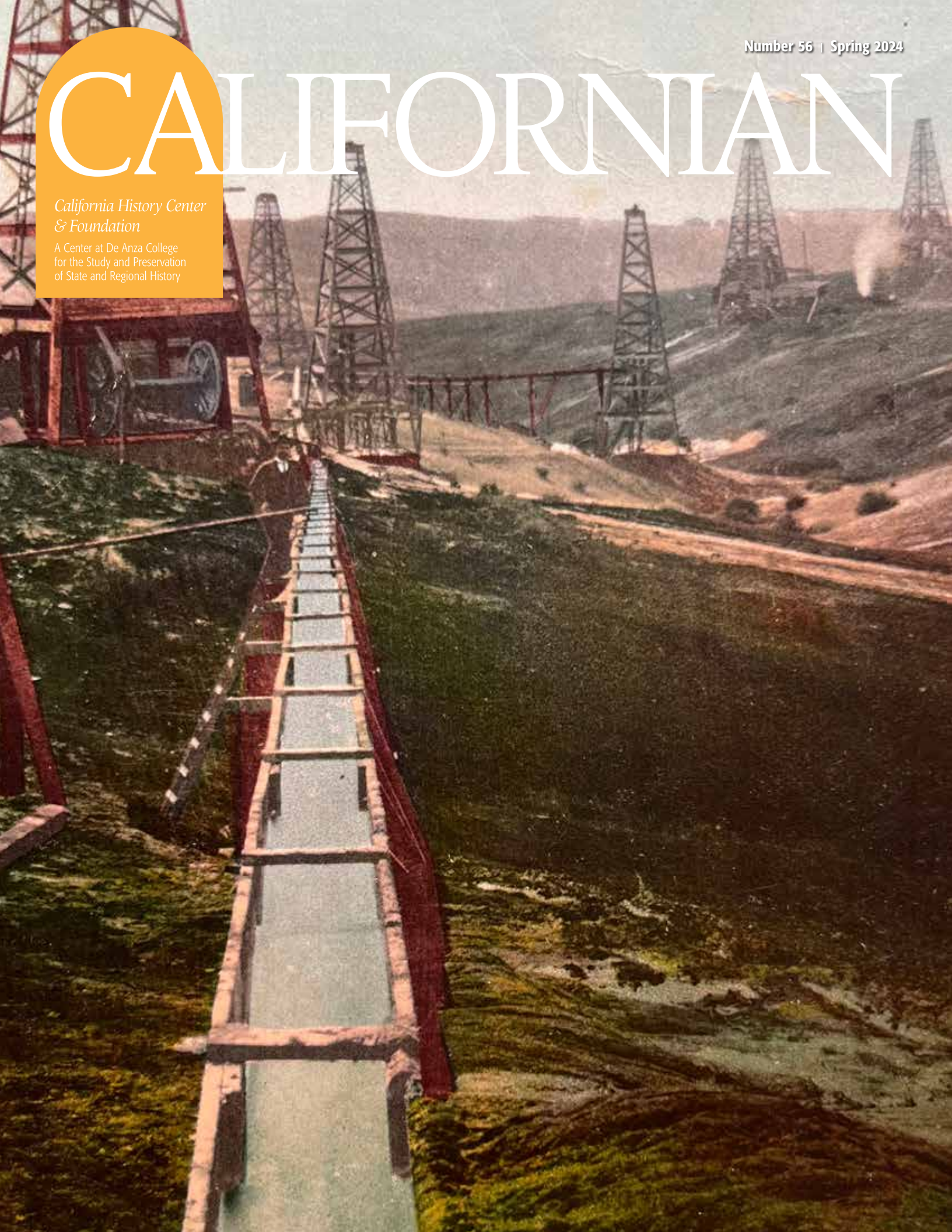


Number 56 | Spring 2024

CALIFORNIAN

*California History Center
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A Center at De Anza College
for the Study and Preservation
of State and Regional History



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90 mins

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Calendar

Spring Quarter

APRIL

8 First Day of Spring Quarter

MAY

25-27 Memorial Day Weekend – no classes, offices closed

JUNE

- 6 Lecture Series Event** – *Inclusive Dialogues: A Panel Discussion on Race, Gender, and the Journey to Equality*; CHC; 3-5:00pm
- 19 Juneteenth Holiday** – no classes, offices closed
- 28 Last day of Spring Quarter**
- 29 De Anza College 57th Annual Graduation** – Santa Clara Convention Center, 3pm

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A Center for the Study of State and Regional History
De Anza College

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Director's Report



Lori Clinchard

Past is Prologue

As we move into Spring, I'm reflecting on the changes of the past two years, and of all that has come before. California History Center has been through many transformations since its inception fifty-five years ago. The Trianon building is now 129 years old, and it still offers a feeling of home on the De Anza campus. We're often surprised at the variety of people who make their way to the Center. Recently, a German tourist stopped by, telling us that he had just two weeks in California, and that he had chosen California History Center as an interesting place to visit to learn about California history and education. The same week, a Chinese traveler came in on the last day of her trip, interested to learn about local history. Both visitors discovered what our students learn daily – that there is a wealth of stories and resources in this space – and that our librarian/archivist, Lisa Christiansen, is a crucial source of the stories and of the feeling of home and welcome that people experience at the Center. Lisa welcomes students, faculty, staff, and community members with warmth, curiosity and generosity, always willing to sit and talk and learn about people as she makes every effort to help them. Her interest in others is inspiring, and her natural sense of respect and kindness is always evident.

The CHC students and volunteers bring a lively energy of youth, enthusiasm, creativity, and talent into the space and to the Center's work. We owe a big and heartfelt "thank you" to Anya Nazarova, Edwin El-Kareh, Margaret Butcher, Saroj Bangaru, Esteban Harkins, Clare Aligbe, Marcus Jacob, and Uriel Barrón, along with several De Anza students who join us for a few hours every quarter to do valuable civic engagement service. These students and volunteers help us to create effective systems for processing the collections, doing some of the most important daily work of the Center. As they engage with the collections, they are not only examining the past; they are bringing the past into the present and revitalizing its enduring themes for our future. Some of our student interns are helping to create new material for the archives, collecting and transcribing oral histories, researching and writing about interesting and important local history topics. An example of this work is the article written for this issue's Audrey Edna Butcher Civil Liberties Education Initiative column, by Humanities Mellon Scholar, Uriel Barrón, titled *Thirty Years*

of Progress: The Impact of the Watsonville Brown Berets. The article is largely based on original oral history interviews that Barrón conducted as part of her research for this project.

As we move the collections back into the Trianon, we are getting creative with the space. The classroom is being partially reconfigured in *law library* style, with a combination of bookshelves, archival shelving, and workspaces, and with about two-thirds of the room still in traditional classroom design with rows of tables and chairs. This is an exciting change, as it will allow us to work even more closely with the archival materials on a daily basis.

Connecting with the past and creating current materials that will one day serve as primary source materials for future researchers is an essentially hopeful endeavor. It's hope and faith in ourselves and in the next generation that motivates our efforts to keep records of the past. If we believe, as Shakespeare said, that "what is past is prologue," then we are creating and saving and building our archives now to benefit those who come after. As we gather and process collections that have been in storage for years, we will share some of the most interesting and curious materials in displays and on our website.

Speaking of our website, if you haven't visited lately, there are changes. All our *Californian* issues, going back to January 1980, are now fully digitized and available on our website: www.deanza.edu/califhistory/californian.html. We also have a new "History of the Land and Its Original Peoples" section, designed to serve as a growing repository for shared knowledge, history, and stories: www.deanza.edu/califhistory/land.html. I especially invite you to peruse our new Oral History Recordings page, where you will find our recordings catalogs, along with updates on our digitization process: www.deanza.edu/califhistory/oral-history-recordings.html.

I encourage everyone to make some time to come in person to the Center, either this Spring quarter, or in Fall quarter, to see the changes and the work being done, and to explore your own curiosities by visiting and talking with Lisa Christiansen and our student interns and volunteers. We are here for you, and we are excited and motivated to continue collaborating with students, educators, and community members for many years to come. What's past is prologue, as our continual exploration of the past inspires new visions of the future.

"What's past is prologue."

– Shakespeare,
The Tempest

Audrey Edna Butcher Civil Liberties Education Initiative



Uriel Barrón

Thirty Years of Progress

The Impact of the Watsonville Brown Berets

The enclave of Watsonville is much more than meets the eye. Beyond the rivets of greenery that traverse our agriculture into the cascading mountains beyond, Watsonville's beautiful diversity and community inclusion is what truly sets it apart. Watsonville's culture and diversity has since grown and flourished, and youth of our city are able to see many different pathways toward bright futures. Yet, the beauty and importance of Watsonville weren't cultivated and nourished overnight; they were created through the hard work and advocacy of young people who wanted to see the positive reflections they saw of Watsonville transform into reality. Thirty years ago, in April 1994, two Watsonville youth set out to change those reflections into reality and formed the Watsonville Brown Berets chapter. One of the founding members, Santa Cruz County Supervisor Felipe Hernandez, is still seen today serving the same community that he, as a young man, aspired to help flourish so the youth of our generation would thrive.

The local history of Watsonville, population in 2020 at approximately 52,596, is something that can be seen as full of movements that inspired progress and equity for all who live within. Google research showcases a plethora of different events and movements that inspired the positive changes we see today, such as the United Farm Workers movement in the 70s, as well as the cannery strikes in the 80s. Yet, the front page of Google did not provide as much information of our community's very own Brown Berets chapter as it did the rest of Watsonville's history even though traces of the Watsonville Brown Berets can still be seen within the integral aspects of the community today. Not only Google, newspaper archives captured and divulged small pieces of history, but didn't appear to cover the wholeness of the story. With pieces missing, many questions arise as well. How did these young people see their mission come to fruition? How did the community perceive them at the time, and how were those perceptions right or wrong? What was the backbone of this movement,



Santa Cruz Sentinel, August 7, 1994, page A-2. Courtesy California Digital Newspaper Collection.

and what did this movement mean for the youth during this time? Thankfully, through the privilege of being able to interview Supervisor Hernandez, the fuller picture comes into perspective.

From youth to organizer

Supervisor Hernandez spoke fondly of his upbringing; growing up in the City of Watsonville with two of the hardest working people he knew, his mom and dad. His dad worked at Pecchenino Farms and his mom worked in the canneries. His parents were able to purchase their home through the connections his father had at the farms. Remembering that time, Supervisor Hernandez said that the workers at Pecchenino Farms took care of one another, and his parents were able to secure their house for a great deal because of the community they shared. Felipe spoke of his dad, seeing him as a hero, being able to do a day's work and then some. Even when young Felipe would get tired from doing chores and take a break, his dad would continue on - seemingly without breaking a sweat - even if they both started their chores at the same time. Waking up to the smell of coffee brewing at 4 am before school was a consistent memory for Felipe in his household; smelling the brew was a reminder of the effort and resiliency his father would produce every working day. His mom was no different; she worked in the canneries up until the day she went into labor, and went back to work within the next couple days. His parent's work ethic and dedication to support for their family provided young Felipe with the understanding and appreciation of discipline and persistence.

Paula Hernandez, Supervisor Hernandez's mom, was involved and arguably played one of the most critical roles in the cannery strikes of the 1980s. She worked at the Richard Shaw Frozen Foods facility in Watsonville, a company she had given years of unwavering service to. When Shaw proposed budget cuts to line workers' pay, Paula and hundreds of other cannery line workers went on strike. When Felipe was a young boy, around 10 years of age, he recalled an empowering moment

"Equal rights, fair play, justice, are all like the air: we all have it, or none of us has it. That is the truth of it."

— Maya Angelou

In their work of organizing for the college community, Felipe and Luis felt as though they needed to do something for their own community of Watsonville. Through their time in clubs and student government, they wanted to bring those skills to serving Watsonville.

of community solidarity with the cannery strikers. As he and his mom were around one of the grocery stores in Watsonville, they saw a truck loaded with Shaw frozen foods about to be loaded into the store, and without hesitation, Paula jumped in and told the delivery driver to stop loading the food. She explained that they were on strike from Shaw and why; the driver dropped the pallets outside in support of the strike and refused to load anything into the store. Not only this, the employees of said grocery store refused to load the food inside, deciding to leave the food outside. However, the food did not go to waste. Paula organized the collection of this food to go to fellow strikers and their families in order to support them through the period of persistence. This moment of perseverance and community solidarity left a lasting imprint in the heart and mind of Supervisor Hernandez that he will hold onto the rest of his career.

With his parents working constantly, Felipe found himself with a lot of free time during the school week. He spoke of participating in after-school activities, such as wrestling and football, and would ride his bike to and from his home for these various activities. He kept himself busy, and spoke of the alternative pathways he could have taken with his free time. Other youth he knew, with similar amounts of free time, found themselves caught up in the life of gangs, and later ending up incarcerated or passing away too soon, before their time. In reflection, Supervisor Hernandez commented on how some of these kids he knew were intelligent, even doing better academically than him, still found themselves on the path of gang violence.

As he got older, Felipe found himself in continuation high school, particularly Renaissance High. His school advisors made a plan for him to catch up in his credits so he would be able to continue to play football and graduate from Watsonville High School. Accepting the challenge, Supervisor Hernandez worked tirelessly to get back on track, while still participating in extracurricular activities as well as having a part-time job. The dedication to hard work and discipline, traits that he learned and honed through his parents and mentors, showed themselves in his high school career and beyond. This discipline paid off, and Felipe was able to keep playing football, and graduated from Watsonville High School.



Photo courtesy Supervisor Felipe Hernandez, pictured center.

After serving in the Army in Desert Storm, Felipe came back to Watsonville, working for a bit before deciding to go back to school. First, he had his go with nursing, as he had served as a combat medic in the military. However, he later switched to Community Studies and participated in a school club where he met current Monterey County Supervisor Luis Alejo. During their time at school, Supervisors Hernandez and Alejo served on the governing boards of clubs and were in student government. They aided in the organization, planning, and execution of different cultural and schoolwide events. Their skills honed during this tenure aided them in understanding the skills needed to do something even larger than organizing for their college community.

In their work of organizing for the college community, Felipe and Luis felt as though they needed to do something for their own community of Watsonville. Through their time in clubs and student government, they wanted to bring those skills to serving Watsonville. Hearing about the Brown Berets Chapter in Salinas, they decided to attend a few meetings, and through their participation in these meetings, they received the green light to open their own Brown Berets Chapter in the city of Watsonville, California.

But who were the original Brown Berets, really?

In the depths of the Civil Rights Era, history showcases the rise of different groups and organizations whose goals aligned with the idea of racial justice and equity. The belief that all were truly created equal and that Black and Indigenous, all People of Color deserved the same rights and liberties as white people across the nation led the way to the founding of such organizations and the lasting impact they made on the frames

of history. One such organization, the Brown Berets, was founded in Los Angeles in 1967 amidst the Chicano movement and inspired by the work of the Black Panther Party. Old newspaper archives and exposés showed this organization as a violent paramilitary group, but does that show the whole picture? Who were the Brown Berets, really? To understand the Brown Berets, it's important to understand what they stood for, and what their mission was.

Founded by David Sanchez, and Carlos Montes, the Brown Berets was founded on the premise of fighting injustices against Chicanos, supported education reform as well as farmworkers rights, and advocated against police brutality and the Vietnam War. History, unfortunately, has conflated their movement to a paramilitary group that promoted violence, but it's arguably not the case. The appearance of the Brown Berets made them a target for police harassment, infiltration by the FBI, and much more. These agencies perceived the organization of the Brown Berets to be a violent, militant group, where their primary goals were actually around self-determination and uplifting of the Chicano community.

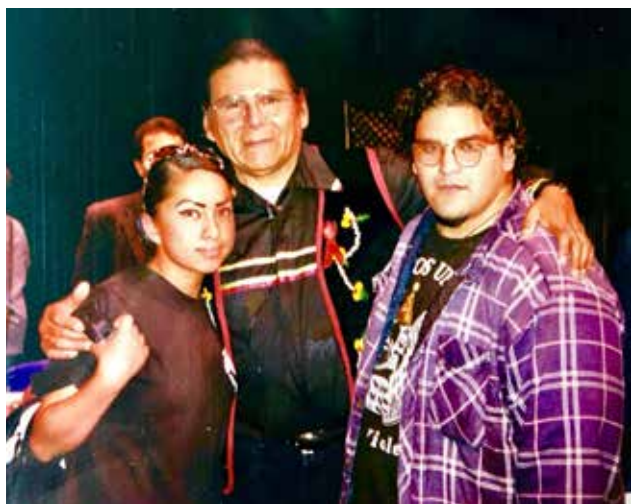
The group, formed mostly by young high school and college students, focused on walkouts, marches, and protests surrounding the goals and mission of the organization. They worked towards protesting the rise of police brutality against

Latinx people, such as the brutality against the Santoya Family in 1967. Unequal education between White students and Latinx students was also something they spoke up against, and many of the school walkouts were organized and executed in protest of these unfair conditions. Also, the Brown Berets opened up a free health clinic, staffed by volunteer nurses and doctors. This clinic stayed open after working hours to ensure working class people had equal access to healthcare as well.

Beyond the veil of sensationalized perception of the Brown Berets in California, they demonstrated their mission of equity and justice for Latinx people across the state. They worked towards a future where Latinx students would have equitable access to education, and police brutality did not exist in their communities. Even amidst the negative perception, the Brown Berets organized peaceful marches and protests, some of the largest in history, during the tenure of the 60s and 80s. The Brown Berets still exist today, and chapters are still promoting the mission of peace and equity for Latinx people.

The Brown Berets worked to show Latinx youth that they are able to become anything they want to be, and did not have to hide from expressing their ideas and advocating for their rights. Before the Chicano movement, Latinx youth were subjected to inequalities and police brutality; society at large posed a black and white picture of the limited potential they could reach. However, the Brown Berets advocated that these young people can exceed society's expectations.

Beyond the veil of sensationalized perception of the Brown Berets in California, they demonstrated their mission of equity and justice for Latinx people across the state.



American Indian Movement activist, leader, co-founder Dennis Banks, center, in this photo courtesy Supervisor Felipe Hernandez, right, with unidentified person, left.

The Watsonville Brown Berets and their motivational mission

Supervisors Hernandez and Alejo wanted to see a better community for everyone in Watsonville. Inspired by the peaceful actions of the United Farm Workers Movement, they worked to create a better Watsonville for youth and their families through uniting our barrios and bridging gaps that may have felt like a non-traversable abyss. Ending violence within the community, creating a space for youth to spearhead change, these were important pieces of the foundation of the Watsonville Brown Berets mission. But why then? What sparked the inspiration to want to do something back in 1994? The answer: the rise of gang violence and the murders of Jorge and Jessica Cortez.

*Photo courtesy
Supervisor Felipe
Hernandez.*



Before the founding of the Watsonville Brown Berets in April of 1994, the community collectively grieved over the brutal slaying of 9 year old Jessica Cortez, and her 16

year old brother, Jorge Cortez, at El Nopal Bakery that February. At the time, the police believed the attack was targeted towards Jorge in a retaliatory action for previous gang related activity. Together, the community was sent into shock and looked towards justice for these two young children who were taken before their time. Shrines were erected, and citizens flooded memorial services to share in the burden of the loss of young lives. Jessica and Jorge were their mothers everything, and the question was posed: when will enough be enough? Enough had to be then and now, and then and now was part of the mission of the Watsonville Brown Berets.

Not only this, the Brown Berets were dedicated to showing youth of the community different paths they could take for their futures, one that didn't include gang activity and the potential of an untimely death. Many young people in the area at the time didn't see alternative pathways from gang activity. The idea that someone who looked like them or had a similar background to them could achieve success and greatness was appearingly unfathomable at the time. The Brown Berets wanted to change that and show young people that they have the power to succeed and achieve something greater than they could imagine. Young people could be active participants in their communities, and especially in their own lives.

Furthermore, providing youth with an avenue to learn more about and connect with their culture was equally important to the Brown Berets chapter as well. Anti-Latinx sentiment was apparent throughout the upper echelons of Santa Cruz County, and it was felt strongly. Not only this, many young people felt disconnected from their own cultures through assimilation and being first or second generation

American. The disconnect between identity and culture cultivated a disconnect among the young people of Watsonville as well. The Brown Berets wanted to provide opportunities for people to connect with their cultures and identities, and bridge that gap between them.

First order of business: setting the stage for the next generations

Supervisors Hernandez and Alejo did not hesitate when they hit the ground running, advertising their first meetings and community actions. Discussing the first year of the Watsonville Brown Berets, Felipe stated that there were over 50 students in attendance at their very first meeting - from all around Watsonville and the rest of Santa Cruz County. That number only grew, but the overwhelming response was a pleasant surprise for the young organizer. Social Media didn't exist, cell phones weren't as they are today, and the Internet hadn't existed yet. The amazing turnout was from the handmade fliers passed around town, and the word of mouth that followed across the county. At the time, these two young organizers never imagined the impact that their chapter would have on the youth of the 90s, and the generations of organizers thereafter.

Not only was the rise of gang violence a prevalent issue the Brown Berets wanted to address and work towards lowering, they also wanted to address the anti-Latinx and anti-immigrant sentiment that was growing in the area. In 1994, Proposition 187 was introduced on the ballot for California voters; this potential proposition was seen by many as an anti-immigrant law. Prop.187 was seen as a restriction to public

...the Brown Berets were dedicated to showing youth of the community different paths they could take for their futures, one that didn't include gang activity and the potential of an untimely death.

services for undocumented immigrants. Not only this, the proposition instructed teachers and healthcare workers to disclose any individuals suspected of being undocumented to the Attorney General, or the Department of Immigration and Naturalization Services. This bill had the potential to raise ethnic and racial profiling in a harmful way to Latinxs.

Watsonville is home to many Latinxs, whether they are one or several generations into being American citizens, or they are immigrants themselves. Many students felt unseen and unheard, and villainized by the government; the state of California's economy had blamed undocumented immigrants for its shortcomings. The Brown Berets organized a march with Watsonville High students to protest the proposition, as well as to bring about a collective unity amongst Latinx students. Fliers were handed out, word of mouth spread all about the county, and the Brown Berets organized the route. The turnout was massive.

Newspaper archives do not divulge the magnitude of how much the community rallied for undocumented immigrants and the Latinx community of Santa Cruz County. In discussing this march, Supervisor Hernandez remembered that, after the students walked out of Watsonville High and marched the predetermined route, they noticed a large group of people walking into the city from Highway 1. Upon further inspection, they saw that it was students from Aptos High School, who partly organized their own walkout and traversed the almost 10 miles on foot to show their solidarity with students in Watsonville. This was communal solidarity, transcending space and location to stand together with others in unity.

Through their perseverance and community support, the Watsonville Brown Berets organized a movement that still prevails to this day: the Peace and Unity March. In August of 1994, Felipe, Luis, and several youth of Watsonville, organized a march to call for an end to gang violence, as well as commemorate the lives lost due to it. Mentioned names of remembrance included Jessica and Jorge Cortez, whose deaths were part of the catalyst that inspired the Brown Berets to envision a better community for the youth of tomorrow. This event rallied the support and physical presence of many businesses and citizens of the community. Businesses offered refreshments and food for marchers, and people from

all over Santa Cruz County and beyond rallied and marched as well. Signs were raised, one captured by the Santa Cruz Sentinel, saying, "Raza stop killing Raza," and families who lost their loved ones due to gang violence spoke of their grief, and the prevailing aftermath of the loss of their children, their siblings, their family. This march reflected the need many citizens felt in their hearts to share inclusion and community with one another, to stop preventable violence, and to connect in their collective identity.

When remembering the first event, Supervisor Hernandez didn't know at the time the importance this march would have on the community and the strength it would still hold to this day. The march was about bringing the community together, and allowing them to see the consequences of gang violence. This march, still held to this day annually, holds onto the remembrance of such individuals who were taken far too soon. Today, the torch has been passed from the Brown Berets to the mothers of the victims of gang violence - the brightly glowing flame of community, grief, and strength perseveres through the continual organization of this march. The mothers have been the organizers of this march for several years now, and have built on the foundation created 30 years ago.

Although he is not the organizer of this annual event anymore, Supervisor Hernandez does attend the march. Through bringing the people of Watsonville together and allowing the city to bear witness to the reality of gangs, violence has declined over the years, but the rate of gang violence has not gone down to zero so the fight continues. Whether through the direct impact of the marches or not, the Annual Peace and Unity March still stands as a reminder of what has been lost, but also serves as a beacon of hope. In remembrance of loved ones who had lost their lives, the oldest continuous peace march in California advocates for change and inspires people to see that there is so much more out there for them to achieve, and so much more within themselves to achieve.

The impact of the Brown Berets on youth of the 90s

The Watsonville Brown Berets were not merely an activist group, they wanted to see the youth of our community flourish and see different pathways that lead to a brighter future.

Through their perseverance and community support, the Watsonville Brown Berets organized a movement that still prevails to this day: the Peace and Unity March.

Photo is from the collection of Supervisor Felipe Hernandez, shown center.



The Brown Berets, in their work, provided these students with the opportunities to see and dream something much larger than their current scope of reality.

One such action they took was taking high school students to different universities to tour the campuses; most of these students had never seen a university campus before, and some wouldn't have been able to tour them with their parents. Many universities would hold days dedicated to Latinx students, in which many Watsonville students would be able to see people from a similar background and culture in roles that transcended their conceptualized ideas of what their options were in adulthood. Reflecting on youth who participated in the Watsonville Brown Berets, Supervisor Hernandez spoke fondly about students who went on to work in local and statewide government. Many of these students went on to earn their bachelor's degrees, master's, and went on to achieve successes they previously couldn't have imagined themselves doing.

Seeing the impact of being able to physically and mentally conceptualize a brighter future for yourself because you were able to see someone who looked like you, or came from a similar background as you, achieve their own dreams inspired these young people. The Brown Berets, in their work, provided these students with the opportunities to see and dream something much larger than their current scope of reality. Through the testimony and results many students showed, after their time in the Brown Berets, that hardwork and dedication to helping these young people paid off greatly.

Not only this, the Brown Berets allowed students and their families to be active participants in the community; giving them the opportunity to speak on issues that they cared about. One such action included allowing students to speak up for affordable housing in the City of Watsonville to local government, and speaking out in support of the creation of Pajaro Valley High School during the time when many people were debating whether it should be built or not. During these times, young people and their families would be invited to speak; seeing the older generations also having the opportunities to speak about causes they care about also made an impact on young people in the area.

The approval for building Pajaro Valley High School in particular was one in which the Brown Berets needed to plan and organize transportation and rally the citizens of Watsonville together to speak up. At the time, Watsonville High was overfull, way beyond capacity, with students that didn't have access to proper means of communication. Many students at this time sat on the floor, generators, and anywhere they could - the classrooms were packed to the brim with students trying to receive an education. Building another high school was an important step in balancing out the number of students and providing them with equitable access to the education they deserved. However, many people from different regions of Santa Cruz opposed the idea of building another high school in Watsonville. Although there was opposition, no one was deterred from seeing the building of a new high school as a reality. The meeting for this proposed new high school was being held in Carmel, about an hour south. Transporting these young people, their parents, and concerned citizens was important, and the Brown Berets pulled it off.

Through their work of providing a new outlet for youth to surround themselves with different outlets for their futures, they never asked for money from these students or their families. They paid for transportation, food, and their meeting spaces through fundraising efforts to support their mission. Supervisor Hernandez explained that they did various car washes, t-shirt sales, and much more. It was important to make it so everyone who wanted to join and participate in the Watsonville Brown Berets chapter was able to access it, regardless of financial status or background. Through these fundraising efforts, they were able to secure transportation for various events, such as university campus tours as well as the various actions of advocacy they participated in. Securing food for everyone who was involved in and participated in these events was important, as well.

Even though they provided a positive impact for students in the community, some did not see it that way. Discussing the

spaces for the Brown Berets meetings, Supervisor Hernandez explained that they had to move spaces three times across Watsonville. Although many community advisors and boards supported young people doing extracurricular activities, they did not support, or feel comfortable with, the advocacy part of the Brown Berets. After some time, the Brown Berets decided to rent out a space, utilized by the money from their fundraising efforts, to call a permanent place for their community-wide meetings. Even though their mission and belief framework behind their work showcased a peaceful movement, many people could not get past the idea that young people did not want to remain silent when it came to issues and causes they believed were important and worth talking about.

Reflecting on the progress from then to now

The strides and progress made from thirty years ago to today must not go unnoticed. Watsonville has since flourished and continues to make great movements towards a future that was envisioned in the eyes and hearts of young people back in 1994. In discussing the time since the founding of the Watsonville Brown Berets, Supervisor Hernandez shared that the community as a whole has gotten better. In the time before the Brown Berets chapter, racism and anti-Latinx sentiment was still a problem many people experienced across Santa Cruz County. This was seen in the opposition to the building of Pajaro Valley High, as well as building more affordable housing options in Watsonville. Latinx culture wasn't as easily showcased and celebrated back then as it is now, yet the reclamation and education for young people during the tenure of the Watsonville Brown Berets and of other organizations and actions taken since, has allowed people to show pride for where they come from, showcase their identity, and honor it.

Since his time in the Brown Berets, Supervisor Hernandez continued to work in community organizing and local politics. He worked for the United Farm Workers Association, and was also a part of the background work for the construction of Pajaro Valley High School. During his time in the Watsonville City Council, Supervisor Hernandez worked towards the construction of the skatepark at Ramsey Park and much more. The Ramsey Park skatepark was driven by the desire to give more young people options for their free time in Watsonville; young people would commute out of town to go skate with their friends, and Supervisor Hernandez wanted to give them the option of skating in their own community home. By working with young skaters, and getting the funding neces-

sary for this project approved, Supervisor Hernandez was able to get the skatepark constructed and opened. On opening day, skaters from all over town flooded the skatepark. From young to old, everyone was able to skate and partake in the beautiful day - they were able to visualize and participate in everything Watsonville had to offer.

As a County Supervisor, he initiated the Young Supervisors Academy. This academy was founded on the premise of providing high school youth the opportunity to participate in local government, and be a part of the behind the scenes work that goes into making change in the community. Through this program, students learn about civic engagement, speech and debate, leadership, and the sector of local politics. Young Supervisors participate in activities within the city council and county chambers, and discuss issues that are not only important to them, but also pertinent to Santa Cruz County overall.

Another action that Supervisor Hernandez has done is assist local food truck operators in ensuring their livelihoods do not get taken away. A countywide proposition was in the talks of being passed that would take away the ability for food trucks to operate, and for the owners to lose their ability to make a living and support their families. Supervisor Hernandez and his team set up zoom tents across the county, advising food truck owners to come by and utilize these tents to speak up and advocate for their livelihoods. The turn out was immense, and Supervisor Hernandez reflected that many of the owners still recognize him as the one that aided in the retention of their businesses still today.

Through his career, Supervisor Hernandez has been an advocate for the people, for the hardworking families similar to the one he grew up in. As a young man, he envisioned a community that allowed people to flourish and reach the fullest extent of their potential, and continuously works toward that vision to this day. In asking about what legacy he'd like to leave behind, Supervisor Hernandez explained that the work he'd done to make the community better, and to see the torch handed off to the next generation of leaders to continue to advocate for a brighter and prosperous tomorrow would be that legacy. Even throughout his tenure, the desire to make the community better has never left his sight, and that motivation shines through in his work today.

We have the power to see change within our communities

When asked if he had any advice to share with the next generation of leaders and organizers, Supervisor Hernandez

Through his career, Supervisor Hernandez has been an advocate for the people, for the hardworking families similar to the one he grew up in.

CALIFORNIA'S MOST UNUSUAL WRITER



William Rintoul and Chronicles of Kern County

By Rasoul Sorkhabi

“Bill [Rintoul] is a Kern County patriot. I do not mean he would defend his county’s honor with guns and knives. But he likes the place, he has spent most of his life there, and takes its flaws with its virtues. He actually prefers the unrelieved flatness of the landscape.”

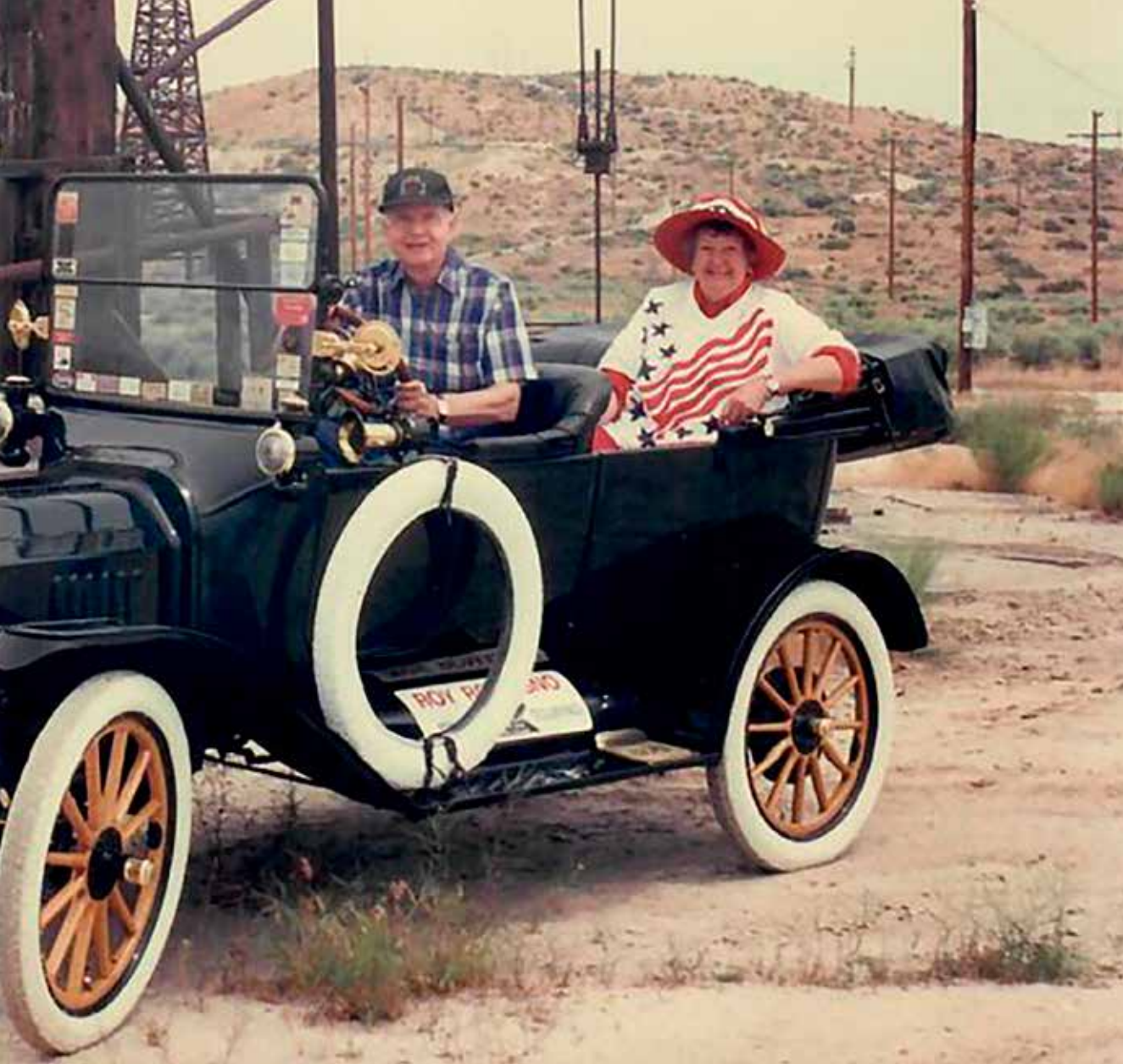
—James Houston in
*Californians: Searching for the
Golden State* (1982)



RASOUL SORKHABI, PhD, is a professor at the University of Utah’s Energy & Geoscience Institute in Salt Lake City. He has published more than 200 articles on geology and history. He is a member of various professional societies including Geological Society of America, Earth Science History Society, and Petroleum History Institute.

In 1940, William “Bill” Thomas Rintoul, aged eighteen, joined UC Berkeley. He majored in journalism and graduated in 1943. Studying at UC Berkeley was a family tradition for the Rintouls. Bill’s father, Henry Ward Beecher “Pete” Rintoul (1887-1964) graduated from Berkeley in civil engineering in 1911; Bill’s elder brothers Henry Ward Beecher “Beech” Rintoul, Jr. (1917-1987) and John David “Dave” Rintoul (1919-2013) also studied at Berkeley and both graduated in mechanical engineering; his wife Frankie Jo Miller graduated from UC Berkeley in 1948 (the same year Bill and Frankie married). This article narrates the story and career of Bill Rintoul, a freelance journalist from Kern County, California, whose life spanned most of the twentieth century and whose writings chronicled the growth of California’s oil industry.

In writing this article, I have much benefitted from correspondence with Bill Rintoul’s daughter Susan Parker Rintoul and his son James Rintoul, both of whom live in California, and kindly shared archived documents and family photographs with me. In addition, I have used Bill Rintoul’s inter-



Bill Rintoul offered group tours to the oil fields of Kern County. This photo shows Rintoul and his wife Frankie Jo during a tour through the oil fields of Taft in the 1990s. (Photo courtesy of Susan Parker Rintoul)

views published in various places. These sources, which are referenced as they are specifically cited in the text, are not easily accessible, and none provides an up-to-date and in-depth account of Rintoul's family and professional life. I hope this article provides a comprehensive report on Rintoul's life and career as a Californian writer and historian of a subject that is now mostly forgotten. Throughout the twentieth century, the oil industry contributed greatly to the economy and energy of California. With Rintoul's passing at the turn of the current century, a new era of energy transition and independence was ushered into California. Nevertheless, if future historians attempt to write a detailed history of California's oil they will find Rintoul's "Oilfields News" columns (1950-2000), his hundreds of magazine articles as well as his four "coffee table" books invaluable sources.

The Rintouls of California

The Rintouls of California are connected to Canada through David Rintoul (1844-1905), Bill Rintoul's grandfather, and

to Scotland through David Rintoul (1796-1872), his great-grandfather, who was born in Glasgow but emigrated to Ontario, Canada to work as a schoolmaster. In 1840, David Rintoul (the great-grandfather) married Margaret Elliot. They had eight children, the eldest of whom was David Rintoul (Bill's grandfather), who spent the years 1869-1870 in Britain where he met and married Agnes McPherson (1849-1941). The couple moved to live on a farm in Manitoba, Canada. David Rintoul (the grandfather) lost his eyesight in 1890, when the family moved to California, first Alameda and then San Francisco. David Rintoul and Agnes had thirteen children, the eleventh being Henry Ward Beecher "Pete" Rintoul (Bill's father) who was born in Gladstone, Manitoba, but grew up in California. He worked as a carpenter in the Bay Area but also attended UC Berkeley, the first in his family to have higher education. After graduating from UC Berkeley, Pete Rintoul worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad and for the Kern County Lands Company in Bakersfield, California, before moving to Taft, California in 1917 as an engineer for

William Rintoul (1922-2001) and his wife Frankie Jo (née Miller) Rintoul (1926-2014) both graduated from UC Berkeley, in 1943 and 1948 respectively. Photo taken in 1976. (Photo courtesy of Susan Parker Rintoul).



the Western Water Company. Pete Rintoul married Deane Gertrude O'Connor (1894-1962, daughter of a railroad man from Missouri), Bill's mother, in 1917. She also worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Arizona where she met Pete Rintoul. The couple settled in Taft, where their three sons were born and raised: Beech worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad; Dave joined the Standard Oil Company; and Bill, the youngest, became a journalist and freelance writer.

Raising in Kern County

The city of Taft is located on the southwestern edge of the San Joaquin Valley, California. It began as a railroad town. "Taft was originally named Moro, but upon applying for a post office it was discovered that another town, in San Luis Obispo County, had the same name. It was suggested that the letter "n" be added, making it "Moron." Unbelievably, a post office in Colorado had the same name so upon the suggestion of postmaster Harry A. Hopkins, the town was christened Taft.¹ That was 1909 when William Taft was elected as the 27th US President; Taft was named after him.

Bill Rintoul was born in Taft on April 30, 1922. The house he grew up still stands on 730 Kern Street in the city. While a teenager, Bill worked as a part-time worker in Kern oil fields on weekends. He also became seriously interested in boxing and collected autographed photographs of professional boxers of the day. He wrote articles about boxing and boxers for various magazines. One of these boxers was Max Marek from Chicago (famous as the man who beat Joe Louis in 1933). Marek was also a book lover. In addition to his autographed photograph, Marek sent a list of his favorite novels to Bill Rintoul to read. Below his signature on the

¹ "Taft - Its beginnings," Bill Rintoul, *Taft Oildorado* 1980, pp. 34-47.

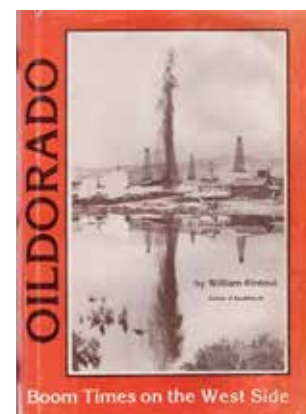
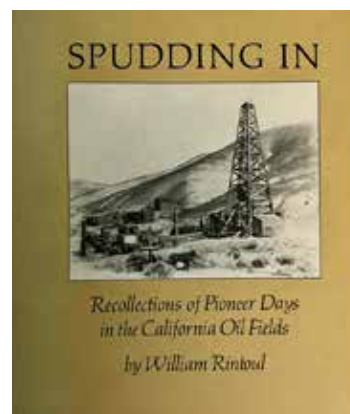
glossy photograph he had written a quote from Washington Irving: "Remember: Great minds have purposes, others have wishes. Little minds are tamed and subdued by misfortune; but great minds rise above them."² On top of Marek's book list was Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* – a novel set in a small "town of a few thousand, in a region of wheat and corn and dairies and little grows" in Minnesota, "but its Main Street is a continuation of Main Streets everywhere" (the opening lines of the novel). In 1930, Sinclair Lewis became the first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, mainly for his novel *Main Street*. That is perhaps why the book was number one on Marek's recommended book list for Rintoul. "It was the first book I had read in which the characters sounded like people I might know," Bill Rintoul later recalled.³ Rintoul became a voracious reader; he read Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Zane Grey, and John Steinbeck. He fell in love with books and decided to become a writer. In 1936, while a sophomore at Taft Union High School, he took a typing class, and also received a portable typewriter as a Christmas present from his parents.

Of the writers Rintoul read, John Steinbeck had closest connections to California. Steinbeck, twenty years older than Rintoul, was born and raised in Salinas, California. His most famous novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939, was set in the Great Depression, when many poor families migrated from the American Midwest to California in search of work, food, and shelter. Steinbeck narrated the plight of these families through the Joads, a family of tenant farmers who were driven from their Oklahoma home by drought and economic hardship and came to Kern County, California. But the novel also mentioned how the Joads were mistreated by Californians. This upset some authorities in Kern County, who believed that Californians had actually shown much hospitality

² Apparently taken from Elbert Hubbard's *Scrapbook* (New York: Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1923) p. 102.

³ "Without a safety net: An interview with William Rintoul," by Gerald Haslam, *Reviews from Rural America*, April 1985, vol. 1, no. 10, pp. 5-7.

While a teenager, Bill worked as a part-time worker in Kern oil fields on weekends.



to the emigrant families; the book was thus banned for several months from schools and libraries. When *The Grapes of Wrath* came out, Bill Rintoul was just finishing high school, and was proud to say that he had read the book and “did not really think it was all that derogatory.”⁴

The book ban by the Kern County Board of Supervisors was protested by libraries and labor unions; the whole controversy faded away as Hitler invaded Poland and World War II began in September 1939.

In 1962 Steinbeck won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Rintoul took the opportunity to write an article about the story of banning of *The Grapes of Wrath*.⁵

Life as a freelance writer

After Rintoul graduated from Taft Union High School in 1939, he studied for a year at the junior college in Taft, but in 1940 transferred to UC Berkeley to study journalism. He graduated from Berkeley in 1943, and then joined the US Army and went to serve as a rifleman and radioman in the 89th Infantry Division in Europe, for which he earned a Combat Infantryman Badge and a Bronze Star. In 1946, Rintoul got out of the Army and returned to Taft, with “only \$500 in his pocket, \$300 of that his discharge bonus. He had rarely saved his pay, he said, because money doesn’t mean much when you’re about to lose your life.”⁶ He took a year to travel in Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. During Christmas of 1947, he returned to Taft, where he met Frankie Jo Miller at a New Year’s Eve party. “Each was with another date,” recalls Susan Parker Rintoul from what she had heard from her parents, “but Dad asked

my Mom out shortly afterwards. He said he was impressed by her intelligence and beauty. Their first date was a movie. Each had already seen it unbeknownst to the other!” They married on June 19, 1948.

For a while, Rintoul worked as a roustabout (laborer) for Standard Oil in Kern County, laying pipelines and setting pumps on well heads. His passion, however, lay in writing. Using the G.I. Bill program for the returning World War II veterans, Rintoul returned to school and obtained an M.A. in journalism from Stanford in 1949. While at Stanford he took a course on magazine article writing and sold an article on the Cuyama Valley oil boom to the *Christian Science Monitor* for \$40 – equivalent of four days of work as a roustabout.⁷ After graduation from Stanford, Rintoul got a job at the *Bakersfield Californian* as a stringer in Delano, California, where his daughter Susan was born. Rintoul’s early assignments were to report on anything making news– fires, crimes, weddings, etc. He was paid 15 cents per printed inch (and that didn’t include the headline!).⁸ But when the *Bakersfield Californian* decided to launch an oil column, Rintoul was picked as their writer.

In 1950 Rintoul moved his family to Bakersfield where he purchased a house at 2721 Beech Street in the Westchester neighborhood. A year later, his son, James, was born. From his home office (a room detached from the main building and adjacent to the garage), Rintoul continued his freelance writing for the *Bakersfield Californian* and numerous other periodicals for the rest of his life. His wife Frankie Jo gave him a Royal Standard typewriter in 1955; he wrote all of

The Rintoul family house at 2721 Beech Street was located in the Westchester neighborhood, bounded by the Kern River on the northwest, Golden State Avenue on the northeast, and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad terminal on the south.



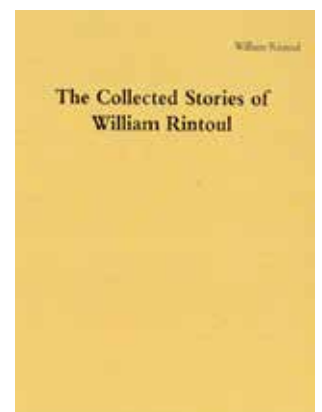
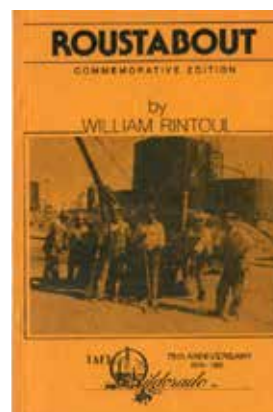
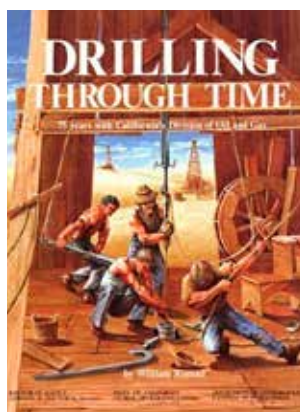
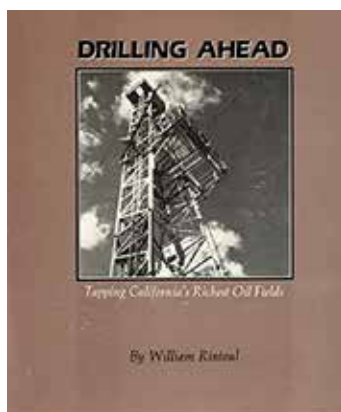
⁴ “Interview with Stacey Jagels, California State College, Bakersfield: Oral History Program,” June 8, 1981. Reprinted in *The Bakersfield Californian*, May 7, 2016, pp. F20-22.

⁵ “The Banning of the Grapes of Wrath,” by Bill Rintoul, *California Crossroads*, January 1963, pp. 4-6, and February 1963, pp. 26-29. *California Crossroads* was a monthly magazine published in Bakersfield, California by Thomas Liggett between 1960-1970. The magazine is digitized and archived in the Walter W. Stiren Library of California State University, Bakersfield: <https://archives.csu.edu/repositories/3/resources/29>

⁶ “50 years and still going for columnist,” Bob Christie, *The Bakersfield Californian*, April 27, 1999

⁷ “Without a safety net: An interview with William Rintoul,” by Gerald Haslam, *Reviews from Rural America*, April 1985, vol. 1, no. 10, pp. 5-7.

⁸ “An exclusive interview with Bill Rintoul,” *Bakersfield Lifestyle*, August 1986, pp. 5-17.

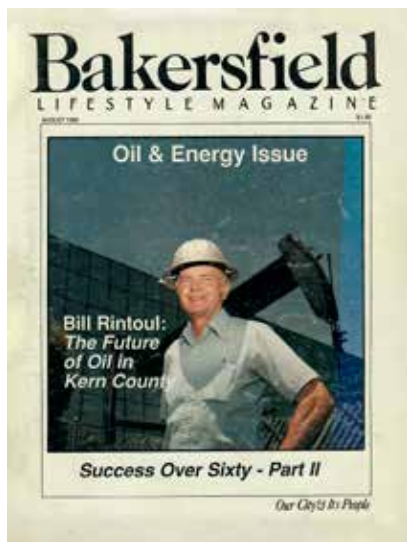


The Rintouls – a happy family in Bakersfield: Bill Rintoul, his wife Frankie Jo, daughter Susan, and son James. Photo taken in 1976. (Photo courtesy of Susan Parker Rintoul).



his books on this manual typewriter. His freelance journalism took him to many places in California and outside of the state to interview prominent personalities.

Rintoul wrote a six-day-a-week “Oilfields News” column for the *Bakersfield Californian* from 1950 until his retirement in May 2000 – for 50 years. His columns were so popular that readers would mail them to friends and colleagues in faraway oil towns (before the Internet and emails). For over a decade, Rintoul was also a regular contributor to the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Sacramento Bee*, *Tulsa Daily World*, and *Pacific Oil World*, and often wrote for magazines such as *Petroleum Week*, *Drilling Contractor*, *Well Servicing Magazine*, *Oil & Gas Investor*, *Oil & Gas Journal*, *Offshore Magazine*, *Westways*, *California Business*, *California Crossroads*, *Sports Illustrated*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Nation*, and others.



From 1976-1981, Rintoul published three illustrated books that are indispensable to any reader of California’s oil history: *Spudding In: Recollection of Pioneer Days in the California Oil Fields* (California Historical Society, 1976), *Oildorado: Boom Times on the West Side* (Western Tanager Press, 1979), and *Drilling Ahead: Tapping California’s Richest Oil Fields* (Western Tanager Press, 1981).

Rintoul did not simply write about machines and rocks in a dry language; he humanized the oil history. He incorporated stories of individuals – their

lives, families, dreams, greed, hard work, pains, and joy – in his articles and books. For instance, Rintoul’s book *Drilling Ahead* opens with the story of the Cuyama oil discovery in 1948. This was shortly after World War II when demand for oil rapidly increased due to population growth and postwar construction. Energy was needed in huge amounts, and California played a major role in securing domestic energy. The Cuyama Valley, to the north of Santa Barbara, was populated by nomadic Indians and was named after an Indian word meaning *clam* because of abundant fossil shells in the valley. One local veteran journalist, James Travers, aged 81, believed that the valley possessed oil riches, and wrote a newspaper article suggesting his readers to lease public lands for mineral rights. Two companies competed for oil in the Cuyama Valley – Norris Oil and Richfield Oil, and both drilled wells in 1948, but Norris Oil’s well was dry; Richfield Oil’s well was successful. In his book Rintoul described how both companies had dedicated managers and geologists for the exploration and drilling. The following is his paragraph about the day of discovery:

“On June 13, seven weeks after Richfield had begun its wildcat, a small group gathered by the well. Among those present were Charlie Jones, Richfield’s president; Frank Morgan, the vice president in charge of exploration; and Hub Russell, Cuyama’s leading cattleman, on whose Russell Ranch the well had been drilled ... In time, the well came in flowing 508 barrels a day of 38.2-gravity oil, cutting 1 percent water, from 390 feet of oil sand at 2,970-3,360 feet. The sand quickly named the Dibblee sand, honoring the geologist who had played a major role in its discovery. The flow from the Russell Ranch well left no doubt Cuyama was an oil province. Jones later recalled that Hub Russell seemed somewhat perplexed. “What does this mean?” Russell asked. “Mr. Russell,” Jones replied, “it means that you are a very rich man.””

This is a superb way of blending petroleum science and history with peoples’ life stories. Rintoul was a master of this style of writing. His books on oil fields read like fiction although they were all historical and actual events. This humanization of the oil history is also evident in the photographs Rintoul included in his books: The vast majority of them are pictures of ordinary men walking or working in oil fields.

Because of Rintoul’s reputation, California’s Department of Conservation, Division of Oil and Gas, commissioned

⁹ *Drilling Ahead: Tapping California’s Richest Oil Fields*, William Rintoul (Western Tanager Press, 1981), p. 17.



Bill Rintoul making money at the typewriter. The upper photo, taken in 1958 by his wife Frankie Jo, shows Rintoul at his desk with the Royal Standard type writer, which was given to him as a gift in 1955 by his wife. Rintoul used this manual typewriter until 1990, thus having written all of his books on it. The lower photo shows Rintoul with his Apple Mac computer which was presented to him in June 1990 by his son Jim, a computer expert. Rintoul used his Mac right away and loved it, even though he sometimes missed the clicking sounds of his loyal manual typewriter. His daughter Susan recalls that "the clicks of the keys on his father's type writer were like a lullaby to her." (Photos courtesy of James Rintoul)





Reporting and journalism took Bill Rintoul to many places and personalities. This photo shows him shaking hands with President Gerald Ford during his visit to Elk Hill Naval Petroleum Reserve in California on March 31, 1975. (Photo courtesy of Susan Parker Rintoul)

him to write the history of California's Division of Oil and Gas for its 75th anniversary. Rintoul used the opportunity to write a succinct chronicle of California's oil. The result was *Drilling Through Time*, a profusely illustrated book published in 1990.

Rintoul also captured the lives of people in oil towns and oil fields in short stories published in more than a dozen magazines. Some of these were collected in two books: *Ring Nine* and *Roustabout*, published respectively in 1983 and 1986 by a small press, Seven Buffaloes, in Montana. Two of the stories in *Roustabout* were translated into Russian and included in an anthology of American writers entitled *I Believe in Humanity*, published in Moscow in 1986. The book's Russian editor noted that Steinbeck would have written like Rintoul had he written about oil fields. In 2011, ten years after Rintoul's death, his children Susan and James published *The Collected Stories of William Rintoul* in a hardcover volume; it contains 45 short stories.

Although California oil was Rintoul's main area of writing, he also covered oil stories from other parts of the USA – from Alaska to Texas, as well as overseas. He and his wife Frankie visited 108 countries in total. The picturesque Iceland was his favorite.

Rintoul was a sought-after speaker; he gave over 150 speeches. As for the topics, "the standing family joke," recalls his daughter Susan Parker, "was that his topic was always: The Changing Oil Scene." She also remembers her father in these words, "We never went out to dinner without people in the oil industry buttonholing my dad to ask about what was

happening in the oil fields. He always knew." Rintoul appears in the 1995 "Oil" (episode 609) of *California's Gold*, a documentary travel TV series produced and hosted by Huell Howser.¹⁰ There is a full-page entry for William Rintoul in the volume *Kern's Movers and Shakers* published in 1987.¹¹

The end of an era

Writing in *The Los Angeles Times*, Gerald Haslam called Bill Rintoul "one of California's most unusual writers."¹² For a prolific journalist like Rintoul specializing in California's oil was indeed a rarity. Rintoul, however, was also a historian of California's oil. James Houston called Rintoul "a living encyclopedia of petroleum lore."¹³ Rintoul was proud to say that during the Second Oil Shock in 1979-80, the Kern County of California was the fourth largest oil-producing region in the country (after Texas, Alaska, and Louisiana) to provide energy for domestic needs.¹⁴

Rintoul taught classes in writing at Bakersfield Junior College and Fresno State University (where he had to commute two hours each way). He loved to teach and train young journalists and writers. He was gratified to see that some of his students published magazine articles. In an interview with the renowned writer Gerald Haslam, Rintoul offered the following advice to young writers: "On one hand, you've got to be sensitive or you're not going to make much of a writer. On the other hand, you're going to have to be strong enough to take a lot of rejection and disappointment. It all comes down to figuring out what you want to do."¹⁵ As for the reason why he chose freelance journalism, Rintoul once commented: "I am not very good following instructions sometimes. I like to write stories the way I think they should be done."¹⁶

In May 2000, just as Rintoul retired, the *Bakersfield Californian* published a cover story about him by Chip Power who quoted Rintoul: "I have appreciated the work I have had. The thing is, I'm kind of tired. I wanted to take some time off."¹⁷ Rintoul died on June 26, 2001 at age 79, after one-year battle with Alzheimer's disease. Newspapers in California, including *The Los Angeles Times*, *Bakersfield Californian*, and *Daily*

¹⁰ "Oil – California's God (609)," Huell Howser, November 8, 1995. Available online: <https://blogs.chapman.edu/huell-howser-archives/1995/11/08/oil-californias-gold-609/>

¹¹ *Kern's Movers and Shakers*, by Camille Gavin and Kathy Leverett (The Kern View Foundation, Bakersfield, CA), p. 128 "Rintoul, William."

¹² "An anecdotal history of oil industry," Gerald Haslam *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1982, p. 10

¹³ *Californians: Searching for the Golden State*, James Houston (Alfred Knopf, New York, 1982), p. 61

¹⁴ "An exclusive interview with Bill Rintoul," *Bakersfield Lifestyle*, August 1986, pp. 5-17.

¹⁵ "Without a safety net: An interview with William Rintoul," by Gerald Haslam, *Reviews from Rural America*, April 1985, vol. 1, no. 10, pp. 5-7.

¹⁶ Bill Rintoul quoted in "A tribute to Bill Rintoul," by Hal Bopp, *Pacific Petroleum Geologist Newsletter*, January-February 2001, p. 12.

¹⁷ "Famed oil writer retires," by Chip Power, *The Bakersfield Californian*, May 21, 2000, pp. 1-2.

Midway Driller, all published his obituary. Many “letters to editor” to *Bakersfield Californian*, well-wishers, and colleagues honored his life and contributions. One reader, Karen Tumulty (actually a writer for *Time Magazine* in Washington D.C.) wrote: “I was greatly saddened to see the story in the *Californian* about the death of Bill Rintoul, who was one of the most generous colleagues I have ever had the opportunity to meet in this business ... I learned more about the oil business from him than anywhere else. Bill always knew who I should

call and what I should ask them. I was also impressed at how he could bring almost a lyrical sense to a subject that was all about dirt and rocks and big machines.”¹⁸

Rintoul’s death at the turn of the twenty-first century marked the end of an era as California embarked on a new path of energy transition to non-fossil fuels. His wife and companion for nearly six decades, Frankie Jo, died in 2014, and shortly afterward their Bakersfield house was sold and the new owner has completely remodeled it.

For his contributions to petroleum journalism and historiography, Rintoul received a number of awards and honors. In 1980 he was Grand Marshall at Taft Oildorado. In 1990, he won the American Association of Petroleum Geologists (AAPG) Journalism Award. For this life-long achievement award, Rintoul was interviewed for Bakersfield-based KGET Television. The video-recording of this interview is available online and provides Rintoul’s own reflections on his life as a writer.¹⁹ Delighted to hear about this award, Rintoul wrote to a friend: “Another flipping of vanity is coming my way in June when the American Association of Petroleum Geologists presents me their Journalism Award at their national meeting in San Francisco. I am flattered, especially that I got a C in the only geology course I ever took (as a freshman at Taft Junior College). I’ll be the 11th person to get the Award since they started giving it in 1972, and it will put me in some august company, including such previous writers as James Michener, John McPhee, and David Attenborough.”²⁰ In 2022, Rintoul was posthumously given the Petroleum History Institute’s Keeper of the Flame Award which was presented to his family at the Oil History Symposium in Santa Barbara, California.

Rintoul’s death at the turn of the twenty-first century marked the end of an era as California embarked on a new path of energy transition to non-fossil fuels.



Bill Rintoul and his wife Frankie Jo in 1988 at an Army reunion in St. Paul, Minneapolis. (Photo courtesy of Susan Parker Rintoul)

¹⁸ “Readers, colleagues remember Bill Rintoul,” *The Bakersfield Californian*, opinion page, July 8, 2001.

¹⁹ William Rintoul Interview with Vivian Tucker (California Revealed, KCET-TV-17, 1990). This video-recording is found in several websites: <https://californiarevealed.org/do/5b8b9a67-6b47-4a1a-9769-71c0f33a6af> (original host); https://archive.org/details/cbak_000055; <https://calisphere.org/item/40833d12c605f6796eacbaef906b787/>

²⁰ Bill Rintoul’s letter to Russell and Arline, dated December 16, 1989. [Russell was Rintoul’s friend from World War II. He and his wife Arline remained family friends for life.]

At the Center

RECENT EVENTS

Over the past two years, CHC Foundation board members and CHC staff, students, and volunteers have been working diligently to bring the collections out of storage and back into the Trianon building where they will be more accessible to researchers. As the collections become more accessible, they are also being processed and organized, with the intention that some of them will also be digitized.

Volunteers Saroj Bangaru and Edwin El-Kareh, pictured here with CHC Faculty Director Lori Clinchard, were instrumental in organizing and moving decades worth of archival collections out of campus storage (lovingly referred to as "the dungeon.")



CHC is housed at De Anza within the Social Sciences and Humanities Division, led by Dean Elvin Ramos, who encourages faculty to relax, create, and enjoy as we work together. On May 13, 2024, Dean Ramos arranged with Creative Arts Dean Kristin Skager and Ceramics Dept. Chair Rocky Lewycky to create a fun afternoon in the Ceramics studio. Pictured here are L to R: Kristin Skager, Rocky Lewycky, Susan Thomas, Elvin Ramos, Javette Johnson, Steve Nava, Laura Chin, Lori Clinchard, and Purba Fernandez.



Volunteer archivist Saroj Bangaru is helping to catalog and organize dozens of boxes of archival collections, with the intention of processing and digitizing for the future.

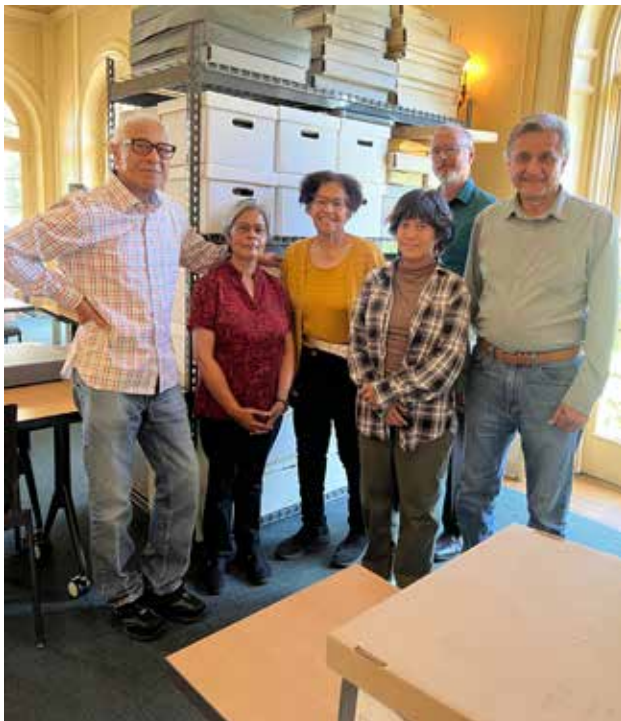
CHC Volunteer Margaret Butcher and student employee Anya Nazarova look at maps with librarian/archivist Lisa Christiansen in the Library.





CHC volunteer Edwin El-Kareh helped facilitate the return of the original wooden “Camp Duveneck” sign to its rightful home at Hidden Villa. The sign had been displayed as part of a CHC exhibit in the 1970s and has been in CHC archives ever since.

CHC Foundation Treasurer Purba Fernandez and President Mark Healy share a laugh; Dean Elvin Ramos’s SSH Excellence Award sculpture is visible in the foreground.



CHC Foundation Board members gather in the classroom to assess and plan for new archival shelving. From L to R: Ulysses Pichon, Purba Fernandez, Cecilie Vaughters-Johnson, Noemi Teppang, Mark Healy, and Ruben Abrica.



Whether you are young, or old, able bodied or not, we all have the ability and unlimited potential to see the futures we envision for ourselves and for the communities we want to see strive.

Audrey Edna Butcher Civil Liberties Education Initiative

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wanted to remind them to remember the people. In explanation, he stated that a lot of organization happens online these days, where we are easily able to see a post about an upcoming march or event. Even though it is great to get as many eyes on it as possible, it is also equally important to engage people in person. As he first got into organizing, social media didn't exist, and most of the work of the Brown Berets, and his own career thereafter, involved connecting with people in person and engaging them face to face. It's important to remember the people behind the screens and engage with them in person; by someone knowing the person you are, and the movements and causes you care about, you are able to inspire them to participate and advocate for the brighter future envisioned.

Supervisor Hernandez still tries to keep his ears peeled to understand what the community he serves wants. He explained that, while people do reach out and call him, it's usually the same people with similar discussion. Not many people call, or reach out to him to discuss what they'd like to see in the community, and he hopes that will change. He discussed that there are many people out there in the city of Watsonville that have ideas and wants for the trajectory of the city, but they have yet to reach out and engage. While he does table and work to personally engage with the people of Watsonville, he hopes that people will reach out to him and advocate for the brighter futures they too envision for the next generation of citizens in Watsonville. Even though the city has made immense progress in the journey of a better tomorrow for the people within it, there is still much work to do.

In learning more about the Watsonville Brown Berets,

and the work of Supervisor Hernandez during and after his time in the chapter, a message showcases itself clearly: everyone has the potential of making change and progress in their community. Whether you are young, or old, able bodied or not, we all have the ability and unlimited potential to see the futures we envision for ourselves and for the communities we want to see strive. If two young men from Watsonville — a town that was precariously underrated at the time — can start a movement that still showcases itself in the structure of the city today, we can too. We have all that we need to make a better tomorrow today is within the hearts and minds of every single one of us.

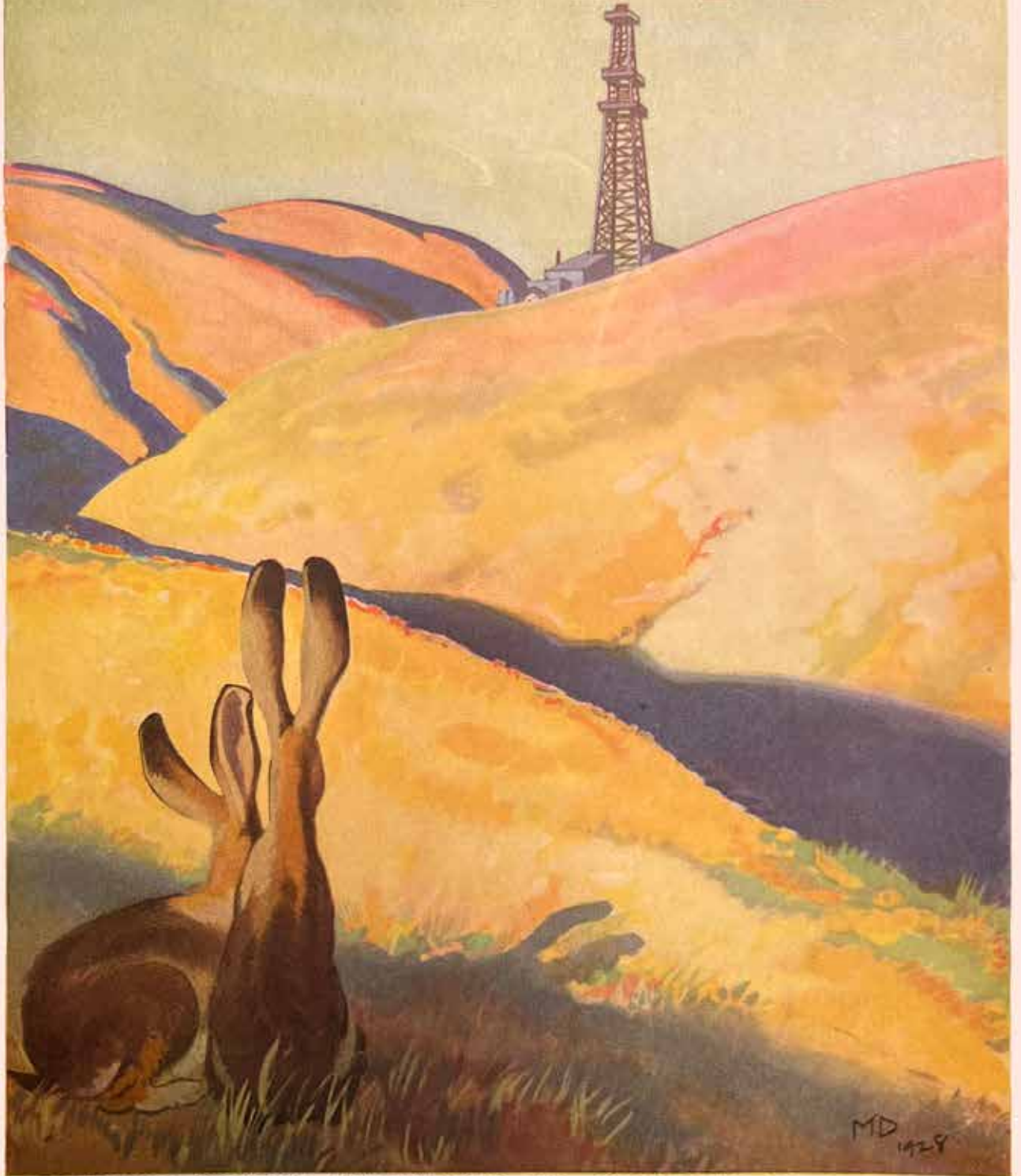
In the beautiful town of Watsonville, where our agriculture expands as far as the eye can see, where kids today run, laugh, and play to their hearts' content, where families are seen living their day to day lives, and where the Sun shines down upon the lush beauty indescribable to words but can only be witnessed physically, we see growth, diversity, and inclusion. But, it wasn't this way in the beginning, and it didn't become this way overnight. Our town's wonder and uniqueness bloomed through the cultivation of generations before us who envisioned a future that allowed those who lived within the confines of the city to strive towards their unlimited potential. That desired future, that vision many fought and advocated for, shows itself in the indescribable beauty and awe of the life of Watsonville today, and we have people such as Supervisor Felipe Hernandez, the Watsonville Brown Berets, and those even before them — as well as those who will continue to cultivate and witness the blossoming of this city thereafter — to thank.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

When I first moved to Watsonville in 2006, I remember driving along Buena Vista Drive with my parents; watching them point at the long stretch of land and regaling me with stories about how they would go out every Saturday in the 80s and help my grandfather in the fields to prepare strawberries for the farmers markets. My grandparents, Paula and Juan Barrón, immigrated to the United States in the 50s from the state of Jalisco and settled in Watsonville soon after - this had been their new home, and the home of my parents' generation, and now the home of my generation. Looking out to the outstretched landscape, viewing the rich beauty that I had never seen anywhere else, and interacting with fellow citizens of my new home embedded in me a love and appreciation for all that this community provides.

"As a first year De Anza student, I was given the opportunity to intern at the California History Center via the Humanities Mellon Scholars program, and with that was able to dive into a topic of my choosing for this project. As a Sociology and Public Policy major, I wanted to incorporate my love for my town as well as my interest in community organizing, advocacy, and equity, and fell upon a Wikipedia page with a brief blurb about the Watsonville Brown Berets. Upon reading what little I could immediately find, I knew that this topic showcased the blend of equality and communal togetherness that is intrinsic within the culture of Watsonville today. I'm immensely grateful to Supervisor Felipe Hernandez for taking the time to deep dive into this topic with me, and for telling me the story of the amazing work the Watsonville Brown Berets did for our city that still presents itself today. — Uriel Barrón

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