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The Caldecott Tunnel—History in the Making

... continued from page L1



Construction of bores 1 and 2.

Photo courtesy of the Orinda Historical Society

The \$400 million 4th bore project will provide another two-lane tunnel north of the existing three tunnels. When complete, two bores will be dedicated to traffic in each direction to carry the 160,000 vehicles that traverse the tunnels daily and eliminate the need to switch traffic flow in the middle bore.

Construction of the bore has progressed about 420 feet since the tunnel excavator started to drill through the portal wall on the east side in August, said Weiss in his brief update on the project adding that drilling from the west side of the bore is scheduled to start soon. The tunnels won't meet in the middle but at a point about 2/3 from the east side. Construction is ongoing 24 hours a day, five days a week;

the excavated dirt is taken to Treasure Island to be used for landfill. The project, which received \$179 million in federal stimulus funds, currently employs a hundred peo-

ple and that number will grow to 250 when working at full capacity. To see photos of the 4th bore

project underway, go to www.lamorindaweekly.com/caldecott.html.



Jeff Weiss (on L) and Ray Mailhot

Photo Kent Long

Caldecott Tunnel Trivia

Ray Mailhot, who gave thousands of tours of the Caldecott Tunnel during his tenure at Caltrans, displayed an encyclopedic knowledge of Tunnel history in his presentation at the Orinda Historical Society dinner. Here's some of the of the tunnel trivia

What happened to the original Kennedy Tunnel?

Mailhot heard that the retired tunnel was used to grow mushrooms in the 1940's after the Lower Broadway Tunnel opened. Eventually both ends of the Kennedy Tunnel were blocked off due to safety concerns. There is a flagpole and monument commemorating the passage near the old tunnel site.

Why is there a bounce as you enter the third bore of the tunnel from the east side?

"It's the ground water pushing up on the roadway," said Mailhot, noting that his crews had ground the roadway down to eliminate most of the bounce.

How many people does it take to run the tunnel?

There were approximately 65 people assigned to Mailhot's crew when he took over supervising the Caldecott Tunnel in the late 1970's. When Mailhot retired three years ago, the crew was down to a total of 20.

It would have made sense to build the 4th bore when the third bore was dug, right?

Mailhot agreed, but not surprisingly, money was the limiting

What's up with the radio reception in bore 1?

"We're not going to talk about that," said Mailhot with a laugh. "My guys used to work on that three or four times a week." He attributes the problem to an antiquated radio broadcasting system. A.Firth

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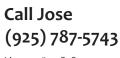
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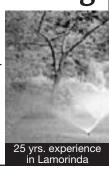
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