



AT THE LIBRARY

By Julie Winkelstein
January 30, 2004

“The man who acquires the ability to take full possession of his own mind may take possession of anything else to which he is justly entitled.”

-Andrew Carnegie, 1835-1919

Last week I went to Livermore to meet with my father and afterwards I decided to visit the library I used when I was a child. I had no idea then that it was a Carnegie library, or that the building is one of seven California Classical Revival libraries designed by W.H. Weeks - the others being in Gilroy, Paso Robles, Lompoc, Richmond, Oroville and Roseville. I did know that I loved going to the library but was scared of the children's librarian - and since I had to walk by her to get into the children's section, I usually went to the adult part instead. I was aware that it was no longer a library, since a new one had been built in 1966, and an even newer one is opening this spring, so I was curious to see what it had become and if it would look familiar inside.

A plaque on the wall as I entered told me the building was a City of Livermore Historic Preservation Landmark Site, dedicated in July 1966.

Farther in, I discovered it is now the home to two non-profit organizations: the Heritage Guild-History Center and the Livermore Art Association Gallery.

When the woman who greeted me found I was revisiting the library after many years - more than many, actually, since I was fifteen the last time I was there - she referred me to the history docent, who turned-out to be Barbara Bunshau, the same librarian I knew many years ago. I introduced myself, but I think she recognized me, since she immediately pointed-out some photographs in a glass case. “We have photos of your mother,” she explained, and as I looked through the glass, I could see pictures and newspaper clippings of my mom, taken when she was acting and directing in the local theatre group. But the biggest surprise was an 8 by 10 photograph, showing me when I was eight years old - what a

continued on page 2

surprise to actually be part of the local history! But that’s me! I told her, pointing, and suppressing the sudden urge to go out and tell everyone to come see this very young and somewhat grim version of myself. Oh, she answered, it’s good to know that. I’ll write it down.

I managed to pull myself away from the case to look around the art gallery and the local history collection – and I enjoyed both. And when I got home – and after I called everyone I could think of to tell them about the photograph – I spent some time thinking about how connected people are to their pasts. It wasn’t just the picture or even driving past my old house; it’s more. It’s as if going back in my mind is a way of explaining myself, as if I am carefully looking at each piece to see how I came to be the person I am now.