

West Berkeley was an industrial section of town. Young boys found a multitude of adventures in this their playground. The teenage years were well lived leading into the promises of adulthood.

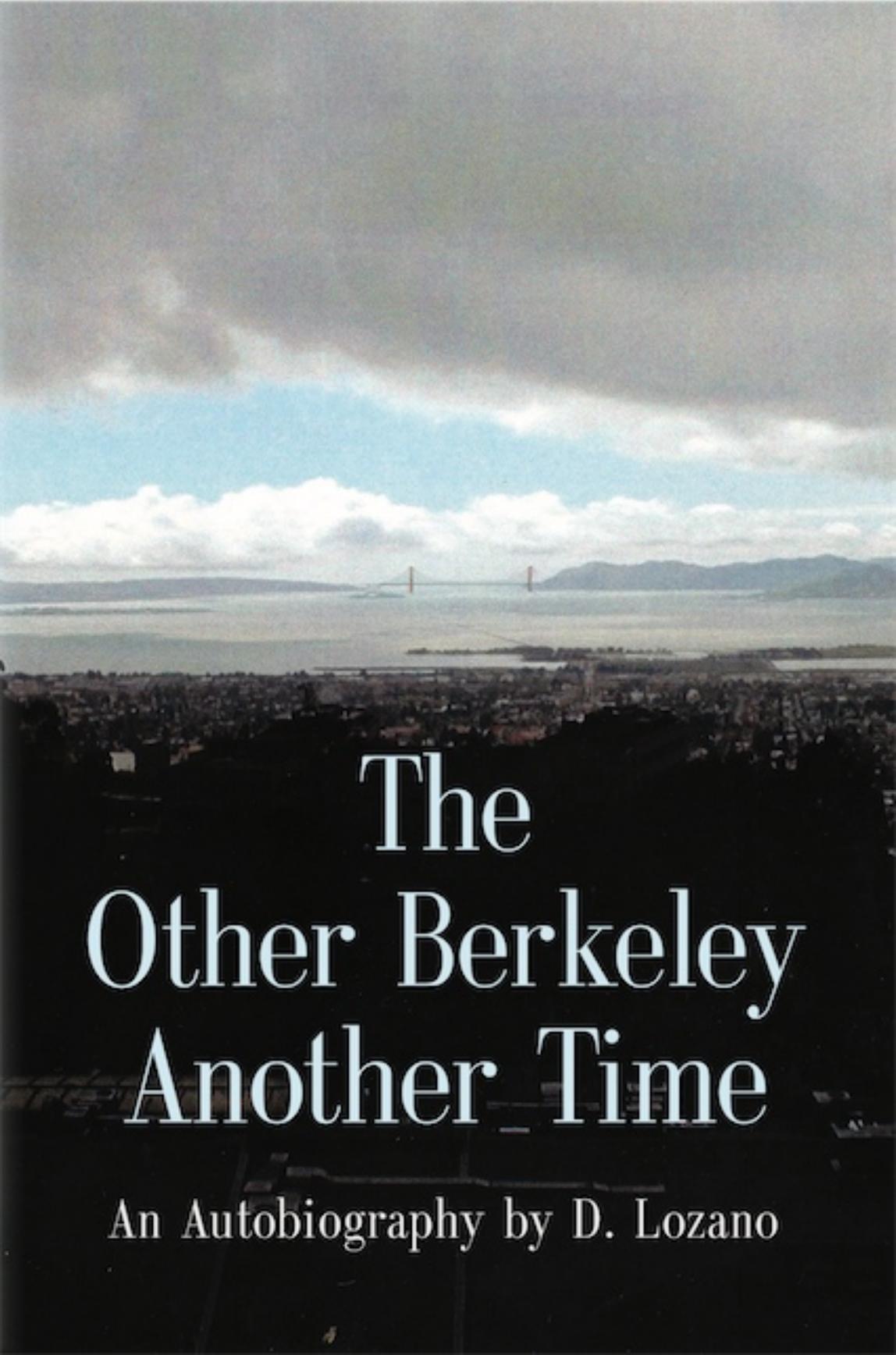
THE OTHER BERKELEY ANOTHER TIME

by D. Lozano

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The
Other Berkeley
Another Time

An Autobiography by D. Lozano

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The Other Berkeley, Another Time

The Early Years

“Please don’t bring your lips close to my cheek. Don’t you smile, or I’ll be lost beyond recall” those alluring words sung by Frank and I. Our perfect unison is interrupted. Frank continues alone. Driving to work I recollect the past years of my life.

My name is David. I came into the world, with very little fanfare, on September 13, 1941 to Oakland, California. I was the third of six children. Mother kept the home while my father worked as a laborer all of his life. The family was well provided for. As I write this, I will soon be 77 years old. My family moved to West Berkeley about five years later to Addison St. below Sixth St., then about in 1949 to Seventh St. On Addison St. my earliest memories began. My childhood was spent in a Tom Sawyeresque world. West Berkeley was our playground, there were many vacant lots with wispy fields of green grass, many friends, and the sun shone brightly every day. It was a time of scooters, kites, bicycles, BB guns and slingshots. In the fifties car tires still used tubes, slingshots were fashioned from tubes of red or black rubber, red rubber was the best choice for maximum elasticity. Some of the things we did as youngsters might have gone badly, fortunately that didn’t happen. In retrospect we crossed legal boundaries many times although this was not always intentional as more often than not incidences arose in pursuit of the elusive pigeon. It was a different time and a dissimilar environment. We were boys living adventures with one eye out for the law. It was what boys did.

One dark episode happened when kids playing with matches in the vacant lot across the street from home learned how quickly dry grass could burn, how swiftly the fire department responded

and the sting of father's belt administered in the wood shed. All left a lasting impression.

Columbus School

I attended Columbus Elementary School, the only school in West Berkeley with its multi stored aged buildings evoking a haunting appearance with its bland architecture and dark wood shingle siding. I recall the walk between its main two buildings seemed like passing through a canyon. Most prominent was the wide iron stairs rising up from the main yard to the side of one building. Here the May pole celebration on Mayday, traditionally on May 1st., was the highlight of the school year. This spectacle was appreciated by students as well as parents when the children holding cloth streamers circled the tall pole, to music, weaving the streamers towards the center.

The wooden school desk top held an ink bottle in its well. Dip ink pens were the writing instrument of the day with blotters a necessary issue. The desk top ink wells would soon be phased out. The modern ball point pen had not yet appeared. The chalk boards were black. Across the street was the open play area known as the West Lot ideal for playing popular games such as marbles, tag or dodge ball.

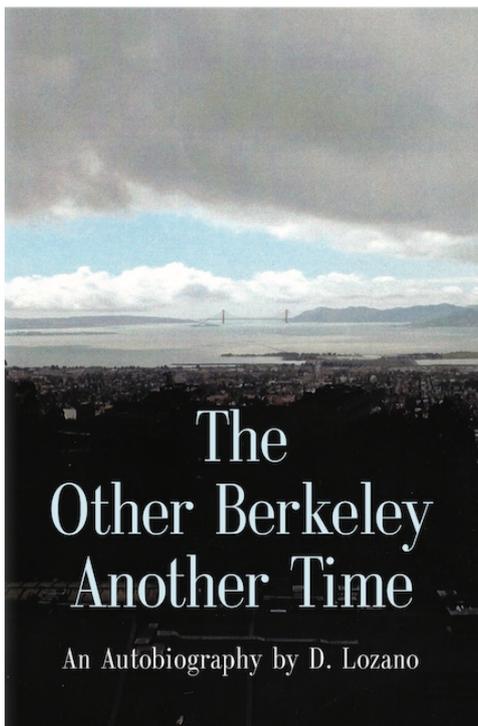
Sometime in the mid-fifties the old school was demolished and today's current campus was built on the West Lot. Entering the new classroom, one was struck with the gleaming newness, modern appearance and the metal desks with tops sans the ink wells. The chalk boards were now green.

Neighborhood

My guess is that many residents in our West Berkeley neighborhood emigrated from Mexico although other families in the area included a mixture of other nationalities. All seemed to get along well. On the warm summer evenings, after dinner, kids would gather and spontaneously play kick the can in the street, hide and seek, or just tell stories on the steps of the corner store until dark. Conversely, during the day we could be found pitching pennies or baseball cards on the side of that same store. In the days before the advent of the supermarket the area was well maintained by local small family run grocery stores. On sixth street alone, there was a store on practically each block. Undoubtedly, the most famous person from the neighborhood was Billy Martin who became well known in the annals of major league baseball. He played in the big leagues when we were still kids. His parents lived two blocks from us on Seventh Street. One family story has Billy Martin liking my grandmothers' homemade tortillas. Billy and my uncle grew up together. The guys from that older age group played baseball regularly in the park as the neighborhood surrounded James Kenny Park which was dominated by a baseball diamond complete with bleachers and lights for night playing. I'm surprised that more from that generation didn't make it to the majors.

Ice

Before, the advent of the modern refrigerator homes used the ice box which held a block of ice that had to be replenished periodically. An ice man made the deliveries using ice tongs and a leather pad on his shoulder on which the ice block was placed. As a child in the late 1940's it was a treat to eat the tasteful chips of ice from the iceman's truck floor when he left to make deliveries. Savoring the glistening form of the purest crystallized



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