



EL CERRITO HIGH SCHOOL ARCHIVING PROJECT NEWSLETTER

May 2022 Volume LXVIII

Presidents Message

Dear Fellow Gauchos and Friends of ECHS,

June is rapidly approaching and I want to wish everyone a safe, healthy and enjoyable summer. We have two COVID years to make up for, so have fun.

It is my pleasure to welcome Risa Nye, ECHS class of 1969, as a new member of the Archiving Project Board. Risa is the daughter of Mr. Sam Elkind, the drama teacher many of you may remember.

If you loved high school and loved being a Gaucho, or you are a parent or were a teacher of a Gaucho you, too, can be a member of our group. We are always happy to hear about past years and new ideas for future activities. We are a fun group to be part of!

Remember to share our e-newsletter with friends and family.

Best Wishes to all,

Jackie Fleming Fonken, Class of 1956
Call or email me – (510) 232-9149 or rfonken@hotmail.com
President, ECHS Archiving Project

GAUCHO APPEARS ON TV GAME SHOW JEOPARDY!

by Kent Sanctuary

A big high-five to 2005 Gaucho alumnus, Matt Takimoto, for his great performance on the TV show “JEOPARDY!” Matt appeared on two episodes, which aired February 17 & 18, 2022. Recently, I interviewed him about his experience, both in high school and on the show. He shared, “At El Cerrito I played trumpet in jazz ensemble, was the Marching Band Drum Major in Fall 2004, played baseball, and did a little bit of theatre.” After graduation he headed to the University of Oregon and majored in music. He now teaches 5th grade at Glenview Elementary School in Oakland. I asked how he became interested in applying to JEOPARDY! “I remember watching it as a kid, but I really started getting serious in the last 5-10 years, watching JEOPARDY! and going to pub trivia with friends. I ended up on the show at the perfect time, the peak of my trivia training.”



“The first step to get on the show was the online ‘Anytime Test.’ You can take it every year and in your home, whenever is convenient. I took it five or six times before getting a callback. Tens of thousands of people try, but only a couple thousand get an audition. Finally, I was successful! In January 2020 I heard back—the audition would be in

April. The next step was a 50-question test which I did on Zoom. After that they called to do sort of a Screen test—I played a mock game with one of the producers and talked about myself. They want to see how you are on camera, to be sure you won't be boring on television. The mock game was in November 2020 and after that I was in the contestant pool for 18 months. I got a call in May 2021 but couldn't make it because it was the worst possible time for teachers. At the time Matt Amodio, the big super champ who won 38 games in a row, was on the show. If I had been able to go that day, I wouldn't have been able to play, unless one of us changed our first name. And then they called in November to tape December 18. The whole process, start to finish, took almost two years."

I asked if they put questions in the games that a contestant might know because of their background. Matt responded with an emphatic "No! One of the fascinating things is how regimented, yet random, the game is. There were a lot of TV game show scandals in the '60s and '70s. As a result, there are strict rules and laws. A Compliance Officer randomly chooses the contestants and order of the games. The writers do a good job having a variety of categories. Everybody ends up with something they are comfortable with compared to someone else."

Curious about the various hosts since Alex Trebek passed away, Matt shared, "I was really happy Ken Jennings hosted my two shows, especially after getting to meet him. I sincerely hope he gets the permanent job because he's really good at it. He is super kind and good with small talk and banter. During breaks and at the end of the game, he would do a little schmoozing. There was perhaps one time per game when he stumbled over a word and had to re-record after the game was over. Overall, it felt like a game of JEOPARDY! It was amazing!" Matt added how difficult it is for someone to step into Alex Trebek's shoes. "The JEOPARDY! fan community is very picky. Alex did the show for 37 seasons. For somebody to step in and have it is kind of an impossible task."

Matt added some more details about producing an episode. "It was filmed at Sony Pictures in Culver City. Each game ran as fast as a game on TV and the time between breaks in the action was similar to a commercial break. I always imagined the judges were in a secret room, but they are literally on the other side of the stage. There are several desks, and each person has a laptop, dictionary, and thesaurus. If there is doubt about a contestant's answer, they immediately start thumbing through the reference books to determine what is correct." In Matt's first game, he correctly answered "Big Bird" to the Final JEOPARDY! question. He became that day's Champ. "The game I won was suspenseful. They read Linda's answer, who was in third place, and were about to read mine. Then suddenly one of the judges yelled, 'Hold on!' Everything froze because they had to look up Charles' answer. He was in first place, and they verified his answer was wrong. We paused, maybe 30 seconds, maybe an hour, I have no idea because I 'blacked out' and had a terrifying moment. It was just the most nervous moment in my life!"

I asked Matt if his response was influenced by his being a fifth-grade teacher. "As a young kid in the early '90s, 'Sesame Street' was the only thing I watched. It influenced a career path for me. It was all very fortuitous, that it ended up coming down to a 'Sesame Street' question."

Matt shared more. "One of the big takeaways was how nice everyone was on the set and the technical aspects were interesting. Plus, the COVID protocols were strict. Unless you were at the podium you had your mask on the whole time. The scariest part was we all had to take a COVID test on the lot, the day before we were to be on the set. I thought, 'Oh God, if I have come this far and then test positive for COVID, I would be so mad!' It was tense! And when you win, everybody goes out of their way to call you 'Champ,' which is the biggest ego boost in the world. 'All right, the Champ is coming into makeup'. Oh, 'that's me!' It was AWESOME! In real life I was only champion for an hour, because after each 'show' we immediately turned around, changed clothes, and filmed the next game. Also, JEOPARDY! is an edited show. If the host fumbles over a question, they won't stop—they'll go back and re-record after the show is over. In the game I lost, Ken had to re-record one of the 'Final JEOPARDY!' transitions. I already knew I had lost but had to pretend I didn't know the outcome. For the most part it is one take, because Ken is really good at his job."

I asked Matt if his appearance on the show had an influence on his fifth-grade students. "Since I was on the show, they've gotten into creating their own JEOPARDY! clues, and quizzing each other. That's fun to watch! And I haven't seen the encyclopedia used so much—they are constantly looking up facts about zebras or bees or whatever." Matt's appearance on JEOPARDY! was a shining moment for Matt, and also for Gauchos! Although El Cerrito wasn't specifically mentioned, it was still a great opportunity to be proud of the town and school we all came from. As another former Gaucho once put it, "Big things can come out of small places. And we live in those small places."

The Archiving Project Acquires Two Unique Items for the Museum

Adrienne Fagiano Snyder, Class of 1956, donated her green-and-white cheerleading letter in the shape of a megaphone and her class pins attached to the felt 'EC.' The class pins are for the Central Committee, Class Officer

and the Deloma Girls Service Club. Her LGAA patch is in the corner. The 1956 High School Invitational Tournament program shows the ECHS basketball team, which includes some familiar faces such as Cornell Green of Dallas Cowboys fame and the brother of Pumpsie Green of baseball fame.

If you have items you would like to donate to the museum and Hall of Fame, please contact Joann at jsbayat1@comcast.net.

El Cerrito High School Archiving Project Second Brick and Tile Installations April 2022



Donor List 2022

John Williams, Pamela Wagner, Carl Anderson, Roger Lee, Alem Ghebregzihi, Pam Davis,
Joyce Clark, Pam Bennett, Leslie Reckler, Rosenda Thomas, Steven Nakazono, Kari Jeffs and
friends, Don Wilson, Kathleen E Seiler-Augello, Bryan Scott, Greg McKinney, Pamela Wagner,
Paula Ghione Lucas c/o 1981

Class of 1967

Thinking about it, 55th is 5 months out.....

The Committee has been meeting.

October 8, 2022

Jonathan is flying 7857 miles to join us.

Email me if you would like to join us.
ECHS1967@aol.com

[Class of 1967 Facebook Link](#)

YOU'RE INVITED
THE ONE AND ONLY OFFICIAL INVITATION



[Brennan's, Berkeley CC, Nite Owls, Wrecking ECHS, Arlington Park, Jonathan Rogers.]

El Cerrito High School Class of 1967
(and the Classes of 1965 - 1969)
55th Reunion!!!

Your presence is requested at the Berkeley (Mira Vista) Golf and Country Club, El Cerrito, California, on Saturday, October 8, 2022, 5:00 p.m. for dinner, dancing, reminiscing, nostalgic décor, and more. Entertainment by the Nite Owls, our own band that was the hit of the 40th, 45th, 50th reunions.

Cost: \$135.00 per person, Deadline September 1, 2022
Mail your payment to: ECHS 1967 c/o Roddy Lee, 3333 Rossmoor Parkway Manor #1, Walnut Creek, CA 94595. (PayPal available).
Contact: ECHS1967@aol.com or 925-954-1861.

Reunion Events	Schedule for Saturday night:
TBD, Friday 10/7/22.	5:00 Check in, cocktails and conversation.
Gala at Berkeley (MV) CC, Saturday, 10/8/22.	7:30 Buffet Dinner, Carved Prime Rib, Miso Seared Salmon, program to follow.
Picnic at Arlington Park, Sunday, 10/9/22.	9:30 Entertainment: The Nite Owls , hit of the 40th, 45th and 50th reunions. Dancing and reminiscing.
CCC COVID-19-Information	11:30 Lights out.

Post Reunion Information

- Class of 1979 Lisa Hughes Brown @ teardropkids6140@gmail.com
- Class of 1969 ECHS1969Reunion@gmail.com
- Class of 1959 Barbara Cornish Barichello at 510-724-4988, Lyn Martinez Kelly at 925-937-1437 or Roberta Mendonca at rmendonca@aol.com
- Class of 1963 Marc Bautista marcusec63@aol.com
- Class of 1988 Mylika Lisa Smith
- Class of 1978 Luanne Canestro canestro4@gmail.com
- Class of 1987 CONTACT: TOSCHA CONROE - ECGAUCHOS1987@GMAIL.COM
- Class of 1968 Paul Bailey paulbailey524@yahoo.com, Rich Runswick mitchwick@aol.com

Reunion leaders, classmates: If you are planning your reunion or need information about your reunion. Please Contact Roddy Lee: ECArchProject@aol.com

Executive Board

- President-Jackie Fonken,'56,**
- Vice President, Alumni/Reunion Outreach Coordinator, Scholarship-Kathie Nemy Weinstein,'58,**
- Recording/Corresponding Secretary-Diane Sericati,**
- Treasurer/Financial Secretary-Dianne Minard Chambers,'69,**
- Museum and Display, Scholarship-Joann Steck-Bayat,**
- Oral Historian/Biographer-Janet Abelson,**
- Fundraising Event, SAF Representative, Scholarship, Merchandising Manager-Donna Houser,**
- Communication Coordinator, Scholarship-Roddy Lee, '67,**
- Alumni/Reunion Outreach Coordinator, Fundraising, Merchandising Manager-David Bilyeu,'65,**
- Scholarship-Gregg Mayer,'76,**
- Museum and Displays, Archive Database Manager-Lynn Maack,'63,**
- School District Liaison -Lee Matteucci,**
- Hall of Fame Coordinator Larry Quirico,'58,**
- Past President,Community Outreach- Patricia Durham-Mitchell,'68,**
- Media-Jessica Lee,'00,**
- Member- Sam Burns, '71**
- Member-Kent Sanctuary, '64**
- Member-Marilyn O'Brian, Faculty**
- Media-Alejandra Perez Orozco, '02**

Member Marnie Fricke-Mufti, '76

Member Risa Nye, '69

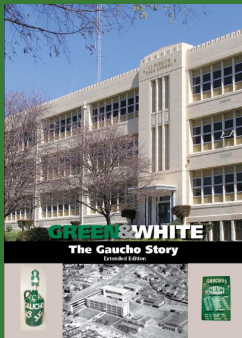
[EC Archiving Project](#)

[ECHS Athletic Hall of Fame](#)

[Brick and Tiles](#)

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ECHS ARCHIVING PROJECT
All the 77 past graduating classes of ECHS wish the Class of 2021 our very best!

The El Cerrito High School Archiving Project was started in 2004 to gather, preserve, and display the artifacts and history of our beloved high school. Since 2005, we have helped students achieve their goals by awarding over \$30,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors.

We are a resource for:
- Research - cultural or historical information
- Family genealogy
- The past
- We also maintain:
- School memory ECHS projects
- Sports Hall of Fame
- Hallway display cases
- You can make an impact by donating to us!

Join us in giving back to our school.
We raise funds for scholarships by selling:
- Commemorative bricks
- Sports stadium tiles
- and
- "Green & White" - an award-winning documentary film about the history of the school.
To join our group email: ecarchiving@icloud.com

Visit our website and subscribe to our newsletter:
<https://www.wccuid.net/domain/2921>