

Disasters in the South Bay

by Steve Schoenherr



Firefighters and officers from the San Diego County Environmental Health, or HAZMAT, team gather in front of a burned-out Chula Vista Middle School classroom and discuss materials that may pose a threat to students and clean-up crews. Photos/Joe Guerin

Chula Vista Middle School fire (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Feb. 12, 2000)

1800/10/11 - A series of earthquake shocks that lasted until Oct. 31 were recorded at the Mission San Juan Bautista. Sometimes there were six shocks per day. A severe shock of earthquake at Mission San Juan Bautista. Cracks appeared in the ground near the Pajaro River. The new church under construction at San Juan Capistrano was damaged by the earthquakes as were the adobe barracks at San Diego. (The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco, <http://www.sfmuseum.org/alm/quakes1.html>)

1812/05/01 - Southern California was subject to nearly continuous earthquake shocks for four and one-half months. Four days seldom elapsed without at least one shock. The inhabitants abandoned their homes and lived out of doors. The Missions at San Juan Capistrano, Santa Barbara and Purisima were wrecked by earthquakes. (The Virtual Museum of the City of San Francisco, <http://www.sfmuseum.org/alm/quakes1.html>)

1854/12/23 - Helen Gohres came to Chula Vista in 1952 and began researching local history. She discovered a tidal wave hit San Diego Dec. 23, 1854, the result of an earthquake in Japan. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, June 4, 1964.)

1884 - Heavy rainfall hit San Diego in April. Nearly every road in the county was washed out; Julian was isolated; telephone lines were down between Julian and Banner; most of the cattle in the county were belly deep in mud; the railroad was barely able to operate as far as Oceanside. (Pourade, Richard F. *The Glory of San Diego*, v. 4. San Diego, California: The Union-Tribune Publishing Company, 1964.)

1892/02/24 - Earthquake last night (Feb. 23) with many aftershocks (Mizony, Paul T., ed. "Excerpts from the Diaries of Frank A. Kimball)

1895 - Heavy rainfall Dec. 1894 through January 1895, reservoir overflowed by 22 in., water pipes and NC&O tracks washed out. The losses from this flood were so great that the San Diego Land and Town Company go into receivership and to be sold to a committee of stockholders in 1897. Rain of six inches in 24 hours caused the Sweetwater dam to overflow for 40 hours, pipes broke, but masonry dam held even with two feet crest of water flowing over the top. The dam was then raised 10 ft. (Coleman, Eugene V. *The Urbanization of the Sweetwater Valley*, San Diego County. Thesis (M.A.)--California State University, San Diego, 1973.)

1895 - D. L. Kretsinger, who owns a ranch at Nestor, visited the Tia Juana valley yesterday. "It is a most desolate sight," he said upon his return. "The whole

the valley, for almost the entire two miles across, is covered with black sediment from three to six inches thick, and as one passes from ranch to ranch the sight is discouraging in the extreme." The Salt Works were destroyed by flood waters. (San Diego Union, Jan. 23, 1895)

1897 - A long drought began, from 1897 to 1904. A wet period from 1904-12 was followed by the Big Freeze of 1913. "Before the 1913 freeze, the entire San Diego area was troubled with the California Flea. It didn't matter if you lived in the country or the city or if you had animals or not. The fleas were everywhere. They seem to like some people more than others. George, our oldest brother, could sit on the side of the bed next to our father. The fleas would jump from George onto our father's. You wouldn't dare leave a bedspread or near the floor. You'd look all through all your clothing for fleas before putting your clothes on. In those days women used to wear real thin georgette blouses. Sometimes in church, we would see fleas crawling. After the freeze, we didn't have any more trouble with fleas." (Mrs. Gladys Downs Brabazon interview, "The Young Historians Student Booklet Otay and Otay Mesa," Montgomery School, n. d. [1983], pp. 62-62.)

1913 - The freeze destroyed many lemon orchards in Chula Vista. "On September 17, 1913 the temperature took another spree in the opposite direction. It got colder and hotter until it reached 110 degrees. This heat killed the young rabbits, the chickens, and the new growth on the same trees which only a few months before had been frozen." The freeze was followed by another long drought and another freeze in 1922. (Krantz and Read. Chula Vista and Community. Part One, 196)

1912/09/07 - Macaroni Factory Destroyed in National City. Terrific Explosion Shakes Entire City. (National City News, Sept. 7, 1912)

1916 - The Great Flood of 1916 was the worst natural disaster in the history of the South Bay. It has been blamed on Charles Hatfield, the infamous rainmaker who was hired by the city of San Diego to fill the county reservoirs with water. His chemical vapors from a platform he built at Morena Dam joined with a series of powerful Pacific storms to produce an unexpected catastrophe. The first storm began January 15 and lasted for five days. The Tijuana River flooded and washed away the Little Landers colony at San Ysidro. The second storm hit January 26 and it rained 2.36 inches in the next 24 hours. The local reservoirs were already overflowing and finally, at 5:05 pm on Thursday, January 27, the Lower Otay Dam broke. For the next 48 minutes, a giant wall of water rushed down the Otay valley and destroyed everything in its path. The Sweetwater Dam, unlike the earthen dam at Otay, was solid stone and concrete and held firm, but the abutments on the south ends of the dam broke and the long earthen dike on the south side of the dam crumbled away, causing the valley to flood for the next three days. The rest of the valley was destroyed, as were the bridges at Willow Street, Edgemere Road, Highland and National Avenues. The Friend's Church washed away and the Sunnyside school was damaged. The Sweetwater Woman's Club house and all its contents, including the local library, were carried into the bay. The adobe walls of the Old Red Barn packinghouse dissolved, leaving only a skeleton building. The gardens and fields of Chinese workers who helped build the dam in 1888 were destroyed. The flood carried debris and topsoil into San Diego Bay, forming shoals that filled the south end of the bay blocking ship channels for years. All the river valleys in the county were flooded and over 200 bridges destroyed. Relief expeditions came from Navy ships in the bay and from the Army encamped at the park for the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Estimates of loss of life ranged from 50 to less than 20. The exact number will never be known. For days after, bodies were seen floating into the ocean from the 3-mile wide mouth of the Tijuana River. The most tragic loss of life came in the Otay Valley where 11 Japanese farmers were killed. A monument in Mt. Hope Cemetery was dedicated in their memory.

1918 - On Friday, October 10, the world wide influenza epidemic reached San Diego, resulting in the imposition by the Board of Health, of a citywide quarantine. Wearing of face masks in public was mandatory. While this quarantine became effective on October 11, it was not until December 9, 1918, that the City Council voted around to adopting an Emergency Ordinance making it a misdemeanor for anyone outside of his home not to: "wear, securely fastened over his nose, and mouth a gauze mask made from at least four-ply surgical gauze, or preferably from at least three-ply butter cloth." There was partial relief in that the ordinance did not require "any person from removing said mask while being served and while actually consuming articles of food or drink." Not less than five dollars, nor more than one hundred dollars was the fine, and/or thirty days in jail. By its terms the ordinance expired after nine days on December 18. (The Journal of San Diego History, Summer 1981)

1918 - "The first world war had started and the big 'flu' epidemic came along. Wearing a gauze mask over mouth and nose was supposed to keep you from catching the flu. So at home we made masks which were sold at the packing house for 10 cents each. Theresa was the only one in our family to come down with the flu. It was often a deadly disease that year, with no miracle drugs yet discovered. Although Theresa was very sick she had excellent care, a mild climate so recovery came a bit faster than the undertakers could take care of them. Uncle Leslie's dad was an undertaker in San Francisco so we heard all about the horrors of later years." (Marian Cox Burns, "Our Life in the Old Days," 1993)

1918 - In the city in 1918, in all, there were 4392 cases and 324 deaths in a population of perhaps 70,000; in 1919, 648 cases and 44 deaths. The epidemic was compared in its severity with the Black Death. More than a half million persons died in the United States, four times the number of Americans who met death in Europe, and 20,000,000 throughout the world. (Pourade, Richard F. "Chapter 12," Gold in the Sun, 1965.)

1920/01/02 - A distinct shock of earthquake was felt in Chula Vista last Wednesday evening at exactly 6:35. (Chula Vista Star, Jan. 6, 1933.)

1923/02/02 - Chula Vista Fire Inflicts Loss of \$40,000. Blaze Puts Every Light In City Out. Five Carloads of Lemons in Buildings Destroyed and Serious Harm Imposed On Citrus Fruit Shippers. Fire, believed to have been started by a short circuit, last night destroyed the plant of the Randolph Market company at Chula Vista, with a loss estimated at more than \$40,000. Simultaneously with the starting of the fire, every light in the city of Chula Vista went out and the town was in total darkness. (The San Diego Union, Feb. 2, 1923)

1926/04/05 - Path Of Destruction Follows Terrific Gale. Homes and buildings partially wrecked and flooded in the throes of a "twister" Monday night [April] like of which had never been seen here before. Rushing through the town at midnight, the gale uprooted trees, tore roofs from houses, pulled garages up from foundations. The damage was done here in a direct path from First avenue to Fifth avenue, between F and G streets. Here is a list of the damage done in the storm: The P. S. Barnhart home on First avenue had the roof torn off the house, the porch completely destroyed, and much damage done to the living room. The Chula Vista Citrus Association Packing House was completely demolished. The supports of the building were of tile and brick and wind caught the building the supports gave way and the entire roof fell in. Next in line was the Leach's packing house. The roof was torn from it in several pieces of timber carried to Peter's Apartments and Irwin's Feed store where they fell and damaged the roof. Across Third avenue, the gale picked up the roof of Coombe's apartments, stripping two of the upstairs apartments and letting gallons of water into the rooms. Fortunately no one was hurt. Three plate glass windows in the Wigginton's store building were completely broken and five upstairs window panes smashed. It was as if an angry giant, hurling an iron spear, rushed through the city destroying everything in his path. On Church street the roof of the house of F. A. Hildenbrand was partially torn off, menacing the lives of those within by falling timbers. One of the "freaks" of the storm was its treatment of the garage belonging to Jack Bates on Del Mar avenue. The storm picked up the garage and it against the corner of the house, tearing it into bits. But when the bewildered owners could make out what had happened they saw that the automobile in the garage was standing there yet, absolutely unharmed. Gathering force the gale swept across the street through the property of George Daschbaugh, hurling down gale force winds and going on to Cypress street. The garage of David Rice was destroyed and that of W. E. Roessner. The latter's home escaped demolition, by twenty feet

the gale passed it by and tore the garage from the foundations and scattered its pieces in the orchard beyond. The roof of the Roessner house was torn, but th was nothing compared to the garage. (Chula Vista Historical Society Bulletin, May 1990)

1927/02/17 - Heavy rain began to fall on Feb. 11 and the storm produced widespread flooding. SIXTH DAY OF STORM - City Supply of Milk, Provisions Chula Vista Water Off as Main Breaks; Tijuana Isolated, Lacks Lights, Food. HUNDREDS BATTLE successfully to save 1870 dike at mouth of Mission va protecting marine base from flooding. THREE CITY RESERVOIRS overflow, while two others, cut off from communication, are believed filled. PIPELINE deprives Chula Vista of water. OCEANSIDE AND TIJUANA without lights and latter cut off by break in bridge. MILK SUPPLY entirely cut off here with provision supply. LA JOLLA lost water line when Lake Hodges conduit breaks. RAIL SERVICE probably week away, but special ateamer chartered for Su CENTER OF STORM moves east, but occasional rains to continue today. SUBURB FOLK DRAW STORAGE FROM FAUCETS Tijuana, Oceanside, In C As Wires Break Thursday, February 17, 1927. Chula Vista was completely deprived of water yesterday afternoon when a supply line running from the Swee dam broke. Advance warning was given before it was necessary to shut off the supply and every household is believed to have drawn an adequate supply for days. It will be possible to resume service for a short while if the supply is exhausted, it was said. Although National City is served also by Sweetwater dam, line branches off above the break, and service was not interrupted. La Jolla Line Breaks- La Jolla was cut off from its regular supply of water when a pipelin from Lake Hodges broke and spouted water. Emergency water rapidly was run into thecity from theUniversity Heights reservoir. These pipes run under the S river to the coast suburb. Tijuana's connection with the outside world was cut when the approach to the Tijuana river bridge was washed away. With it went current and the only immediate means of getting foodstuffs into the border town. The water supply was reported normal. Although the flood waters are abou with the floor of the wooden structure, the fact that the washed away approach permits much of the flow to spread out below over the lowland will probably officials believe, unless the storm continues. Shortage Reported< That there is a shortage of coal oil and gasoline as well as other supplies, is the information here last night. Many workmen were busy all day yesterday throwing up a dike about the race track and the grandstand to protect it from further encroachment water. Two frame houses, the residences of Mexican officers in the Tijuana valley, were washed away by the raging Tijuana river, but not before they had been vacated by their occupants. Several houses in the river bottom at San Ysidro were washed away also, Hannah said. Except for these towns, no others experie of water, electricity or gas. Telephone service was generally good through the county, although wires to Los Angeles and to several back country points were NATIONAL CITY CITIZENS LAY IN FOOD STUFFS< A rush for food supplies in National City was made yesterday afternoon when it was learned that t highway to San Diego was almost impassable. Food stuffs were being concentrated in the event that supplies from San Diego are held up for an unusual leng time. Mail service to all points south and east of San Diego has been temporarily suspended, pending repair of highways. National City residents last night v warned to store water in case principal mains were shut off, although it was indicated that this would not be necessary as the water in Sweetwater dam was r be receding. Another Dam< Another dam around which rumors of a break circulated was that of the Sweetwater Water company, near Chula Vista, late yeste stood adamant while water poured through its spillway. The wide valley below was flooded, as 22,500 cubic feet of water a second poured out of the reservc homes were abandoned and water stood a foot deep in the Sweetwater Food company's plant at Bonita. It was in this valley that the break in the pipeline occ which cut off Chula Vista's water supply. Excerpt taken from The San Diego Independent newspaper. (Chula Vista Historical Society Bulletin, Jan.1988)

1933/03/10 - On March 10, 1933, at 5:54 p.m., an estimated magnitude-6.3 earthquake hit Southern California. The Long Beach earthquake killed 115 people and damaged buildings throughout the region. Unfavorable geological conditions (landfill, water-soaked alluvium) combined with poorly constructed buildings increased the damage done by the quake. In Long Beach, buildings collapsed, water tanks fell through roofs, and houses were tossed off their foundations. School buildings were among the structures that incurred the most severe damage. The earthquake highlighted the need for earthquake-resistant design for structures in California. Many school buildings were damaged, with more than 230 school buildings that either were destroyed, suffered major damage, or were judged unsafe to occupy. The California State Legislature passed the Field Act on April 10, 1933, mandating that school buildings must be earthquake-resistant. (Wikipedia)

1935/01/01 - severe earthquake tremor felt Monday, Jan. 1 (Chula Vista Star Jan. 6, 1950.)

1936/09/04 - Chula Vista Grammar school has been earthquake proofed at cost of \$15,000, all from the school budget and not from any bond issue, and another \$15,000 will be spent over the next 2 years. Miss Lilian Rice has been in charge of the earthquake project, with contractors Wm T. Lyons, Arthur Done, S. T. Alesander, Richard Johanson, James H. Horn. (Chula Vista Star, Sept. 4, 1936.)

1938/06/26 - Shell Oil district depot fire in Palm City was the worst gasoline blaze in county history. (San Diego Union June 26, 1938)

1948/07/30 - Due to polio epidemic, Vogue and Seville have discontinued kiddie matinees, fresh air systems turned on full blast, children under 12 not admitted unless with an adult, lights have been made brighter to allow patrons to find seats with touching other patrons. (Chula Vista Star, July 30, 1948.)

1948/09/17 - School openings delayed one week due to polio, but opening scheduled for Sept. 20 (Chula Vista Star, Sept. 17, 1948.)

1948/10/29 - The Fred McLean case brings the polio total this year to 322 In the San Diego area, of which number 30 have been from Chula Vista with seven fatalities. Dr. Alex Lesem, County health officer, again warned that parents should not relax in their precautions to guard against polio. Meanwhile, Chula Vista schools are maintaining restrictions designed to avoid fatigue among pupils. (The Chula Vista Star, Oct 29, 1948)

1948/12/05 - A rolling earthquake Saturday afternoon [Dec. 5] startled residents of Chula Vista and the South Bay area. Emory School was declared unsafe condemned after this earthquake opened cracks in walls. When Rudy San Martin was about 13, the second Montgomery School that he attended was damaged earthquake and was replaced by the current third school. (Chula Vista Star, Dec. 10 and 31, 1948; San Martin, Rudy. Interview Jan. 22, 2010.)

1950/01/20 - Sweetwater Union High School Is without an auditorium as a result of decision of the trustees last night to abandon the building because of a b Although the building, Stafford Hall, Is being repaired to permit use of the school library and classrooms on its second floor, the auditorium will never be used. Wilbur F. Bradley, chairman of the board, announced. He said the building, built in 1921, was not sufficiently earthquake resistant and did not have large enough rooms to warrant repairs, which would be costly. He said that prior to the discovery of the hall's structural weakness, the district had planned to apply for a new building to take its place. The distorted wooden beam, 68 feet long, was discovered Monday by a maintenance man. V. M. Chase, principal, immediately ordered use of the building discontinued and the emergency meeting of the trustees was called to deal with the problem. It was believed the classrooms and auditorium would be back in use by Jan. 30, the first day of the spring semester. Bradley said there was no probability of any early building of a new auditorium because



auditoriums were ruled out of state aid funds. Open air assemblies will be the order of the day, Chase declared. (The San Diego Union, Jan. 20, 1950)

1951/01/03 - Civil Defense Plans - As friendly bombers and jet lighters whizzed overhead, the Board of Education yesterday adopted civil defense plans for survival of school children in the event hostile forces should attack San Diego. An emergency instructional program, for all school children will start Jan. 15, preceded by pilot classes this week in San Diego High School and Theodore Roosevelt Junior High School. Principals of schools were instructed yesterday to draw up disaster plans for each school in accordance with several listed principles. Simultaneously, all school employes were directed to begin first-aid training at once. First aid training will be started not later than Feb. 19 in all junior and senior high schools and Junior colleges. Employes in the physical education staff, who will serve as instructors for junior and senior high, school students must complete their first-aid training by Feb. 16. Others must complete Red Cross standard first aid courses by May 25. Here is the way the pupils will be instructed: Elementary principals will distribute Tuesday scripts called "Americans Are Always Ready," an adaptation for kindergarten-through-Grade-6-pupils of the official defense publication "Survival Under Atomic Attack." Instruction to pupils starts Jan. 18 and runs through Jan. 19 and is to be reviewed as frequently as necessary. Junior and senior high school students will get more training. A total of 3 hours of instruction will be given each, of these students within 5 consecutive home loom periods of 35 minutes each day. Junior college students will get the same instruction during the basic English course. The instruction will be based on "Survival Under Atomic Attack" and will follow the Teachers' Discussion Guide. Principals will distribute the guide to all teachers Jan. 9, when there will be detailed discussion of plans. Instruction will be given junior and senior high and junior college students Jan. 15 through Jan. 19. Basic first aid instruction will be given, to all high and junior college students in the physical education classes from grades 7 through 14. The Junior Red Cross first aid course (15 hours) will be given to junior high pupils. The standard Red Cross first aid course will be given to high school and junior college students grades 7 through 14. The courses will stress training essential to civilian defense and deemphasize other aspects of the training that are immediately related to the present emergency. Emphasis in these classes for school children will be on the why and-how of first aid; shock and hysteria; artificial respiration; bleeding from cuts; burns; fractures; transportation of injured. Where student leaders serve as assistants in large physical education classes, they be trained through the official Red Cross courses before Feb. 16. The first aid instruction in the schools will be given for 2 periods a week in all physical education classes as soon as each school has certified first aid instructors and student assistants available. It is expected that such instruction will be started not later than Jan. 19. Under disaster plans for schools, pupils will remain in the buildings during an air raid or air raid drill unless otherwise advised by the San Diego Disaster headquarters or the superintendent of schools. An air raid station will be assigned in the school for each individual on the basis of 6 square feet for each person. Order of safety: 1-Inside corridors on the ground floor, leaving a passage down the corridor at least 3 feet wide, leaving passages to toilets, drinking stairways and exits clear, with no station closer than 20 feet to the end of a corridor if the end is an outside wall. 2-Basement space, if any, where relatively windows and if there are 2 or more exits. 3--The one-third of the classrooms on the ground floor next to the corridor. If classrooms are used as shelter station window coverings will be drawn. Classroom units will remain intact under direction of the teacher in the room. In event of, an air raid, all pupils will be dismissed immediately after the raid is over provided it is declared safe by the disaster council. Parents will be asked to plan alternate locations to which the children should go from school in the event no responsible adult is at home. The school plans prepared by the principals will be checked by the disaster council which may suggest alternate technical modifications. PRESENTED TO BOARD The civil defense plans were presented to school board members by Supt Crawford; Assistant Superintendents Robert Jenkins, T. Malcolm Brown and Martha Farnum; Kenneth Imel, adult education director, and George Geyer, bus manager. Board members complimented the administrative staff for their work. Crawford said there probably would be no extra expense for the schools in carrying out the program and that if there was any, it probably would be recovered from state or federal civilian defense allotments later. (San Diego Union, Jan. 3, 1951)



1952/11/13 - Civil Defense disaster drills being conducted, CD HQ is in the Chamber of Commerce bldg at 360 Third ave. (Chula Vista Star, Nov. 13, 1952)

1953/05/14 - First test Monday of civil defense sirens was successful, controlled from a switch at the police station. (Chula Vista Star, May 14, 1953.)

1955/04/21 - Federal Civil Defense Administration recommends stainless steel ID tags for civilians, now available thru food stores (photo) (Chula Vista Star, Apr. 21, 1955.)

1955/05/09 - Yellow alert air raid warning for 3 minutes Thursday morning caught many schools and officials unprepared, but CV schools had CD alarm in bldg, and the district's 11 schools were immediately notified. (Chula Vista Star-News, May 9, 1955.)



Second-grader Kenneth Perkins gets Salk polio vaccine shot.(Chula vista Star-News, Apr. 18, 1955)

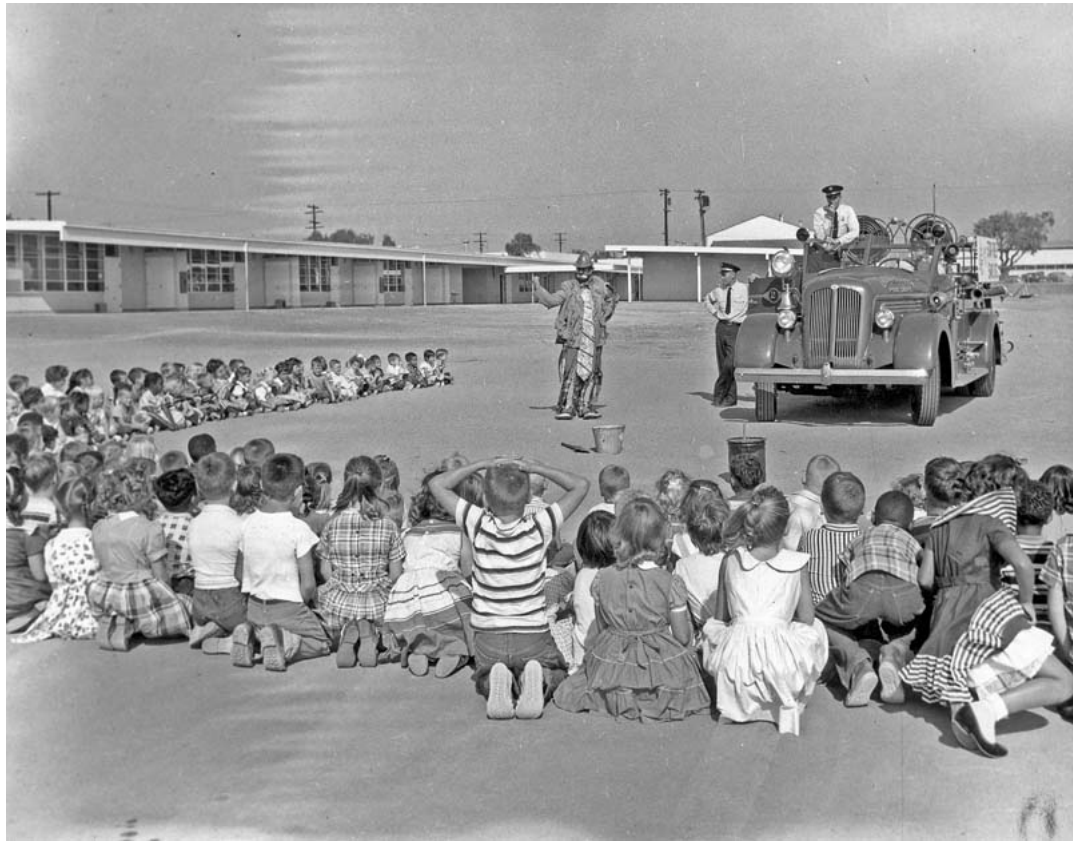
1955/04/14 - New Salk polio vaccine soon to arrive for 4200 first and second grade children in the South Bay; in Chula Vista, the F Street school and the Lil Rice school will be vaccination centers. (Chula Vista Star-News, Apr. 14, 1955.)

1956/07/19 - A mock A-bomb attack will test civil defense in nation-wide. "Operation Alert 1956" and yellow alert on Pacific coast will be 8am July 20, fol a red alert, the Conelrad emergency broadcast system will operate for 15 minutes, at 640 or 1240 on radio dial. (Chula Vista Star-News, July 19, 1956.)

1957/10/10 - 10,000 CV school kids get 1st TB skin mass tests. (Chula Vista Star-News, Oct. 10, 1957.)

1957/10/17 - Asiatic flu causing rising school absences. (Chula Vista Star-News, Oct. 17, 1957.)

1958/11/06 - Hofer dairy in Nestor burned by explosion and fire, at 1215 19th Street. Students from nearby Emory school were evacuated. Dairy owned by Hofer of 1215 19th Street. (Chula Vista Star-News, Nov. 6, 1958.)



Mr. Blunders, the clown, visits an elementary school and explains fire prevention to school children in the 1950s. (Historical Photos Digital Collection, Chula Vista Public Libr

1960/06/05 - Tidal Surge Causes Odor In South Bay. That odor bothering South Bay residents recently is the aftermath of last week's tidal surge from the Cl earthquakes. This was confirmed yesterday by Leonard Burtman, engineer for the Regional Water Pollution Control Board, who investigated. Bottom dwelli and animals, particularly snails, clams and mussels in San Diego Bay, apparently were suffocated when the surge lifted heavy silt from the bottom. Acres of snails are packed near the end of G street in Chula Vista and tons of sea lettuce as well. There are anchovies stacked along the beaches and sizable numbers rays, clams and mussels. The "fish kill" sector ranges the four-mile beach from the Sweetwater River to the Salt Ponds. There is some animal life dead along bayside of the Strand but mostly sea. lettuce is swept above the high water line there. (The San Diego Union, June 5, 1960)

1962/01/07 - Gov. Edmund Brown to ask state legislature for law to build fallout shelters in schools, Sen. Hugo Fisher supporting the Gov (Chula Vista Sta Jan. 7, 1962.)

1964/09/03 - Mrs. James Cahill has been "raising a howl about the lack of a proper fence along the border to keep the rabid dogs out of San Diego county" - one look at the miserably inadequate fence which now supposedly covers the last 2-1/2 miles of border to the ocean, anyone can see that the route is an easy the rabid strays." - "The fact is, 163 known cases of rabies have broken out in the last 24 months in San Diego county, and like it or not, the rabies problem c to border on epidemic proportions." (editorial, Chula Vista Star-News, Sept. 3, 1964.)

1968/03/14 - Citizens angry at lack of storm drains after recent storm, 6-yr old boy Gregory Falls swept to death, 1964 report showed need for \$5m in storm Larry Fitzpatrick recommended putting a stick of dynamite in some of the storm drains. People on Moss street were up to their waists in water -- newspaper "the entire drainage situation in CV is a disgrace." (Chula Vista Star-News, Mar. 14, 1968.)

1968/09/19 - Two fires at Feaster School Sunday destroyed two classrooms, cost \$60,000. (Chula Vista Star News, Sept. 19, 1968.)

1968/10/24 - Feaster school burns again, 3 classrooms burned, cost \$40,000, arsonist sought, total 3 blazes since Sept. 15 cost \$95,000. (Chula Vista Star-N 24, 1968.)

1970/09/22 - The Laguna Fire, previously known as the Kitchen Creek Fire and the Boulder Oaks Fire, occurred in 1970 in the Laguna Mountains and East region of San Diego County in Southern California. It was the third largest wildfire in the history of California at that time, after the Santiago Canyon Fire o and the Matilija Fire of 1932. It was one of many wildfires in a massive conflagration that spanned across the state from September 22 October 4, 1970. Th fire was started by downed power lines during Santa Ana winds in the Kitchen Creek area of the Laguna Mountains on the morning of September 26, 1970. hours it burned westward about 30 miles to the outskirts of El Cajon and Spring Valley. The fire devastated the communities of Harbison Canyon and Crest. the fire burned 175,425 acres and 382 homes killing eight people. The Laguna Fire was surpassed as the third largest fire in California history by the 280,27 Cedar Fire in October 2003. It was surpassed as the fourth largest by the 197,990 acre Witch Creek Fire in October 2007. (wikipedia)

1970/09/27 Laguna fire - flames at Proctor Valley Road, Sunday, Sept. 27, 10 pm. (Chula Vista Star-News Oct. 1, 1970)



Fire on San Miguel mountain, people watch from Southwestern College Estates (*Chula Vista Star-News*, Oct. 4, 1970.)

1970/10/04 - 1st female fire inspector. -- Dispatcher Carol Ann Gove, for 11 years the nerve center of the National City fire department, is quitting to become Vista's first woman fire inspector. Gove says the most serious fire she can remember was the Laguna blaze of 1970, which began in the mountains and was stopped as it reached the east end of Bonita. All available equipment and men were sent either to the front lines or to standby stations, and Gove spent 48 hours straight at the station, sleeping just feet away from her radios. (*Chula Vista Star-News*, 1978.)

1970/10/04 - South Bay Amateur Radio Society (SOBARS) members worked with firemen and civil defense during the 1970 Kitchen Creek fire in eastern San Diego County. Some relayed messages from concerned relatives during the Los Angeles earthquake last year. Nationwide ham radio operators have been applauded for their help in the devastating West Virginia and Rapid City, S.D., floods and the Alaska earthquake. Clarence Harris, SOBARS president from Chula Vista explains that public service is the main reason the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) licenses amateurs. Amateur Radio Emergency Corps (AREC) has installed an antenna on the Red Cross headquarters roof, and some members have stored food and supplies to last 72 hours in their homes in preparation for an emergency situation. Harris is a relative newcomer to the art, counting 15 years in the field. Almost 75, the Chula Vista resident became interested in radio during his stay at the Army Air Service in World War I. "That was WWI, NOT II," he emphasized. "Things were a lot different then in signal corps. One of the newest things on the horizon in ham radio is Oscar. Oscar 6 is the latest in a series of ham-built satellites orbiting the globe after being lofted with a U.S. weather satellite. HAMs bounce signals off Oscar 6, traveling in a polar orbit, to reach far distant stations. W. P. "Si" Morrison, W60SD, says that amateurs could reach the distant Pacific without Oscar 6, but 'it's a lot more fun to use low wattage equipment and get it here. " Morrison, an ex-Navy chief, says many of the hams picked up their radio expertise in the military. "I guess the average age is 45-50 years; we're trying to attract younger people into the field." He and his wife Helen, a lady ham, refer to the jargon as a XYL (a ex-, or married, young lady operator), devote a bedroom wall to the necessary transceivers and other electronic gear. . . . , neurological treatment with Project Concern." . Last week concern for an overdue yacht from Mexico united hams in both countries and commercial fishermen off the Mexican coast in a search for the boat. "The cooperation between the two countries was really beautiful," Wiederhold said. The ham estimates he spends 120 hours a month on volunteer activities for the Flying Samaritans. The Flying Samaritans, a much-lauded group of doctors and laymen who fly medical supplies and their skills to small Baja California towns, have relied on ham operators for years. One ham who is also a member of the winging group is Earl Wiederhold, K6SMT, of National City. In case of a local emergency, like that 100-year flood, SOBARS members affiliated with the Amateur Radio Emergency Corps (AREC) would band together at the Vista Red Cross headquarters on 3rd Ave. (*Chula Vista Star News*, Nov. 5, 1972)

1978/03/09 - Explosion blacks out county. A circuit breaker explosion yesterday in Chula Vista's bayside power plant triggered a countywide blackout that left 400,000 homes and businesses without power and created enormous traffic tangles. This report was compiled by Sandy Pasqua, John Taylor and Dave Urbaniak. Power was restored by San Diego Gas & Electric Co., just after dark yesterday to about half the customers, including most of the South Bay, but not before police and firefighters reported traffic jams and minor fires and accidents. The explosion came at about 3:13 p.m., just as many commuters were beginning their drive home and schools were letting out. Policemen, and in National City, public works employees, were sent to major intersections to direct traffic. Many businesses and schools closed early. Reporters at the Star-News resorted to candles imported by an editor to finish today's edition, which was rushed to a printing plant in Kearny. Power was restored early. But the blackout put the paper behind schedule. Even after the lights went on in Chula Vista, a police dispatcher reported "traffic units running code three (lights and sirens), just about everything." In National City, a spokeswoman said most street lights were out "and we're going crazy." In Imperial Beach, police reserves were out in Imperial Beach, but no major accidents were reported. "It's not dark enough for anything to happen yet," said the Imperial Beach spokeswoman just before dusk, "but we're waiting." Before power came back in much of the South Bay just after 6:30 p.m., the California Highway Patrol reported two fender-benders, one on Briarwood and the other on Sweetwater Rd. No one was injured. One accident was reported in National City, but no ambulance was needed. One Highway Patrol dispatcher said the drivers themselves kept accidents to a minimum by being cautious and courteous. "When the signal lights get set up their own four-way stops," he said. "The drivers have just been terrific." At Fredericka Manor in Chula Vista several people were caught in elevators when power went out, but a spokeswoman there said the elevator was taken to the basement, where all residents were led out safely. The manor was on emergency power and the only problem reported was difficulty in getting food upstairs without elevators. Telephones weren't answered at Congregational Towers, Chula Vista's senior citizens' apartment house. The power outage was widespread, but sporadic. The South Bay Shopping Center in National City didn't lose power; City Center didn't at first, and later did. One traffic light remained on at Plaza Blvd. and D Ave. in National City. Early in the blackout a downtown branch office of SDG&E reported only a 20-second "brownout" there and said it had received no calls about a blackout. The explosion at the plant, at the foot of L St., occurred during "routine switching," according to spokesman Dennis Richter. "Two transmission units were shut down and triggered circuit breakers to shut down all the way north to the Onofre plant in San Clemente. No one was injured in the explosion, he said. "We have to turn on the power in pockets," said Richter. "That is, we can't turn

power at once or we'll have another failure." Such power "surges" as service was restored was blamed for the on-again, off-again lights in some locations. By 9 p.m., power was back to 200,000 customers and officials expected the rest of the county would be serviced within hours. (Chula Vista Star-News, March 9,

1979/05/05 - The Chula Vista Community Church, 301 East J St., suffered damage nearing \$150,000 in a fire that gutted the sanctuary and three classrooms (Chula Vista Star-News, April 5, 1979.)

1979/08/09 - Residents a half-square-mile area of west Chula Vista were evacuated for more than an hour yesterday when a dump-bound tanker truck laden with deadly acid sprung a leak and began spewing its noxious cargo into the air. Residents of the area bounded by Broadway, Interstate 5, and Hand L St. were ordered to leave their homes shortly after 8 a.m. when the Los Angeles Freight Lines truck sprang a leak as it was entering northbound I-5 from J St. The truck - carrying a combination of hydrochloric, nitric acids and ferric chloride - had left Rohr Industries moments earlier and was headed for a north county dump. Chula Vista Chief Clyde Longbone said the substances began to react with the stainless steel interior of the truck, causing an increase in pressure and heat which blew relief valve. The amount of acid escaping was not exactly known, but was estimated at about 2,000 gallons. The leak sent a bright orange acid cloud over nearby homes. Five firefighters were exposed to the substance and were taken by ambulance to Bay General Hospital, where they were treated for skin exposure and inhalation and later released. Hospital spokeswoman Cece Wilkins said the substance was a "very toxic acid" that could cause "corrosive burning." She said they were given oxygen. She added that none suffered any serious skin or breathing problems. At the scene, firefighters washed down their stricken co-workers. (from CalTrans, the fire department, police department and Rohr were on hand as firefighters trained hoses on the leaking truck. A spokesman said the truck filled up with the waste at Rohr. Peeples called the acid mixture a "pickling solution" used in the processing of metals, By 9:15, the leak had been stopped, and firefighters began filling the truck with water, reportedly to prevent any further chemical reaction. The number of residents evacuated was not known. Those in their homes were ordered out by the sheriff's helicopter Astria, which broadcast the evacuation order from the air. Police stopped both east and west-bound traffic on J Street, and motorists either back the way they'd come-back onto Interstate 5 or down adjacent streets. Longbone said the acid mixture's effect was much like the lung-irritant. (Chula Vista Star-News, Aug. 9, 1979.)

1982/01/24 - Arson fire destroys the main office of Chula Vista Junior High School. (Chula Vista Star News, January 24, 1982)

1983/08/21 - Sixty area firemen were needed to control fire at Apache salvage yard, a former hazardous waste site on Otay Valley Road. Apache Services Company Valley Rd. is on state's list of most hazardous waste sites. Owner Robert Dearie claims U. S. Navy cleaned up hazardous waste. (Chula Vista Star-News, Feb. 17 and August 21, 1983)

1983/08/21 - Blaze strikes site of old waste dump at the Apache salvage yard, a former hazardous waste site, took more than 60 firefighters from Chula Vista, National City, Bonita, Montgomery, Coronado and San Diego all night to put out. After hazardous wastes were found and cleaned up at the site in 1981, it was on the State's superfund cleanup list. Though the drums of waste marked U.S. Navy were removed from the site by the Navy, health officials feared groundwater contamination caused by hazardous wastes which had leaked from barrels prior to the cleanup. The Navy paid the IT Corporation nearly \$220,000 to have the site cleaned up in what the Navy said at the time was a public service. While the Navy did not take responsibility for the wastes, the barrels had Navy markings. The land is owned by Vincent Davies and was leased to Bob Dearie. (The Imperial Beach Star-News, August 21, 1983)

1985 - In 1985 Ted Goff went to Juarez-Lincoln School, where Al Blair had been the principal when the school opened in September 1970 (with concrete walls and Ted's house). Al's wife was a sculptress and made a bust of Lincoln for the front of the school, but it was later broken. The school had down-sized but still had 600 students. Ted remembers a story that made the local TV news in the late 1980s that the school was infected with a chemical agent, and the police surrounded the school with yellow tape, but found only a dead pig in a dumpster. The chemical agent story was a hoax created by a fake doctor treating the school psychologist leaking information to the press. In May 1987 some teachers became ill due to a chemical used to clean the air conditioners, but it turned out not to be toxic. Goff ordered no air conditioners were to be cleaned while the school was in session. Louis Beall was superintendent at that time and was a good diplomat, a principal to deal with problems in their own way, was "what a superintendent should be." Ted retired in 1987. (Ted Goff, interview in Chula Vista April 14

1994/06/17 - Long-standing efforts by the city to limit operations at a local hazardous-waste treatment plant are expected to come to a head today in court. I will argue whether Appropriate Technologies II Inc. should have come under closer environmental scrutiny before the state renewed its permit last year. The city hopes the judge will revoke the permit and order the company to undertake more studies and stop processing chemicals such as highly toxic cyanide. As the defendant in the case, the state Department of Toxic Substances counters that its permit process was adequate and showed no high-risk activities at the plant off Otay Valley Road next to the county dump. And Appropriate Technologies attorney Peter Weiner accuses the city of interfering with a legitimate business that is badly needed to deal with the volumes of hazardous wastes produced statewide by the government and private industry. Berwanger has collected sworn depositions from scientists alarmed at the potential danger that deadly phosgene, chlorine or hydrogen cyanide gases could spew from storage tanks damaged by fire, earthquake or earthquake. Stacks of documents and declarations have been filed by all the parties in the case for review by South Bay Superior Court Judge Thomas LaRocca had originally been scheduled to open last month but was delayed when the attorneys thought they might reach a settlement. The parties failed to agree on settlement terms. The company, commonly known as Aptec, recycles paint, collects household waste and dangerous chemicals found in drug labs, separates out the toxic components and repackages the wastes for transfer to disposal centers. Aptec employs about 120 workers and generates \$3 million in business annually for its Otay-based parent company Greenfield Environmental, according to Tim Sparks, Greenfield president. The firm has operated the hazardous-waste facility near the Otay Landfill since 1982, having its permits periodically renewed by state, federal and county authorities. After a dangerous chlorine gas release in February 1985, the plant was fined \$24,000 by the state. In April the same year, residents along Interstate 805 were evacuated during a chlorine spill from a truck that caught fire on its way to the plant. No one was seriously injured in either incident, but city officials began asking that the company's permit not be renewed. "About then our problem was with the city," said Sparks in a recent interview. "We spent \$800,000 on an environmental review and health-risk assessment that the Department of Toxic Substances said was one of the most complete reviews ever done." Residents of the Robinhood Point development half a mile from the Aptec plant joined city officials opposing the permit renewal, arguing the environmental report failed to consider -- among other things -- potential danger from nearby earthquake faults. The state issued the permit last year, however, and the city responded with its lawsuit. (San Diego Union-Tribune, June 17, 1994.)

1999/01/16 - crash of experimental plane from Brown Field in Eastlake rancho Janal, near Hunt Parkway and Otay Lakes Road (Chula Vista Star-News, Jan. 1999)

2000/02/07 - Chula Vista Junior High School fire destroyed 11 classrooms and cafeteria. (Chula Vista Star-News, Feb. 12, 2000)

2001/04/11 - Congregational Tower evacuated due to shooting incident. (Chula Vista Star-News, June 29, 2001)

2003/10/25 - The Cedar fire began, was the largest and costliest fire in California history, consuming over 272,000 acres. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Dec. 3

2003/10/26 - Cedar fire -- daybreak came as a shock Oct. 26. Residents across the region looked out their windows on a Sunday to see smoke so thick it turned sun blood orange. Overnight, curtains of flame had burned through as many as 6,000 acres an hour as wildfires swept across the county, from Valley Center Dulzura to Lakeside. Over the next few days, thousands of residents were uprooted from their homes or lost them. Unhealthy air kept many San Diegans in Schools and some government offices shut down. Sixteen people died, including firefighter Steven Rucker. The 38- year-old Novato fire engineer was burned Julian while trying to retreat from the rushing flames. More than 2,400 homes were destroyed in the county's fires. More than 376,000 acres burned, about 1 of the county. Fire investigators have said the biggest blaze, the Cedar fire, may have been started by a lost hunter who ignited a signal fire near Lakeside. It was the largest and costliest fire in state history. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Dec. 31, 2003)

2003/10/27 - Cedar fire -- A fire that began near Dulzura raced toward the eastern edge of Chula Vista yesterday, stopping short of thousands of homes when it reached the Otay Lakes reservoir. The speed of the fire prompted city officials to implement a voluntary evacuation of three of Eastlake's newest communities. An evacuation center was opened earlier in the day at Bonita Vista High School. By early evening, more than 150 people reported to the center. City officials let them stay the night or return to their homes. "We're trying to make a stand on it," said Chula Vista fire Cpt. Angelo Cappos. Cappos said fire officials were concerned about the Cedar fire, which started in Cleveland National Forest's Cedar Creek area east of Ramona. That fire is moving southwest toward the Otay Lakes area. Jorge Cortez, who was at the evacuation center for three hours, said the Otay Lakes reservoir was a good buffer to the fire. He watched the fire for Eastlake Parkway for about two hours. The fire began near Bee Canyon Road and Marron Valley Road at about 6:45 a.m., the California Department of Forestry said. The cause of the fire was unknown last night. The fire swept over at least 15,000 acres, moving west toward the Otay Lakes reservoir and north toward Proc Pines. CDF officials expected to have the fire contained by Thursday night. The fire reached Otay Lakes about 4 p.m. It reached the eastern shoreline, engulfing 500 trees. The fire then split, moving north and south along the lake, burning the entire eastern bank of the lower Otay Lake. East of the reservoir, the fire burned the sides of Otay Lakes Road. The fire forced the evacuation of a trailer park in Jamul and the San Diego Air Sports Center. Padilla said the city activated its emergency operations center at 10 a.m. More than 250 police and fire personnel were called in. City fire officials dispatched police officers to Eastlake's Woods, Vistas neighborhoods at 4 p.m. to alert residents. By then, rows of cars and sport utility vehicles had lined Olympic Parkway and Hunte Parkway or drove on grade overlooking the Otay Lakes to view the fire. Residents slowly filtered into the evacuation center, which was set up yesterday morning with tables, television and water donated by the Eastlake Community Church, Sgt. Dan Hardman said. (San Diego Union-Tribune, Oct. 27, 2003)

2007/10/23 - San Diego County Wildfires started Oct. 20. These wildfires were a series of wildfires that began burning across Southern California on October 20. At least 1,500 homes were destroyed. Of all the fires, the two biggest were located in San Diego County. The largest, the Witch (Creek) Fire, burned areas north and northeast of San Diego. The second largest, the Harris Fire, burned northwest from the U.S.-Mexico border towards San Diego. (The San Diego Union-Tribune, Oct. 23, 2007)



Cedar Fire at Otay Lake 2003