, both historical and business profiles, for the El Cerrito Chamber of Commerce's Byline magazine.

Chris has assembled an important collection of El Cerrito documentation and memorabilia, and has donated valuable archival material to the Richmond Museum of History and Culture.

Much of Chris's news coverage was devoted to El Cerrito, and much focused on community groups and culture and efforts to better life in our area. He has always been a journalist who cares. Chris's popular West County "Our Neighbors" column, which ran from 2005 to 2016, was the thing to read if you wanted to know what various community groups were up to.

It was not uncommon for the historical society, Trail Trekkers, or the El Cerrito branch of the NAACP to send Chris an item expecting to get 3 inches of copy on page 5 only to find a story by Chris with a photo leading on page 1 of the El Cerrito Journal.

Coverage like that of local issues you can't get anymore.

Patricia Durham, one of the founders of El Cerrito's Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, recalls when the local NAACP and St. Peter's C.M.E. Church were promoting the celebration. It was Chris's coverage that spread the word. And Chris covered the event year after year.

It was Pat who, when she heard that Chris was ill, knew immediately that the entire El Cerrito community should be informed. The society brought the news to the Council.

Chris and Diana's son, Henry, an Eagle Scout, community volunteer, and student at UC Berkeley, passed away in 2012.

Although he is ill, Chris is soldiering on, finishing his book about El Cerrito's gambling and nightclubbing past, a project he has been working on for many years. The book is highly anticipated.

-- Dave Weinstein

We mourn the passing of Grace MacNeill. Grace MacNeill, El Cerrito's longtime librarian, passed away in her home on October 20 at age 97. Grace was a founding member, a board member and longtime supporter of the El Cerrito Historical Society. She was an active member of Friends of the El Cerrito Library, running the annual book sale. She was a joy to be around. We will write more about Grace in the next issue of Sparks.



Grace MacNeill took part in a celebration of the El Cerrito Library in 2018.

The Society thanks new and renewing members and donors

Meredith McGuire has joined the society as a life member.

Please attend board meetings of the Historical Society. The board meets on the second Thursday of each month. Meetings last up to 90 minutes, often less. These days they are via Zoom. Soon we will return to live meetings. Members are welcome to attend; so are people from the general public. Find out what we are up to; make a suggestion or two; consider if you would like to become more involved. Contact our president for more information or to get an agenda, davidsweinstein@yahoo.com.

Help us document and preserve the city's history by becoming a member of the El Cerrito Historical Society. Membership, a bargain at \$30 a year, is open to everyone and includes this newsletter, our email updates and meeting notices. More importantly, it assists our mission to locate, preserve and educate people about local history. A membership form is online under "How you can help" at www.elcerritohistoricalsociety.org. We also offer memberships at the sponsor level for \$75 and life memberships for \$400. We accept donations of any amount.

Please note that we have increased membership rates modestly, for the first time in many years.

The El Cerrito Historical Society produces two publications, the Forge, which is a print publication, which we aim to produce four times a year, and Sparks (from the Anvil), an email publication which we aim to produce monthly. Both hark back to one of El Cerrito's original settlers, William Rust, a blacksmith who worked at his anvil producing, among other things, sparks.

