

The Case for Farrelly Pool March 2010



"Family Nights" fun, summer 2009

Photo: Timmothy Shonard

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San Leandro, California

March 2010

The City of San Leandro is planning to close Farrelly Pool in the summer of 2010 as part of its cost-cutting efforts. Last year, when Farrelly faced a similar fate, a group of concerned citizens lobbied to keep Farrelly open, convincing the City to preserve this valuable community resource. Farrelly Pool is an historic San Leandro treasure with a rich history, providing not only a place for recreational swimming, but a safe swimming school offered by a talented, caring staff, and a gathering center where the community comes together. Because City-wide budget cuts are so much more drastic this year, expecting the City to operate the pool in 2010 is an unrealistic hope, so the community is seeking angel funding to keep the pool alive while we weather the current economic storm and look forward to a brighter future.

The Early Years

Farrelly Pool is the oldest swimming pool in San Leandro, originally opening in the summer of 1930 after the generous philanthropist Henrietta Farrelly bestowed a \$20,000 posthumous gift for its construction. Since opening day, "Mr. Swim" Frank DeMello was an iconic figure at the pool serving as life guard and swimming instructor until his death in 1966. He was a charismatic ex-Navy chief with a booming voice and a warm heart who taught over 90,000 youngsters to swim. Because of his great contributions to Farrelly Pool, the Frank DeMello Memorial Fund was created in his honor to raise money to help with capital improvements in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Frank Fehn

The DeMello Fund was chaired by Frank Fehn (a.k.a. "Mr. North Area"), a tireless fund raiser and volunteer coordinator focused on transforming the pool from "just a place to swim" to a family oriented community gathering place. Under his leadership, the DeMello Fund raised many thousands of dollars and materials, and coordinated a group of all-volunteer community members who provided labor

for many of the features we see at the pool today: A remodeled locker room, the trees, grass, picnic tables and barbeque pits on the east side of the pool, the breeze-blocking brick walls that surround the pool, the covered recreation area and kitchen to the west side of the pool, and the snack shack are all products of this dedicated group of San Leandrans during the era of Frank Fehn. In addition, the pool had significant renovations and upgrades to its water filtration and heating systems in the late 1970s (or 1980s?) providing for a sustained, modern and healthy swimming facility to this day.

High Quality Swimming Lessons

The pool has thrived through the years, providing not just a family-oriented recreation facility, but a valuable swimming training center for the youth of San Leandro. The pool provides valuable employment opportunities for young adults in our community who work as life guards and swimming instructors. In recent years, the staff could arguably be considered one of the best in the East Bay, providing consistent, thorough, caring and skilled swimming lessons with grace and compassion for thousands of children of all ages.

2009 Proposed Closure and Subsequent Successful Operation

In 2009, after the City announced intentions of closing Farrelly to cut costs, San Leandrans voiced their concerns en masse. Almost overnight, we had over 400 petitioners and dozens of outspoken citizens who plead a case to the City Council over a series of meetings. After hearing from numerous young children about what the pool means to them, and hearing accounts like those historical stories above, the Mayor and City Council were persuaded to keep the pool open. The alternative (closing for the summer) also had a \$48,000 associated price tag to cover utility expenses to keep the water filled and filtration system working. The City resolved to increase admission price and reduce hours of operation to bring the overall expenses down, while

still operating at a loss, for the benefit of the community, they reduced the loss to one that could be absorbed in the overall budget.

So the word was out that Farrelly was NOT going to close... Enrollment in swimming classes went up, and the community showed its renewed appreciation and patronage of the pool by attending weekly "Family Nights at Farrelly Pool" -- a promotion aimed at bringing the community together at the pool in a way reminiscent of the olden days. Family Nights featured live music provided in gratuity by local San Leandro musicians while families enjoyed connecting with old and new friends, frolicking in the pool, and dining on their barbeque dinners.

The Future

With the re-engagement of the community, many ideas came forth from the community for new ways to support and use the pool:

- The seniors are interested in having seniors-only swimming session as well as aqua-aerobics
- We would like to expand the Family Nights and live music to weekend afternoons.
- We want to get game equipment (such as ping pong tables and board games) back in the game room so that there are more things to do at the pool facility.
- We want to make the pool more financially viable by:
 - o Getting solar panels at the pool to offset the utility expenses for heating and circulating the water.
 - o Introducing family pricing plans so that families with more than one or two kids can afford to bring the whole family.
- We want to create a kids summer camp with swimming, gardening, music, arts and crafts in a partnership with the adjacent Roosevelt School buildings.
- We want to find other new and innovative ways to use this great facility as a community family recreation space.

What Closure Would Mean

If Farrelly Pool is closed for even one summer, we are concerned that it may be the beginning of the

end for the pool. Because of the construction of the pool walls, it must be kept full so the walls do not cave in and deteriorate; if it is filled with water, the water must be circulated to keep it from going stagnant, which costs money -- just to have the pool sitting unused. If an unused facility continues to cost the city money, the next alternative would be to fill the pool with dirt -- the unfortunate fate of many other pools in San Leandro. Farrelly Pool is too much of an historic community treasure to let that happen.

With the threat of closure last year, I have worked hard to educate the broader community of the historical significance of this pool. I have also worked hard to promote the pool and get all of the people who spoke out in support of the pool to patronize the pool -- "use it or lose it" as it were. As you can see from the newspaper clippings and historical photos included in the following pages, there truly is a rich history here. The pool provides a wonderful quality of life service to San Leandro for the young and old alike. If the pool were closed, all of the blood, sweat, tears and care of the people who have made this pool a special place throughout the years (Henrietta Farrelly, Frank DeMello, Frank Fehn, Fran Smith (the pool manager following Frank DeMello's death), the current wonderful staff, and countless others) will have been for naught. The children of San Leandro will lose a safe place to learn to swim and swim recreationally.

Prepared by

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A short biography of Henrietta Farrelly

1908 **Henrietta Farrelly** was one of San Leandro's greatest philanthropists. She was born in Pulaski, Pennsylvania in 1837. In 1851 she came to California and joined her father who came earlier in the 1849 gold rush.

In 1852 she married Robert Farrelly, also a forty-niner and a carpenter from Reading, Pennsylvania as well. She was fifteen at the time.

In 1860, the Farrellys bought a 51-acre tract on East 14th Street, about one mile north of the San Leandro Plaza, on which they made their home and farm. Robert Farrelly planted cherry orchards on this farm. This home and the garden around it became one of the showplace homes of Alameda County.

Farrelly later became a prominent banker. He was one of the organizers of the Bank of San Leandro and a director until his death in 1907. He also held the position of vice-president of the Bank of San Leandro. He held offices of County Treasurer from 1871-75 and County Supervisor for 6 terms.

When Robert Farrelly died at the age of 83 in January 1907, he left Henrietta a very wealthy widow. At the time of his death, Henrietta was 70 years old. One might assume she would pursue a life of quiet retirement, but this was not the case at all.

She instead embarked on a career of philanthropy donating to many San Leandro charities. Some of her charitable acts were as follows: (1) helped establish on April 14, 1910 the first boys' club in San Leandro (2) paid in 1911 for instruments and equipment for the San Leandro Grammar School Band as well as the salary for the band's director (Charles Way, who served San Leandro schools for 43 years as band instructor and director) (3) donated in 1913 equipment for San Leandro's old school building (4) gave \$50,000 to establish the Farrelly Nurses' Home at Merritt Hospital and (5) worked in 1915 with San Leandro parents, teachers, and the Broadmoor Mothers' Club to establish a day nursery in San Leandro.

In 1925 she presented the San Leandro Post No. 117, American Legion property on which the old Masonic Hall was located (at the corner of Washington and Ward Streets), a property having at the time a value of at least \$20,000. A year later the Henrietta

Farrelly Memorial Building was built on the site. It was used as a meeting place for the San Leandro Post. This building was later demolished in 1969.

Henrietta also contributed \$15,000 for the Animal Home in Alameda and \$20,000 to the Oakland Y.W.C.A. She also set up a fund at one of the local stores to deliver shoes for those in need. In fact, between 1908 and 1922, Mrs. Farrelly gave away over \$310,000 to charitable causes, a considerable sum of money for those days.

Henrietta also made changes in her own life. In 1908, she hired architect **William H. Weeks** to design a new home on her estate. Like its predecessor, it too became a showplace home.

She died at the age of 90 at her home on December 17, 1927. Her generosity continued even after her death. She made provisions in her will to the San Leandro Post (\$15,000) and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (\$10,000) as well as funds towards the construction of the Farrelly Swimming Pool and a gift of \$50,000 to the Alameda County Foundation for needy children. Her generosity was so great that a *San Leandro Reporter* article described her as "one of the most beloved women in San Leandro."

All of the newspaper clippings and photos included in the next few pages were contributed by Carol Fehn-Fitzpatrick, daughter of Frank Fehn, from her family's personal collection.

Leandro Reporter.

AN LEANDRO'S PIONEER NEWSPAPER—HOME PRINTED—HOME READ
AN LEANDRO, ALAMEDA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA FEBRUARY 7, 1930

MRS. MAUD PESANTE GIVES \$20,000 TO LOCAL PUBLIC SCHOOL FOR BATHING POOL

The San Leandro School Department has in its possession a check for \$20,000 contributed by Mrs. Maud Pesante, of Oakland, a former resident of this city. Mrs. Pesante was a niece of Mrs. Henrietta Farrelly, who passed away a few years ago, and in her will specified that one-third of her huge estate be given to charitable purposes.

One of the first contributions was to the local school department. This money is for the construction of a swimming pool to be erected on the Roosevelt School in upper Brookmoor. The new building 40x80 feet will be constructed just as soon as possible and contain every device that goes with a modern swimming pool, including a heating plant.

The trustees and people of San Leandro are very grateful over this wonderful gift and will be more pleased when it is in operation. Mrs. Farrelly during her life time was very generous to San Leandro institutions. One of her former gifts was the building at the corner of Washington avenue and Ward streets, to San Leandro Post, 117, American Legion, and at the time of her death, willed the local Legion \$15,000 which money was used to pay off the debt on remodeling of the building. She had given many other bequests in San Leandro.

The school trustees L. F. Sterner, Wm. Lucio and R. W. Heilig are now working on plans and specifications for the new bathing pool which will be rushed to completion.

Leandro Reporter.

AN LEANDRO'S PIONEER NEWSPAPER—HOME PRINTED—HOME READ
AN LEANDRO, ALAMEDA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA AUGUST 29, 1930

FARRELLY SWIMMING POOL NOW OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, IS BEING WELL PATRONIZED

The \$20,000 Farrelly Pool that was erected on the grounds of the Roosevelt grammar school was opened to the public this Thursday morning.

There was a good crowd at the opening and a large number swimming. The \$20,000 pool was a gift from the estate of the late Henrietta Farrelly, and spent for the construction of the pool. In order to complete the construction and provide it with extra accommodations, the school trustees contributed additional, which will be returned in the way of admission charges to the swimming pool.

The school trustees L. F. Sterner, Wm. Lucio and Reed Heilig have erected a wonderful swimming pool and all equipment that goes with it. The pool is 50x100 feet, divided for children and grown-ups. The children's portion is 20x100 feet with a depth of 2½ x 4 feet, and the grown-up pool is 30x100 feet, with a depth of 4x7½ feet. A filtering system is installed that will take care of the water in eight hours. The water will be heated to suit in the tanks and changed as often as necessary. There

are 188 lockers to be used by bathers, who have the use of hot and cold showers. A sand beach has been installed 50x100 feet, with the finest grade of Monterey white sand, that is two feet deep.

All regulations for the swimming pool have not as yet been worked out, but will be just as soon as affairs are settled. The hours for swimmers will be as follows:

10:00 a. m. to 7 p. m. on all week days except Wednesdays.

Wednesdays, 9 a. m. to 5 p. m.

Saturdays and holidays 9 a. m. to 9 p. m.

Sundays, 9 a. m. to 7 p. m.

The charges will be for adults 35 cents with the privilege of suit, locker and towel; children under 14 years, 15 cents; and children over 14 years, 25 cents. They will have the same privileges as adults with the use of bathing suits, locker and towel.

The Farrelly Pool is a great benefit to San Leandro swimmers who will greatly enjoy the pool at all times. The public is invited to inspect this pool at any time it is open.



Frank DeMello: life guard, swimming instructor, pool manager from 1930-1966.
Here in a familiar pose overlooking his swimming students.



Mr. Swim Memorial Job Moving Along In Leandro

SAN LEANDRO — A \$2 brick doesn't mean much sitting by itself, but the Frank "Mr. Swim" De Mello Memorial Fund is counting on local residents to buy many bricks so the remodeling at Farrelly Pool can keep going.

Frank S. Fehn, fund chairman, described the Dutton Avenue facility as an ideal family pool with ample shallow area for young swimmers.

THE GRASSY area on the east side of the pool, complete with trees, barbecue pits and picnic tables, should be finished soon. Volunteers are working each weekend to put on the finishing touches.

Meanwhile, Fehn said the fund needs to be built up again since most of \$1,500 collected since last fall has gone for the family recreation area.

THE FUND drive was started for general

improvements at the pool which De Mello helped open in 1930 and where he taught 90,000 people to swim before his death in 1966.

Once the recreation area is complete, Fehn said he hopes to get started on the west wall, which will serve as the rear wall for the planned activities room.

Two dollars will purchase an 8x8x16-inch tan block, which when in place looks like four smaller bricks.

FEHN SAID people can even come and set "their" bricks in place.

He added he's anxious to keep the fund fluid to continue the project, which may eventually include remodeling the existing building into a better equipped shower and meeting room.

Bricks may be purchased by writing De Mello Memorial Fund, care of Frank S. Fehn, 367 Bancroft Ave., San Leandro.



COMMUNITY REMODELING GOING ON AT FARRELLY POOL
Raleigh Wills, Carol And Frank Fehn "Set" Their Own

Farrelly Pool Begins 'Frank DeMello Days'

SAN LEANDRO — Today, tomorrow and Sunday have been declared "Frank DeMello Days" at Farrelly Pool by the San Leandro Unified School District, in honor of the late beloved swim coach whose memory has inspired a project to improve the pool area, with installation of picnic facilities and the building of a game room.

All proceeds collected during the three days will be used for the building program underway the past 18 months, according to Frank Fehn, chairman of the Frank DeMello Memorial Fund.

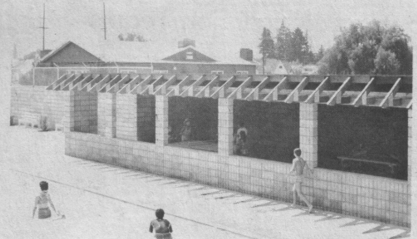
DeMello was the coach at Farrelly Pool when it opened at 980 Dutton Ave. in 1930, and spent 36 years teaching some 90,000 youngsters to swim.

Swimming is still the main activity at Farrelly. But with two ping pong tables in use, the juke box playing, chess, checkers and card games in progress, families using the barbecue facilities and the brightly daubed snack shack, the pool has taken on the title of "Family Fun Center," Fehn reports with understandable satisfaction.

Fehn has been the sparkplug for the project both in fundraising and in leading a dedicated group of residents of the area in much of the actual labor. He is the past president of the Dads' Club at the adjacent Roosevelt School.

Last year the brick wall around the swimming pool and the picnic area and snack shack were the focus of many volunteer hours.

This summer the 25 by 75-foot game room was constructed, with 30-foot roof beams lowered into place and then covered with plywood.



The New Game Room

Still-to-be completed game room at Farrelly Pool, where Frank DeMello Days will be celebrated through the Labor Day weekend, keeps children occupied with ping pong and other games, with a juke box playing in background. But the roof needs a covering before the rains come.

(Bardanaro and Zarcane Photo)

The DeMello fund is now making possible the installation of a Spanish tile overhand on the game room and the planting of more trees to beautify the area.

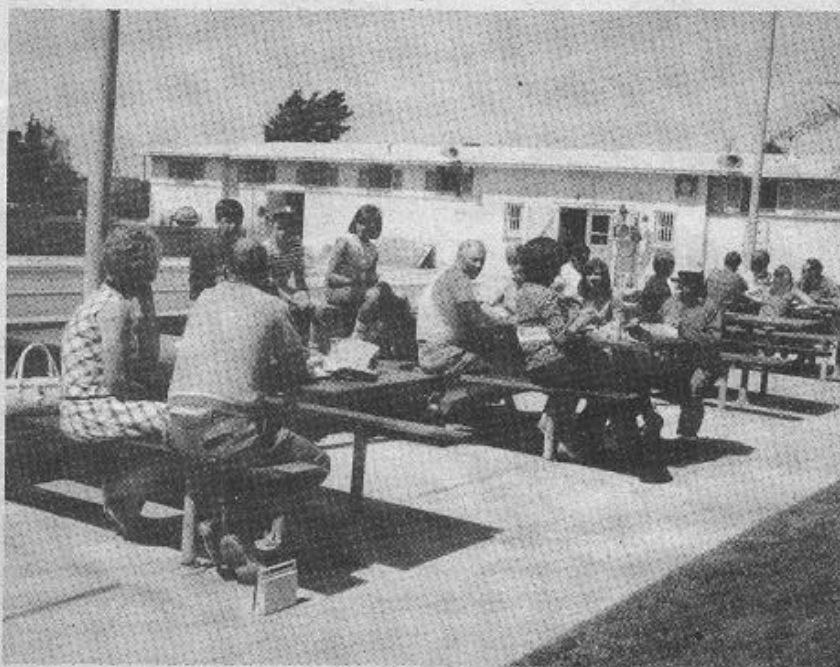
Ten Spanish-style wrought iron lanterns have been handmade for the room, and four three-foot Spanish

chandeliers are now under construction.

But the roof needs a covering before the rains begin. Fehn calls it "Our NOW!!" Project. Please join us at the pool this weekend and help us further this family fun center project," he urges.



FARRELLY POOL drew ooh's and ah's last summer when neighborhood volunteers gave it a facelifting, building stone walls to cut the breeze, installing barbecues, brightly colored picnic tables, a refreshment stand, etc. Now they're back again, this time building an eight-foot high stone wall around what will be a 25 x 70 foot game room for young people in the area. They need **M-O-N-E-Y** to put a roof on it though, and Frank Fahn (second from right), president of the Roosevelt School Dads' Club, says he'll gladly accept donations sent to him at 367 Bancroft Ave., San Leandro. Other volunteers here admiring the photo of what their finished work will look like are (left to right), Larry Theisen, Vernon Person, Manuel Inacio, Raleigh Wills, and Ed Owens. Below volunteer bricklayers have to stop and eat, too, so dads building the game room wall at Farrelly Pool and their families enjoy the fruits of last summer's labor—the picnic area at Farrelly Pool. Tables are painted bright colors and barbecue pits are nearby.





The "buy a brick" program to raise money for the brick walls. Frank Fehn on far left.

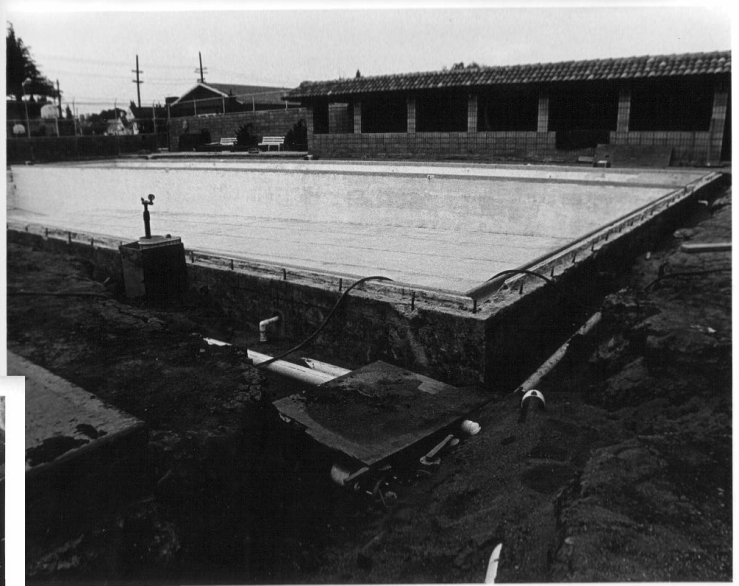


Volunteers installing new grass on the east side of the pool.



After the renovations in 1969/1970, we see many youngsters enjoying the new facility





Undated photos. This was a remodel done in the 1970s some time to upgrade the pumps and water filtration system.

A copy of the flyer for Family Nights 2009

FAMILY NIGHTS at FARRELLY POOL!

presented by *Roosevelt* DADS' CLUB

864 Dutton Avenue • San Leandro

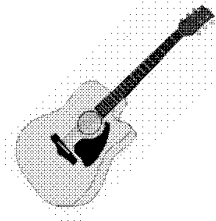
Join your community for summer socializing at our historic Farrelly Pool

- Every Thursday night June 18 - August 13; 6:30 - 8:30 PM
- Standard pool admission \$5
- Bring your food to BBQ on the grills
(BYO charcoal; charcoal chimneys only; no lighter fluid!)
- Pack a picnic dinner
- Bring family games
- Connect with other families
- Please be self-sufficient with regards to servingware



Featuring LIVE MUSIC every other week

The Farrelly Music Series features local San Leandro musical talent:



- \$ June 25: Herd 'a Cats (jazz)
- \$ July 9: The Burning Embers (country/bluegrass/americana)
- \$ July 23: Fightin' Tinnitans (sloegrass)
- \$ August 6: King Cab (country) and Pinto Wagon (acoustic Pinto pop)
- \$ August 13: Jimmy and the Wave Runners (Jimmy Buffet tribute band)

Check <http://rooseveltdads.com/farrelly> for up-to-date performer schedules.

Use it or LOSE IT!

Farrelly Pool was almost closed this summer in an attempt to save money in the city budget. A group of outspoken citizens was successful in convincing the City Council to preserve this historic community resource. Farrelly was originally chosen to be closed in part due to low attendance. If the community does not patronize the pool in greater numbers during the summer of 2009, the possibility of Farrelly closing in 2010 is great. PLEASE SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY POOL! Come to recreational swim. Sign up for swimming lessons.

Recreational Swim (\$5) Hours:

Monday - Thursday 2:00 - 4:00 PM, 6:30 - 8:00 PM

Saturday 2:00 - 4:00 PM

Swim lessons available:

Monday - Thursday 4:00 - 6:30 PM

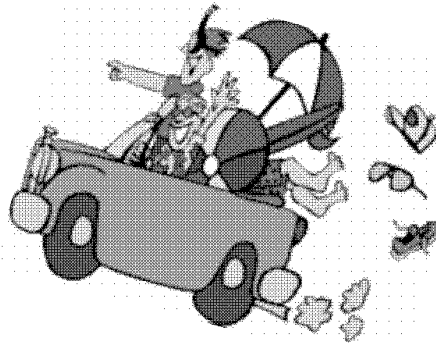
Saturday 11:00 - 2:00 PM

Online registration: <http://www.sanleandrorec.org>

For more information or questions on Family Night or updates on music performers visit

<http://rooseveltdads.com/farrelly>, or contact

Brian Murrell • 351-7327 • btmurrell@gmail.com



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Alcohol is not permitted at any City Pool or Park

Photos from "Family Nights at Farrelly Pool" 2009

All photos by Timmothy Shonnard







On one of the music nights: The Burning Embers entertains the crowd



