



# 'Viera's Place'

Where everybody knew your name

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# Land Park's Mannie Viera reminisces on early South Sacramento

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*Editor's note: This is part one of a two-part series about Sacramento resident Mannie Viera.*

At 88 years old, Sacramento's Manuel J. "Mannie" Viera, Jr. has experienced many things in his life, including growing up as the son of a railroad worker.

## Dad immigrated

While sitting inside his home in Sacramento last week, Mannie spoke about his father, Portuguese immigrant Manuel J. Viera, Sr. (1892-1962).

"My dad came over (to the United States) from Faial, Portugal by himself when he was about 12 years old and he had a sign on him that (read), 'California, Sacramento, and a loaf of French bread,' said Mannie. "I guess he had enough money to travel (to Sacramento) by train. When he got here, he lived on the corner of 6th and U (streets), right across from Southside Park. He never told me much about that time. All I know is that from then he went on to work at the (Southern Pacific) shops. He would go over there and work on the engines and stuff like that. And later on when I got older, I went to the work for the railroad, as well. So, I worked on Front and J (streets) and he worked



Manuel J. Viera, Sr. stands behind the bar in his Southside Park area business, Viera's Place, in this c. 1940 photograph. The people to the left of the photograph are unidentified.

*Photo courtesy: Mannie Viera*

over (at 4th and I streets) at the shops."

Manuel Viera Sr. married Goldie Mac Dias (1893-1974) in about 1920. Mannie was born in San Francisco, and moved to the capital city

when he was about six months old, when his parents adopted him.

## Viera's Place

Mannie said that his father was well known by

many locals for his ownership of Viera's Place, a bar at 1914 3rd St., between S and T (streets), in the Southside Park area.

He added that during that time, the Southside Park area

was populated with people of different cultures.

"There were a lot of Portuguese, Italians and Slovenians who all lived right

# Viera: Clients at 'Viera's Place' ranged from senators to a beer-drinking goat

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there in that area," Mannie said. "There's a lot of history down in that neighborhood."

Although Mannie said that he does not know exactly when his father established the bar, he said that he believes the business was actually open and selling "beer and wine and stuff like that during the bootlegging days" of Prohibition.

## Grocery bar?

Additional information regarding Mannie's father and his bar was discovered during research for this article.

The 1921 city directory, for instance, shows that Manuel J. Viera, Sr. was already associated with 1914 3rd St. at the time, but was then operating a grocery store at that address.

However, it is possible that the grocery store was then doubling as a bar, despite the fact that Prohibition had already gone into effect.

Mannie said that his father closed the bar in 1923 due to the risks of running an alcohol vending business during Prohibition.

Following the repeal of Prohibition, Mannie's father reopened the bar on April 14, 1933.

bottle) in the mouth of the goat and the goat drank the whole darn bottle of beer. So, that was a ritual every day. When the fellow came off of work, he'd stop by my dad's bar and he'd get a bottle of beer (for the goat) along with his order."

When asked whether the goat showed any effects from drinking beer, Mannie said, "No, he cut him off at one bottle."

## Check, please

Mannie added that the bar was also a place where people would pick up their paychecks.

"My dad owned a rooming house at (nearly) the same address (as the bar) at 1914 4th St.," Mannie said. "A lot of their checks would go to my dad's bar and since it was only a block away, they'd come pick up their checks."

In addition to the barroom, Viera's Place also included a kitchen, an office and restrooms.

## Will Rogers

While looking at a vintage photograph of the inside of the bar, Mannie pointed to a picture that was hanging on the wall to the left of a clock and said, "My dad always had a picture of Will Rogers on the wall. He liked Will Rogers."

at the old L Street Arena at 223 L St.

"He would go down there and box whenever he needed some extra money," Mannie said.

## Land Park move

When Mannie was 6 years old in 1929, he moved with his parents from 430 1/2 T St. to 3200 Riverside Blvd., across the street from where Vic's Ice Cream opened 13 years later.

The Vieras property was one of four lots in the vicinity on the west side of the street.

"Nothing but hayfields and Japanese gardens

Mannie recalled a very rural area from his vantage point on the boulevard at that time.

"(The area) wasn't very populated at all back then," Mannie said. "My dad had chickens and he had rabbits and he had dogs, cats, a regular menagerie. And at that time, when we lived there, you could look from there over to where Holy Spirit Church (at 3159 Land Park Drive) is now and there was nothing but hayfields and Japanese gardens. A lot of strawberry farms were out there at that time. The Swansons rented the land out to Japanese (strawber-



Land Park News photo, Lance Armstrong  
Mannie Viera has many fond memories about his long life in the capital city.

### From senators to goats

Included among the clientele of Vicra's Place were Senator Earl Desmond, who served in the Legislature from 1933 to 1958, and other senators and assemblymen.

Mannie said that one of the more unusual customers at his father's bar was a goat.

"This customer of my dad's, he used to come in after work and have a beer and he'd bring his goat into the bar," Mannie said. "And my dad said, 'What about your goat? Do you want to buy him a drink or do you want to be a cheapskate?' And (the customer) said, 'Why? Do you want to feed him a beer?' So, my dad got a bottle of beer and the goat came up on the bar and my dad had a beer bottle opener, of course, and he put (the

Rogers' popularity in Sacramento reached a higher level in 1935, when he came to the capital city for the filming of "Steamboat 'Round the Bend."

Mannie said that he was among the people who went to the banks of the Sacramento River to view the filming of the movie.

### The boxer

In addition to his previously mentioned employment, Manuel earned money by participating in boxing matches

ry) farmers. And (Sanford A.) Woodruff, the guy who had a house a block down from ours (at 3300 Riverside Blvd.), had a stable (at 2643 Riverside Blvd.), right by where the Riverside Clubhouse is now (at 2633 Riverside Blvd.). He had horses he rented out and people used to ride them out by the levee and come down by Riverside Baths (the old public swimming pool at 3640 Riverside Blvd.)."

# 'Putting on the Ritz'

Land Park resident  
leads interesting life

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# Mannie Viera shares his Sacramento memories

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*Editor's note: This is part two of a two-part series about Sacramento native Mannie Viera.*

Mannie Viera has maintained a very full life in Sacramento, where he has resided since he was six months old.

## Child entertainer

Few people in the capital city have maintained such a longtime employment career than Mannie, considering that he first worked as an entertainer when he was six years old.

In discussing this early employment, Mannie said, "I worked at different clubs around town. I recited poems like 'Sonny Boy' and 'I'm Waiting for the Ships that Never Come In.' I also dressed up like a cowboy, but I don't remember what that was for. I was so young, I was lucky to remember what door to come in. It was my mother's idea to have me perform. She set me up with piano and tap dancing lessons and things like that."

After speaking about his time as a child entertainer, Mannie, 88, said that his continuous span of working, which continues today, began when he was a teenager.

a great ball player and we really like to watch you' and all that sort of thing."

Upon completing his time in the service on Dec. 31, 1945, Mannie traveled by train from Marysville to Sacramento and then took a taxi to his home on Riverside Boulevard.

## Mannie meets Alice

Mannie said that he met his then-future wife several years after the war.

"It's funny how I met her," Mannie recalled. "I worked on Front and J (streets) at the Southern Pacific freight yards and she worked on 5th and J (streets) at the Kramer carton company. She would cross the street and walk on the right side of the street going down to her home at 18th and H (streets). But anyhow, I saw this beautiful pair of legs and this pretty woman walking down the street and I walked behind her. I'd make sure that I was down there by the time that she got off work and finally one day I got up the nerve and talked to her. And then I'd see her sometimes at night when I'd go to a show and I'd see her walking on her way home. I'd ask her if I could give her a ride and she would say, 'No, no, no, no, no.' So, this went on for a while and finally one time I said, 'Well, what about a coffee and a piece of pie?'"



Photo courtesy, Mannie Viera

SWEETHEARTS. Mannie and Alice Viera were married in 1943.

it — and I looked at the numbers and all of a sudden I let out a yell. My wife thought I cut myself shaving. She came in and I was all shaking and I said, 'Read this number. Is that number so and so?' She said, 'Yes.' I said, 'We just won a 1959 Cadillac (Coupe de Ville).'"

Fourteen years after winning a Cadillac, Mannie, who has been a member of Sacramento Elks Lodge No. 6 since about 1957, entered a contest to win a 1973 Ford Pinto during an Elks gathering in Marysville.

About a month later, the exalted ruler in Marysville called Mannie to inform him that he had won the car.



Photo courtesy, Mannie Viera

WORLD WAR II VET. Mannie Viera served in the U.S. Army from Feb. 10, 1943 to Dec. 31, 1945.

### Lifelong worker

"I've been working since I was 15 years old, when I worked at Joe Wilson's grocery store (at 3231 Riverside Blvd.)," Mannie said.

He was the valedictorian of Christian Brothers High School's Class of 1941. Later, Mannie later took typing and shorthand classes at Sacramento Junior College - today's Sacramento City College.

Mannie's time working for Southern Pacific in Sacramento lasted for just a little less than eight months, since he was drafted into the Army on Feb. 10, 1943.

### World War II

On Feb. 18, 1943, Mannie had a by-chance meeting with one of the world's then-most famous athletes.

In recalling this moment, Mannie said, "I got on a train and went down to the Presidio of Monterey and flew off from there with Joe DiMaggio. Yeah, he got drafted at the same time as I did. Nobody asked him for an autograph. We talked to him and said, 'Hello, how are you and you're

Mannie's persistence paid off, as Alice accepted the offer and he took her to an eatery at 15th and J streets.

Following this short date, Alice refused a ride home, so Mannie walked her home instead and got her name and phone number.

The date began a four-year courtship that led to their marriage in Las Vegas in 1953.

With a chuckle, Mannie said that it took him four years to convince Alice that he was worth marrying.

Although Mannie said that he feels that he was very fortunate to have been married to Alice, who passed away on Aug. 24, 2010, he also said that his luck extends beyond meeting his late wife.

### Auto winner

In particular, Mannie explained that he apparently has a knack for winning automobiles.

"You used to go buy gas (at the Regal station at 4011 Freeport Blvd.) and they would give you a ticket or coupon," Mannie said. "I was lathering my face up to shave one night - they used to put out a slip with the winning numbers on

Mannie said that although "the good lord might be saying, 'Don't be so doggone grabby,'" he nonetheless is still hoping to win another car some day.

And perhaps he is about due for a new car, since he drives about 12 miles per day to perform his volunteer work for the county's Adult Protective Services agency. He began this volunteer work 27 years ago.

### A busy guy

About the time that Mannie joined Lodge No. 6, he took over his father's night shift at his father's Southside Park area bar, Viera's Place, while his mother worked the day shift.

Meanwhile, Mannie was also working during the day for Southern Pacific.

When asked about his activities outside of work, Mannie said that he used to spend a lot of time bowling in leagues.

During his interview for this article, Mannie presented an official American Bowling Congress medal representing his accomplishment of bowling 11 consecutive strikes at Alhambra Bowl at 1221 Alhambra Blvd. on Dec. 27, 1971.

### Couldn't ask for better

Thinking back on his various activities and adventures in life, Mannie said that he is very thankful for many things.

"I've been a very fortunate individual with good parents, good jobs and many other things," Mannie said. "I'm thankful I'm 88 years old. I don't understand why God's been so good to me. I've been so thankful for everything I've had in my life. I couldn't have asked for anything better."