

ROARSHOCK PAGE

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Late September 2017, last quarter for industrial endeavors, but near the heady beginnings of the academic and art world seasons, while south of the equator it is spring. Here's a spring story reaching back almost fifty years. ROARSHOCK PAGE recalls 1968.

A VISIT TO PINEL

The spring of 1968 saw the rolling hills and the gentle valleys of Northern California vibrantly green after the winter rains and bursting with exuberant growing life. This abundance was most clear in the hinter countryside outside of historic Martinez, California along old Reliez Valley Road. That was the location of pinel school (the lower case p was intentional) on a six and a half acre parcel of land that included valley and hill, set amidst farmsteads and out beyond the back fence the newly created Briones Regional Park which had just been designated the previous autumn, in October 1967, after being acquired by the East Bay Regional Parks District from the East Bay Municipal Utility District (East Bay MUD)... Pinel School, Spring 1968, and there were gardens growing and pens and stables full of farm animals and birds. There were cats and dogs, and especially, most of all, there were children, each of whom was discovering his and her individual beauty and life path as they grew and learned and played. Also, the adults around them (some of them the founders who had the audacity and vision to create and operate the school), they too could not help but be changed and evolve with the experience... A moment after we first arrived and got out of the car I was tugging at my dad's sleeve and emphatically telling him, "I want to go to *this* school." It had only taken one look for me to grok pinel. As the visit continued I got more excited. We met with two of the founding teachers Jim and Ray, and with one of the student teachers from Antioch College who ran down some basics of a typical pinel week. You brought your own lunch, but sometimes on announced days there were meals cooked and served out of the kitchen in the Big Room, and Fridays often was a Movie Day. The Antioch teacher had a key to the storage room where were kept 10¢ "cokes" for sale (These so-called "cokes" were actually big flats of Shasta brand soda pop in many different flavors. They were not refrigerated so your 10¢ "coke" was drunk at whatever room temperature currently was in the pinel storage room). My dad and I looked through the classrooms and walked all over the

school grounds, checking out all the abundant open space (and internally I knew at once that space for the imagination was practically limitless here) and each amazing attraction and structure, from the Tower at the top of the hill to the duck pond, chicken coop, goat and pony pen, etc... We invited ourselves inside one of the many kid built forts. These forts often had a foundation of railroad ties stacked like oversized Lincoln logs, two-by-fours and plywood sometimes were used in the construction, along with old surplus tarps and many other strange materials. Among the furnishings of the fort we entered we found an oil burning lamp. "Boy I bet they have some strict rules about this." my dad said, but we both silently understood that this lamp had to be in breach of the rules, and also that pinel was a place that gave kids room to break rules and discover for themselves limits and boundaries... and consequences (but as far as I know not one of the pinel forts ever burned down)... In the spring of 1968 I was seven years old and a washout at Margaret Collins Elementary School in Pinole. By the second semester of 2nd Grade I had withdrawn all cooperation with my free compulsory public education despite all intimidation and pressure directed at me by school (i.e. government) officials, family and larger society. From an early age I'd gotten in trouble for repeatedly questioning the unspoken rules, all the stuff that was the way it was because everybody said that's how it was. When the kids in the neighborhood tried explaining Christianity to me, and I pointed out that it didn't explain the world actually around us, after that half of them were no longer allowed to play with me. When my school teacher was fussing about the classroom one day, and the students were seated at attention, my desk was next to a drinking fountain. I was thirsty so I got quietly up and got a drink of water. The teacher completely went off on me, telling me that I must never leave my desk without getting permission. Yeah, but I was thirsty, nothing was going on, so I just got my drink. The more I protested the angrier she got. There was no room for common sense, only obedience. Two boys got in some trouble and were called out into the hallway, so was I and another boy to witness the school principle as he administered spankings with a ping pong paddle. Soon he was calling me and my parents into his office to declare that I was disruptive to the school and just a bad kid. I assured my parents that I was fine, but that the school was really messed up. The neighbor kids teased and bullied me walking home from school, so one day I didn't go, instead hiding out on a

big rock on the side of the hill between home and school. My poor parents didn't know what to do. Finally, my pediatrician, Dr. Diller, told us about pinel and we made that first visit, which ended up saving me and my family... The best aspects of the "American Dream", as expressed in the "Counter-Culture" bursting out all over the Bay Area at that time, were happening at pinel. The school existed from 1962 and lasted until 1978, which was long after many experiments and seeming institutions of the Sixties had disappeared. That era of possibilities was really over years before the new times forced the school to shut down. As someone who was there a profound disappointment and sadness persists in the realization (from the perspective of the early 21st century) that pinel school could not exist now, economically or politically, not as it was. But greater and surpassing that feeling is the knowledge that pinel *did* exist and that I was part of it and it helped create and shape in joy the man I grew up to be. Many others who were also there were undeniably influenced by the experience (I have not ever heard any of them contradict that). All of us were essential elements in creating the school as a whole. It took every one of us in chaos and in harmony. What a journey together, as we drifted apart or stayed together over years and decades, sharing memories and stories via mailing lists and reunions, and now in the absurd and amazing 21st Century "New Times" we can gather together in "real time" from far flung places via the ingenious social web, united with our common foundation. I am constantly reaffirmed by and proud of my fellow pinelians. We are a family of friends forever... At the end of that first visit I was back down front by the parking lot and a big red headed kid (later identified as Russell "Rusty" Calhoon) was standing joyously eating a chicken salad sandwich on thick cut wheat bread. That was living the good life! There were cut lengths of telephone pole intended to mark the parking lot boundary, and after his sandwich Rusty and his brother Wayne Calhoon got up on one of them and started rolling it back and forth with the motion of their feet. They were chuckling and laughing together as they performed this exercise. I was laughing inside as we pulled out the drive and started back down Reliez Valley Road and Alhambra Valley Road toward our house in the old town of Pinole, knowing that I would be back the next school year when summer turned to fall 1968, and that pinel was mine.*

*But my mother may not have calculated what it meant that she would spend the next four school years driving that road back and forth, shuttling me and my younger brother to and from school, and that was a big motivation for my parents buying a new house about a mile further down Reliez Valley Road the other way towards Lafayette and Pleasant Hill, and that house became and remains the Top of the Hill, Martinez, home to much life and history. For the rest of the existence of pinel, it was a matter of going out our backyard gate, and my brother Daniel and I and our German Shepherd dog Max walked to and from. I, from then on, had the job of looking after the school grounds and animals in the summertime and other school breaks. At the very end, I was living in the little corner room off the Big Room as school caretaker. Those are other stories...

— D. A. Wilson

SEPTEMBER ALMANAC

09/01	2017	Shelley Berman died in Bell Canyon, CA.
09/06	2017	FULL HARVEST MOON
09/07	1822	Dom Pedro I declared Brazil independent from Portugal, Ipiranga Brook São Paulo.
09/10	2017	Clifford "Tiff" Garcia died at age 79 in Novato, CA.
09/11	1775	Benedict Arnold's expedition to Quebec.
09/12	1846	Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning eloped.
09/14	2000	Microsoft released Windows ME.
09/15	2017	Harry Dean Stanton died in Los Angeles at age 91.
09/19	2017	NEW MOON
09/20	1946	The first Cannes Film Festival was held, (delayed seven years due to WWII).
09/21	1981	Sandra Day O'Connor was unanimously approved the first female Supreme Court justice by the United States Senate.
09/22	2017	AUTUMN EQUINOX NORTH EARTH
	1927	Jack Dempsey lost the "Long Count" boxing match to Gene Tunney.
	1991	Dead Sea Scrolls made available to public for first time by Huntington Library.
09/23	1253	One-Eyed Wenceslaus I of Bohemia died.
09/24	1664	The Dutch Republic surrendered New Amsterdam to England.
09/25	1237	England and Scotland signed the Treaty of York, establishing the common border.
09/27	1540	The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) received its charter from Pope Paul III.
	2017	Hugh Hefner died in Los Angeles, at 91.
09/30	489	Ostrogoths under king Theoderic the Great defeated Odoacer's forces, Verona.

<http://roarshock.net/september.html>

Calling for Contributions! ROARSHOCK PAGE invites submissions of art, photographs, poetry, and micro-prose, to be considered for inclusion in future issues.

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