



Coming of Age at Beale Park • A Collective Memoir •

by Jerry Kirkland

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What follows is a recount of events and experiences that helped shape the lives of a certain generation of Bakersfield youngsters - the generation that was born during the Great Depression, came of age during and immediately after World War II, then grew to maturity in the 1950s. Beale Park served as a backdrop for that generation's transformation.

The objective of this project has been to recapture a rather narrow moment in time by setting down on paper the shared experiences of members of that

generation who found refuge at Beale Park during the summer months of those years. Perhaps it is best described as a collective memoir. It is, at any rate, a tale about coming of age in Bakersfield and, more specifically, at Beale Park, in the mid to late 1940s, then well into the 1950s.

Defying Satchel Paige

Sixty years ago, personal safety was of little concern to those of us who lived in the Beale Park neighborhood. We knew all our neighbors and could call them by name. Friends and relatives could and did drop in unannounced and were welcome to do so. As often as not, front doors were left unlocked.

Beale Park at any time of year was a safe haven for neighborhood children and especially so during the summer months when it was filled with kids engaged in any number of activities, all of which were well-supervised. Fights were rare, the use of drugs rare to non-existent and there was no gang activity. In our minds, there was no better place to live and no better time to be alive. We were park rats, similar to gym rats in the respect that we found ourselves in a

comfortable and enjoyable environment and spent as much time there as possible.

Looking back, perhaps we should have appreciated it even more than we did.

A few weeks ago, I drove down Oleander, stopped next to the park and got out with the intention of spending thirty minutes or so just walking around, seeing how the old girl was holding up. Maybe some of you have done the same. The visit did not turn out as I had expected. The park was all but deserted, just me and a couple of high school kids and they soon disappeared. The atmosphere, which my memory said should be warm and familiar and inviting, was surprisingly eerie and somewhat alien. I kept thinking of Satchel Paige's rules for living. At the top of his list was, "Don't look back." He was right, of course. I am hopeful, however, that there are exceptions to old Satch's admonition because this tale can only be told by . . . looking back.

Those who qualified as park rats had several things in common: All were very young, most of them teenagers - meaning simply that they were a typically unpredictable mixture of energy, adventure, foolhardiness and testosterone; almost all attended, or had attended, one of two or three neighborhood elementary schools, either Roosevelt, William Penn or Lowell; and, lastly, all

spent a good part of each day during the summer months of their formative years at what was generally referred to simply as “the park”.

After leaving elementary school, almost all of us went to Emerson Junior High and then on to Bakersfield High School. Many of us attended school together from kindergarten through the senior year of high school.

A footnote to history: When it first opened its doors in 1876, Emerson Junior High School was called Railroad Avenue School because it faced Railroad Avenue, which later would be renamed Truxtun Avenue. That first Railroad Avenue School was a wood frame structure that was burned to the ground by arsonists shortly after it opened and so had to be rebuilt. A \$12,000 refurbishing program was begun in 1901, this time using brick for the construction of 12 new classrooms. It was renamed Emerson School in 1904 and was, at that time, an elementary school. Later it became a junior high school and would remain in service until 1952 when it was damaged beyond repair by the earthquake.

Those of us who gathered each summer at Beale Park came from a surprisingly large geographical area, bounded roughly by Chester Avenue on the east, California Avenue on the north, Oak Street on the west and beyond Brundage to Terrace Way or thereabouts to the south. For the most part, the area defined by those boundaries would have been characterized as an ordinary middle-class neighborhood.

That being so, consider this: It is generally agreed among psychologists and other experts on the human condition that we are, each of us, products of our environment. Assuming that to be true - that the environment in which we are raised determines whether we are passive or aggressive, gregarious or shy, the life of the party or the wallflower – then to what extent were our personalities shaped by the relationships we established and the socialization we experienced as park rats? It is a question that has merit simply because this *ordinary* neighborhood produced more than its share of *extraordinary* individuals. Several became lawyers or CPAs or engineers. At least one was an airline pilot, another a physician. A number went on to become successful in the world of business. Many became teachers, counselors or school administrators. Several had long and distinguished careers in local government; two served as our police chief and one of those was also our mayor for a time. And we had more than our share of great athletes. Two

helped anchor the line for the Golden Bears of Cal; one played professional rugby in Australia and England while another served, for many years, as the head football coach at Bakersfield College.

Truxtun Beale, a generous and forward looking man, no doubt contributed to these successes by creating an environment that facilitated social and physical development. His efforts did not go unrecognized. On a wall near the stage of Beale Park's Greek Theater is a brass plaque, placed there in 1964 by the Kern County Historical Society. The plaque acknowledges Beale's generous donation of the five acre park site to the City of Bakersfield in 1907, just one of several efforts he made to bring beauty and culture to his adopted hometown. The plaque states, in part, that the park, "has become part of the pleasant memories of more than half a century of Bakersfield's children." Nothing could be truer.

Just three years earlier Beale had arranged to have a clock tower constructed in the center of the intersection of Chester Avenue and Seventeenth Street. Dedicated to the memory his mother, Beale's clock tower was a handsome addition to downtown Bakersfield but, like other brick and mortar structures, it came tumbling down during the 1952 earthquake. It was not rebuilt but a replica now stands in front of the Kern County Museum.

It's not likely that we knew or cared to know anything about Truxtun Beale during the many summer months we spent at his park, or even gave a thought as to why the park was so named. But, now, some six or seven decades later, if we consider that, absent his generous donation, there would have been no park (and thus no tale to tell) it seems fitting that we should know something of the man for, in retrospect, Truxtun Beale changed our lives by providing the environment, and so the opportunity, for us to meet and socialize and move toward maturity.

Truxtun Beale: A Brief Biography

Like his father before him, Truxtun Beale was enterprising, successful in a variety of endeavors and a generous benefactor. Born in San Francisco to Edward Fitzgerald Beale and Mary Engle Edwards, he was named for his grandfather, Commodore Thomas Truxtun. After graduating from Pennsylvania Military College in 1874, Beale completed the course of study at Columbia Law School and four years later was admitted to the bar. He never formally entered the legal profession, however, and instead became manager of his father's Tejon Ranch, a position he held for thirteen years.

In 1891 he was appointed United States Minister to Persia and a year later, minister to Greece, Romania and Serbia. When his father died in 1893, Beale assumed ownership of the huge Tejon Ranch. In 1894, Beale married Harriet Blaine, daughter of James G. Blaine, well-known senator from Maine who twice served as Secretary of State.

During the years 1894-96, the Beales devoted their time to travel in Siberia, Central Asia, and Chinese Turkestan . Westerners knew little of these areas and Beale wrote many articles on international questions for reviews and magazines.

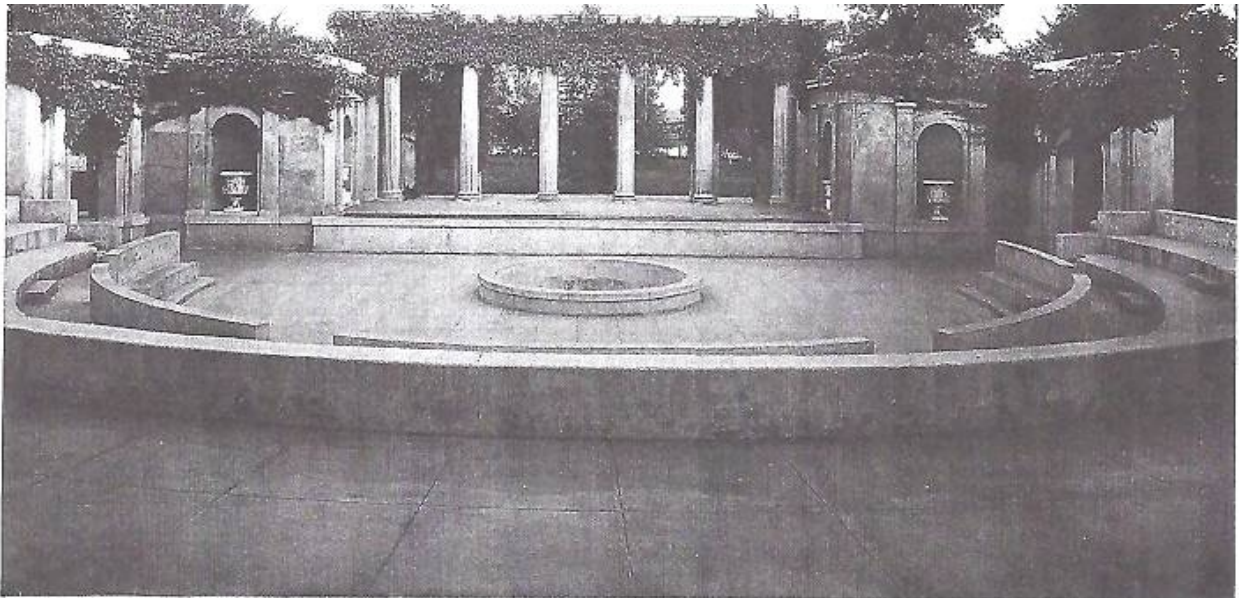
Truxtun's marriage to Harriet Blaine ended in divorce. In 1903, he married Marie Oge, granddaughter of Salmon P. Chase. Chase had been governor of Ohio, was the United States Treasurer under Lincoln and later served on the U.S. Supreme Court. For a number of years, Truxtun and Marie divided their time between Washington, D.C. and California.

In 1912, Beale sold the Tejon Ranch to a syndicate of investors headed by Harry Chandler and Moses Sherman. He and Marie then took up permanent residence in Washington. He died on June 2, 1936, at his country home near Annapolis, Maryland.

Beale's interest in the development of the park that would bear his name did not end with the transfer of title of those five acres to the City of Bakersfield. He personally supervised the construction of the Greek Theater as well as a cinder running track that formed the park's perimeter. Both were completed in 1908 and the track was used for a number of years by the high school track teams. Tennis courts were completed in 1910 and are still in use today. A swimming pool was built and opened to the public in June of 1915 but to the dismay of many, the pool was recently abandoned and replaced by a water spray play area. The wading pool has also been filled in.

Beale had hoped to use the park and more specifically, the Greek Theater, as a miniature university, a forum for improving the mental, moral, physical and intellectual climate of the city. It was, in fact, known originally as University Park. Later it was called College Green, then High School Green, and, finally, Beale Park. Arrangements were made with the University of California for professors and bright students to present lectures in the Greek Theater each year during the month of May, lectures that focused on politics, economics, American history and the Constitution, psychology, sociology and philosophy. Sadly, it was an idea that never gained traction and the program was abandoned after a brief trial.

Although a man of vision, Beale could not possibly have foreseen the impact his generosity would have on generations of families who lived in the Beale Park neighborhood. His gift to the city was not made for the purpose of self-aggrandizement but he would no doubt have been pleased to know that this gift has been enjoyed by untold thousands.



Early photo of the Greek Theater at Beale Park

The old Greek Theater is showing signs of age but remains intact and is still used from time to time. The large Italian marble urns that sat in alcoves on

each side of the stage have gone missing and the circular pit just below the stage is no more. Originally it was a fountain but that must have been long before we started hanging out there.

It's likely that those of us who grew up in that neighborhood after the war received more benefit from the use of the park than those from any other time or circumstance. Beale Park was our summer home, the place where we met old friends and made new ones. It was home to a superb summer recreation program with well-supervised activities for all age groups. It was where many of us first tested our coordination and physical prowess through sometimes hotly contested games of ping pong or horseshoes or three-on-three basketball. It was, undoubtedly, where many of us came of age.

The Changing Face of the Oleander Neighborhood

In the early 1900s, when Beale Park was under construction, there was little development around the park site except for the huge mansions on Oleander.

From about 1870 until the early 1920s, having an address on Oleander Avenue (originally called D Street) was a symbol of success for the local elite and it was there that they built their homes, forming what would come to be called "millionaires' row". These were the community's movers and shakers and their names are still familiar to us today. The north end of "the row" was anchored by the home of Alfred Harrell, owner and publisher of the *Bakersfield Californian*, who lived on the southwest corner of Oleander and California. At the southern extreme was lawyer J.W. Wiley's big white pillared mansion on the west side of Oleander a half block south of Palm Street. In between were the huge homes of stockman Robert Holtby (later owned by W.B. Camp); S.A. Johnson (later owned by banker George Planz, then oilman William Kleinpell); and George Haberfelde, an imposing structure built in 1918. Others with Oleander addresses included Edward Hougham, Hugh Blodget, Thomas Klipstein, Dr. Francis Gundry and Angus Crites. In the years following 1920, the building of mansions was replaced by the building of two and three bedroom houses such as most of us lived in.

The Emergence of the Park Rats

Through the magic of email, I have recently been in touch with a number of the Beale Park "old timers" and without exception, all have been

anxious to participate in this project by sharing their thoughts and memories of what was obviously a very special time of their lives. "Old timers" is a fitting sobriquet since few, if any, of the contributors are less than seventy-five years old.

The question each was asked is a simple one: During the summers of those growing up years that we spent at Beale Park, what are your lasting impressions and what did you find most enjoyable about the park experience? All mentioned the great variety of activities made available by the recreation department and, indeed, there was something for everyone, regardless of age. Ping pong, horseshoes and basketball, of course, but also talent contests, arts and crafts exhibits, band concerts and weekly movies. There were chinning bars set at three different levels, some parallel bars, several tetherball courts and even some teeter totters, now apparently considered a safety hazard since they are not found on modern playgrounds. And more than a few of those who responded mentioned having been members of the "after hours swim club"! More about that follows below.

Tom Trotter mentioned the popularity of a board game called caroms, something I had forgotten. The board was maybe three feet square with nets in each corner like a pool table. It was, in fact, sort of a poor man's version of

pool in that a stick was used to shoot little checker shaped pieces into the nets. Tom also talked of midnight trips to the watermelon fields in Billy Smith's old car, then returning to the park for a feast, the melons having been purchased at a bargain price. It was customary to break open the melon and just eat the heart, of course.

We could and did go swimming almost every day. The pool was open for lessons in the morning, then reopened to the public in the early afternoon for a couple of sessions, each of which was limited to a specific age group. The pool remained open until 9:30 p.m. during the week and 6 p.m. on weekends. Well, those were the official hours. It was not unusual to hear splashing and noisy chatter in the pool area long after the park had closed. Cap Haralson was the recreation czar and lived not too far from the park. Part of his duties involved hiring life guards and serving as the overseer of the pool maintenance program but it was not unheard of for him to come by at a late hour and check for trespassers. He was seldom disappointed. His presence alone forced a hasty evacuation but he also added a little vocal encouragement. Still, he was a nice guy and I don't recall anyone suffering any serious repercussions for having been one of the fence climbers. Cap was a teacher at the high school (where he had, in his day, been a great football player) and, consequently, he knew many of us and could call us by name! I've often thought he was

probably chuckling inside as he watched all those skinny little white butts scurry around looking for their clothes before scampering over that high chain link fence, hopefully without damaging critical parts of the anatomy. The police also came by occasionally and they were less understanding, of course. In fact, my brother, Ted Kirkland, claims that there was one occasion when David Moore ended up at the police station clad only in an athletic supporter!

Ping pong was played from the time the park opened each day until closing time – and also horseshoes. Few people play horseshoes today but there were some very talented throwers who hung around the park in those days. Each summer, tournaments were held to determine the best ping pong player and best horseshoe tosser. Competition ladders were established and winner progressed down (or across, maybe?) the ladder until it came down to the final two. The championship round often drew a crowd and was almost always an exciting contest. Milt Younger was a great ping pong player and he and my brother, Al Kirkland, engaged in some epic duels. Banging on the table with the edge of the paddle was verboten as it damaged both the paddles and the ancient wooden tables. There weren't very many rules but violating that one could get you banished from the area for a while. Seems as though Francis Ballard may have suffered that fate. At any rate, once the winner of the Beale

tournament was established, that person would play Jefferson Park's tournament winner to determine who would wear the crown as city champion.

Everyone seems to remember the tournaments and at least a half dozen have written to say that they were the city ping pong or horseshoe champion and, in fact, still have the medal or ribbon to prove it. As for myself, I'm all but certain that I won the city horseshoe championship one year but until I find that ribbon or medal, I will make no such public declaration!

Seemingly permanent fixtures at Beale Park were the Russell brothers: George, Blair, and Richard, as well as sister, Pat. I suppose they had supervisors, including Cap Haralson, but it always seemed to me that they ran the pool operations. All were redheads and fair skinned and so covered their noses with some white ointment to protect against sunburn. Recently, tongue firmly in cheek, former Chief of Police Robert Patterson stated that he thought the life guards all wore that white stuff on their noses so they could be easily identified as such. Patterson added that one of his lasting impressions of the Beale program was taking swimming lessons from Margo Robesky and being distracted by her striking appearance in a black and white one-piece suit.

Richard Russell tells me that, white stuff and all, the Russell clan served as life guards and coaches at the Beale pool from 1947 to 1963 which kept them very busy but not so busy that he couldn't take the time to become the park ping pong champion one year. And while it sounds outrageous, he claims that in one day he beat me and both my brothers in succession. A trifecta, so to speak! He was quick to add, however, that he got whipped by Alan Hodges for the city championship. Rich claims he still has the medal among his souvenirs. Even remembers that he bested Denny Wetterholm for the title.

A point of interest: Something that continues to resonate with me is the importance we attached - and continue to attach - to the ribbons or medals awarded for having excelled at something in the Beale recreation program. It would be fun to know how many still exist, tucked away in a special corner of the cedar chest. It was a prideful moment to be recognized for participating in the talent contest or the art show or one of the organized races in the swimming pool. After the passage of more than half a century, when we are reminded of these seemingly trivial and insignificant events, it is obvious that they were neither trivial nor insignificant; they were, in fact, one of our milestones to maturity.

George Russell remembers lots of things that I had forgotten and just as many things that I never knew. Horses used to graze in the field just east of the park, a fact barely retrievable from some dim recess of my mind. And how many of us knew that the mayor, Alfred Sieman, lived on Dracena, just across the street from the park? We knew that some important person lived in that big white house but I suspect few of us knew it was the mayor. George recalls, too, that Francis Ballard, who lived just a door or two away, shot a bird out of the mayor's pine tree with a double barreled shotgun. I think the only time I ever saw Mayor Sieman was one day when he came across the street to interrupt a weekend football game, cum free-for-all. Apparently there was some colorful language being used (Imagine that!) and he wanted to share with us that he found such language offensive. We were polite and apologetic and solved the problem by moving to another part of the park, outside the mayor's range of hearing. Recalling that event serves as a reminder of just how much times have changed. In today's world, one would give pause before approaching a group of teenagers, strangers all, to advise them that you were offended by their language.

Admission to the swimming pool, depending on your age, was either 11 cents or 26 cents which really didn't make any sense and, according to George, resulted in a lot of small change on the bottom of the pool. On Wednesday

afternoons, there were swim races for kids 12 and under. The winners got free swim passes. Betty Ann Cox, in a note to me, characterized Beale Park as her "baby sitter" and also wrote that she ended up with lots of free passes from entering and winning those races.

Life guards during that era, many of them teachers, included Stan Segal, Rena Russell, Margo Robesky, Bob Bone, Gib Shimmel, Carl Berra, Margaret Swarder, June Uhalt, Shorty Martin, Ray Roberts, Ray Scott, Andy Hinderliter, Wally Bertrand and, of course, the ubiquitous Russell brothers.

The Beale pool was the original home of the Bakersfield Swim Club, formed in 1947. Initial membership was about twenty swimmers. Now there are more than five hundred! And remember the Aquanettes? Joanie Misemer Trotter reminded me that they, too, used the pool at Beale to practice their synchronized swimming routines.

At the beginning and end of each school year, the high school used the Beale pool for P.E. classes and, of course, the swim team practiced there. As I recall, the P.E. classes had to walk down to Beale and the activities were devoted largely to water safety. Earl Sargent taught the class when I took it. In a strange twist of fate, he later became my step-father, married to my mother

for many years. Right up to the time that he passed away two years ago at age 97, I still called him "Sarge." Weird!

The park was the summer home-away-from-home for kids from large families, one being the Mince brothers: Bob, Harold, Walt, Bill and Jerry. They first lived at 221 Chester Avenue, then later moved over on Forrest Street. Harold, in what he called "a flow of consciousness" shared some wonderful Beale park moments that most of us can relate to. He enjoyed the open air movies and concerts in the Greek Theater and mentioned, too, the talent contests and watching Terry Kinney do a tap dance routine. Secretly, he added, we all thought dancing was for sissies. Little did we know. Terry was a BHS classmate who was a great dancer and so envied by all at the school dances. He later was an outstanding police officer for the Bakersfield Police Department. Harold liked the skate nights because it was his first opportunity, during the couples sessions, to hold hands with a girl! Not unlike me, he had no sisters and claims he knew as much about girls as he did about Martians. And along with brother Bob Mince, plus Gere Burt, Dick Wahl and Carl Wallace, Harold, too, was a regular member of the after hours swim group. I'm just amazed at how many of us belonged to that group! But he really stirred my memory juices when he mentioned Fleer's Double Bubble bubble gum and racing from Roosevelt School to the Beale Park Store as soon as school was

out, having heard through the bubble gum grapevine that they had received a shipment. Walt Mince had the same fond memory. Like Levi's, old Double Bubble was hard to find and a precious commodity during the war.

That little store was directly south of the park on the west side of E Street. It was owned by a funny old guy (or so we thought at the time) named Gus Ergo, who lived just across the street from his store. He took phone orders and had a little delivery truck that made the rounds of the neighborhood dropping off groceries. It's likely that many of us who lived nearby were sent there for milk and bread at one time or another. Tom Trotter recalls that his mom used to send him there with a note to buy cigarettes for her! The building is gone, of course, but the old concrete foundation is still there, hidden among the weeds that cover the now vacant lot.

The supervisors for the various park activities included Lowell Nelson, Shirley Harris, Esther Aubin Dougherty and Ed Hemmerling. Clarence Medders, teacher, principal and later our mayor, also served in that capacity at one time. It's likely there were others, as well. Ed Hemmerling lived in the neighborhood as I recall, down in the vicinity of First Street or Verde maybe. He was a bright guy and taught math and maybe physics. He was fair minded and seemed to keep order without raising his voice. He did get a little excited

when there was widespread vocal opposition to his vehemently held opinion that the curve ball was nothing more than an optical illusion. That was before televised baseball but had Ed been able to stand at the plate and take a pitch or two from Sandy Koufax, he may have had to rethink his position on that one. Lowell Nelson was the basketball coach at BHS and loved to play in pickup games at the park. He was another soft spoken and really nice guy.

But Esther Aubin, now Esther Dougherty, added a new level of authenticity to the Beale Park story when she agreed to share her memories of those days. Esther claims to be ninety but, given her activity level and appearance, that is pretty hard to believe. She was a teacher for many years in the Bakersfield City School District and can still be found substituting in one of their classrooms on a regular basis. Beginning in 1945, she served as an activity supervisor at Beale for three summers and she has vivid memories of her time in that position. Her daily schedule for each of those three years is a testimony to the huge variety of activities offered by the recreation department at that time. Her day went something like this: She would teach beginning swimming all morning, then spend her afternoons teaching crafts, tether ball, roller skating and group games of all sorts. Kids in her program also played monopoly, chess, dominoes and simple card games. In between, she organized and supervised plays, dances, picnics, talent shows, pet shows,

puppet shows, arts and crafts shows, square dancing and an occasional parade! Although more than sixty years have passed since her days at Beale, she clearly remembers Carl Bowser, Buddy Laster and Betty Cox as regular participants in her programs. Often entire families, such as the Antongiovannis, the Flickingers and the Hall Ramirezes came to enjoy the fun.

More

Leo McKenna: Leo lived at 14 Oleander just off Brundage Lane. He and his wife, Carolyn, are both retired from teaching and now live in Santa Rosa. On Oleander, he lived around the corner from Goldie Griffith. He mowed the old coach's lawn and, in turn, Griff taught him how to drop kick! He talks of enjoying the many activities the park offered, of having his arm broken in a "touch" football game, and also singing in a group with Jerry Butchert, who played the piano.

Uppy Allen: Uppy's real name was Chester but I'm not sure how many people knew that. He now goes by Chet and lives in Encinitas. Uppy lived on Oleander directly across the street from the park and his memories include the concerts in the Greek Theater, five cent ice cream, touch football games, kick the can and a host of other kid's games. Here's something he didn't mention

although it's forever etched on my mind: There was a relatively open area that ran along Dracena Street that was often used for football games. During one such weekend game, Uppy, with a good head of steam, found himself headed for an old car parked next to the curb. He put out both arms to cushion the blow but hit one of the car's windows which, unfortunately, were not safety glass! The flesh on his arms was shredded. We took him to the emergency room at Mercy Hospital bleeding heavily and it took some 300 stitches to put him back together.

Gere Burt: Gere's father was Harold Burt, a music teacher at BHS, and Mr. Burt was instrumental in getting the summer band concerts started at Beale. Gere was pretty young at the time and, although pushed to attend the concerts, preferred instead to frolic in the wading pool. A few years later, he recalls being clipped in a pickup football game one day and suffering a knee injury that still bothers him to these many years later. He was close friends with the Mince brothers as well as Dick Wahl, Carl Wallace, Walter Stout, Gary Skaggs and Clive Alexander. They enjoyed just hanging out together and all were experts at scaling that pool fence for an after hours dip. Gere and his wife, Mary Lee, divide their time between the Huntington Lake area, where they own and operate a ski lodge, and their condominium in Santa Maria.

Don Lohr: Real name William but best known in those days as "Jiggs". Jiggs was an Oildale guy, just one of several from north-of-the-river who frequented the park. Some others were John Williams, Ken Crabill and Don Trammell. Jiggs also worked for the recreation department, serving as a life guard at both Jefferson and Central parks. He spent a lot of time at our house on Palm Street and was one of my mother's favorites. There are characters and then there are GENUINE characters and Jiggs definitely belongs to the latter group. He presently resides in Kerrville, Texas.

Ann McDowell Gore Gomes: Ann was introduced to Beale Park through Betty Cox and then spent lots of time there with her friend, Adrienne Johnson. She recalls that one night she and Adrienne were found by Adrienne's father to be swimming in the pool after hours. He was less than happy but couldn't corral them and ended up chasing them down the street, an occasion she would rather forget. Among her fondest Beale memories, however, was just sitting by the pool and ogling George Russell! Ann lives in Atascadero and her friend Adrienne lives in Palm Desert.

Jack Qualman: Jack, who lives now in Hailey, Idaho, characterized the Beale Park environment in the days of the Park Rats as a great place and a great era to grow up in. Jack made another astute observation when he reminded us

that, while many in our age group really disliked high school, the Beale Park group seemed to have a different attitude and how they “learned to enjoy the time and life itself.”

Ted Kirkland: Brother Ted reminded me that our Heinz 57 dog was a constant presence at the park. His name was Tippy and he was a chronic wanderer but always managed to find his way home. He spent his entire lifetime without being on a leash and his diet, never from a can, consisted of whatever was left over from dinner. Spaghetti was his entrée of choice. He was small but never wanted to admit it and we always suspected he thought he was a boxer or a German Shepherd, a misconception that proved to be his undoing.

Carl Bowser: The old coach mentioned that since there was no cooler in their house over on H Street, Beale was a “great place to cool your heels”. Carl’s comment brought to mind that with no air-conditioning in those days, we probably all appreciated the opportunity to cool off in the shade of the big trees or in the pool. He is dead right in mentioning that those were simpler days with a little competition thrown in and having to sit and wait to play ping pong or horseshoes. And feeling that Richard Russell’s claim to be park champion in ping pong is bogus, Carl wants to challenge him to a match when we get together for a park rat reunion! Can’t wait.

Other Park Rats

Not a complete list by any means, but these folks, too, spent much of each summer at the park.

Alan Stramler

Bob Morrison

Bobby Mason

Dick Mason

Dick Spahn

Gloria Egger Zigner

Clive Alexander

Floyd Alexander

James Alexander

David Egger

Ted Michel

Betty Wells Michel

Bob Lynn

Lyndon Peterson

Carthal Wyatt

Barbara Ballard Kleier

Judy Barrett

Tom Stockton

Phil Rudnick

Pat Higgins

Don Buckle

Barbara Kavern

Hugh Herndon

Tommy Toon

Don Trammell

Ken Schwocho

Bill Riel

Bob Price

Buddy Cuen

Larry Austin

Dick Wahl

Carl Wallace

Jim Downs

Fred Patterson

Dennis Wetterholm

Francis Ballard

Katie Hinderliter

Andy Hinderliter

Ken Crabill

Ron Kavern

Hal Kavern

Ken Napier

Bunky Durham

Don Torres

Bob Karpe

Joe Copeland

Dickie Marshall

Bob Rous

Ed Rous

Bill Rous

John Rous

Don Edwards

Gary Skaggs

Walter Stout

Pat Toon

Camille Gavin

Roberta Jones

Mary Haralson

Anita Haralson

Lois Newell

Adele Newell

Bruce Parker

Jim Lovegreen

Doug Lovegreen

Leland Hill

Bob Self

Pat Trotter

John Trotter

Don Goodrich

Mike Barrett

Tharrell Ming

Bill Finch

Jack Finch

. . . and finally

In 2007, a group made an attempt to recognize Beale Park's hundredth birthday but, from all reports, it fell far short of being a proper birthday bash. I characterize it as an attempt since it could only have been a legitimate celebration had the guest list included that army of innocents who spent the summers of their formative years there some sixty years ago. Unfortunately, it did not.

Thomas Wolfe was no doubt correct when he observed that “you can’t go home again, home to your childhood or home to the escape of Time and Memory” but had we been included in that celebration, we would no doubt have endeavored to find some weakness in that argument . . . at least for a few hours!

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