

# Moments in Time

SAUSALITO HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER SPRING 2012

## FRITZ (THE COMIC WIT OF PHIL FRANK) CRACKERS



Exhibition Opening  
March 31, 2012

## FRITZ (THE COMIC WIT OF PHIL FRANK) CRACKERS

Not every town is fortunate enough to have in its archives the hilarious commentary of a sympathetic cartoonist to highlight its faults, foibles and foul-ups. But in the *MarinScope* comic strip *Fritz Crackers* (1977–1984), Phil Frank created just that as he lovingly lampooned the local scene with his deft pen-and-ink drawings and verbal puns.

Over a period of many months during 2011, Steefenie Wicks, long time Galilee Harbor resident and photographer, combed the pages of *MarinScope* for the *Fritz Crackers* comic strips and the news articles that inspired them. This body of work was then brought together into one archive from which Sausalito Historical Society volunteers Heather Wilcoxson, Tom Hoover, Margaret Badger and Susan Frank, working closely with professional exhibit designer Donald

Sibbett, compiled the contents of the exhibit opening on Saturday, March 31 at the Society's gallery on the 3rd floor of the Civic Center.

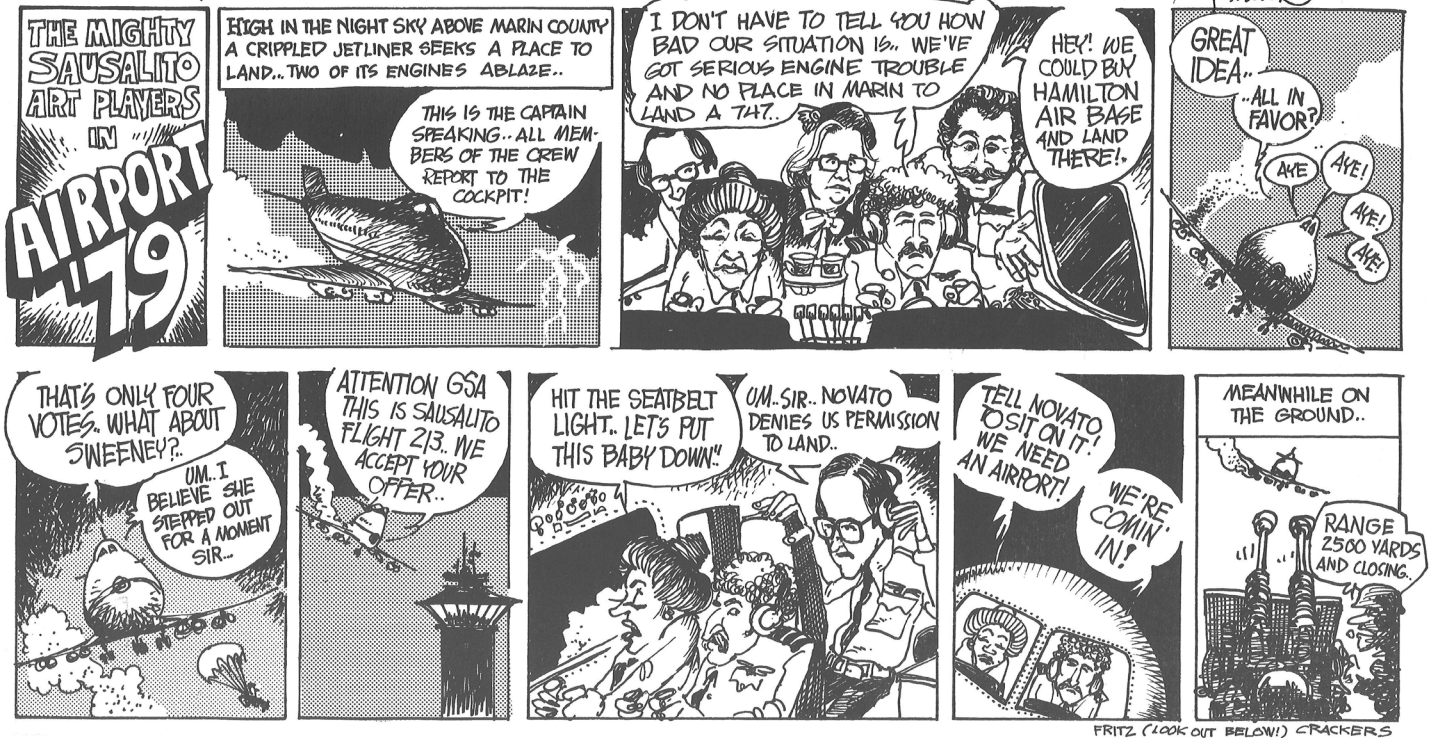
In this issue of *Moments in Time* we have taken two strips, called *Airport '79* and *Wink Van Ripple* respectively, and shared the 1979 backstory that inspired them. Together they depict a remarkable city drama featuring some still familiar—and beloved—Sausalito bright lights: Buddy DeBruyn, Peter Van Meter, Sally Stanford, Robin Sweeny and Fritz Warren. So if you are of the opinion that politics has only recently gone bonkers, sit back and enjoy a look at the past—both the reported version and the comic rendition. For much more about the artist Phil Frank and the cartoon stripe *Fritz Crackers*, we hope to see you at the exhibit: FRITZ (THE COMIC WIT OF PHIL FRANK) CRACKERS.

# AN IDEA THAT NEVER LANDED ♦ Sausalito's Airport Bid—1979

4/25 3/18/80 Phil Frank

To Robin who had the good sense to bail out. Phil Frank

GRAPHIC COURTESY OF ROBIN SWEENEY



In the 2nd frame, the city council members characterized from left to right are: Peter Van Meter, Sally Stanford, Robin Sweeney, Buddy deBruyn, and Fritz Warren.

Cartoonist Phil Frank harvested the content for his *MarinScope* cartoon strip *Fritz Crackers* from the colorful social and political goings-on of Sausalito and Marin County in the late '70s and early '80s. Certain issues lent themselves especially well to the satirist's wit particularly those that polarized public opinion. In 1979, one such issue was the Sausalito City Council's bid to buy Hamilton Air Force Base from the General Services Administration for \$1.

That action, satirized in the *Fritz Crackers* comic strip reproduced above, was one of several attempts to get Marin County behind the idea of having a civilian airport included in the Hamilton Field site development plans. Civil aviation became a real possibility at Hamilton when the Air Force curtailed its activities there in 1973 and left for good in 1976. When the land was put up for public sale by the General Services Administration, Marinites passionately sided for or against perpetuating aviation activity at the site. After two-and-a-half years of research and debate over county acquisition of the base for a general aviation airport and a commercial-industrial park, the Supervisors scheduled a vote on the aviation proposal for May 15, 1979.

At the time, a majority of the Sausalito City Council enthusiastically supported the pro-airport position. They realized that this valuable infrastructure resource could probably never be reproduced, and that the county should keep all options open by retaining the property. Mayor Buddy DeBruyn, Peter Van Meter, Sally Stanford and Fritz Warren voted 4-1, Robin Sweeney dissenting, to support county purchase of the airfield for civilian aviation.

Of all the cities in Marin only Novato and Sausalito took a stand on the county's controversial take-over plan. In so doing, Sausalito hoped to influence anti-aviation members of the Board of Supervisors not to kill the airport option, but, "to go to the market place and see what kind of deal can be obtained from major developers."

But despite the Sausalito City Council vote of support, the Supervisors voted on May 15 not to proceed with acquisition of the base for civilian aviation. Financial risks were cited as the main reasons for backing away from their own proposal. This left the majority on the Sausalito City Council (and other supporters around the county) with the task of trying to keep the airport option alive. Mayor Buddy DeBruyn immediately proposed and got passed a motion to ask city staff to explore the possibility of Sausalito applying to the GSA to purchase Hamilton Air Force Base at the \$1 price. If the county wasn't going to do it, Sausalito would! As Gordon Hansen, former Sausalito Chamber of Commerce President, stated, "The rest of the county will begin to take Sausalito seriously when we own the airport."

Phil Frank's *Airport '79* cartoon appeared in the *MarinScope* on May 22-28, 1979, immediately following the Board of Supervisors negative action and Sausalito's positive vote to continue to explore purchase options. He boldly drew the four pro-airport supporters in the cockpit and Robin Sweeney, the one dissenter, parachuting out. Our tiny fishing village was proposing to own an airport, a regional shopping center, an industrial park, and take on a dike restoration project to protect the runways (to mention a few challenges)?

While DeBruyn's motion to have the city staff explore the feasibility of purchasing the airport for \$1 appeared absurd to some, to others it was considered an effective delaying tactic to prevent the Board of Supervisors from proceeding with a negotiated sale that would forever prohibit an airport. Airport backers figured that given more time to organize support from Marin's cities and/or the overall county electorate, the county's original bid to buy the airport could be resurrected and civilian air access at Hamilton Field could become a reality.

It proved to be an up hill battle. Town after town said they were not interested in "Sausalito's suggestion that the municipalities of Marin County form an airport commission to retain aviation uses at Hamilton Air Force Base." And on further investigation, Van Meter, an income property specialist, learned that the city could not by law own (e.g. annex) non-contiguous land, so the original proposal for Sausalito to buy Hamilton became mute anyway.

As the debate moved into the summer months, an array of four ballot measures were put before county voters to determine what development should occur at Hamilton. One environmentalist vision, Measure B, stood out dramatically from the other plans by suggesting a Solar Village should be built at the air force base. John Nelson with the Trust for Public Lands advocated for a Marin Solar Village that would evolve into "a sustainable city." Designed by former California State Architect Sim Van Der Ryn, the Solar City would be capable of generating its own energy, food, housing, services and jobs. These ideas, penned by designers 33 years ago, sound familiar today: solar-heated housing, restored wetlands (flood the landing strips), independence from fossil fuels, and privately supported environmental research centers housed in former hangars.

Pro-airport supporters coalesced mainly around Measures F and G. Measure F was mandatory, if passed, and provided for a strictly controlled general aviation airport limited to planes of 20-passenger-capacity, plus commercial development including a shopping center

and housing with a big solar component. Measure G allowed the Board of Supervisors (rather than the voters) to determine the level of aviation allowed and permitted development of a commercial airport. Measure A was an aviation cost-control proposal prohibiting the county from spending a dime on an airport or improvements—or, in the words of an aviation opponent, "an attempt to subvert the airport plan by denying it county funds for preparation of a second application to GSA."

In the *Wink Van Ripple* cartoon strip below by Fritz (*Wake Me When It's Over*) *Crackers*, Frank leads the reader on a whirlwind tour of the issues facing Marin County voters regarding Hamilton Field. In fact, Wink Van Ripple may represent the bafflement of listeners at an October, 1979 debate among eight representatives both pro and con the four proposed ballot measures. Hosted by the Sausalito Citizens Council, presenters included Supervisor Barbara Boxer, Sausalito City Councilman Peter Van Meter, John Nelson, Executive Officer of the Marin Solar Village Corp, and other main players in the debate.

As it turned out, Sausalitans made their wishes emphatically clear in the fall election. A headline in the *MarinScope* after the election read: "Sausalitans don't like airports, but might go for a solar village." Measures A (fiscal limits) and B (solar village) won and Measures F (mandatory airport) and G (supervisors decide) lost.

Hamilton Field was eventually incorporated into the City of Novato. But what about an industrial-commercial complex? A Solar Village? An airstrip? A recent, quick spin up to Hamilton confirmed that many, but not all, of these elements are present. Most strikingly, the airstrips are covered with mud from the Oakland estuary, a green brackish-loving grass pokes up, some water is moving in. The vast acreage of the former airfield has become one of the biggest wetland restoration projects in the country. Standing on top of the levee, lots of birds can be seen landing and taking off, but not a single small plane sets its wheels to the buried tarmac.

—Margaret Badger



GRAPHIC: SHS COLLECTION

## GALILEE HARBOR from Bob's Boatyard to Historical Landmark

When I was asked to share images and stories of the Galilee Harbor Community Association with the Historical Society in January, it occurred to me that in order to talk about Galilee Harbor and what we are today, it was necessary to know the background and how we came into existence. This meant looking back to find one of the original founding members of the committee that put together the project which would become known as Galilee Harbor.

That person was Susan Frank, who as it turns out was the Galilee project coordinator and responsible for assembling the winning team that would format and shape the first Sausalito waterfront Maritime Service Harbor.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF LARRY CLINTON



*Architect Peter Calthorpe shares his memories of helping to create Galilee Harbor.*

As the lecture opened, Frank introduced her team of speakers, a group of visionaries from the 1980's. Dorothy Gibson, a long-time resident of Sausalito, at that time was a member of the Sausalito Planning Commission and a trail-blazer behind the Friends of Galilee. Robin Swenny had served on the Galilee Advisory Board. Architect Peter Calthorpe, an internationally known urban design specialist, worked on Galilee's Task Force. Architect Michael Rex contributed to the design structure of the Harbor. Susan's last guest was Dusan Mills who was responsible for the land negotiations that placed Galilee Harbor where it is today.

Although Annette Rose was not there to speak, Michael Rex acknowledged her important work to get the project approved. Rose, understanding the need for the Galilee community to become more politically active, ran for City Council and after being elected was later able to help change the zoning. When the Galilee project ran up against the Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), Rose ran for Board of Supervisors and after being elected was appointed to the BCDC where she was able to turn the attitude of the group from negative to positive.

Michael Rex went on to speak about the importance of



PHOTO: COURTESY OF LARRY CLINTON

*Dusan Mills inspired the capacity audience with poetic words about freedom, choice, the importance of dreams and the challenge of going to sea.*

legitimizing this special neighborhood because it preserved a culture and a way of life—a heritage that gives Sausalito its character. He also added that he was proud to be part of restoring something that should never have been destroyed.

But it was the closing speaker, Dusan Mills, who captured the essence of Galilee. Galilee is a community on the edge of wildness—where land meets the frontier of the sea and where creativity, freedom and choice work together to form a relationship with life. It's a good place and in many ways it makes Sausalito a stronger and more alive place to be.

When it came time for me to present my work as resident photographer of the Harbor, I found myself almost unable to speak because what I had heard from these visionaries was information that I was only somewhat aware of. Their stories left me silent with wonder at how they came to believe in the dream that I have lived for the past 28 years.

The event was well attended and informative. I want to say thank you from all of us at Galilee and thanks to the Sausalito Historical Society for making possible this presentation of waterfront knowledge. For, what we are today is what we have become and are still growing to achieve.

—Steeffie Wicks



PHOTO: COURTESY OF LARRY CLINTON

*Wicks points out details in one of her documentary photographs of Galilee Harbor.*

---

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

---

## CALENDAR

March 31—Saturday

### Exhibition Opening

FRITZ

(THE COMIC WIT OF PHIL FRANK)

CRACKERS

5-6 p.m. Members Only Reception

6-8 p.m. General Public Opening

Newly Renovated Exhibition Gallery, Second Floor,  
Sausalito City Hall.

Popcorn & Pinot, Fritz Crackers and  
Waterfront Delicacies will be served.



April 7—Saturday

### Free Water- front Boat Tours

Between 11 a.m.

and 3 p.m.,

Spaulding Wood-  
en Boat Center

will offer its first free monthly boat tour of the water-  
front led by docents from the Historical Society. The  
45-minute tours will depart from Spaulding's dock at  
the foot of Gate 5 Road. Space is limited.

Please call 332-3179 for more information.



May 8—Tuesday

### The SHS Annual Meeting

The SHS Annual Meeting will be held in the City  
Council Chambers at 420 Litho Street at 7:00 p.m. We  
will report on the year's activities and elect directors  
for the 2012-2013 term. Members will receive written  
notices and ballots prior to the meeting.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### MEMBERSHIP UPGRADE OPTION

More and more members are choosing to join or renew  
their memberships at the Sponsor/Business level, and  
the Patron and Benefactor levels. For their generous  
support, we'd like to thank: Linda and Wayne  
Bonnett, Jim and Cathy Delano, Mickie and Doug  
Lloyd, Ross Lovington, Annette Rose and Chris  
Hardman, Peter and Katherine Streitmann, Mickie  
Allison, Ellen Edwards, Clipper Yacht Club and  
Michael and Nance Moyle for joining at the Sponsor/  
Business level; Jim Meyer and Phillip Smith for joining  
at the Patron level, and Joan McArthur at the Bene-  
factor level.

Tiered memberships are listed below:

Senior	\$15/year
Individual	\$25/year
Family	\$40/year
Sponsor/Business	\$100/year
Patron	\$250/year
Benefactor	\$500+/year

Your renewal date is one year from when you last  
renewal. If you upgrade your membership, please  
contact Sharon Seymour, SHS Membership Chair,  
at 289-4117.

### EQUIPMENT NEEDED

We would greatly appreciate the donation of a working  
color scanner with an 11"x17" inch bed. If it could  
also scan transparencies larger than slides, that would  
be a great bonus. In addition, we would like to replace



one of our aging PC's.  
Donations to the Soci-  
ety are deductible under  
federal tax law. If you  
can help, please contact  
us at 289-4117 or email  
us at [info@sausalitohistoricalociety.org](mailto:info@sausalitohistoricalociety.org).

