

TIBURON'S "GOAT LADY"

By Dave Gotz

The history of every community is dotted with notable characters. On the Tiburon Peninsula there was a woman who was and should always be remembered. Rose Rodrigues de Fonta (1883-1964) moved with her Portuguese parents from San Francisco to Marin in 1886. The family settled on a ten-acre plot at the end of Richardson Bay with a panoramic view of San Francisco. They rented the property from the Reed family who originally owned all of Tiburon and Belvedere. Living not far from the Reed mansion, Rose eventually worked as a maid for the family. A friendship bloomed between the beautiful young Rose and the bachelor John Paul Reed. In 1918, shortly before his death, John Paul deeded Rose's property to her for \$10.

If it wasn't for the fact that Rose's property was right along the main road into Belvedere and Tiburon, she might have lived out her life in quiet obscurity tending to her animals, most of which were goats. But as the quiet little road became a busy highway, with more and more people passing by, Rose became a favorite of the community. Children liked to stop by and visit her goats and she became affectionately known as Tiburon's "Goat Lady."

Marin County's plentiful land and easy commute over the Golden Gate Bridge to San Francisco made it a target for development in the late 1940s and early 50s. Some of the most sought-after land was on the Tiburon Peninsula with its abundant shoreline and spectacular views of the

Bay and the City. After living a lifetime on the peaceful shore of Richardson Bay, surrounded by nature, Rose was dismayed as large housing developments began to impinge on her quiet corner; she even turned down an offer for more than \$500,000 for her property in the 1950s.

Well-known nature educator Elizabeth Terwilliger and conservationist Caroline Livermore approached Rose with the suggestion that she preserve her valuable acres as a nature sanctuary by donating them to the cause of saving Richardson Bay. She agreed and remained living in her cottage on the property, receiving much needed medical care under the supervision of Dr. Marty Griffin. Her land was deeded to the Audubon Society and became the headquarters for the Richardson Bay Audubon Center and Sanctuary.

On August 8 1963, more than 300 friends and neighbors gathered at the Richardson Bay Audubon Center to honor Rose on her 80th birthday. Hosted by the Belvedere-Tiburon Landmarks Society, the party reinforced the commitment of the peninsula communities to the preservation of Richardson Bay and celebrated the generosity of one of its oldest residents by making Rose the first honorary member of the Landmarks Society.

The Landmarks Society needs your help! Keep our local history alive and accessible to the public by getting involved at www.landmarkssociety.com

Help Landmarks Society preserve our local history and keep it accessible for the community and visitors. To become a member, or get involved, visit our website at www.landmarkssociety.com or call 415-435-1853. "The Tradition Starts With You."



1. Rose Rodrigues de Fonta in 1909.
2. Rose visits the Boardwalk Shopping Center, 1960.
3. In the company of Caroline Livermore, Rose enjoys a moment with one of her beloved goats at her birthday party in 1963.



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