

# OTEGO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



**April 2013**

Monthly Meetings  
3rd Monday April to Nov.  
7 p.m.

at Harris House  
334 Main St., Otego

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## OFFICERS

President..... Bill Boerner  
Vice Pres...Irmabelle Sheldon  
Secretary.....Emily Longtin  
Treasurer.....Jan Lloyd

## Meet Sy "Road Kill" Lloyd

Sy's great grandmother, Delta Van Brakle, lived in New York City in a very nice place on Riverside Drive. Sy's father's mother died in childbirth. Sy's dad, Sylvester Chichester Lloyd, II, was brought up by Sy's great grandmother and his aunts in New York City. When Sy's dad was old enough to ask questions, he asked his grandmother where his father was. She would repeatedly answer that his father was dead. Years later, Sy's dad discovered that his father had been alive all of the time across the Hudson in New Jersey. Sy's dad became so disillusioned and angry that he quit the Episcopal Church.

Sy's mother (Marion Van Brakle) and father both worked in the Chase Bank in Manhattan. They eloped and were married in Elkton, MD. Sy's older sister, June was born in 1934.

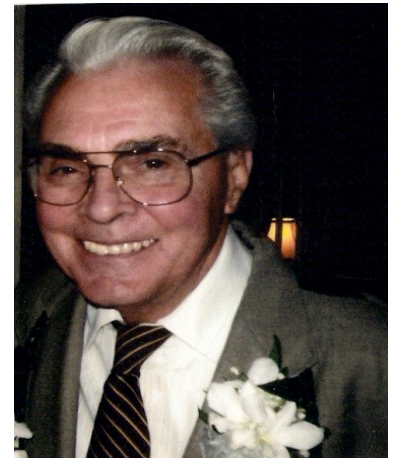
Sy, or Sylvester Chichester Lloyd III was born in Hasbrouck Heights, New Jersey in 1935. The family moved to Bergenfield, New Jersey then to Woodbridge, New Jersey. In Woodbridge, Sy's mother became very ill. There was a wooden fence separating their property from the

neighbor's. The neighbor was piling all of the animal manure against their side of the fence. The Lloyd family's well was on the other side of the fence from the manure. As a result, Sy's mom got Cholera. Sy remembers his mom drinking eggnog all day long to build up her body since she was so debilitated.

## WORLD WAR II

The Lloyd family moved back to Bergenfield and they moved in with Sy's grandmother. This was during WWII, so his grandmother was there alone. Sy's grandfather was stationed in the Panama Canal, under cover, protecting the Canal. Sy's grandfather was a career military man and served with General Pershing when he attempted to capture Pancho Villa. The family had a document showing that his grandfather resigned as a sergeant. The next day he "re-upped" and was promoted to lieutenant.

Sy's father was not drafted. He was a skilled tool and die man and worked at Curtiss Aviation making P38's during the Second World War. His father did not live at home. He had a one room apartment near Curtiss Aviation. He owned a 1930's Peerless. He took the back seat out, and blackened the windows. He would go to the amusement parks on the week-end and take pictures of the children playing there. Then he would process the photos in his darkened car, and sell the photographs to the parents to make



extra money. Sometimes Sy would go with his dad to the park. His favorite food there was "beanie weenies" (hot dogs chopped up with baked beans).

Sy vividly remembers the rides back to Bergenfield from the Amusement Park. Once his dad had 14 flat tires taking Sy back to Bergenfield. So each time a tire got flat, the car had to be jacked up, the wheel taken off, tube taken out and patched, and returned to the tire. Sy's dad got so tired of patching the tires that he arrived in Bergenfield on the car's rims. His father was forced to go to Newark, New Jersey the next day and buy black market tires.

## A SURPRISE MOVE TO OTEGO

Both of Sy's parents were photographers and had a studio in Bergenfield. In 1946, with no explanation to Sy or his sister, they loaded up a trailer, attached it to the Peerless and drove to Otego.

It took two trips to move everything to Otego. On one of the trips it was a rainy night and the windshield wipers

stopped working. String was attached to the wipers. With Sy working one side and his mother the other, they made the wipers go back and forth so Sy's dad could see.

#### A NEAR ACCIDENT -

While transporting the second load of furniture to Otego, Sy's dad fell asleep at the wheel. He woke up just before they went over a bank. He cranked the car to the left so hard that the back bumper was ripped off. Sy said his dad looked as if he could have cried. He took the front bumper off of the car, threw away the damaged rear bumper, attached the front bumper to the back of the car, uprighted the trailer, refilled it with all of the spilled contents and continued on to Otego. This wonderful car was later sold to the Herring Lumber Mill in Otego where they used it for a logging "truck".

#### THE HOUSE ON FLAX ISLAND

The house they were going to was 5 miles up Flax Island Road. They'd come from New Jersey with all amenities to a 100 year old house with no electricity, no running water, no indoor plumbing, and no central heat. The only thing in the house was an old fashioned kitchen stove where you put the logs in on the left side for a fire and cooked on the right side. Sy had vivid memories of the massive swarm of flies on the wall when he entered the house for the first time.

There was an outhouse in the back of the house. If using the outhouse at night, Sy remembers taking a lantern off a hook in the house, raising the wick to brighten the light and crossing the lawn. Man! it was cold in the outhouse in the winter! The family bathed in a little hand tub which was in the kitchen. When he got a little older, Sy was lucky because he could go and bathe in the near-by creek.

Sy's family was very fortunate because his mother adjusted very

well with the move to this old house. It was a bright day when the family finally got a washing machine. Well actually, it was a big metal tub on legs with paddles that had to be cranked to turn the water. Attached to the tub were rollers which were hand turned to squeeze the water out of the clothes.

As Sy got older, he could no longer sleep with his older sister, June. So his bedroom was upstairs over the kitchen. In order to go to his bedroom, he'd climb steep stairs; turn right and right again so he was parallel to the stairs – with no banister between him and the stairs. In order to get through the low door to his bedroom, he would duck down and then walk on boards to get to his bed. Heat from the kitchen stove would warm the room. But there were times when the room was so cold, that ice would condense on the nails.

There was a chicken house already on the property, so Sy's parents raised chickens. The eggs would be collected and sanded to get any blemish off. The family would candle the eggs and put them in cartons and



*Lloyd Home on Flax Island in 1946*

take them to town to be sold.

#### MEMORIES OF OTEGO CENTRAL

Sy was in Mrs. Tuttle's 5<sup>th</sup> Grade when he arrived here. He told about the time that Mrs. Tuttle caught him running in the school hall. He was sent to the principal's office. Sy told Mr. Nichols why he had been sent to

bend over." Sy received a paddling and returned to his classroom. Mrs. Tuttle asked him, "How was it?" Sy replied that only the first impact hurt. So Mrs. Tuttle sent Sy back down to the principal's office. She told him to tell the Mr. Nichols what he had told her. The principal asked Sy, "Why are you back?" Sy told Mr. Nichols his exact words that only the initial impact hurt. The principal said, "You know the routine." Sy bent over and was "whacked" again. When he returned again, Mrs. Tuttle asked, "Well?" Sy replied, "It hurts!"

Sy's older sister, June, did not fit in well in junior high in Otego. So Sy's parents sent her to live in New Jersey with her grandmother's sister, Edith and her husband. She was much happier and finished high school there. June joined the Air Force during the Korean War. While in the service she met her husband and they moved to Sacramento, California.

One day Sy had study hall. Mr. Clayton, the music teacher, was in charge of study hall that day. In those days they had the leftover food from World War II such as dates or raisins brought in. When Mr. Clayton saw Sy throw a raisin, he (in Sy's words) "went ballistic". Mr. Clayton carried a ping-pong paddle for discipline. As punishment for a boy, he would stand up, pull up the leg of his pants and Mr. Clayton would paddle the calf of his leg. On that day he hit Sy so hard, that the paddle broke, pieces scattered across the room and Sy laughed. As a result of this incident, Sy was banned from music. He had played a violin as a kid. He was put in a Vocational Program. This meant that he would not learn a language in high school.

#### SY & DENNIS O'MARA LOVED THE OUTDOORS

Sy was an outdoorsman. He and his best friend, Dennis O'Mara,

hunted day and night. They practically lived in the woods. Sy reminisced that they would sleep in the haymow, so that they could do the chores early and be out by 7 in the morning. Dennis could imitate a female raccoon's call and the male raccoons would come looking for them.

Because neither Dennis nor Sy could afford lights, they used a 5 cell flashlight. They would put extra batteries in a newspaper delivery bag. But the batteries would die so quickly that the boys would run through many batteries. As a result, they had to drag them through the woods. But they could easily spot the raccoons.

It was not unusual for them to fall asleep among the pine trees on the hill. Sy remembers because of shortages during World War 2 using gun shells which were filled with dried beans. Much to his shock, when he shot a rabbit with those shells, the rabbit exploded into pieces.

#### **SY & DENNIS JOINED THE ARMY**

Sy was the salutatorian of his graduating class. Immediately after graduating, he went into the Army so that he could get college money from the G.I. Bill. Sy learned later that Dennis O'Mara joined the Army at the same time because he had. Sy's parents drove Sy and Dennis to Albany to meet the recruiter. Sy's dad advised him, "Before you meet the recruiter, select the branch of the Army you want. Don't let them talk you into something you do not want to do." So both Dennis and Sy chose Army Intelligence.

They completed Basic Training at Fort Dix, NJ. After Fort Dix, Sy and Dennis went to Fort Devans, Massachusetts for advanced training. Sy was sent to Ethiopia, (now Eritrea) in East Africa. He was stationed in Kagnew Station for over two years.

Sy was offered Officer Candidate School but turned it down.

#### **MR. SEARS TO THE RESCUE**

After being honorably discharged from the Army in 1957, Sy discovered that the G.I. Bill would not cover his expenses to study at Cornell. He then applied to Oneonta State. At SUCO they noted that he had never studied a language. He told them that he never was allowed to. They did not want to accept him as a student. It was ironic but Sy had been the salutatorian of his class, yet could not get into college. So he went to Mr. Sears, his Otego Science teacher and good friend, to seek help. The next day Mr. Sears, who told him, "Go back to the college and take the test. You're in." And he successfully passed the entrance exam.

#### **SY'S PARENTS -PHOTOGRAPHERS**

In the early 50's, for several years after Sy's parents moved to Otego, his dad was an engraver and photographer for The Daily Star.

He made all of the plates for printing the newspaper and prepared the photographs. Then he and Marion started a very successful Photography Shop in Otego. (today it is 354 Main Street). The Lloyds would take the pictures and if people wanted a colored photo, Sy's mother would skillfully color the picture by hand. If a client was upset about a blemish on his or her face, Sy's mom would touch up the negative so it never appeared in the photo. Sy's dad was such a perfectionist that he often lost money in his photography business. The Lloyds would mix their own chemicals, took and developed the pictures and framed them for their customers.

After Sy's dad died in 1966, his mother gave up the studio and continued the business from her house on Flax Island. With improvements in technology, Sy's mother could take the photos and send them to a processing lab. After Marion gave up the business, June, Sy's sister, who lived in California asked Sy to ship all of the equipment that was in the Lloyd

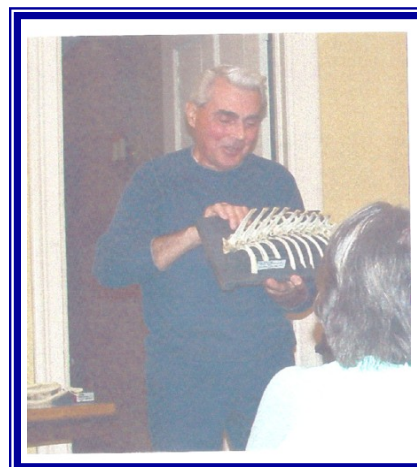
Studio to a Photography Museum in Sacramento. Where it is now.

At the same time as running the Photography Studio, Sy's mom and dad worked at Bendix (now known as Amphenol). They worked the night shift so Sy never saw them during the week because he would leave for school in the morning while they were asleep. When Sy returned home at 4 p.m., his folks had already left for work at 3 p.m. They would come home at midnight. Friday nights Sy's dad would wake him up and they would have ice cream together.

#### **SY'S INTEREST IN SKELETONS**

At this time, Sy was already interested in dead animals, so his dad would also bring "road kill" home. Sy's interest in animal skeletons started when he was 15. He found a dead blue heron by their creek. He put all of the bones that he could find on a piece of plywood and gave it to Mr. Sears. Mr. Sears kept it on the wall in his classroom.

Sy majored in Science Education at SUCO. He made all of the museum mounts for the college. Sy remembers while in college he caught a porcupine in a trap in the dark near his home on Flax Island. It was quite a struggle but he managed to capture it and prepare the skeleton to give to the college.



When SUCO offered, for the first time, courses for Secondary Science Teaching, Sy switched his major so he could teach high school. However, many of the courses he had taken no longer counted so he had to take one summer and an extra semester of courses in order to fulfill the requirements. He later learned through the Education Department in Albany, that he actually did not have to take some of the additional courses. So, although he spent an extra semester in College, he was able to immediately become a Certified Teacher because of that mistake. Sy later earned his Master's Degree + 60 hours.

**SY MEETS HIS FUTURE WIFE**

Sy met his future wife, Jan (Revett) in college. Jan was his blind date for a Valentine's Day Dance that neither one of them wanted to go on. Sy was a substitute for a guy that was supposed to be Jan's date. It took about 3 dates before they decided that they liked each other.

Jan and Sy became engaged in the spring of 1962, the year they graduated, and were married in August of that year. Immediately after graduating, Sy taught in Cooperstown for a year. Then they moved to Long Island where Sy taught in Greenlawn and Jan was an elementary school teacher in Smithtown.

**SY TAUGHT FOR 28 YEARS**

Sy taught Science for 28 years in Greenlawn and had the delightful nickname of "Road Kill". He was known as a very strict teacher and as a result he never had trouble from his students. His students would bring "critters" in to him. Students would dissect animals in the science lab. Two of the girls in his class were especially interested in dissecting and worked on a special project for a whole year. One is now a veterinarian and the other a dentist.

After Sy retired, he had an amazing collection of skeletons and eventually connected with Sweet Briar Nature Center in Smithtown. Sy was given a room there where he worked in all of his spare time. He was able to build them a unique collection of skeletons.

**THE TRAVELING BONE SHOW COMES UPSTATE**

Eventually Sy and Jan decided that they no longer enjoyed living on Long Island. Many of their friends were moving to other areas. So, because they still had property in Otego, they decided to return here. Sy brought much of his skeleton collection with him. Some he donated to Paul Smith's College in the Adirondacks. He has also donated sets to both the Newcombe Interpretative Center as well as the Paul Smith's Interpretative Center.

At the request of the Department of Environmental Conservation, Sy took a year to create 8 sets of skeletons for the officers to use when they visited schools. He wrote a curriculum to accompany the sets. Now he gives program to such places as schools, the Boy Scout camp, Otsego County Fair, and the Continuing Education Program at SUCO.

**SY AND JAN HAVE 3 CHILDREN**

Jan and Sy have three children. Laurie Jean and Jeffrey Allen were adopted. Christopher Adam is their biological son. Jan was a stay-at-home mom while raising the children, so Sy would work a second job as a carpenter or white goods installer.

Christopher was very ambitious. During high school he began a landscaping business. Chris graduated from SUNY Plattsburgh. He now lives in Flagstaff, Arizona with his daughter, Alexandria, and has one of the largest landscaping companies in that area.

After graduating from high school, Jeffrey eventually moved to West Palm Beach, Florida. He worked in the Pediatrics Ward of the hospital there. Because he loved to cook, he happened to stop in to investigate the Florida Culinary Institute in West Palm Beach. The rest is history. Jeff graduated from there and he is now the Executive Chef at Cummins Cove Golf and Country Club at Hendersonville, N.C.

Laurie went to Albany State College as a Business Major. After successfully working for computer firms, Laurie wanted to work in the medical field. So she studied at Touro College on Long

Island and now works for a doctor as a Physician's Assistant. Laurie has two daughters: Sara who is 13 and Emily who is 11.

**A FAMILY MYSTERY SOLVED**

After Sy's parents died, he was cleaning out their Flax Island House, and discovered that in 1946 they were bankrupt when they left New Jersey. At long last he could understand why they made the abrupt move from New Jersey to Otego. He attributes medical expenses and a variety of other factors adding up over the years to create their financial problems

Sy received a wonderful phone call from his dad just before he died in 1966. He told Sy that all of his bills were finally paid. Now he would be able to do what he loved the most, purchase a trailer for his boat and go sit in his boat, on Goodyear Lake and enjoy life.

**SY'S GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT**

When asked to pinpoint his greatest accomplishment, he said that it is the love of his life, Jan, his wife. He had two cardinal rules which he shared with his children. One, always kiss your partner good night and two, never say "nasty words" to your partner. Those words can never be taken back once they are said.

After talking to Sy and Jan Lloyd, I know they can be very proud of their lives and how they have touched so many other lives positively throughout the years *Mary Johnson-Butler*

**"OTEGO TAKES A WHIP TO OUTDATED LAWS"**  
*From July 27, 1985 Daily Star*  
**Since 1893 these laws were still part of the Otego ordinances:**  
 In 1957 it was still against the law to:

- Walk your dog on the sidewalk
- Ride your horse faster than 10 mph
- Light a street lamp
- or Give a beer to a friend while there was a fire in the village.

As quoted in the article, "Apparently they didn't have much faith in the firemen" in 1893.