

# Do You Remember?



By Anne Homan

## Livermore & Pleasanton Drugstores

Chamberlain's Pain Balm, Lydia E. Pinkham Tablets, Dr. Shiloh's System Vitalizer, Aker's Dyspepsia Tablets, Pyramid Pills for inactivity of the liver, Chamberlain's Cough Syrup (5% alcohol)—all these and more are some of the patent medicines in the Carnegie Building in the historical exhibit contributed by pharmacists John Sarboraria, Manuel Duarte and Don Hill.

By 1883 Joseph O. McKown had taken over an earlier drugstore in Livermore and changed the store's name to J.O. McKown's Drugstore. Eleven years later he became partners with stationer Charles F. Mess and the McKown and Mess Drugstore opened at the southeast corner of First and J Streets, currently Strizzi's restaurant. About 1910 the drugstore became one of the first Rexall distributors in Alameda County. After Mess retired, McKown carried on for several years alone and then sold the business in 1925 to J. Mortimer Beazell, who had been a pharmacist at the store for many years.

In 1934 Mort Beazell moved his Rexall Drugstore to the other side of First Street in order to expand. Beazell followed precedent and sold out in 1947 to the store's longtime employee and partner in the business, Manuel E. Duarte. Although officially retired, Beazell still helped out part time—retiring from a business after 51 years takes some adjustment.

Manuel Duarte was a Livermore native and attended St. Michael's Parochial School. After graduation from Livermore High, he studied at UCSF's School of Pharmacy, graduating in 1931. He married his high school sweetheart, Amelia Azevedo, a graduate of the Franklin School of Nursing in San Francisco. Duarte was a pharmacist with a generous spirit: "Often in times of illness, Manuel would go down to the drug store at night to fill a prescription or help a doctor. ... He worked behind the scenes to help the needy who could not pay for medicine and to act as an interpreter for many who could not speak English." John Sarboraria remembered Manuel's acting as his mentor: "I started working for him in high school. He would show me things, not just have me do menial jobs. He allowed me to work, always found time for me to work at the store when I needed money. In that respect he was very generous." John Sarboraria graduated from the UCSF School of Pharmacy in 1955 and purchased part interest in the store in 1958. The First Street site closed in 1973, but Sarboraria and Duarte had opened in another location on Second Street in 1960 that they called R-X Rexall Drugs. Duarte retired from this store in 1971; Sarboraria retired in 2002.

Another long-running drug business in Livermore was the Livermore Drug Store, started in 1874. Dr. Lewis Hezekiah Cutler, a graduate of Western Reserve Medical College in Cleveland, bought it in 1876 and five years later moved it into a building at the southeast corner of K and First Streets, currently the home of the Panama Bay coffee shop. When George W. Beck bought the business in 1901, he changed the name to Beck Drug Company. Beck had graduated from UC Berkeley in pharmacy in the class of 1900. "A full line of pure drugs and chemicals are carried, with all the standard patent medicines of value and merit, physicians' and surgeons' requisites of all kinds and a full line of druggists' sundries," was the description of his drugstore's merchandise in the 1907 *Herald*. Beck sold the business to E.J. "Ed" Lawless in 1917, and it was renamed the Lawless Drugstore. Lawless sold the store in 1941. It became the Davison Pharmacy, which moved in the early '60s to the East Avenue shopping center. In its last reincarnation in 1985 it became Bill's Drugs, which closed in 1993 when it was bought out by Longs Drugs.

Tracing the history of drugstores in Pleasanton is difficult because of the lack of newspapers, but Pleasanton native and pharmacist Louis "Rusty" Hewitson came to my rescue. Dr. Cutler moved with his family from Livermore to Pleasanton about 1887 and bought the Pleasanton Drug Store on Main Street from Peter Rock. Cutler advertised "pure wines and liquors" (for medicinal purposes only) in his stock in the *Pleasanton Times* on January 17, 1891. Inventor of Cutler's Condition Powder, the "perfect horse medicine," he claimed to "compound prescriptions accurately day or night." An 1894 directory listed him as the owner of Cutler and Silva Drugs. The *Husted Business Directory* for 1892 included druggist Thomas H. Silva. When Cutler died in June 1894 at age 71, Silva took over the business, renaming it the Silver Pharmacy. By the 1920 census, Francis Ernest Hartzell was running the drugstore, which Hewitson assured me Hartzell won in a poker game. The December 20, 1929 *Times* had Hartzell's ad for his Reliable Drug Store, now in a new building at 649 Main Street. When he was 13, Andrew Jorgensen began working for "Doc" Hartzell. Jorgensen took some college courses, but mostly learned his trade through the apprenticeship method. Hartzell died about 1939, and the store became Jorgensen's Drugs. Rusty Hewitson began working for Jorgensen at age 13; later, he earned his B.S. in pharmacy from UOP. When he was discharged from the Navy, Jorgensen had died, and Rusty bought into the business, now called Alisal Drugs. In 1976 they vacated the site on Main Street, now Strizzi's Restaurant, and moved to First Street where they have the Medicine Shoppe Pharmacy.

Do you need to try some C.S. Tablets, a vegetable liver laxative? (Readers can reach me at [am50homan@yahoo.com](mailto:am50homan@yahoo.com).)