

SAN FRANCISCO

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# GARDENERS OF IDENTITY: BASQUES IN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA

by Pedro J. Oiarzabal



LEHENDAKARITZA

PRESIDENCIA

**Eusko Jauriaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia**  
Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco

Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2009

A catalogue record of this book is available in the catalogue of the General Library of the Basque Government: <http://www.euskadi.net/ejgvbiblioteka>

Published: 1<sup>st</sup> edition, March 2009

Print run: 750

© Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoko Administrazioa  
Lehendakaritza  
Administración de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco  
Departamento de Presidencia

Executive director: Josu Legarreta Bilbao

Internet: [www.euskadi.net](http://www.euskadi.net)

Published by: Eusko Jauriaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia  
Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco  
Donostia-San Sebastián, 1 – 01010 Vitoria-Gasteiz

Designed by: Canaldirecto. [www.canal-directo.com](http://www.canal-directo.com)

Photosetting: Ipar, S.Coop.  
Zurbaran, 2-4 - 48007 Bilbao

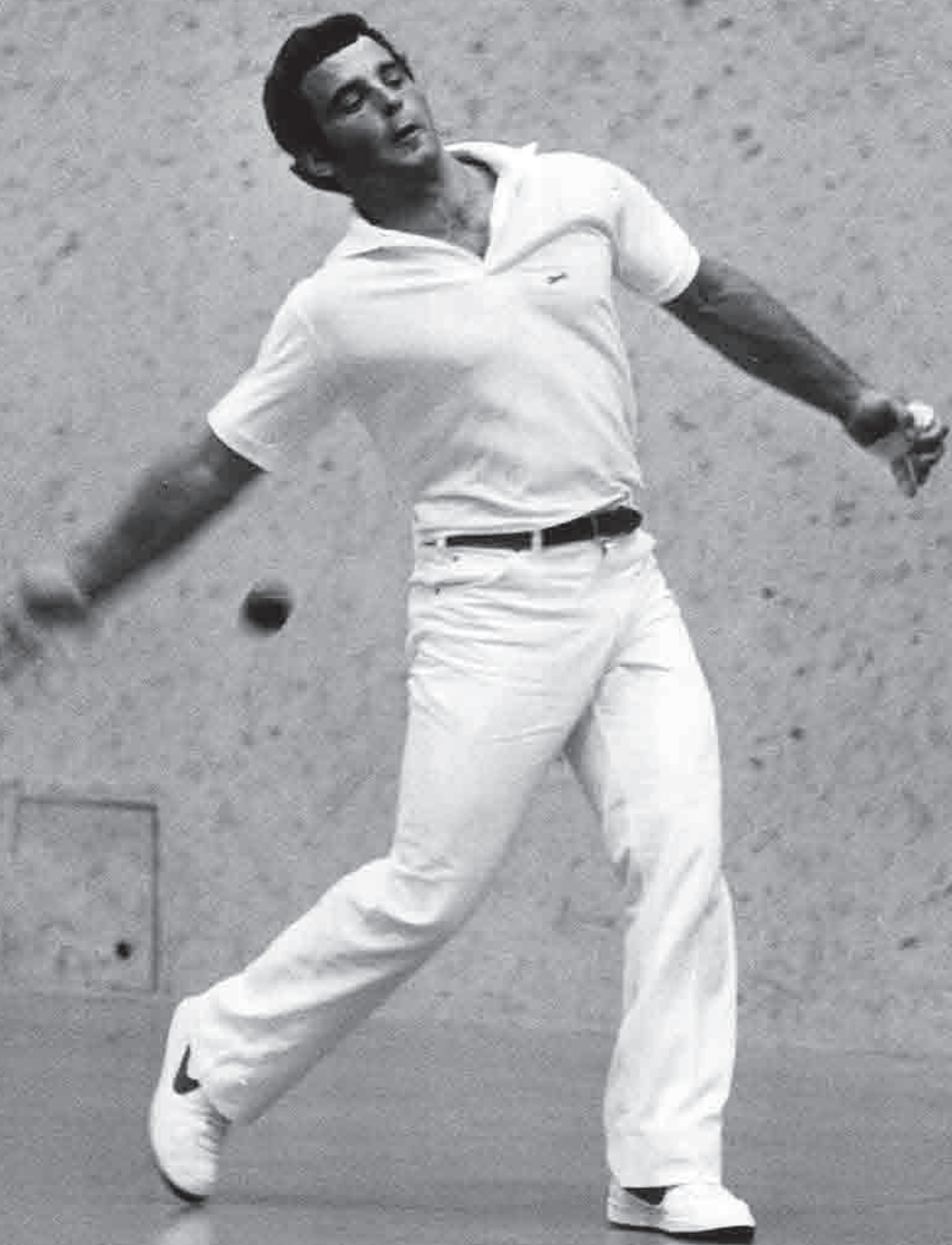
Printed by: Grafo, S.A.  
Avda. Cervantes, 51 - 48970 Basauri (Bizkaia)

ISBN: 978-84-457-2938-0

Legal Deposit: BI 1303-2009

Note: The printing department of this publication is not responsible for the content or opinions contained within the pages of the individual books of this series.

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*To all those anonymous—past, present and future—gardeners of identity*

*The Basque Country is not only geography, but also the people who inhabit it. That is, a country. A country that naturally has its history—an ancient one, so much that in all of Europe there is not a single ethnic group with a clearer profile than the Basques. All this means that among many kinds of plants and flowers that form a garden, we constitute a different kind of plant with the same right to live as others, not to better care than them, but rather, to as much care as them. That is, care conferred upon the Basque people themselves in this orphanage in which our culture barely survives. It is not our aim for other flowers to be disregarded, but to keep ours alive. Would this be too much to ask from a civilization that defends and protects even animals and vegetable species as collective goods? That's all we ask for.*

*(José Miguel de Barandiaran, 1889-1991, Basque ethnographer and anthropologist)*

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# Aurkezpena

JUAN JOSÉ  
IBARRETXE  
MARKUARTU  
Lehendakaria



1994 urtean *Eusko Legebiltzarrean Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoaz Kanpoko Euskal Gizatalde eta Etxeekiko Harremani buruzko Legea* onartu zen, kontrako botorik jaso gabe. Legebiltzarreko Taldeen jarrera bateratu hau, Euskaditik kanpora bizi diren euskal herritarrekin eta euren ondorengoekin Euskal Gizarteak duen konpromiso atzeraezinaren erakusgarri onena da. Konpromiso horrek, halaber, Euskal Etxeen aitorten ofiziala eta Euskal Erakunde Publikoekiko harremanen instituzionalizazioa ahalbidetzeko duen borondatea adierazten du.

Lege horren bidez, lau urtero egin beharreko Euskal Gizataldeen Biltzara instituzionalizatzen da ere bai, euren helburuak betetzeko lau urteko plana prestatu ahal izan dezaten.

Ikuspegi horretatik, Euskal Etxeen eta Euskal Erakunde Publikoen arteko harremanen instituzionalizazioa, horiek etorkizunean jarraipena izateko asmoaren seinale da, ekintza bateraturako estrategiak, aldian-aldian, gaur egungo mundu gero eta globalagoaren errealitate historiko berrietara egokituz.

Hain zuzen, etorkizun asmo horrekin jardun zuten euren jaioterritik urrun elkartzea eta euren «Euskal Etxeak» sortzea erabaki zuten euskal herritar ospetsuek. Elkarriz laguntza eta babesa ematea eta Kultura sustatzea zuten helburu, Euskal Herriaren partaide izatearen sentimenduak eta harrera egin zieten herrialdeekiko elkartasuna uztartuz.

Gaur, Euskal Etxeen historiaren berreskurapenean berriro lagundu nahi izan duten profesionalen ikerketa-bilduma aurkezteko ohorea dugu. Euskal Etxeak nazioarteko euskal presentziaren historia instituzionalaren zati dira eta,aldi berean, kokatuta dauden herrialdeen araberrako legediaren aitorten ofiziala izan dute.

Bilduma honetatik, milaka euskal gizon eta emakumeri elkartasunez harrera egindako herrialde horiei omenaldia egin nahi diegu, baita Euskal Etxe eta Gizataldeei ere, fundazioko helburuak betetzeko eta Euskal Herriak historian ezaugarri izan dituen baloreak defendatu nahiz zabaltzeko egindako ahaleginagatik, adibidez lanerako gogoia, nazioarteko elkartasuna, printzipio demokratikoen defentsa eta emandako hitza betetzea.

Espero dut ahalegin profesional eta instituzional berri honek Euskadiren errealitate soziopolitikoaz ezagutarazten lagunduko duela, baita Euskal Etxe eta Gizataldeek Euskal Erakunde Publikoekin duten harremana estutzen ere.

# Presentation

JUAN JOSÉ  
IBARRETXE  
MARKUARTU  
Lehendakari



In 1994 the Basque Parliament passed the Law on Relations with Basque Associations and Centers with no dissenting votes. The Parliamentary Groups' unanimous attitude clearly demonstrates the desire of Basque society to lend their unequivocal support to the Basque people and their descendants residing outside of Euskadi. It also leads the way to the official recognition of Basque Centers, and to formalizing their relations with Basque Public Institutions.

The law also establishes the celebration of a World Congress of Basque Organizations every four years to draw up a four-year plan of action aimed at achieving the objectives.

From this perspective, by institutionalizing relations between the Basque Centers and Basque Public Institutions the long-standing nature of the project is understood. New joint action strategies must be adapted regularly to meet the new historic realities brought about by today's increasingly globalized world.

Far from their native land, the illustrious Basques who decided to form partnerships and create "Basque Centers" also had their sights set on the future. Spurred on by mutual support and the desire to defend and promote their culture, they managed to combine their feelings as part of the Basque nation with their feelings of solidarity towards the countries that took them in.

Today we have the honor of presenting a collection of research projects put together by experts who, once again, have made an effort to recover the history of the Basque Centers. Officially recognized in accordance with the laws of the host countries, the Basque presence around the globe is further enriched by these contributions to Basque history.

We would like this collection to be seen as a tribute to the countries that welcomed, protected and supported so many thousands of Basque people. It is also meant as a tribute to the Basque Associations and Centers themselves for their work in carrying out the organizations' objectives and in defending and disseminating the values that have characterized the Basque nation throughout history—hard-working spirit, international solidarity, defense of democratic principles and a people who keeps its word.

I trust that this new professional and institutional effort will contribute to a better understanding of the social and cultural reality of Euskadi, and to strengthen the bonds between the Basque Associations and Centers and the Basque Institutions

# Hitzaurrea

Kalifornia da, Estatu Batuetako 2000. eroldaren arabera, Amerikako Mendebaldean euskaldun moduan definitzen diren biztanle gehienen bizilekua. Hain zuzen, hogeit hamar milatik gora lagunek euskalduntzat jo zuen bere burua urte horretako erroldarako galdetegian.

Euskaldunen presentzia aspaldikoa da Estatu horretan, kolonizatzaileen garaikoa alegia: horrela erakusten digute maisuki William Douglasssek eta Jon Bilbaok «Amerikanuak» lanean, Mexikotik joandako misiolarien eta gobernadoreen artean bai baitzeuden euskaldunak ere, eta puntako eginkizunetan egon ere. Gerora, Amerikako Mendebalde horretan XIX. mende erdialdera sortu zen urre-bilatzaile —*forty-niners* deitutakoak— haien artean ere (edo 1849tik laster behinik behin) bazen euskaldunik, gehienak, dakigunez, Hego Amerikatik joanak.

Urte batzuk geroagokoak dira han-hemenka irekitzen joan ziren euskal ostatuak, presentzia haren premiei erantzunez joan zirelarik. Bigarren garai horretako euskal komunitate inportantearen lekuko paregabeak dira Los Angeles hirian argitaratutako lehen euskal egunkariak ere: *Eskualdun Gazeta* (1885), Martín Biscauiluzen zuzendaritzapean sortua, eta *California'ko Eskual Herria* (1893), Jean Pierre Goytinen ardurapean.

XX. mendean zehar, meategietako eta artzaintzako lanetatik hirian lan egitera pasa ahala, euskaldunen biltoki izandako ostatu edo hotelak euskal etxe bihurtuz joan ziren. Horietatik gehienak gaur egun ere Kalifornian zehar kokatzen dira, 2000ko eroldan jasotakoa ziurtatuz. Eta Kalifornia osoan bizien dirauena South San Frantziskokoa da. Beraz, sasoi batean Los Angeles izan zen moduan euskaldunen hiriburua Kalifornian, gaur South San Frantziskon kokatzen da.

Horregatik da hain garrantzizkoa Urazandi bilduman argitaratu izana San Frantziskoko euskaldunen historia hau, bilduman zehar Kaliforniari zegokion zuloa betetzen baitu, ondo bete ere, Pedro Oiartzabalen gidaritzapean hainbeste lagun elkarlanari esker hezurramitutako liburu honek.

Bay Areako euskaldunek 1982an eraikin berria altxatzeari ekin ziotenean izan zuten etorkizun-sena sekulakoa izan zen. Hogeita zazpi urte igaro direnean, harro egoteko moduan daude lortutako emaitzarekin, alde batetik mundu mailan euskal etxerik inportanteenetarikoa baita, baina beste alde batetik amerikarren artean euskalduntasuna ezagutzera emateko tokia antolatzen asmatu dutelako, jabetxearen bitartez. Eta hori San Francisco moduko hiri batean ez da erraza.



Euskaldun guztien bategitearekin ere zeresan handia izan zuten San Frantziskoko euskaldunek 1973tik aurrera jaio zen NABO erakundearen sorreran eta geroan. Bizkaitarrak eta Iparraldeko eta nafar jatorrikoak denak batera elkartzen dituen erakundea da. Eusko Jaurlaritzaren ordezkari izendatu nindutenetik laster, 1995an, San Frantziskora egin nuen lehen bidaiatik berehala konturatu nintzen komunitate honen indarraz, eta ordutik ondo ezagutzeko aukera izan dut.

Horregatik, liburuaren azken atalean Amerikako Mendebaldeko euskalduntasunaren geroari erreparatzen zaionean, nire iritzia eman nahiko nuke, teoriak teoria eta adituak aditu. 1982an asmatu zuten bezala, orain ere asmatuko du, nire ustez, komunitate honek etorkizunean kokatzen, belaunaldien arteko erreleboa bermatu duen neurrian.

Ez dut amaitu nahi sarrera testu hau azken hamahiru urteetan euskaldun guztien kapilau izan den aita Martxel Tillous aipatu gabe. Estatu Batuetako euskaldun guztien bizitzan azken urteetan hain pertsona garrantzitsua izan dena bere azken egunak bizitzen ari den honetan. Bera joango da, denok joango garen moduan, baina bere ondarea ondo errotuta ikusten dugu Estatu Batuetako Mendebaldeko euskal gaztetxoak udalekuan euskaraz mintzatzen edo txistu joka ikustean. Etorkizuna, pixka baterako, bermatuta dago. «Pottoka»k kilometro asko egin zituen eta bidea markatuta utzi digu. Eskerrik asko, Aita Martxel!

IÑAKI AGUIRRE ARIZMENDI  
Kanpo Harremanetarako idazkari nagusia

# Preface

According to the United States census of 2000, California contains the highest number of inhabitants in the whole American West who define themselves as Basques. Specifically, more than twenty thousand inhabitants claimed to consider themselves Basque in the census survey for the year at hand.

Basque presence in this State dates way back, even to times of colonization, as is so masterfully demonstrated to us by William Douglass and Jon Bilbao in their work “Amerikanuak”, given that the missionaries and governors arriving from Mexico included Basques who were, it must also be said, occupied with tasks carrying a great deal of responsibility. At a later date we also find Basques among the influx of gold miners—the so-called *forty-niners*—arriving around the mid-19th century (or, at least, shortly after 1849), most of whom, as far as we know, came from South America.

The Basque hostels gradually springing up in these lands to meet the needs of those people date from only a few years later. Another exceptional testimony to the populous Basque community of that second period are the first Basque newspapers published in Los Angeles: *Eskualdun Gazeta* (1885), created under the direction of Martín Biscailuz, and *California'ko Eskual Herria* (1893), the responsibility of Jean Pierre Goytino.

Throughout the 20th century, as activity passed from mining and shepherding to more urban endeavors, those hostels and hotels formerly serving as meeting places for Basque people progressively turned into *euskal etxeak*. Most of these are still today located in California, confirming the results of the 2000 census. The liveliest survivor of these is the one in South San Francisco. We can therefore say that the Basque capital status once pertaining to the city of Los Angeles now belongs to South San Francisco.

Hence the importance of having published as part of the Urazandi collection the history of those Basques from San Francisco, in so doing filling the space corresponding to California in this collection, and which does so splendidly with this book made possible thanks to the collective work of many under the direction of Pedro Oiartzabal.

The vision of the future of those Basques from Bay Area on starting to build the new headquarters in 1982 was providential. Twenty-seven years on they can be proud of the result, not only because this is one of the most important *euskal*

*etxeak* in the world, but also for having been capable of creating the ideal place to reach the Americans and teach them about Basquism with its restaurant. And having achieved such a feat in a city like San Francisco is no mean task.

The work of the San Francisco Basques also played an important part in uniting the Basques in the Diaspora with the creation and development of NABO, an organization congregating people from Bizkaia, Iparralde and those originally from Navarre. Ever since my first trip to San Francisco, shortly after my appointment as Basque Government representative in 1995, I have felt the energy of that community, having since been able to get to know it better.

That's why I'd like to give my opinion on the future of Basquism in the American West, without going into the theories or opinions of the experts, who make their own analyses in the final chapter of this book. Repeating its success of 1982, this community will continue to hold a place in the future thanks to having ensured its generational changeover.

But I wouldn't like to end this foreword without mentioning the person who, for the last thirteen years, has been the chaplain of all of these Basques, Aita Martxel Tillous, whom, after so many years as a person of reference in the lives of all Basques in the United States, is now coming to the end of his days. Although he will cease to exist, as we are all destined to do, his deeply-rooted legacy remains visible in the Basque girls and boys in the West of the United States who attend the summer colonies, where we can hear them speaking in Basque or playing the txistu. Just like the "pottoka", his was a path of many kilometers leaving us a clearly marked trail. The future is ensured for a good deal of time to come. Eskerrik asko, Aita Martxel!

IÑAKI AGUIRRE ARIZMENDI  
Secretary General for Foreign Affairs

Ackno

# wledgements

This manuscript would have not been possible without the generous and unconditional financial support of the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center and the Government of the Basque Autonomous Community as well as the professional guidance and assistance of the University of Nevada Oral History Program. I feel especially indebted to Marie Laxague Rosecrans, Chair of the San Francisco Urazandi Committee and its members—Philippe Acheritogaray, Esther Bidaurreta, Franxo Bidaurreta, Gina Espinal, Marisa Espinal, Yvonne Hauscarriague, Aña Iriartborde and Nicole Sorhondo—for their help and relentless work.

I would also like to acknowledge the interviewers—Philippe Acheritogaray, Robert Acheritogaray, Valerie Arrechea, Arantxa Arriada, David Barreneche,

Elizabeth Barthe, Xabier Berrueta, Esther Bidaurreta, Jean Luc Chiramberro, Gina Espinal, Marisa Espinal, Nadine Goyhenetche, Yvonne Hauscarriague, Bernadette Sallaberry Hurley, Robert Iriartborde, Lucy Jaimerena-Zamattia, Nicole Lapeyrade, Anton Laxague, Isabelle Laxague, Marie Laxague Rosecrans, Natalie Oroz and Nicole Sorhondo—who conducted oral histories with key members of the Bay Area Basque community that are the foundation of this book. In addition, the role of Kate Camino and Jeanne Guerrero as the transcribers of dozens of hours of interviews was essential to the development of the overall project.

I was also privileged to have as editor of this volume Dr. Lisa Corcostegui whose valued suggestions and professionalism have enriched the final product. Community members Philippe Acheritogaray, Esther Bidaurreta, Franxoa Bidaurreta, Aña Iriartborde, Leon Sorhondo and Nicole Sorhondo also made valuable contributions to the editing process. Many thanks to the board of directors of Anaitasuna Basque Association, the Basque Club of California, the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, the Basque Educational Organization, the 599 Railroad Catering, and the Marin-Sonoma Basque Association, and to their respective memberships; the Center for Basque Studies and the personnel at the Basque Studies Library of the University of Nevada, Reno—Shannon Cisco, Estibalitz Ezkerra, Brandon Scutt and Marimar Ubeda; Dr. Marta Elliot at the Sociology Department of the University of Nevada, Reno; Woody LaBounty of the San Francisco Western Neighborhoods Project; Gail Malmgreen at the New York University’s Tamiment Library; the National Endowment for the

Arts; the Ronald Reagan Library; Andrea Adams; José Félix Azurmendi; Joseba Etxarri; John Freeman; James Reswick, Jr.; Koldo San Sebastián; Yan Shu; those who took part in this effort by participating in interviews or focus groups; and the volunteers who helped us.

Finally, I would like to specially acknowledge the Camino-Villanueva family for their kind hospitality and unconditional love as well as the Asueta-Goñi family for their support and friendship.

# Eskerrik asko



Introd  
A New

# uction: Beginning

The Navy recruiting officer looked at me. He said, “Are you an Indian?” I said, “Yes, Sir.” “Sorry we don’t take Indians in the Navy. But...you’re not a full-blooded Indian.” “No I’m not,” I said. “I don’t think there are any full-blooded Indians east of Winnipeg! But on the books I’m an Indian. Here’s my border-crossing card.” [...] “Well,” he said, “you got a French name: B-a-s-q-u-e. We’ll sign you as a Frenchman.” I said “No, you won’t...That’s not a French name, anyway. It’s Basque—it’s from northern Spain.” “Well,” he said, “we’ll sign you on as Basque.” I said, “No. On the books, I was born on the Indian reservation and I’ve always gone as an Indian all my life...What in the world? Disown my own race, just to get into the Navy?” I said, “I’m Canadian, even if I am Indian. Same as you are...I was born here in Canada.”

(The story of Max Basque)<sup>1</sup>

The paradox of our time in history is that while we are more aware than ever of the paramount forces of globalization that constantly threaten minorities like the Basques with assimilation, we are also aware of new global tools of telecommunications and transport that are available to minorities, emigrant groups and diasporas as they struggle against vanishing from the pages of history. These

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<sup>1</sup> Max Basque was a Native American from Whycomagh, Canada, who traveled to Montreal to enlist in the Canadian Navy during World War II (WWII). Back then, the Royal Canadian Navy required an applicant to be a “British born subject” of a “White Race.” Max Basque never did join the Navy. Quoted in *Cape Bretons Magazine*, no. 52: 58.

technologies represent new ways of promoting their cultures and keeping them alive. Basques have been active participants in globalization while promoting their own local culture and heritage. Throughout their history Basques from San Francisco have been an excellent illustration of this.

This book chronicles the history of the Basques in the San Francisco Bay Area (hereafter San Francisco or Bay Area) and their resilient and relentless work in support of Basque culture and language in America, and specifically in the State of California for the last 160 years. They are, indeed, true gardeners of Basque identity, who nurture, preserve and promote their cultural heritage in new soil for future generations. As we revisit this history we will explore concepts such as identity, culture, tradition, and homeland in the midst of globalization.

How does migration affect Basque identity? How and why do Basque immigrants maintain their traditions in their new country? What does being Basque mean for the immigrants' children and grandchildren born and raised in the United States (U.S.)?

Diaspora communities including the Basques are formed by emigrants (and their descendants) who shared a collective identity in their homeland from which socio-economic and/or political conditions forced them to leave, or who for other reasons chose to settle in another country. Collectively and associatively some of these diasporas attempt to preserve or develop cultural, religious, and even political expressions of their identity. As of August 2008, the Basque diaspora has established approximately 200 associations—federation of clubs, *euskal elkarteak* or community-based social clubs, and cultural, educational, political, and business associations—throughout twenty-four countries in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Oceania.<sup>2</sup> These associations, explicitly self-defined as Basque, foster strong collective self-awareness sustained over a considerable amount of time. Diaspora associations create transnational networks that maintain varying degrees of personal, institutional, cultural, social, economic, political, and business ties with the homeland and with other countries where there is a Basque presence.

Diaspora Basques make up an atlas of identity populating multiple geographical locations in which they construct different discourses, speak different languages and dialects, experience different degrees of assimilation into their host societies, and maintain varying degrees of connection among themselves and with the homeland. They constitute a world-spanning web of attachments and allegiances, combining and sharing an identity from a particular place and culture of a particular

2 Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Uruguay, and Venezuela. See Pedro J. Oiarzabal, "The Basque Diaspora Webscape: Online Discourses of Basque Diaspora Identity, Nationhood, and Homeland" (PhD Dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, 2006).

time and generation. That is, diaspora is an evolving concept subject to time and space that represents a shifting historical reality. In sum, the Basque diaspora is a community not of place but of identity. Place of origin, however, becomes central to the identity discourse produced by the diaspora. Homeland is defined by Terhune as “the place of fond memories.” Indeed, the Basque Country, Euskal Herria, is the symbolic and central reference for diaspora Basques.<sup>3</sup>

The historical territories of the Basque homeland are currently divided into three main political administrative areas with a total combined population of nearly three million people, and about the size of the State of New Jersey. The Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) or Euskadi, comprised by the provinces of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, and the Foral Community of Navarre (Nafarroa in Basque) are part of the Spanish state, and both the BAC and Nafarroa constitute the southern or peninsular Basque Country or Hegoalde. The three Basque provinces of Lapurdi, Nafarroa Beherea and Zuberoa are part of the French State and constitute the northern or continental Basque Country or Iparralde. The population of the Basque diaspora is nearly impossible to determine as this depends on the operational definition of ‘being Basque’ as well as a complete database. Nevertheless, the BAC’s government (hereafter Basque government) estimates that the diaspora population consists of 4.5 million people.<sup>4</sup>

The intrinsic nature of any diaspora is defined by physical or geographical dispersion as well as psychological separateness from the homeland, which creates, to some degree, longing and nostalgia. Hoffman explained the reasons for homeland-diaspora estrangement or disjuncture in the following terms: “Loss is a magical preservative. Time stops at the point of severance, and no subsequent impressions muddy the water you have in mind. The house, the garden, the country you have lost remain forever as you remember them. Nostalgia—that most lyrical of feelings—crystallizes around these images like amber.”<sup>5</sup> In a sense, identity abroad endures because of individual and collective nostalgia, as part of a strategy for maintaining identity. At the same time, the diaspora aggregates its particular experiences of migration, resettlement and dual or multiple allegiances, to its prior homeland identity that consequently results in an identity that differs from the one promoted in the homeland. In other words, Basque diaspora institutions are recreating their own sense of identity—multi-faceted, deterritorialized and diasporic—where nostalgia and idealization cannot be seen as detriments, but rather as intrinsic and, to some degree, necessary strategic markers in their survival.<sup>6</sup>

3 K. W. Terhune, “Nationalism among Foreign and American Students: An Exploratory Study,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 8 (1964): 258.

4 Gobierno Vasco, *Euskaldunak Munduan, Building the Future* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Editorial de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 1996), 47.

5 Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language* (London: Minerva, 1991), 115.

6 See also Chapter Two for further arguments on Basque identity.

According to Grinberg and Grinberg, “Migration requires a person to recreate the basic things he thought were already settled; he must recreate another work environment, establish affective relations with other people, reform a circle of friends, set up a new house that will not be an overnight tent but a home, and so on. These activities demand great physical effort, sacrifice, and acceptance of many changes in a short time. But to able to carry them out gives one a sense of inner strength, an ability to dream, a capacity to build, a capacity for love.”<sup>7</sup> The recreation of a new home in the adopted country by the immigrant generation and the evolution of its meaning are particularly well reflected in the literary production of Basque-American writers.

In 1957, Basque American Robert Laxalt published *Sweet Promised Land*, which portrayed, through a Basque lens, a paradigmatic story of the life of immigrant Dominique Laxalt, the authors’ father, in the United States. It is significant that the first line of the book referred not only to Dominique’s occupation but to his new “home:” “My father was a shepherd, and his home was the hills.”<sup>8</sup> In words of Douglass, Laxalt became Basque America’s “own literary spokesman,” and even more, he became a cultural broker between the Basques and the larger society and between the immigrant generation and their descendants.<sup>9</sup> One generation later and nearly half a century apart, Gregory Martin’s *Mountain City* presented an autobiographical portrait of his family and Basque heritage in a small community of Nevada, while Martin Etchart explored his own heritage by rediscovering Basque culture in *The Good Oak*.<sup>10</sup>

In *Mountain City*, Martin reflected on his childhood, youth, the people he most loved—the old Bascos [Basques]—Mountain City itself, and the western culture, which all are nearly gone but in his memories. The author recounted the old times and the old-timers, colorful characters, who are trying to make sense of a world that is fading away: “To me, home is the place I can’t keep from disappearing,” Martin asserted with sadness and resignation.<sup>11</sup> Without much doubt, both authors, Martin and Etchart attempted to make sense of a world made up by their parents’ and grandparents’ homeland and the American society into which they had been born.

This brief journey through the literary landscape of Basque America reflects perfectly the evolution of the Basque community in the American West. They are narratives of migration and settlement (e.g., Laxalt) where the shepherd

7 Leon Grinberg and Rebecca Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 176.

8 See also David Río, *Robert Laxalt: The Voice of the Basques in American Literature* (Reno, Nevada: Center for Basque Studies, 2007).

9 In Robert Laxalt, *Sweet Promised Land*, Fortieth Anniversary Edition. (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1997), xiii.

10 Martin Gregory, *Mountain City* (New York: North Point Press, 2000), Martin Etchart, *The Good Oak* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2005).

11 Gregory, *Mountain City*, 191.

figure—“lonely sentinels” of the desert and hills of the American West—is central to understanding the modern origins of the Basque community in the U.S. as well as narratives of self-discovery and education.<sup>12</sup> Basque Americans are eager to understand their ancestry and learn about their cultural traditions clearly portrayed as endangered (e.g., Martin and Etchart). The timeframe in which the action of these novels develops roughly coincides with the development of the Basque community in the Bay Area of San Francisco that we will examine—from the involvement of many of its members in the sheep and cattle industries to their later resettlement in cities and suburbs of the Bay Area to the boom of its socio-cultural and recreational institutions.

## RATIONAL FOR THE STUDY

For nearly a century, Basque immigration into the U.S. has attracted the attention of numerous scholars from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology, geography, history and sociology.<sup>13</sup> These studies have for the most part focused on the causes of Basque migration as well as their adaptation to the American society and their specific role in the sheep industry and rural economy. However, a few studies have analyzed settlement of Basques in urban settings as a “new” phenomenon in comparison to those that have explored their settlement in rural areas.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the Bay Area, Decroos’ pioneer sociological work on the Basque community of San Francisco was the basis for his PhD dissertation that was later

12 William A. Douglass, “Lonely Lives under the Big Sky,” *National History* 82, no. 3 (1973), Robert Laxalt, “Basque Shepherders: Lonely Sentinels of the American West,” *The National Geographic Magazine* 1966.

13 Frank Patrick Araujo, “Basque Cultural Ecology and Echinococcosis in California” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Davis 1974), Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, “A Statistical Study of Basque Immigration into California, Nevada, Idaho and Wyoming between 1900 and 1910” (M.A. Thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1986), Christiane Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960” (TER, Université de Pau et des Pays de L’Adour, 1976), Joseph Roy Castelli, “Basques in the American West: A Functional Approach to Determination of Cultural Presence in the Geographic Landscape” (PhD Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970), William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1975), John B. Edelfson, “A Sociological Study of the Basques of Southwest Idaho” (PhD dissertation, Washington State College, Pullman 1948), Adrian Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans l’ouest Américain* (Bordeaux: Editions Eskila, 1955), Joseph H. Gaiser, “The Basques of Jordan Valley Area: A Study in Social Process and Social Change” (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1944), James P. Kelly, *The Settlement of Basques in the American West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1967), Richard Lane, “Cultural Ecology of Sheep Nomadism: Northeastern Nevada, 1870-1972” (PhD Dissertation, Yale University 1974), Pierre Lhande, *L’émigration Basque; Histoire, Économie, Psychologie* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1910), Grant McCall, *Basque-Americans and a Sequential Theory of Migration and Adaptation* (San Francisco, California: R and E Research Associates, 1973), Flavia Maria McCullough, *The Basques in the Northwest* (Saratoga, California: R and E Research Associates, 1974), Sol Silen, *La Historia de los Vascongados en el Oeste de los Estados Unidos* (New York: Las Novedades, 1917), Richard Uriquidi, “History of the Mountain Home Basques” (M.A. Thesis, Boise State University, 1980).

14 For example, San Francisco, Jean Francis Decroos, “The Long Journey: Assimilation and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in Northern California” (PhD Dissertation, University of Oregon 1979), Salt Lake City, Louise Brown Dunn, “Salt Lake City Basque Community: Atypical in the American West” (M.A. Thesis, University of Utah 1972), Los Angeles, Sonia Jacqueline Eagle, “Work and Play among the Basques of Southern California” (PhD Dissertation, Purdue University 1979), Stockton, Carol Pagliarulo, “Basques in Stockton” (M.A. Thesis, 1948), Bakersfield, Mary Grace Paquette, *Basques to Bakersfield* (Bakersfield, California: Kern County Historical Society, 1982), Boise, John Bieter and Mark Bieter, *An Enduring Legacy: The Story of Basques in Boise* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2000).

published by the Basque Studies Program (today's Center for Basque Studies) at the University of Nevada, Reno after his sudden death. This study provided the first academic look at the San Francisco Basque community between the late 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s prior the establishment of its flagship project, the Basque Cultural Center, in 1982. It explored the degree of assimilation or participation of San Francisco Basques in the social structure of American society.

In addition, San Francisco Basques have been keen to record their own history through the study of their institutions while paying tribute to the old Basque shepherders: "Brave, young men who left their homeland and weathered the solitary life of a shepherd, not only making an enormous impact on the shepherding industry, but also becoming productive members of the American society."<sup>15</sup> The work carried out by San Francisco Basque institutions and individuals—particularly by the immigrant generation and the immigrants' children—in order to preserve their intra-history through a community-based approach is unparalleled in the American West. The present book is also an initiative promoted and developed by Bay Area Basque associations and individuals representing different generations.<sup>16</sup>

This self-exploration of Bay Area Basque intra-history clearly contradicts authors such as Hansen who argued, "What the son [of the immigrant] wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember [...] It may be said that the second generation [parent immigrated] is not interested in and does not write any history. That is just another aspect of their policy of forgetting."<sup>17</sup> That is, in Decroos' words, the third generation [grandparent immigrated] of San Francisco Basques "develops an irresistible urge to search the past and identify itself with a common heritage."<sup>18</sup> However, as we will see in the following chapters, the second generation of Basques throughout the Bay Area sustains the cultural, educational and folkloric activities of their institutions to a certain extent. As of 2007, the second generation made up nearly 40% of the entire membership of current Basque associations in the Bay Area—Anaitasuna

15 Castanchoa and Iriartborde, eds., *The Basque Shepherders in the West: A Souvenir of the Times*, 2. See Philippe Acheritogaray, Valerie Arrechea, and Jean Luc Chiramberro, eds., *Oroitzapenak: A Forty Year Retrospective of the San Francisco Club* (San Francisco: San Francisco Basque Club, 2000), Florence Castanchoa, *Gure Euskal Etxea: The House the Basques Built, the First Ten Years 1982-1992* (Albany, California: Minuteman Press, 1992), Florence Castanchoa and Aña Iriartborde, eds., *The Basque Shepherders in the West: A Souvenir of the Times* (San Francisco: Basque Educational Organization, 2000), Frederic Fuldain, "Zazpiak Bat Dance Group," (1989), —, "Zazpiak Bat Klika," (1989), —, "History of the Klika," (1989), —, "San Francisco Bay Area 'Pelota' History as We Know It," (1989), Nadine Goyhenetche, *Gure Euskal Etxearen Horoigarren Urteburua: Azken Hamar Urteak-Basque Cultural Center's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: The Second Ten Years* (South San Francisco: Basque Cultural Center, 2002), and Jean Paul and Elizabeth Barthe's irreplaceable video-documentary productions.

16 See Methodological Notes.

17 Marcus Lee Hansen, "The Third Generation," in *Children of the Uprooted*, ed. Oscar Handlin (New York: G. Braziller, 1966), 260-61.

18 Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983), 59, Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Problem of the Third-Generation Immigrant* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1937), —, *The Immigrant in American History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1940).



Basque Club, Basque Club of California, San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, and Marin-Sonoma Basque Association—while the third generation only accounted for around 4%. The San Francisco case indicates that the role played by Basque associations and individuals in preserving their historical memory is not so much an act of remembering but rather an act of not forgetting. The “irresistible urge” Decroos spoke of has not yet taken place in the Bay Area Basque communities, but if it were to, it could potentially contribute to maintaining and even promoting Basque identity and culture in the future. Consequently, the active membership and participation of the immigrants’ grandchildren in these socio-cultural institutions has to be guaranteed in order to unleash their potentiality for the benefit of their own communities and their sustainability in the near future.

In sum, the book builds upon previous works on San Francisco Bay Area Basques and examines the ways that these Basque communities have evolved and established associations to maintain and preserve their heritage and how they have influenced the larger Californian society. Basque presence on the west coast dates back to Hispanic Empire rule of many of today’s western and southern states and to the early days of the establishment of the State of California.<sup>19</sup> However, Basque history has been masked beneath French and Spanish official histories, and Basques have become invisible witnesses of their own past.<sup>20</sup> Today, acclaimed American historians still refer to the significant contributions of the French and Spanish to the history of California, failing to explicitly mention even once the Basques (or for that matter any other Iberian minority group, such as Catalonians or Majorcans) who were subsumed under these labels, an all-too-common practice that historian Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe defined as a “curse.”<sup>21</sup> Under the rubric of Spaniards, Basques played a prominent role in the exploration of the Californian Coast —e.g., Monterey and San Francisco Bays—the establishment and administration of missions and forts—e.g., Mission Dolores and Presidio Real in San Francisco in 1776—and local governments under both the Hispanic and Mexican administrations.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS WORK

In Chapter One, I will provide a brief summary of the history of the Basques in the United States—from the Hispanic colonial times to the present—and the reasons for migration, and establish the historical context of the present Basque

19 I use the term “Hispanic” instead of Spanish as Spain did not constitute an independent political state until the nineteenth century. It would be an anachronism to speak of a Spanish Empire before that century. In addition, despite the popular usage of the term “Empire” to define the extensive territorial possessions of “Spain,” I interchangeably use the term “Monarchy” as there have never been emperors, but rather kings and queens.

20 See Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, Richard Etulain, “Basques of the American West: Some Problems for the Historian” (paper presented at the Idaho History Conference, Boise, Idaho, March 9, 1974).

21 In Pedro J. Oiarzabal, ed. *A Candle in the Night: Basque Studies at the University of Nevada (1967-2007)* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 2007), 296.

community in San Francisco. It will also recount the main occupational history of Basques of the San Francisco Bay Area Basque community—from gold mining and shepherding to gardening.

In Chapter Two, I will summarize the main findings of a survey on San Francisco Bay Area Basque association membership in order to examine its principal characteristics in relation to other Californian, national and worldwide institutions. I will also address the questions: who are the members of Bay Area Basque associations? Where do they come from? How do they conceive of the term “Basque” in relation to other identities, such as the French, Spanish or American?

Furthermore, in Chapter Three, I will study the San Francisco *ostatuak* or boardinghouses as core institutions of Basque America from the late nineteenth century to the 1970s as well as Basque bakeries and French laundries where many Basques found their first jobs upon arrival in this country. The Chapter will also highlight the leading role of Basque women in many of the private enterprises established in the city.

In Chapter Four, I will analyze the role played by Bay Area Basques in the establishment of North American Basque Organizations and the United States Pelota Federation. I will also address the community-based associationism of Basques in the Bay Area with particular attention to the Basque Club of California.

In Chapter Five, I will explore the origins of the Basque Cultural Center, the Basque Educational Organization, Anaitasuna Basque Club, and Marin-Sonoma Basque Association. In Chapter Six, I will describe the Basque cultural, political and religious activities carried out by individuals and institutions while commenting on the future of Basque identity and culture in the Bay Area. Finally, disseminated throughout the book, there are portraits of Basque individuals who have been selected for their years of generous service to the San Francisco Bay Area Basque communities and unselfish dedication to the promotion of Basque language, folklore, games, sports, and culture in general.



# From the to the Paci

(01)

# Pyrenees fic Ocean

Who was Juan de Oñate?—Spaniard? Hispanic? Basque? Gipuzkoan? Andalusian? Castilian? Jew? He was all of the above and much more. Who he was likely to be, i.e. which of his identities was in play at any given moment, must be contextualized in time and space [...] Framed in such fashion, Juan de Oñate’s playing fields and personal strategies are but a microcosm and metaphor of other individual and collective displays, invocations, and appropriations of “Basqueness” for particular purposes, at particular times, in particular places, by particular persons and groups.

(Douglass, William A., “In Search of Juan De Oñate: Confessions of a Cryptoessentialist.” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 56, no. 2 (2000): 154.)

## INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter I will briefly summarize the history of Basque immigration into America since the 1500s until the present time. Then, I will highlight the role that the Basques have played in the history of California since colonial times, without disregarding the indispensable contributions of other groups (e.g., Spaniards, Catalonians, Majorcans, French, English or Russians) to the exploration and/or colonization of California.

Attempting to assess who a Basque was centuries ago and what such an identity meant for that person is tricky enterprise. Douglass' quote summarizes quite perfectly any argument that I could put forward in order to substantiate my interpretation of California history from a Basque perspective. Every single meaning assigned to the conceptualization of Basqueness is a historical construct tailored to its spatial and temporal context. In other words, identities, such as Basque, were understood not as exclusive, but rather as interchangeable and overlapping in a world of opportunities. It is not until the end of the nineteenth century (particularly after 1898 in the Spanish case) that we first become aware of antagonistic clear-cut Spanish/French identities versus Basque identities as we are confronted with early attempts of political and cultural reductionism of local identities.

## BASQUE IMMIGRATION INTO AMERICA

Historically, Basques have emigrated in search of work, trade, and colonial pursuits as a result of the expansion of the Hispanic Monarchy and the discovery of an entire new continent.<sup>22</sup> From the fifteenth century to the eighteenth century the main destinations for Basques were Mexico, the Central America region—today's Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua—Peru, the Philippines, and Venezuela. Since access to administrative and honorific posts was reserved for persons who could demonstrate “Old-Christian” genealogical credentials, the claim of universal collective nobility and “clean blood” made by the inhabitants of the Basque provinces (never conquered by Muslims and therefore “uncontaminated”), secured their access to high administrative, military, religious, and commercial positions throughout the Hispanic offshore domains. Consequently, Basques and their descendents, the *criollos* or Creoles, developed a tight network of families that preserved their socio-economic and political status in both the colonial and post-colonial eras.

Despite being geographically dispersed, Basques tended to actively promote and manage collective actions as a way to enhance their privileged status conferred through cultural, ethnic, family, and kinship lines, as well as to increase and maintain their ethnic consciousness and solidarity among themselves. That is, Basque historical associationism and collective action brought about bonds of solidarity among members of diverse communities. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Basques established several mutual-aid societies; confraternities; voluntary

<sup>22</sup> Basque presence in the Americas is related not only to the Hispanic Monarchy but also to the French and Portuguese Empires, as well as the development, particularly, of the French State during the modern era. The French Empire expanded to the New World (e.g., Louisiana, the Caribbean area and Canada), while Portugal focused primarily on Brazil. In 1822, Brazil peacefully obtained its independence from Portugal. In 1885, a Basque association called Euskaldunak Orok Bat (All Basques as One) was established in Rio de Janeiro. Due to self-imposed constraints, I focus mainly on the Basque diasporic and transnational experiences and practices related to the Hispanic World and the Spanish State.

religious, cultural and ethnic solidarity organizations throughout the Hispanic territories, soliciting benefactors and creating business networks on both sides of the Atlantic. For example, the Confraternity of Our Lady or Aranzazu (Mexico City, 1681-1860) was one of the most influential organizations ever established by Basques in America. The purpose of this fraternity was twofold: to spread Christianity and to assist Basque immigrants by providing low-interest-rate loans. In 1728 the Royal Gipuzkoan Company of Caracas was founded and controlled by homeland Basques who established business networks with their counterparts living in Venezuela. It became a true ethnic trade monopoly within the late Hispanic Monarchy. In 1767, the Confraternity of Our Lady of Aranzazu established the College of Saint Ignatius in Mexico City as an innovative initiative to educate women in New Spain, and it remains open to this day. Originally, it was free of Catholic Church control. From the eighteenth century onwards, the main Basque destinations shifted to Argentina, Uruguay and Chile.

By 1825, all of the American colonies had achieved political independence. Spanish control was reduced to the Antilles and the Philippines. In the 1830s, Basque immigration continued into the Río de la Plata (today's Argentina and Uruguay) as that region was still under-populated. After the 1850s, the newly independent countries of Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile created positive discrimination immigration policies that specifically requested Basques, among other European groups, as new settlers and manual laborers in a civilizing enterprise based on racial purity (whiteness) and Catholicism. For example, Argentinean *enganchadores* or recruitment agents traveled to the Basque Country to target mainly rural Basques as potential immigrants. In addition, between the end of the 1840s and the mid-1850s, the Spanish and French governments passed favorable laws that encouraged emigration. It is roughly estimated that nearly 200,000 Basques immigrated *legally* into the New World from the 1830s to the early 1900s.<sup>23</sup> Douglass and Bilbao commented that “there was no discontinuity in the awareness of a former migratory tradition.”<sup>24</sup> Emigration had been etched into the collective memory of families and villages over the last four hundred years.

Waves of Basque post-colonial migration established new transnational organizations and networks. The first modern Basque diaspora organizations were created in Uruguay and Argentina in 1876 as a response to the abolition of the homeland *fueros* or provincial consuetudinary law system. The Laurac Bat<sup>25</sup> (Four as One) was established in 1876 in Montevideo, and then a year later, La Sociedad Vasco-Española Laurac Bat (The Basque-Spanish Society Four as One)—later on known as Laurak Bat—was established in Buenos Aires as a pro-fueros “political organization”

23 The lack of a database on those who returned to Europe or migrated to secondary destinations makes those estimates extremely unreliable.

24 Quoted in William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1975), 270.

25 The Laurak Bat motto promoted the unification of the four Basque provinces of Spain into one unit.



celebrating annual protests against their abolition.<sup>26</sup> Both organizations aimed at promoting Basque culture and assisting only Basque-Spanish immigrants. In 1895, the Centre Basque-Français (Basque-French Center) and the Centro Navarro (Navarrese Center), both in Buenos Aires, were also established to attend to the needs of their respective fellow “compatriots” — Basques from the French provinces and Nafarroa.

The establishment of the Buenos Aires Asociación Cultural y de Beneficencia Euskal Echea (Cultural and Beneficence Association Basque Home, 1901/1916) was the first successful diaspora project to integrate all Basques—previously divided into the three aforementioned provincial associations—from both sides of the Pyrenees, into one common cultural project, by softening their regional rivalries and particularities from back home.<sup>27</sup> According to Douglass and Bilbao between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, “in each

<sup>26</sup> William A. Douglass, “Creating the New Basque Diaspora,” in *Basque Politics and Nationalism on the Eve of the Millennium*, ed. William A. Douglass, et al. (Reno, Nevada: Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1999).

<sup>27</sup> The Asociación Cultural y de Beneficencia Euskal Echea served as an asylum for Basque indigent elderly people and orphans. It is still open as an educational institution, and the Basque language is currently taught there. Other early welfare associations, mutual-aid groups, and socio-cultural organizations were established in Manila, the Philippines (1877), Havana, Cuba (1878), Bahía Blanca, Argentina (1899), Mexico City, Mexico (1907), and Boise, Idaho (1908). This was the Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos (The Society of Mutual Aid).





***Group of Basque immigrants posing in front of a railroad car of the Southern Pacific Company, c. 1940s.***

The route of this railroad extended from Chicago to the West Coast (from Portland to San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego). The Southern Pacific's Overland Route linked San Francisco with Odgen, via Reno and Winnemucca. Photograph courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

[Latin American] country the Basques maintained their ethnic group self-awareness, which converted into formal organizations as they made concerted efforts to maintain Basque cultural traditions [...] The maintenance of ties with the Basque Country is reflected clearly in some of the activities of the Basque organizations in Latin America.”<sup>28</sup>

In 1848 gold was discovered in California, and hundreds of thousands of people moved into the region. From the 1850s onwards, the United States became the new fashionable destination for emigrants. Basques made their way to California first from Latin America and Mexico, while subsequent waves moved from east to west after the completion of the transcontinental railway system in 1869. European immigrants such as the Basques arrived at New York, where they took the transcontinental train to Odgen, Utah, and from there to other destinations in the American West. New Basque immigrants joined other well-established Basque families who had populated California since the colonial era.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 170.

<sup>29</sup> Craig Campbell, “The Basque-American Ethnic Area: Geographical Perspectives on Migration, Population and Settlement,” *Journal of Basque Studies in America* 6 (1985).

As we will see, by the 1960s, Basque immigration into the United States had waned as a result of the establishment of anti-immigration policies and the overall decline of the sheepherding industry.<sup>30</sup>

## Reasons for Emigration

The links developed between Europe and America provided information and means of travel for potential emigrants. Information networks and exchange of knowledge between homeland and host societies accomplished over centuries have traditionally helped Basques to settle in particular areas. As any other emigrant group, the Basques also had a set of choices and preferences for migrating in relation to their past experiences and future opportunities. Therefore among the many opportunities that they did encounter, their decisions were made according to a “known” factor that could ease their difficulties of adapting to a new environment. Subsequent Basque migrations benefited from the important positive social status of the Basques as a collectivity and the existence of an institutional network that supported the newly arrived immigrants to help ease them into the new ways of the host societies.

Basque emigrants were more likely to immigrate into areas populated by family members, relatives, friends, and acquaintances from their hometowns and nearby locations in the homeland, which in turn stimulated a so-called chain migration. Bi-directional networks—from individual to individual, from village to village—triggered chain migration between two worlds that lasted over five hundred years. For example, Pescador’s research illustrated multi-directional long distance interactions and the set of connections created between the New World and the Basque-speaking community of the Oiartzun Valley (Gipuzkoa) for fifteen consecutive generations between 1550 and 1800.<sup>31</sup> America became idealized as *El Dorado* in the imagination of homeland Basques as it was portrayed as the place to become rich quickly. The Basque “adventurer,” the *indiano* figure, was replaced later by the images of the *Amerikanuak* (Basque Americans) as the pragmatic and realistic new emigrants or sojourners who just wanted to save enough money to return home wealthy after a few years.

30 José Manuel Azcona Pastor, *Possible Paradises: Basque Emigration to Latin America* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2004), Jon Bilbao, ed. *América y los Vascos* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 1992), William A. Douglass, “Factors in the Formation of the New World, Basque Emigrant Diaspora,” in *Essays in Basque Social Anthropology*, ed. William A. Douglass (Reno, Nevada: Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1989), Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, Ronald Escobedo Mansilla, Ana de Zaballa Beascochea, and Óscar Álvarez Gila, eds., *Emigración y Redes Sociales de los Vascos de América* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 1996), Louis Etcheverry, “Les Basques et leur Émigration en Amérique,” *Société d’Économie Sociale* (1886), Marcelino Iriani Zalakain, “Hacer América.” *Los Vascos en la Pampa Húmeda, Argentina (1840-1920)* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 2000), Pierre Lhande, *L’émigration Basque; Histoire, Économie, Psychologie* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1910).

31 Juan Javier Pescador, *The New World Inside a Basque Village: The Oiartzun Valley and Its Atlantic Emigrants 1550-1800* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2004).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Basque land was plagued not only by extreme socio-economic mishaps, but also by overwhelming political instability in the form of revolutions and wars, which pushed many Basques to emigrate in order to improve their quality of life or simply to save their lives. In general terms, the traditional family-primogeniture system of inheritance forced non-heirs to emigrate in search of a better future. The dismantlement of the same kind of rural legal structure in the northern part of the Basque region after the French Revolution obliged non-heirs to leave the household in order to avoid breaking up the inheritance. Also, the finite agricultural economy based on small socio-economic family units of production was a powerful factor in Basque emigration. In other words, the *baserri* or farmstead was based on a traditional economy of subsistence that was not able to provide for all members of a household. In addition, rural overpopulation and drastic crop failure provoked serious episodes of hunger (e.g., 1846-1847 and 1904-1906). According to Arrizabalaga, the largest Basque emigration occurred in 1907 following a period of extreme hunger.<sup>32</sup>

Simultaneously a tumultuous chain of political and military events, the French Revolution (1789); the Napoleonic military campaigns on the Basque territories of Spain (1808-1809); followed by civil wars (1833-1839 and 1872-1876) between liberals and traditionalists (called Carlists because their candidate to the Spanish throne was Carlos/Charles of Bourbon), shook the Basque territories. The liberal victory put an end to the *fueros* of the Basque provinces in Spain, and therefore traditional privileges such as exclusion from mandatory military service were abolished. According to Douglass and Bilbao, since the introduction of compulsory military service in France and Spain was established, the highest percentage of military evaders was found in the Basque Country.<sup>33</sup>

Jean Baptiste Urruty, born in 1938 in Armendaritze (Nafarroa Beherea), came to the U.S. in 1960 after serving in the French army. He is the eighth of eleven brothers and sisters. His father also had eleven siblings, and now his sister has nine children, so in a span of approximately three generations, thirty-one children were raised in the same household. Jean Baptiste's father came to the U.S. and stayed in Nevada for fourteen years. Urruty remembers, "Since I was a kid I always heard about America from my father [...] I was curious about what was going on in America, always wanted to come to see it [...] He was here before World War I because he didn't want to go to war. He went back home a few years later, and they took him to jail for two years because he refused to fight in the war, him and most of his friends."<sup>34</sup>

32 Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, "A Statistical Study of Basque Immigration into California, Nevada, Idaho and Wyoming between 1900 and 1910" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1986).

33 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 359.

34 Jean Baptiste Urruty, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2001.

The twentieth century was no kinder to the Basques than the previous eras were. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the two World Wars (1914-1919 and 1939-1945) forced thousands of Basques into exile. For example, as a result of the Spanish Civil War and subsequent Francoist repression during the 1940s and 1950s, over 100,000 Basques went into exile. Over 30,000 children were sent to France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Mexico and the former Soviet Union for their protection after the aerial destructions of the towns of Durango and Gernika in 1937. This Basque exile was the last massive wave of Basque emigration in the twentieth century. In addition, as a result of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962) an undetermined number of young Basques from rural areas throughout the northern Basque Country chose to emigrate to the U.S.<sup>35</sup>

## BASQUE IMMIGRATION INTO CALIFORNIA

### Hispanic California

Under the Hispanic Monarchy, the Viceroyalty of Nueva España (New Spain) was established in 1535 and collapsed with the independence of Mexico in 1821. New Spain's capital was Mexico City, and its territorial domains included Caribbean and Asian possessions as well as North and Central American territories—today's states of California, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, northern Arizona, southwestern Wyoming, Texas, Utah, and western Colorado.<sup>36</sup> New Spain was the most important Hispanic colony along with the Viceroyalty of Peru (1542-1824), which expanded throughout South America.

The role that Basques and their descendants had traditionally played in New Spain regained importance with the founding of Nueva Vizcaya (or New Bizkaia, which referred to today's Mexican states of Chihuahua and Durango) and Nuevo Mexico (New Mexico) in the sixteenth century by Francisco Ibarra, a native of Durango, Bizkaia, and by Basque Creole, Juan de Oñate, respectively. These provinces became two of the most influential regions of New Spain. In addition, among other powerful Basque creoles we find Juan de Ugalde who was Governor of Cohauila (1777-1783) and became the General Commandant of the so-called internal eastern provinces of New Spain (i.e., Cohauila, Nuevo León, Nuevo Santander and Texas) between 1788 and 1791; while Jacobo Ugarte y Loyola became

35 Auguste Indart, interview by Elizabeth Barthe, South San Francisco, California, November 17, 2006. See also Azcona Pastor, *Possible Paradieses: Basque Emigration to Latin America*, Bilbao, ed. *América y los Vascos*, Douglass, "Factors in the Formation of the New World, Basque Emigrant Diaspora," Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, Iriani Zalakain, "Hacer América." *Los Vascos en la Pampa Húmeda, Argentina (1840-1920)*, Pedro J. Oiarzabal and Fernando Molina, "Basque Atlantic Shores: Ethnicity, Nation-State, and Diaspora between Europe and America (1808-1898)," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* (2008).

36 Florida was acquired by the U.S. in 1819 under the Treaty of Adams-Onís.

the General Commandant of all internal provinces between 1786 and 1788 and the western provinces (i.e., Sonora, Nueva Vizcaya and Nuevo Mexico) between 1788 and 1790.<sup>37</sup>

The earliest exploration of California as part of the Pacific Northwest expedition dates back to the sixteenth century and lasted for over two hundred years. Among some of the most noteworthy Basque explorers of the Californian coast are Sebastián Vizcaíno who surveyed Monterey Bay (1596-1602), Juan Bautista de Anza who explored the San Francisco Bay (1774-1776; see below), and Juan Francisco de la Bodega y Quadra who explored the Pacific Northwest (1775, 1779). It is not until the late seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century that the Hispanic authorities actively attempted to colonize the Californian territory and evangelize its population by combining Roman Catholic *misiones* or missions, military *presidios* or forts, and *pueblos* or small villages. Between 1683 and 1768, the Jesuit Order was in charge of this spiritual colonization until they were expelled from New Spain by order of King Charles III of Spain. During their tenure the Jesuits established a chain of eighteen missions and two chapels. According to Douglass and Bilbao, ten out of sixty-two Jesuits who serviced the missions were of Basque origin. For example, Basque priest Father Juan María de Salvatierra established the first permanent California mission at today's city of Loreto.<sup>38</sup>

After the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Franciscans took over their missions, and in 1804 California was divided between Alta (Upper or New) and Baja (Lower or Old) California, falling under the administration of the Franciscan and Dominican orders, respectively.<sup>39</sup> The Dominicans established eleven missions between 1774 and 1834, while the Franciscans established twenty-one missions and four presidios between 1769 and 1823, and were responsible of the first settlement in Alta California, San Diego. The colonization of Alta California was mainly carried out by Catalanian and Majorcan Franciscan missionaries with the assistance of Basque friars such as Gregorio Amurrio who headed the mission of San Diego; Fermín Francisco Lasuén who managed the San Gabriel mission; and Juan Prestamero who was in charge of the mission of San Luis Obispo.<sup>40</sup>

In 1774 Basque Creole Juan Bautista de Anza began exploration of the San Francisco Bay and located the sites for the San Francisco de Asís Mission, also called La Misión Dolorosa (Mission Dolores) and the San Francisco Presidio near the end of the peninsula. Anza's second in command, José Joaquín Moraga, and Father Francisco Palóu founded the mission in June of 1776 and royal presidio in December

37 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*.

38 *Ibid.*, 179.

39 Alta California's territories included today's U.S. territories of California, Nevada, northern Arizona, south-western Wyoming, Utah, and western Colorado. Alta California would be annexed by the U.S. in 1848, and Baja California (or Baja California Norte as it would become known later) would eventually become part of Mexico.

40 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 186.

of the same year. The latter was fortified by Basque descendant José Garaicoechea. Garate strongly argued that Anza should be considered the founding-father of San Francisco as he led the entire exploration of the area.<sup>41</sup> The mission was established under the presidency of Father Junípero Serra, responsible for all Catholic missions of California at the time. Serra was replaced by Father Fermín Francisco Lasuén, born in Vitoria, Araba in 1736, becoming the second President of the missions from 1785 to his death in 1803. Father Lasuén helped to establish nine missions. Mission Dolores was secularized in 1834, and the presidio was abandoned in 1836.

There were also Basques of European or Mexican origins among the governors of Hispanic California. For instance, José Joaquín de Arrillaga from Aia, Gipuzkoa was Acting Governor of California between 1792 and 1794. He later served as Governor of Alta California between 1800 and 1814. Diego de Borica y Retegui from Vitoria, Araba was Governor of California between 1794 and 1800, and Pablo Vicente Solá from Mondragon, Gipuzkoa, was the last Governor of Alta California under the rule of the Hispanic Monarchy between 1815 and 1822. Mexican-born Felipe Antonio de Goycoechea was the last Governor of Baja California. He served between 1805 and 1814.

## Mexican California

At the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the Hispanic colonies and territories throughout America began to obtain independence from Spain. The three-hundred year-old Hispanic World, one of the largest Western Empires on earth with 18,000 transoceanic territories spread throughout four continents began to fall apart rapidly. In 1810, Mexico declared independence from Spain, and eleven years later achieved its objective, thereby ending Spanish rule in Alta California. Mexico retained the territories of Alta California, Nuevo Mexico and Texas. The Franciscan Order lost control of the missions, and their lands were confiscated and secularized after 1833.

Following a Spanish tradition initiated in 1774, the Mexican government encouraged settlement, particularly alongside the southern California coast, by providing large land grants that resulted in *ranchos* dedicated to raising cattle and sheep operated by *Californios* or Spanish-speaking Californians. The allocation of land grants continued under Californian home-rule until the 1850s. During this period there were two Basque governors of Mexican Alta California: José María de Echeandia (1825-1833) and Manuel Micheltorena (1842-1845). One hundred and sixty-two years later, another Basque would again hold a seat in the Governor's Office, this time

<sup>41</sup> Donald T. Garate, *Juan Bautista de Anza: Basque Explorer in the New World* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2003).



*On February, 18 2007 John Garamendi, Lieutenant Governor of California, presented a commemorative plaque to Xabier Berrueta (center) and Isabelle Bushman (left), President and Vice-president of the Basque Cultural Center respectively, for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the South San Francisco Basque organization. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



under the rule of the United States of America. In 2007, John Garamendi, a grandchild of immigrant Basques from the province of Bizkaia, became the 46<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant Governor of the State of California.

## United States California<sup>42</sup>

Mexico struggled to administer California after achieving independence. Mexican governors sent to this territory encountered local resistance, particularly in the north, which was dominated by a non-Hispanic population. In addition, the non-Hispanic population began to grow as the first organized groups of settlers traveled across the Sierras into California beginning in 1841. The last Mexican Governor, the Basque Manuel Micheltorena was unofficially substituted by a rancher known as Pío Pico, marking the timid beginning of political autonomy in California. In 1846 Mexico and the United States entered into war as a result of the U.S. annexing Texas (which

<sup>42</sup> Much of the historical description of the involvement of the Basques in California and elsewhere in the American West presented here relies to certain extent on seminal works such as those of Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*.

had seceded from Mexico ten years earlier) in 1845. The war ended in the Cahuenga Capitulation of January 1847.

Some exemplar Basque immigrant success stories unfolded during this time period, such as those of José Antonio Aguirre from San Sebastián, Gipuzkoa; Miguel de Pedrorena from Madrid (of Navarrese origins); and Cesareo Lataillade from Donibane Lohizune, Lapurdi. Aguirre and Pedrorena, both maritime merchants, settled in California in the late 1830s and mid-1840s, respectively, and both married into prominent Californian families, becoming major landowners in today's city of San Diego. Lataillade first immigrated into Mexico and then into California, settling finally in Santa Barbara. He also married into an influential Old Californian family, the Guerras. He became the Vice-consul of Spain in 1846 and the Consul of France in 1849, which gives us an idea of the increasing number of Spanish and French immigrants into the area.<sup>43</sup>

In January 1848, gold was discovered along the American River and other tributaries of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers at the foothills of Sierra Nevada. In the ensuing months, gold seekers from all over California, neighboring territories, Mexico, and also from distant places such as Hawaii, South America, China, Australia, and New Zealand began to arrive at the gold fields of Sierra Nevada and northern California. The Chilean seaport of Valparaiso was also used by emigrants from the neighboring countries of Argentina and Uruguay as the starting point of their adventure. Some of the earliest Basque immigrants found in California actually came via South America as part of a second migration. For example, both Jean Baptiste Batz and Domingo Amestoy came from Buenos Aires, while Juan Miguel Aguirre came from Montevideo.<sup>44</sup>

Alta California was formally ceded to the U.S. in February of 1848 by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and it was recognized as part of the U.S. by the Senate in August 1848. Four months later, President James Polk officially announced the discovery of gold to Congress, which triggered a mass influx of an estimated 100,000 people known as the “Forty-Niners.” The negative impact of the Revolution of 1848 in France provoked the immigration of many French nationals into California, constituting, with the passage of time, the single largest European population in the “Golden State.” Among them there were also some Basques a few of whom became quite successful in the mining business including Jean Baptiste Arambide who owned the Arambide Quicksilver Mines in Mendota, California, Bernardo Etcheverry, and Bernardo Iribarne.<sup>45</sup>

43 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 199-200. According to Mary Grace Paquette, *Basques to Bakersfield* (Bakersfield, California: Kern County Historical Society, 1982), “a man named Satrustegui—probably of Basque origin—acted as both French and Spanish consular representative” in the southern mining district of California during the Gold Rush.

44 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 425-27.

45 Jeronima Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels” (PhD Dissertation, North Texas State University 1988), 42, Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 425-27.



In September of 1849, Californian delegates declared California a “free state” with regard to slavery and a year later California was officially admitted as a state. Mining camps and towns sprang up along the gold sites. San Francisco’s growth was unparalleled as it also became California’s main port of entry for people and goods. If San Francisco had a three-digit population before the discovery of gold, by 1860 it had 56,000 inhabitants according to the first official census. The Transcontinental Railroad was completed by 1869, ending the physical isolation of California. The railroad strengthened its socio-economic and political ties with the central and eastern states and eased the mobility of national and international populations within the nation. Europeans, for example, no longer had to sail around Cape Horn or travel through the Isthmus of Panama. New York City would become the first stop for many immigrants, including Basques, into the American West. The city would also witness the emergence of the first Basque community on the east coast. By 1910, San Francisco was the tenth most populated city in the nation.<sup>46</sup>

Alongside mining, the agricultural endeavors of farming and cattle and sheep-raising flourished as the population grew. There was not only a demand for meat but also for wool, particularly during the Civil War (1861-1865). As a supporter of the Union, California supplied wool to the northern states as a replacement for cotton as the industry was disrupted by conflict. Consequently, between 1852 and 1862 there was an increase from approximately 80,000 to over one million sheep in California.<sup>47</sup> Basques were quick to move into such a profitable business as many had already been involved in large-scale and open-range livestock operations in countries such as Argentina. For example, Domingo Bastanchury from the French Basque Country arrived at Los Angeles in 1860 and became one of the biggest sheep owners and wool growers in the history of Orange County.<sup>48</sup>

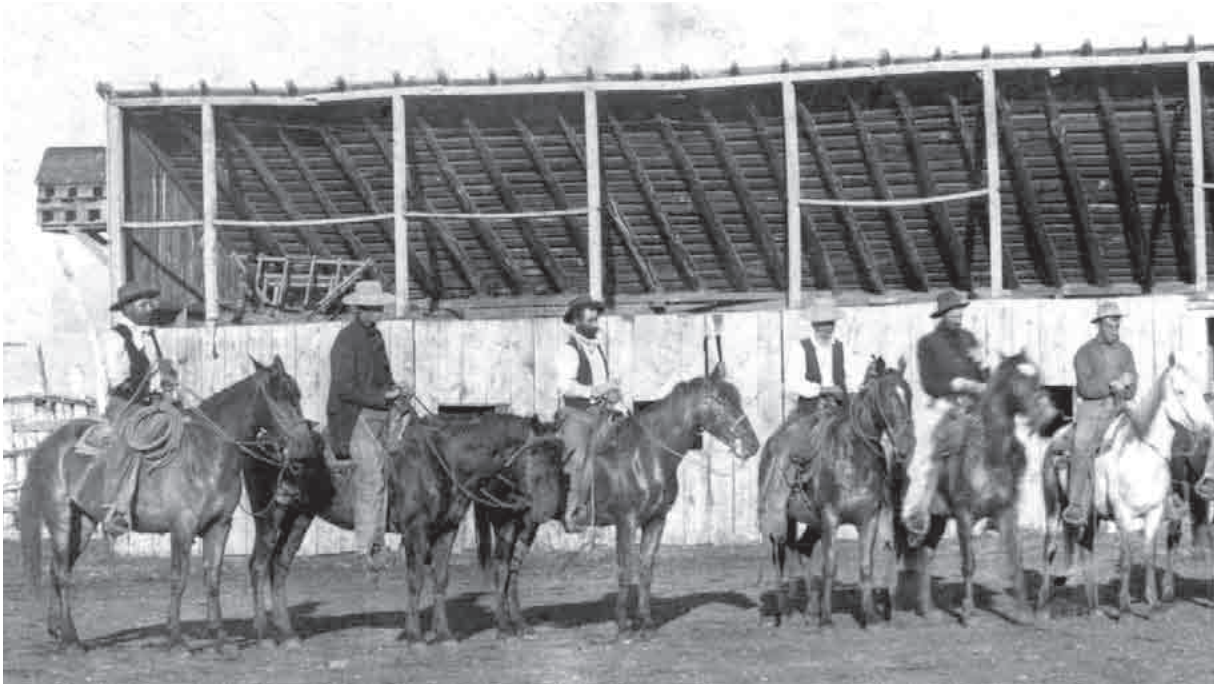
The discovery of gold in California was followed by the discovery of silver in western Nevada (what is now Virginia City, 1858; i.e., the so-called Comstock Lode), in central and eastern Nevada (Austin, 1862; and Tuscarora, 1867), and in southwestern Idaho (De Lamar, 1863). Consequently, miners began flooding the new areas and settled new camps and towns increasing the demand for supplies and food. New permanent and itinerant sheep and cattle operations developed exponentially in order to meet this demand. By the 1860s and 1870s, Basques had already established mining and cattle businesses in the Great Basin area.

For example, José Manuel Apaiz, José Antonio Erquiaga and Florencio Crespo owned a mining operation called Viscaino Ledge Spanish Company, which presumably

46 See Kevin Starr, *Americans and the California Dream: 1850-1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), ———, *California: A History* (New York: Modern Library Chronicles, 2007), and Andrew F. Rolle, *California: A History*. Sixth Edition. Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2003.

47 Sonia Jacqueline Eagle, “Work and Play among the Basques of Southern California” (PhD Dissertation, Purdue University 1979), 50.

48 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 425-27.



*Bernardo Altube with white beard in a car with his family.* Bartlett Springs, Lake County, California, 1914.  
Photograph courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.



*Pedro Altube, the fourth from the left, at his Spanish Ranch, c. 1900.*  
Photograph courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

referred to their Bizkaian origins. Brothers Pedro and Bernardo Altube owned the Spanish Ranch (1873-1907) in Independence Valley, Elko County, Nevada, with an area of some 400,000 acres; while Jean and Grace Garat owned the 75,000-acre YP Ranch (1939-1975) also in Elko County.<sup>49</sup> According to Douglass and Bilbao, both the Altubes and the Garats were responsible for bringing many Basques into the area. Basques were brought over for a few years to work tending flocks of sheep, and many of them were paid with sheep and some land to begin their own businesses. Some of them left after their contracts ended, but others settled in the U.S. becoming part of the earliest Basque communities in the country.<sup>50</sup>

The Altube brothers, from Oñati, Gipuzkoa, first immigrated into Buenos Aires, where they got involved in the livestock business in the 1840s and from there into California in 1850, where they set up a dairy business in San Mateo, Palo Alto, and a ranch in Fresno. In 1873 they created the Spanish Ranch, which was dissolved in 1907 after Pedro's death in 1905 in San Francisco. Bernardo died in 1916 in Berkeley, California.<sup>51</sup> In order to understand the magnitude of the Spanish Ranch, we can say that it was about nearly 82% of the current size of the province of Gipuzkoa and over 81% of the entire northern territory of the Basque Country. In this regard, one

49 Ibid., 256-57.

50 See next section for further information.

51 Ibid. See also Carol W. Hovey, "The Spanish Ranch," *Journal of Basque Studies in America* 5 (1984), —, "Altube Family: The California Years. Chapter II," *Journal of Basque Studies in America* 11-12 (1991-1992), —, "Pedro and Bernardo Altube: Basque Brothers of California and Nevada," in *Portraits in the New World*, ed. Richard W. Etulain and Jeronima Echeverria (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999).

can only imagine what a contemporary of the Altube brothers would have thought about one of their countrymen owning property nearly equivalent to the entire surface of the Gipuzkoan province.

In 1890 at the age of sixteen, Jean Pierre “Pete” Aguerreberry left Bildoze in the province of Zuberoa to join his older brother Arnaud (who had arrived in the country in 1884) in San Francisco. Arnaud worked first as a baker and then became the owner of a fruit and barley ranch in Madera, California. According to Pipkin, his biographer, Pete held a great variety of jobs—handball player for San Franciscan Irish MacDonald, shepherd, stagecoach driver, cattle driver, miner, prospector—until he struck gold in 1905 in the Panamint Mountains in Inyo County, within the limits of today’s Death Valley National Park. He also worked for the Altube brothers between 1899 and 1900. At the time Pete’s Eureka Mine had a value of \$100,000. Pete died in 1945.<sup>52</sup>

Another factor that contributed to increased involvement of Basques in the livestock business was the fact that the State of California did not respect the land-grant titles previously given by the Spanish and Mexican authorities, which, in turn, indirectly favored Basques as landless, transhumant or itinerant shepherders or small-scale owners throughout southern California, and particularly in Los Angeles County. Consequently, by the 1860s the Old Californian *rancheros*, main tradition suppliers of meat for San Francisco and the mine sites, lost their socio-economic status as it had been based exclusively on their extensive territorial possessions. Between the 1860s and the 1880s, Basque sheepherding operations were also active in other areas, including the San Joaquin and Sacramento valleys. For instance, during that period of time the Sentinela Ranch was one of the main Basque-owned sheep ranchos in San Joaquin Valley’s Merced County.<sup>53</sup> Amidst these circumstances many Basques ended up establishing their own livestock operations that triggered further chain migration as they recruited workers from the Old Country.

According to Douglass and Bilbao, by the 1890s the sheepherding industry had “declined sharply” in California because of the lack of available open-range land due to the expansion of agricultural exploitations and dairy farms, designation of rangeland as federally protected land, and an increase in population, which required new settlement areas.<sup>54</sup> Basque ranchers such as Domingo Bastanchury were forced to restructure their livestock operations and moved into the agriculture business. For example, by the beginning of the

52 George C. Pipkin, *Pete Aguerreberry: Death Valley Prospector and Gold Miner* (Second Edition. Trona, California: Murchison Publications, 1982).

53 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 234-35, Mary Grace Paquette, *Basques to Bakersfield* (Bakersfield, California: Kern County Historical Society, 1982).

54 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 233, and Carol Pagliarulo, “Basques in Stockton” (M.A. Thesis, 1948), 41-43.



twentieth century Bastanchury “had three thousand acres of oranges, making him the owner of the largest citrus grove in the world.”<sup>55</sup> In addition, in the 1920s, oil was discovered in the northern part of Los Angeles County further limiting shepherders’ access to public land.

Douglass and Bilbao stated that “Basque” became synonymous with “shepherd” once they began to take their flocks across the Sierras into the neighboring territory of western and northern Nevada in the 1870s, and began establishing themselves in other areas such as eastern Oregon and southern Idaho in the 1890s.<sup>56</sup> By the 1880s, Decroos similarly argued that the Basques already had the reputation of being the best shepherders despite the fact that many of them had never experienced anything like it in their lives with respect to the dimension of the land, the task to be accomplished or flock size.<sup>57</sup> Douglass and Bilbao commented that by 1900, “the Basques were preferred shepherders in most outfits.”<sup>58</sup> By the first decade of the twentieth century, Basques were present in every single state of the American West as they searched for new open-range to establish their sheep operations or for work as herders. Gachiteguy argued that Basques controlled two-thirds of the sheep business in the American West by 1910.<sup>59</sup>

The fate of Basque immigration into the U.S. would go hand in hand with the success of the itinerant small-scale shepherding operation. As we have seen, the decline of much of that industry in California was due to the lack of open-range, which in turn paradoxically expanded the industry throughout the landscape of the American West, creating conditions that hastened the flow of Basque immigration into the country. For decades, Basques left their homes with the hope of establishing themselves as independent livestock owners, but they would soon suffer the same misfortune of their countrymen in California. The difference was that the newcomers had more open-range available to them, but this would only postpone the inevitable. The dream of many immigrants would be shattered by the fact that the availability of public land would decrease with the passage of time.

In addition, as Douglass and Bilbao described, by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, local media began to direct bitter criticisms at the landless and itinerant Basque herders portraying them as selfish usurpers of American public land.<sup>60</sup> For example, the Caldwell Tribune (Idaho) wrote on July 17, 1909:

55 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 240.

56 *Ibid.*, 233.

57 Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983), 16.

58 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 259.

59 Adrian Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans l'ouest Américain* (Bordeaux: Editions Eskila, 1955), 26.

60 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*.

The scale of living and methods of doing business of the Bascos are on par with those of the Chinamen. However, they have some undesirable characteristics, that the Chinese are free from. They are filthy, treacherous, and meddlesome. However, they work hard and save their money. They are clannish and undesirable but they have a foothold and unless something is done will make life impossible for the whiteman.<sup>61</sup>

Within the context of this very localized and narrowly-focused anti-Basque propaganda, local laws and certain federal laws were introduced to limit the capacity of the itinerant Basque herders as they were penalized legally (e.g., anti-trespassing laws) as well as financially (e.g., taxes, grazing permits, fees, fines) for using open-range. Also, laws were introduced to limit herders' access to public land. Local woolgrowers associations and well-established ranchers also united against the itinerant bands. Federal laws established conservation programs for forests and natural reserves that were previously defined as public lands, while explicitly excluding foreign itinerant sheepherders (e.g., General Revision Act 1891, 1897; Forest Service Creation; grazing permits, 1902, and fees, 1907).

The outbreak of World War I (and subsequent wars such as the Spanish Civil War and World War II) was a major obstacle for European immigration, initiating a trend that would continue for decades. Fewer Basques would immigrate resulting in a continuous labor shortage in the sheep industry. Furthermore, a number of immigration laws (e.g., the 1921 Emergency Quota Act or Immigration Act) restricted the entrance of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe. Then, the Immigration Act of 1924 established a permanent National Origins Act or Quota Act limiting even further the number of eastern and southern Europeans by using the national origin of immigrants as the basis for the allocation of immigration quotas. Basques from Spain were, consequently, more affected than those from France as Spain had a lower immigration quota than its northern neighboring country. The Spanish quota per year was reduced from 912 to 131 people.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 placed public rangeland under federal government control, ending nomadic sheepherding. The Act explicitly prohibited the use of public range by itinerant landless sheepherders and aliens, the majority of whom were Basque. Many then sought employment in *ranchos* and elsewhere, purchased land, or returned to Europe.<sup>63</sup> According to Decroos, the 1934 Act killed the dream for a sheepherder to establish himself as a small sheep operator as this depended on the availability of public open-range.<sup>64</sup> Sheepherding became a dead-end job. On the other hand, as a result of the 1934

61 The term "Bascos" (meaning Basques) derives from the Spanish term "Vascos," which could have been introduced by the first Basques immigrants coming from Argentina. Quoted in Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 270.

62 Ibid. 294, Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels," 32.

63 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 282-84; 91-92.

64 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 16.

*San Francisco-based Father Jean Pierre Etcheverry (center) blessing the Basque Monument in accompanied by two unidentified individuals at its inaugural ceremony. Reno, Nevada, August 27, 1989. Photograph courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.*



Act, a positive social image associated with Basque sheepherders emerged in the local media and in the literature on the American West. The near disappearance of nomadic sheepherding allowed non-Basques to construct a new image of the Basques as they were no longer viewed as a threat to the American lifestyle. The image of the Basque as the lonely sentinel of the desert was born. (It would be fifty years before a public monument was displayed in America dedicated to Basque sheepherders in recognition of their contribution to America's socio-economic fabric and work ethic. The National Monument to the Shepherdder became the major public monument to Basques in the country. It is located at Rancho San Rafael in Reno, Nevada.<sup>65</sup>

The story of Basque involvement in the sheepherding industry is exemplified by the story of the Yparraguirre family, which resembles the life stories of many other Basques. Frank Yparraguirre, born in 1903 in San Francisco of parents from Nafarroa, lived at his parents' Sweetwater ranch (Esmeralda County, Nevada) for most of his youth. Frank's father, Francisco, was born in Etxalar in 1864. He left for

<sup>65</sup> Carmelo Urza, "Basque Ethnic Identities: Old World and New World Expressions," in *Solitude: Art and Symbolism in the National Basque Monument*, ed. Carmelo Urza (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1993).

San Francisco at the age of thirteen to join his oldest brother Juan Francisco who had come to the States under the sponsorship of Pedro Altube, and had owned the Yparraguirre Hotel since c. 1877.<sup>66</sup> Upon his arrival, Frank's father worked as an itinerant landless shepherd for nearly ten years in the San Joaquin and Elko valleys. When he was twenty-three years old, Francisco and his uncles León and Pablo and partners Manuel and Miguel Yrigoyen bought a 2,300-acre ranch. By the 1920s, they had a total of between 28,000 and 30,000 head of sheep. Frank recalled the profound effect that the Taylor Grazing Act and subsequent legal restrictions and economic and financial crises had on their lives, becoming one of the main reasons for him not to get involved in the family ranching business.

One of the things that impressed me was at that time they started putting on restrictions. [Because of] the Taylor Grazing Act [...] you had to drive livestock something like 5 or 6 miles a day. [Before], you'd just let them graze themselves; you didn't drive them. Where you drive them for 6, 8, 10 miles a day, you're pushing the hell out of them; they're not eating. They're pushing on the road. So that's not doing the animals any good. I could see it: the handwriting was on the wall. Then you had the Forest Service restrictions coming in [...] It didn't look like there was any future in the sheep business to me. I told my dad about it. "Oh, Frank," he says, "don't worry about that." He says, "There's going to be sheep here. There was sheep on the earth when Christ was born, and there's going to be sheep here after you and I are gone." That's just the way he put it to me [...] You look at the sheep industry from *this* point right now: in the state of Nevada you were looking at something like 2, 2 1/2 million head of sheep in 1917-1918 [...] But relatively speaking in numbers, I don't think that the University [of Nevada] can catalog over 125,000-130,000 head of sheep in the state of Nevada [...] Well, it didn't look like there was much future in sheepherding. Things went kind of haywire. In 1921 there was a recession; the livestock went down the tube, weren't worth anything. And then you got to 1929—the big slide happened in New York when stock went to hell [...] Things went from bad to worse [...] There were so many sheep men then who were gradually getting out of the business. They were moved, like into California, and they'd go rent pasture and feed and things like this. Then the prices kept climbing, climbing, climbing, and these people in California were going out of the sheep business just like flies...because sheep were getting too expensive to feed, and no range with the proper incentive to develop [herds]. (King, Thomas Robert. *Frank Yparraguirre: A Contribution to a Survey of Life in Carson Valley, from First Settlement through the 1950s*. Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1984: 36-37; italics in the original.)

In order to fill the shortage of workers in the sheep industry, a series of laws were designed to modify the Quota Act. They favored the legalization of the status of illegal Basques residing in the country. Between 1942 and 1961, 383 Basque men received legal residency status.<sup>67</sup> In the 1940s, a series of

66 See Chapter Three for more information on this and other historical San Francisco Basque boardinghouses and hotels.

67 Allura Nason Ruiz, "The Basques: Sheepmen of the West" (M.A. Thesis, 1964), 68.



shepherding associations, made up mostly by Basques, were set up to promote the increase of quota for “Spaniards:” Nevada Range Association Sheep Owners Association (1942), Eastern Nevada Sheep Growers Association (early 1940s), and the California Range Association (1947; it was renamed Western Range Association in 1960). With the advent of the Korean War (1950-1953) there was an increasing demand for meat and consequently for herders. Nevada Senator Patrick McCarran sponsored a bill in 1950, the so-called Shepherder’s Act, which became law in 1952, to recruit Basques as shepherders by increasing the Spanish immigration quota. In 1951, 250 herders per year were allowed into the country on a three-year contract. In 1952, the number of Basques increased to 750 per year. The majority of the Basques allowed into the country under those conditions came from Bizkaia and Nafarroa.<sup>68</sup>

Ángel Arriada, born in 1933 in Arizkun, Nafarroa, came to the U.S in 1951 as part of the newly established immigration quota: “At that time there was work in Spain but there wasn’t too much money, so that put the idea in our heads, and there was a way to come to the States as a shepherd. Since America was involved in the Korean War at the time, and since they used lamb to feed the soldiers, and there were few shepherders that wanted to come, so we came. At that time there were 250 of us to go to the States [...] The idea was to make a little money and take off; everybody’s dream. At that time everyone wanted to do the same. We didn’t think there were other places in the world like the Basque Country.” Arriada worked as a shepherd in Bakersfield for fifteen years. He then returned to the Basque Country and after less than a year there, he came back to the U.S. Arriada has lived in San Francisco since 1967.<sup>69</sup>

In 1957 the California Range Association lobbied for herders’ status being changed from that of permanent resident to a temporary permit as many herders tended to leave their jobs once the three-year contract expired and filed for citizenship. (For example, Basques sought employment in towns and cities such as San Francisco from the 1950s on, which in turn rejuvenated local urban Basque communities.) Consequently, herders were allowed to return to the States for a total of three three-year contract but were required to return to Europe between contracts in order to avoid illegal status, breaking the contract or filing for citizenship as one was eligible to do after five years of continuous residency in the country. Douglass and Bilbao stated that “the herder had to remain in shepherding or face immediate deportation.”<sup>70</sup> By 1965, there were 1,283 shepherders in the American West under contract with the Western Range Association, and according to Douglass and Bilbao, 95% of those herders were of Basque origin.<sup>71</sup>

68 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 311, Edward P. Hutchison, *Legislative History of American Immigration Policy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).

69 Ángel Arriada, interview by Arantxa Arriada, Daly City, California, November 23, 2006.

70 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 314-15.

71 *Ibid.*, 317, 20.

Pedro Salaburu, born in Elizondo, Nafarroa in 1942, arrived in Bakersfield in 1965. He worked as a sheepherder for three years and then delivered food and goods to the herders until he left for San Francisco in 1970 to work for Jean Pierre Ospital's gardening business. "I remember the first time I told my boss that I was gonna leave, he was not very happy. He told me, 'Why don't you stay? We'll buy a new truck for you. A brand new truck you can drive.' I told him I decided already. Then the guy was very nice. He was from Baigorri, Loui Curutchet. He told me, 'You know what, I'm here doing this sixty years, and I tell you honestly this is not a life a human being should have. You're doing the right thing. You get out of here, and you'll be fine. I'm with you.' He supported me doing that. They wanted me to stay there but he was honest telling me that was not the life. I was too alone."<sup>72</sup>

As mentioned above, by the end of the 1970s, the drastic decline of the sheep industry in America was evident. Some authors argued that its decline was due to a series of combined factors, including the following: a labor shortage, lack of public



***Basque sheepherders in the fields of California.*** From left to right: Charles Ourtiague, Solato, Charles Moustirats, Jean Pierre Ascarraïn, Jean Baptiste Harguindeguy, Laurent DiHarce, Frederic Fuldain and Pierre Laxague. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>72</sup> Pedro Salaburu, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, August 16, 2006.

land, a decrease in demand for wool, an increase in demand for synthetic textile materials, foreign competition, better socio-economic opportunities for Basques at home, particularly on the Spanish side where rapid industrialization created new jobs, and the demythification of the Far West and sheepherding as the ultimate profitable business.

As the American sheep industry bubble burst, the economic picture in the Basque Country improved dramatically. Three decades later, the Basque Autonomous Community's gross domestic product surpassed the Spanish and European Union average by 4.2% (2006) and its per capita income level exceeded the European average by nearly 28%, ranking third after Luxembourg and Ireland. Moreover, a 2008 United Nations' report indicated that the Basque Autonomous Community also ranked third in the human development world index following Norway and Iceland. *Euskal Etxeak*, the Basque government's diaspora magazine, enthusiastically reported that the Basque Country "has the highest quality of life it has ever known."<sup>73</sup>

The original settlement patterns of Basques were mostly determined by their main traditional occupation, i.e., sheepherding and its expansion and contraction throughout the years. That is, Basques settled in open-range livestock districts where Basque hotels or boardinghouses flourished. Those, as we will see, were built in towns alongside the railroad (used to transport livestock) and catered nearly exclusively to Basques. Basques settled according to Old Country regional ties and kinship—Bizkaians on one hand and Navarrese and Iparralde or northern Basques on the other. This community separation was perpetuated by chain migration that favored the immigration of family members, relatives and acquaintances from the same villages and regions.<sup>74</sup> Consequently, after 160 years of continued Basque immigration into the American West, those two distinctive communities still persist today in general terms. In other words, most Basques from the province of Bizkaia settled (and are still present) in northern Nevada, Oregon, and Idaho, while those from Nafarroa and the northern Basque Country settled (and are still present) in California, western Nevada, Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, and Wyoming.<sup>75</sup>

For example, Castelli stated that most Buffalo Basques originated in the village of Baigorri, because Jean Esponda, a successful immigrant from Baigorri, settled in that area of Wyoming.<sup>76</sup> Esponda immigrated into California in 1886 and then moved to Wyoming in 1902, where he set up a thriving sheepherding operation,

73 *Euskal Etxeak*, 1989-2008, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Servicio Editorial de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco. 2007:11.

74 See next section.

75 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 330-35, Campbell, "The Basque-American Ethnic Area: Geographical Perspectives on Migration, Population and Settlement."

76 Joseph Roy Castelli, "Basques in the American West: A Functional Approach to Determination of Cultural Presence in the Geographic Landscape" (PhD Dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970), 100-01.

claiming many Basques from his own natal village and neighboring villages for nearly two decades (e.g., the Ausquys, Caminos, Harriets, Iberlins were from the village of Arnegi at the border with Nafarroa).<sup>77</sup> Douglass and Bilbao argued that in the 1970s “in most features of their social life the activities of the two greater Basque colonies [Bizkaians and Navarrese and northern Basques] remain mutually exclusive. Each has a history of founding its own hotels, organizing its own network of sporting events and festivals, importing its own Basque chaplains, [and] organizing its own clubs and dance groups.”<sup>78</sup> To a great extent today’s two distinctive Basque communities no longer remain mutually exclusive as the level of intercommunication and networking has increasingly evolved since the 1970s, particularly due to the creation of NABO—a federation of Basque clubs that works for the interrelation of its different parts by organizing common events and activities on a regular basis.

## BASQUE CALIFORNIA SINCE THE 1900S

As stated earlier, the first major wave of Basque immigration into the U.S. was related to the discovery of gold in California, but also to the booming livestock industry, which initially had a major impact in Los Angeles County. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Basque community established in the Los Angeles area was mature enough to create its own printed media, similar to many of other immigrant communities, such as of the French and the Spanish.<sup>79</sup> Two prominent Basque lawyers were responsible for the establishment of the first (and only) Basque-language newspapers in the history of the United States (and two of the first ones in the history of the Basques). *The Escualdun Gazeta* (1885-1886; it published only three numbers) edited by Martin V. Biscailluz, and the *California’ko Eskual Herria* (1893-1898), which was renamed in 1897 as *Eskual Herria* under the motto of Yainkoa eta Sor-Lekuoa—God and the Homeland or the Native Country—was edited by Jean Pierre Goytino. Besides the Los Angeles area, it was also distributed in San Francisco, San Diego, Mexico City,

77 Pierre Ausquy, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, October 28, 2006.

78 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 339.

79 It is estimated that between 1820 and 1900 approximately 350,000 people from France (including Basques) immigrated into America. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, there were 135,592 French people residing in the country who had been born in France. In 1920 in California the French population was over 18,000 individuals, while the Spanish population was over 11,000 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1920). For example, among the earliest and most important French-language journals in California were the following, published in San Francisco: *Le Californien* (established in April 1850, it became the first French journal in the state, it lasted three numbers), *Gazette Républicaine* (established in September 1850), *Echo du Pacifique* (established in June 1852-1865. It became the first long-lasting French journal, which was succeeded by *Le Courier de San Francisco* and lasted until 1868), *Le Messenger* (October 1853-March 1856), *Le National* (1864-1870. It was succeeded by *L’Union Nationale*), and *La Revue Californienne* (established in 1853) (Clifford H. Bissell, “The French Language Press in California.” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1960): 1-18, —, “The French Language Press in California.” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (1960): 141-73, and —, “The French Language Press in California.” *California Historical Society Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (1960): 219-62). Within the context of the massive influx of immigrants into the U.S. in the nineteenth century, 794 non-English newspapers were published in 1884 alone (Sally M. Miller, ed. *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987, xiii).

Havana, and Río de la Plata.<sup>80</sup> Biscailuz was born in the U.S. to parents from Nafarroa Beherea, while Goytino was born in Ainhoa (Lapurdi) in 1860, and immigrated first into Mexico and from there into the United States. He passed away in 1920.<sup>81</sup>

The *Escualdun Gazeta* estimated that in 1886 there were 2,000 Basques in the Los Angeles area alone, while its successor, the *California'ko Eskual Herria* considered that the entire Basque population of California numbered 5,000.<sup>82</sup> However, Douglass and Bilbao and Echeverria pointed out that these estimates were unlikely.<sup>83</sup> The former authors argued that by the end of the nineteenth century there were no more than 10,000 Basques in the entire region of the American West; while the later stated that the population of the whole city of Los Angeles was 18,000 in 1884.

Etcheverry estimated that between 1832 and 1884, one-fourth of the total population of the Basque provinces of France (i.e., over 64,000 people) immigrated into America.<sup>84</sup> In other words, an average of over 1,200 Basques left for America annually over the course of half a century.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, Gachiteguy stated that from 1862 to the 1920s the majority of all eighteen year-old males from the Nafarroa Beherea villages of Aldude (located in the Canton of Baigorri), Ezterenzubi and Arnegi (both located in the Canton of Donibane Garazi) immigrated into the American West as their primary destination, followed by South America as their second option.<sup>86</sup> (Nevertheless, the author stated that none departed for South America by the 1920s.) For example, between 1862 and 1865, 78% of eighteen year-old males from Aldude immigrated into the American West, while only 9% went to South America. Between 1870 and 1873, 60% of eighteen year-old males from Ezterenzubi left for the U.S., while 4% chose Latin America. Within the Basque Country, the cantons of Baigorri and Donibane Garazi became the primary sources of immigrants to America (firstly to Montevideo and Buenos Aires and then to the U.S.) during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

With regard to the Basque provinces of Spain, Bilbao and Eguluz calculated that between 1897 and 1902, 636 Basques, mostly from the southern Basque Country,

80 Other Basque diasporic and transnational periodicals in the nineteenth century were *Revista Sociedad Vascongada de Montevideo* or *Laurak Bat* (1877-1882) and *Vascones* (1898), both from Montevideo; *Revista de la Sociedad Vasco-Española de Buenos Aires*, also called *Laurak Bat* (1878-1893, 1911, 1921-1922, 1930-1931, 1960-1970), *La Vasconia: Revista Euskaro-Americana* (1893-1901) later known as *La Baskonia* (1901-1943), *Euskal Herria: Journal Basque-Français du Río de la Plata* (1898, in Basque and in French), and *Haritza* (1899), the three of them were established in Buenos Aires; and the weekly *Laurak Bat* (June 1886-August 1886) from Havana, Cuba.

81 Xipri Arbelbide, *California'ko Eskual Herria* (Bilbao: BBK Fundazioa, 2003), ———, *Jean Pierre Goytino (1860-1920)* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Editorial de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2003), Javier Díaz Noci, "Historia del Periodismo en Lengua Vasca de los Estados Unidos: Dos Semanarios de Los Ángeles en el Siglo XIX," *Revista Zer* 10, no. May (2001).

82 *Escualdun Gazeta*, 1885-1886, Los Angeles, California, Martin V. Biscailuz. January 1886: 1, and *California'ko Eskual Herria*, 1893-1898, Los Angeles, California, Jean Pierre Goytino. May 18, 1895: 1.

83 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 401, Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels," 72.

84 Louis Etcheverry, "Les Basques et leur Émigration en Amérique," *Société d'Économie Sociale* (1886): 494.

85 See also J. P. Mathy, "Les Basques en Amérique," in *Société, Politique, Culture en Pays Basque*, ed. Pierre Bidart (Donostia, Baiona: Elkar, 1986), 101, Henry de Charnisay, *L'émigration Basco-Béarnaise en Amérique* (Biarritz: J et D Éditions, 1930, 1996).

86 Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans l'ouest Américain*, 187.

legally entered the U.S. via the New York port.<sup>87</sup> The majority of them (like those from the northern Basque area) were male, single, and young—between sixteen and thirty years old. Their final destination was California, and within that state, San Francisco was their main preference.

According to Arrizabalaga's analysis of the 1900 and 1910 U.S. Census, nearly 1,000 Basques lived in the states of California, Nevada, Idaho, and Wyoming at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>88</sup> The population rapidly increased to nearly 8,400 over a decade due to the entry of a new wave of immigrants. California hosted the oldest and largest Basque community in the American West. Arrizabalaga estimated that the Basque population in California increased from 745 to 6,267 within the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>89</sup> That meant that nearly 75% of the Basque population of the entire country resided in California by 1910. During this period, the majority of Basque immigrants in California came from the Basque region of France, although the number of Basques from the southern provinces had increased considerably by 1910.

Arrizabalaga stated that in 1900 the Basque-Californian community "was mature and established yet rather small compared to 1910 [...] [By then] there was a considerable number of second or even third generation Basques in California."<sup>90</sup> If by 1900 one-third of the Golden State's Basque population lived in Los Angeles County, by 1910 the San Francisco County became the most popular, youngest, and largest settlement of Basques in the state due to the influx of new immigrants. That is even in spite of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and subsequent fires that disrupted much of the Basque community by demolishing their downtown neighborhood. In 1910, 22.6% of California Basques lived in San Francisco.

Taking into account that Basque immigration was traditionally composed of single, male and young individuals (early twenties on the average), Arrizabalaga pointed out that "most female Basque immigrants were married before they immigrated or joined and married in the United States after their lovers had established or met and married shortly after immigrating."<sup>91</sup> As we will see in the following paragraphs, this immigration pattern continued throughout the rest of the twentieth century.<sup>92</sup>

Douglass and Bilbao calculated that the Basque population of the American West was at least 10,000 by the 1950s.<sup>93</sup> Gachiteguy talked about nearly 1,500 Basque

87 Iban Bilbao and Chantal Eguiluz, *Vascos llegados al Puerto de Nueva York, 1897-1902: (Materiales de Trabajo)*, Diáspora Vasca 1 (Vitoria: Diputación Foral de Álava, Consejo de Cultura, Sección de Bibliografía y Diáspora Vascas, 1981).

88 Arrizabalaga, "A Statistical Study of Basque Immigration into California, Nevada, Idaho and Wyoming between 1900 and 1910," 42-72.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid., 45-46; 51-52; 55-56.

91 Ibid., 46.

92 See also Marie-Pierre Arrizabalaga, "Basque Women and Urban Migration in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century," *The History of the Family* 10, no. 2 (2005).

93 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 328.



immigrants in California who were mainly single, male, and in their mid-teens to mid-twenties.<sup>94</sup> Since the end of the 1960s, for the reasons stated earlier (e.g., anti-immigration laws and the overall decline of the sheep industry) Basque immigration into the United States was reduced to a trickle. According to several authors by the 1970s there were between 40,000 and 100,000 Basques in the American West.<sup>95</sup> Regarding the Basque community in California, Araujo estimated that there were less than 8,000 Basques.<sup>96</sup> Additionally, Bouesnard argued that there were between 4,500 and 5,000 Basques in San Francisco and of those 3,000 were immigrants—one-third of men were single.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Decroos estimated that by the end of the 1970s, the San Francisco Basque community “tallied over two thousand foreign-born individuals and their descendants.”<sup>98</sup>

Paquette argued that emigration agents from the Basque Country were quite active in recruiting shepherders on behalf of American ranchers, which explained the “exodus” of Basques from small villages like Aldude or Urepele over the years.<sup>99</sup> For example, in the 1950s, most California Basques (56%) came from the northern Basque provinces (52.4% of them were from Nafarroa Beherea). The remainder (44%) came from the southern provinces (of those, Nafarroa accounted for 36.6%). Similarly, Bouesnard pointed out that between 1960 and 1975 the majority of the 500 Basque immigrants whose final destination was California and Nevada came from Nafarroa Beherea’s cantons of Baigorri (specifically from Anhauze, Arrosa, Azkarate, Baigorri, Banka, Irulegi and Urepele), Donibane Garazi, Iholdi (particularly from Irisarri), Donapaleu and Hasparren (particularly from Makea).<sup>100</sup> Those from the Basque provinces of Spain were natives of Nafarroa.<sup>101</sup>

Following the trend of chain migration established at the beginning of the twentieth century, Branaa calculated that between 1945 and 1972, 617 Basques from the valleys of Baigorri (particularly from Banka and Urepele) and Donibane Garazi (particularly from Arnegi, Duzunaritze, Ezterenzubi, Ortzaize and Uharte-Garazi) immigrated into the United States.<sup>102</sup> All of them came through the emigration/contracting agency of Charles Iriart in Donibane Garazi, the capital of Nafarroa Beherea. Iriart operated between 1945 and 1972 and was responsible for most of

94 Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans l'ouest Américain*.

95 James P. Kelly, *The Settlement of Basques in the American West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1967), 3. Castelli, “Basques in the American West: A Functional Approach to Determination of Cultural Presence in the Geographic Landscape,” 77, Frank Patrick Araujo, “Basque Cultural Ecology and Echinococcosis in California” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Davis 1974), 97-104, and Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 328, 54.

96 Frank Patrick Araujo, “Basque Cultural Ecology and Echinococcosis in California” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Davis 1974), 101.

97 Christiane Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960” (TER, Université de Pau et des Pays de L’Adour, 1976), 35.

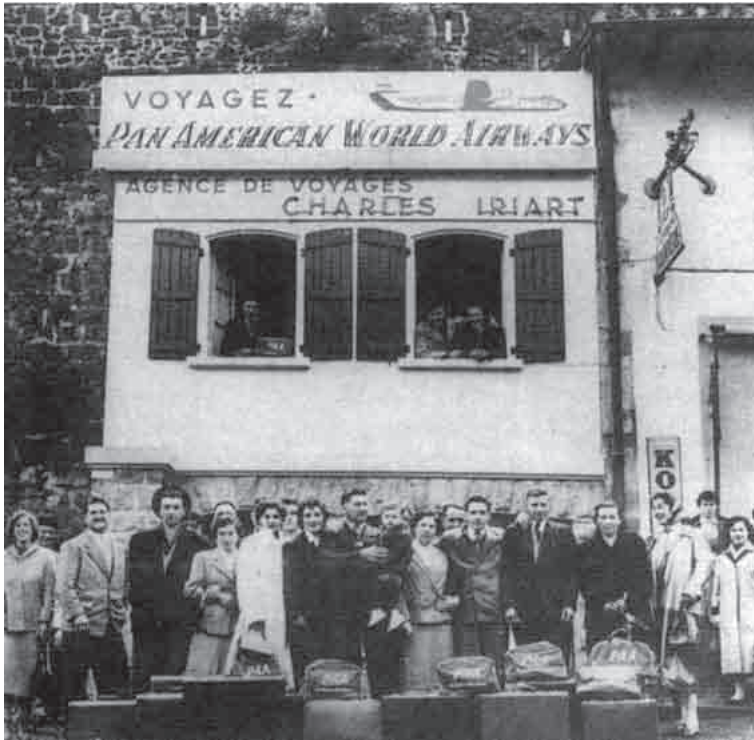
98 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 33.

99 Paquette, *Basques to Bakersfield*, 13.

100 Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960.”

101 See next Chapter for further socio-demographic analysis of current Basque community in the Bay Area

102 Eric Branaa, *Les Archives de Charles Iriart: Agent d’émigration Basque aux États-Unis* (Donibane Lohitzun: Ikuska, 1995).



*Group of Basque immigrants pictured in front of Charles Iriart's Travel Agency, Donibane-Garazi, 1950. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

the later Basque immigration into the U.S. He placed ads in local newsletters to attract potential migrants by offering them three-year contracts as sheepherders. In addition, Iriart worked out an agreement with Pan American World Airways to reduce the cost of tickets between Europe and America.<sup>103</sup>

For example, Dominique Hauscarriague, born in 1928 in Irisarri, came to the U.S. in 1951 with a group of eighteen other men of his age from nearby hometowns. The trip was organized by Iriart, and at that time they flew from Paris to New York via Ireland with TWA. His brother Jean, who had immigrated two years earlier, paid for Dominique's passage. Dominique worked for Pete Etchart from Zuberoa as a sheepherder in Winnemucca, Nevada for a year and a half along with Jean. He then went to Fresno where he continued to work as a sheepherder for a year and a half after which he went to Wyoming where he stayed for five years. His main goal was to "make a fortune." Dominique said, "We were brainwashed before we came here. We were told if we stayed in the mountains [sheepherding] we would make a lot of

<sup>103</sup> Other local migration agents were Jean Baptiste, Leopold and Rene Monlong from Aldude (Nafarroa Beherea), Grison Charles from Atharratze Sorholuze (Zuberoa), and Leon Inchauspe from Donibane Garazi (Lapurdi) (see also Bouesnard, 1976: 28-29).



money, get rich, and be able to go back after a few years [...] You would save what you earned because there was nothing to spend it on. [But] I hated that job. It was so hard to take that life during my youngest years. My best life (earliest years), I spoiled it in the mountains up there.” After he had his fill of sheepherding, he went to San Francisco, where his first job was cooking at Hotel des Alpes for Ganix Iriartborde who was from a nearby town in the Basque Country. Dominique said, “I have known him [Ganix] because he played handball in Irizarri and other little towns. I enjoyed it [cooking] very much. It was much better than sheepherding. At least you are with human beings.”<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, Roger Minhondo, a Basque restaurateur in the Bay Area, also came to San Francisco in 1970 by plane from Paris: “90% of the airplane was full of Basque people coming to this country,” he said. “And, I think this was the last group sent by the Iriart father and son, as a group goes.”<sup>105</sup>



*Group of Basque immigrants, including newlyweds (near top) Josephine and Sebastien Curutchet and Prudence and Beñat Sallaberry, boarding Air France flight from Paris to San Francisco on December 15, 1960. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

<sup>104</sup> Dominique Hauscarriague, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Bruno, California, 2001.

<sup>105</sup> Roger Minhondo, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, March 15, 2005.

Prospective immigrants were required to obtain an “affidavit of support” from a legal U.S. resident (e.g., relative, family member, friend, or employer) before they could get into the country.<sup>106</sup> As an example of chain migration, Andre Arduain a resident of San Francisco and founding director of the San Francisco Basque Club claimed a friend (Jean Ansolabehere) from Banka, his sister (Bernadette) and two brothers (Rene and Roger) during the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, Dominique Marticorena from Baigorri claimed a party of five who all left from his natal village in 1969 to San Francisco. They were Dominique’s wife (Candida), his two brothers (Michel and Marcel), and brother’s wife (Maria Josepha) and daughter (Elizabeth).<sup>107</sup>

Immigrants used to leave the country in organized groups several times a year. For example, a group of eight people left on April 10, 1964 with California as their final destination. Among them was Franxoa Bidaurreta, born in 1942 in Aldude, who was claimed by his brother Jean Baptiste who had settled down in San Francisco.<sup>108</sup> On the same plane, there were another fifty-three Basques. “Every two months there were twenty to thirty new young Basques coming here [to the U.S.] It was that way until about 1966,” Franxoa commented.<sup>109</sup> Jean Baptiste was a director of the San Francisco Basque Club in 1962-1963 and its Vice-president in 1963-1964. Jean Basptiste and Franxoa’s father, Manex (born in 1888 in Aldude) had been in the country between March 1909 and May 1922. Manex worked as a shepherd and became a sheep rancher in partnership with Beltran Paris in Ely, Nevada for a time.<sup>110</sup> The upward social mobility of immigrants within the San Francisco Basque community and the Basque cultural associations’ managerial structure happened quite quickly. For example, Franxoa joined the Basque Club two days after arriving in San Francisco for the first time. He became a director of the club in 1973-1974 and its President between 1976 and 1979, just twelve years after arriving at the country. Franxoa was a director of the club until 1982.<sup>111</sup>

## From Sentinels of the Desert to Gardeners of the Bay

Despite the fact that many Basque immigrants work in the sheep and, to a lesser extent, in the cattle businesses throughout the American West, Arrizabalaga argued that by the beginning of the twentieth century, the occupations of Basques

106 Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960.”

107 Ibid.

108 The seven other immigrants were Rene Arduain (from Ortazaize), Jean Baptiste Arraras (from Aldude), Marie-Therese Bomefoud (from Donapaleu), Marie Coscarat (from Baigorri), and Ciprien, Catherine and Marie-Béatrice Duhart. The Duhart family came from Oragarre, in the canton of Donapaleu, and their final destination was Ontario, California.

109 Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, October 7, 2006 and July 13, 2008.

110 See Paris Beltran and William A. Douglass, *Beltran, Basque Sheepman of the American West* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1979).

111 Bidaurreta, Franxoa. Interview by Robert Acheritogaray, Petaluma, California, 2001.

in the State of California were quite diversified.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, over half of Basques in 1900 and one-third of them in 1910 were involved in the agriculture sector (i.e., sheep or cattle raising and/or farming). The majority of those working in agriculture were new immigrants (87.3% in 1900 and 88.1% in 1910). In other words, although Basques were traditionally associated with livestock, the majority of Basques left the industry, leaving the job of raising sheep and cattle to the newcomers. The author stated that “those who were permanent residents, naturalized or America-born worked in towns as unskilled laborers or skilled laborers or else in hotels or laundry businesses.”<sup>113</sup> As mentioned earlier, the California open-range sheep industry was in decline by the end of the nineteenth century, therefore many Basques moved to other areas where they continued to be involved with the livestock business, changed jobs (e.g., dairy farmers, bakers), or moved into urban areas (e.g., construction workers, cooks). By 1910, two-thirds of Basques in California were working in cities. That is to say, “The Basques of San Francisco County had basically town jobs.”<sup>114</sup>

A few decades later, there was an even further and quite drastic decline of Basque involvement in livestock throughout the American West. Bouesnard argued that “the new generation of Basque emigrants who came after World War II, differed somewhat from their predecessors. Their educational level was higher and they saw little opportunity in sheepherding. Working as a herder was a thing of the past and wages were very low compared to any other trade or occupation. From the hundreds of French Basques [and for that matter I would add any Basque regardless of their geographical origin] who emigrated in the 1940s and 1950s, very few are today [in the 1970s] involved in sheepherding business.”<sup>115</sup>

Following this argument, Gachiteguy attested that only 39.5% of Basque immigrants in California worked with livestock in the 1950s.<sup>116</sup> Within the post-war socio-economic crisis, Basques from rural areas of California moved to San Francisco in search of new opportunities and helped, in turn, to renew the city’s Basque community in the 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>117</sup> For example, Jacques Unhassobiscay, born in 1938 in Etxeparia, Behorlegi, worked on a dairy farm in Chino for two years before moving to San Francisco where he became a successful independent landscape contractor. In 1984, the Unhassobiscay family returned to the Basque Country as Jacques and his wife, Dorothy, had the desire to educate their children—Jacqueline, Daniel and Marc—in his homeland. He passed away in the Basque Country in 2002.

112 Arrizabalaga, “A Statistical Study of Basque Immigration into California, Nevada, Idaho and Wyoming between 1900 and 1910,” 57.

113 *Ibid.*, 58.

114 *Ibid.*, 68-69.

115 Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960,” 20. Comment in brackets added.

116 Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans l'ouest Américain*.

117 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 33.

**Jacques Unhassobiscay** dedicated an enormous part of his life to the promotion of Basque culture and identity in the Bay Area and elsewhere in the United States. As part of the San Francisco Basque Club, Jacques was the director of the Antzerkia group (Basque Theatre group), and an active member of the club's dancing, klicka and choir groups. As a delegate of the San Francisco Basque Club, Jacques was one of NABO's founders, becoming its second Vice-president (1974-1976), third President (1976-1978), and again Vice-president (1978-1979) during the 1970s. He was also one of the founding directors of the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center and its second President (1982-1983). He also became a founding director of the 599 Railroad Catering, Incorporated or Catering Board. Because of his passion for handball, he was founding director and President of the U.S. Federation of Pelota. Jacques was posthumously honored in 2007 by NABO for his lifetime contribution to Basque culture in America and in 2006 by the Society of Basque Studies in America at its 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Basque Hall of Fame for "his diligence in promoting Basque culture and identity" (November 2006, San Francisco). He was also honored as one of the key visionaries and promoters of NABO in 1993 by the Society of Basque Studies in America at its 13<sup>th</sup> Basque Hall of Fame (Reno, Nevada).

The majority of those Basques who immigrated into California between 1960 and 1975 worked as gardeners (full-time or part-time, combining it with another job), bakers and cooks throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, constituting, according to Bouesnard, part of a lower to middle-middle class.<sup>118</sup> This was the foundation of today's San Francisco Bay Area Basque communities as most of current Basques immigrated in the 1940s. (A minority of those immigrant Basques chose Chino or Fresno as their final destination, where they worked on dairy farms and cattle ranchos.)

As a direct result of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, nearly 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans were detained and placed in internment camps between February 1942 and 1945. Added to this trauma was the loss of their properties and businesses. In the Bay Area, Japanese lost control of the gardening and landscaping business, leaving an occupational vacuum, which, according to Decroos, "was to be filled almost exclusively by Basques."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Bouesnard, "Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960," 35.

<sup>119</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 33.



*Jacques and Dorothy Unhassobiscay at their residence in Angelu, Lapurdi in 2001.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

By the mid-1950s, the author argued that “more than 2/3 of [the San Francisco Bay Area] Basque population [former herders and farmers, particularly from the province of Nafarroa Beherea] were employed in gardening service [...] The 1960’s was the halcyon decade of Basque gardening in the San Francisco Bay Area.”<sup>120</sup> Decroos estimated that by mid and late 1970s nearly 43% of Basque immigrants and 22% of the first generation of Basques born in the U.S. were involved in the gardening business as manual laborers, self-employed or small-scale contractors.<sup>121</sup> (Bouesnard maintained that 90% of the gardeners in San Francisco in the 1970s were Basque, but I would argue that this estimation is largely inflated.<sup>122</sup>)

For instance, Leon Franchisteguy owned a gardening business for nearly forty-six years after moving to San Francisco in 1958 from Fresno, California where he herded sheep for Peter Harguindeguy, originally from Irisarri, for a period of five years after his arrival in this country. Auguste Lapeyrade, born in Kanbo in 1935, came to San Francisco in 1959 and was also the owner of a gardening business for forty-

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 33, 42.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 41-42. See also Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 351, Grant McCall, *Basque-Americans and a Sequential Theory of Migration and Adaptation* (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1973), 44.

<sup>122</sup> Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960,” 35.



seven years. Similarly, Auguste Indart came to San Francisco in 1963 and owned a gardening business between 1966 and 2003, when he retired. “Gardening was like working in the farm, we like to be independent; no bosses,” Indart stated.<sup>123</sup>

Jean Sorhouet, born in Arnegi in 1942, moved to Cokeville, Wyoming in 1964. His trip was facilitated by Charles Iriart. He worked there for five and a half years at the Echeverry Sheep Company. He then returned to Arnegi for eleven months, but the socio-economic conditions had not changed very much, and he decided to return to America, this time to San Francisco, where he began to work for Michel Oyharçabal’s gardening business in November 1970. For two years Jean lived at Ganix and Aña



*A group of Basque gardeners got together to help out Pierre Iriartborde to pour concrete in his house's backyard in Millbrae, California, 1972. From left to right: Frederic Fuldain, Pierre Irola, Johnny Curutchet, Guillaume Irola, Gabriel Begorre, Barth Lahargoue, Etienne Urruty, Jean Baptiste Urruty and Sauveur Anchartechar. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

<sup>123</sup> Auguste Lapeyrade, interview by Nicole Lapeyrade, San Francisco, California, March 24, 2007, Leon Franchisteguy, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2007, and Auguste Indart, interview by Elizabeth Barthe, South San Francisco, California, November 17, 2006.

Iriartborde's Hotel des Alpes until it was sold. Then, he moved to Hotel de France until May 1973. At that time, he started his own gardening business and got his own apartment. He went back home in 1977 and married Marie Etchegoinberry, born in 1950 in Landibarre, and both returned to San Francisco in April 1978. As many other Basque women at the time she began cleaning houses, while Jean has continued to work as a gardener since then. However, Jean felt that fewer Basques are involved in the gardening business than thirty years ago.<sup>124</sup>

As Decroos pointed out, gardening, like shepherding before it, can no longer be considered as a main occupational marker of Bay Area Basques.<sup>125</sup> New Basque generations are abandoning their parents' occupations, so there is little indication that gardening will continue to be one of the main economic activities among Basques. Over two decades later, our research on Bay Area Basque clubs' membership indicates that only 13% of members are gardeners/landscapers. Over one-third of members are retired, 10% are students, and the rest are liberal professionals, and skilled and unskilled laborers.

## Reverse Migration and New Immigrants

Thousands of Basques, generation after generation, came to the United States in search of a better life. Many of them left with the intention of returning home, particularly after the implementation of restricted immigration laws that constrained them to a three-year contract. Basque immigration, largely linked to the shepherding industry was characterized by being circular, temporal and seasonal—i.e., Basques as sojourners. Only after living in the U.S. for some time did some Basques decided to remain in the country for a variety of reasons, such as the realization that there were still more possibilities for a more prosperous life in America than in the Old Country, and many decided to start families. Others returned to the Basque Country temporarily or permanently. Grinberg and Grinberg stated that emigrants often “return home out of a need to prove to [themselves] that all [they] left behind is still in fact there, that it did not all disappear and turn into a figment of the imagination, that those [they] left behind have forgiven [them] for abandoning them, that they have not forgotten them and love them still.”<sup>126</sup>

Daniel Unhassobiscay, Sebastien Gomis, Philippe Iribarren and Chantal Etcheverry were born in the U.S., but at one point in their lives their parents decided to terminate

124 Jean Sorhouet, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Bruno, California, December 30, 2006, and Marie Sorhouet, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Bruno, California, December 30, 2006.

125 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 43.

126 Leon Grinberg and Rebecca Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 181. See also Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas, “Retornados e Inadaptados” El “Americano” Gallego, entre Mito y Realidad (1880-1930),” *Revista de Indias* 214 (1998).

the “American dream” to initiate a new chapter of their renewed Basque dream.<sup>127</sup> Daniel was born in 1973 in San Francisco to Jacques and Dorothy Unhassobiscay, and in 1984 the whole family went to live to the Basque Country. Sebastien was born in 1974 in Uharte Garazi, and when he was one year old his parents Marie Pierre Haristoy and Pepe Gomis took him to San Francisco. The family stayed in the U.S. for twelve and a half years until his parents decided to return. Philippe was born in 1975 in San Francisco, and when he was fourteen his parents, Gracie Duhalde and Beñat Iribarren, both from Ortaize, also decided to return. They are currently living in Donibane Lohitzune. Finally, Chantal was born in Oakland in 1991 and her parents, Linda Etcheverry and Roland Lacourrage, moved to Ortaize in 2005. Since they left, all of them have visited the U.S. on several occasions as they still have family and friends in the Bay Area.

Their adaptation to the Basque Country was not so easy, particularly since they all had grown up in the Bay Area and then moved into small villages and towns. However, their young age helped them to adjust and make new friends quickly. For Sebastien and Chantal learning new languages was extremely hard, and in addition to that, some school children did not treat them well because they were “Americans.” The first winters were tough as there were not many things to



*From left to right Chantal Etcheverry, Philippe Iribarren, Sebastien Gomis, and Daniel Unhassobiscay conversing about their experiences living in the Basque Country. Basque Cultural Center, February 16, 2007. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

<sup>127</sup> Chantal Etcheverry et al., focus group interview on *Reverse Migration*, facilitated by Yvonne Hauscarriague and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, February 16, 2007.



do. Today, they recognized that the Basque Country is quite advanced in socio-economic and technological terms, and there are not many differences between lifestyles there and in the U.S. They all had previously visited the Basque Country on summer vacations, but living there permanently was a different story. Daniel remembered that his father was disappointed when they went back. The first couple of years were particularly hard for his father as he was treated as an *Amerikanua* (a Basque American) even though he was Basque.

The emigrant generation and the first generation born in the host country frequently suffer from a sense of estrangement and a feeling of exclusion in both homeland and hostland —i.e., a process of “othering” and “foreignization” according to Noivo.<sup>128</sup> In the words of Basque poet Joseba Sarrionandia, “Itsasoaz bestaldera joan ziren, eta ez dira egundo itzuliko [...] Eta inoiz itzuliko balira ere, jadanik ez dira joan zirenak izango” (They left overseas and will never return [...] and if someday they would come back, they wouldn’t be the same as when they left).<sup>129</sup>

According to Chantal, Daniel, Philippe, and Sebastien, the most rewarding aspects of living in the Basque Country are getting to know the family and being able to learn Basque traditions from different villages on both sides of the border. However, they all argued that Basque traditions are stronger in the U.S because, in Philippe’s words, when “you are far away from home you work hard to keep them alive, because they are part of who you are.” They are concerned that the Basque language or Euskara will largely vanish after the immigrant generation passes away if nothing is done. In a sense, they feel more Basque in the U.S. than in the Basque Country. They expressed that in the Basque Country, many people still believe that all Basque Americans are rich; so many young people want to come to the U.S., but they do not know that they have to work hard, and there are no longer as many opportunities as there were during their parents’ time.

Among recent Basque immigrants to the Bay Area, there were Gorka Ochogaray, Eric and Philippe Garat, Javier Romeo and Óscar Espinal.<sup>130</sup> Javier, born in 1960 in Pamplona-Iruña, Nafarroa, immigrated in 1984; Gorka, born in Bizkaia, came in 1989; and Óscar, born in Culiacan-Xinaloa, Mexico, arrived in 1994. Óscar’s parents, both from Orondritz, Nafarroa, had previously immigrated to Mexico where Óscar was born. At the age of three, his entire family moved back to Nafarroa.

Gorka represents a new type of immigrant from the Basque Country. This type of immigration is a byproduct of the socio-economic and technological advancement of Basque society. Gorka came to earn a PhD in medicine at the University of Southern

128 Edite Noivo, “Towards a Cartography of Portuguesness: Challenging the Hegemonic Center,” *Diaspora* 11, no. 2 (2002): 256, 66.

129 Joseba Sarrionandia, *Hnuy Illa Nyha Majak Yahoo (Poemak 1985-1995)* (Donostia: Elkar, 1995), 119.

130 Gorka Ochogaray, interview by Xabier Berrueta, San Francisco, California, 2001. Óscar Espinal et al., focus group interview on *New Immigrants*, facilitated by Gina Espinal and Marisa Espinal, South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007.

California in Los Angeles where he lived for five years until he completed his degree. He then enrolled in a postdoctoral program at the National Institute of Health, in Bethesda, Maryland, and ultimately landed a permanent position in San Francisco. Óscar, on the other hand, plans to return to the Basque Country. The Garat brothers were both born in San Francisco (Eric in 1969 and Philippe in 1971) to parents from Hasparren. After living in the Basque Country they decided to return and settle down in the Bay Area. Eric worked for a while at Chalet Basque in San Rafael and at the moment works as a gardener. He is currently a director of the Catering Board that supervises the Basque Cultural Center Restaurant in South San Francisco. Philippe is a *sous-chef* at the BCC's restaurant.

## Assimilation: Resistance is Futile?

Decroos argued that the later generations of San Francisco Basques suffered of a progressive disengagement with their own sense of Basque identity.<sup>131</sup> The author evidenced that there was an increase in self-identification as American to the detriment of Basque or Basque American within the San Francisco Basque community in the 1970s. This assimilation was defined in terms of an increase in intermarriage and relationships with non-Basques, and decreased participation in Basque organizations and activities along with a decrease in Basque language retention or use. As we have seen earlier, some of these overpowering forces of assimilation (specifically with regard to Basque language) were set in motion decades ago and continue to be present in today's Bay Area Basque community.

Douglass and Bilbao argued that there was a tendency for Basques (particularly among the immigrant generation) to marry within their own ethnic group, which reinforced Basque exclusivity and heritage maintenance and which to some extent favored business partnerships.<sup>132</sup> Gachiteguy corroborated this argument by stating that of 500 Basque marriages contracted in California in the 1950s, 86.6% of them were endogamous (70.2% of them were among immigrants).<sup>133</sup> In the case of the 1970s San Francisco Basque community, most individuals born in the Basque Country also married native Basques (66.6% in the case of males and 87.5% in the case of females—the Basque community was still male-dominated back then, which explains the higher number of female Basques marrying Basques).<sup>134</sup> Other studies found that most first generation American-born Basques married non-Basques.<sup>135</sup>

131 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 82-83.

132 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 343; 46-47.

133 Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans l'ouest Américain*, 66.

134 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*.

135 Pagliarulo, "Basques in Stockton," 34, Clifford A. Sather, "Marriage Patterns among Basques of Shoshone, Idaho" (Senior Thesis, Reed College, 1961), 48.

However, in the 1970s in San Francisco this group continued to choose partners from their own ethnic community (50% in the case of males and 66.7% in the case of females).<sup>136</sup> As a result of the lack of new immigrants since the mid-1960s and 1970s, however, there is increased difficulty for Basques of any generation to marry within their own group.

Regarding Euskara, Douglass and Bilbao argued that in very general terms the knowledge and retention of Basque among the first generation of Basques born in the U.S. erodes with the passage of time, while second generation Basques “rarely retain any Basque-language competence or comprehension.”<sup>137</sup> Decroos found that in the 1970s San Francisco Basque community “few second generation individuals [i.e., first generation Basques born in the country] (and virtually no-one of the third generation) [i.e., second generation Basques born in the country] speak or understand the tongue [as used in everyday communication].”<sup>138</sup> He suggested that the most salient factors that discouraged Basques from retaining and using the Basque language were: intermarriage with non-Basque speakers, difficulty learning the language due to a lack of teachers, a sense of uselessness of learning and/or using the language in a non-Basque speaking context. There was clear encouragement to teach English, French or Spanish at home, but not Basque, because of a perceived social stigma that immigrants brought with them from the Basque Country. Decroos observed ambivalent attitudes among immigrant and first generation Basques towards the teaching of the Basque language. Over 39% of his informants disapproved of it being taught; of those 30% were born in Iparralde and 44.4% in Hegoalde.<sup>139</sup>

There is an assumption that the better educated and higher income generations tend to be more assimilated into American society.<sup>140</sup> But according to the U.S. Census, over 38% of self-defined Basques in San Francisco held a Bachelor’s degree or higher. At the national level this number reaches nearly 25%, and it is over 23% at the state level. In addition, at national and California state levels self-defined Basques had higher per capita incomes than the average “American.”<sup>141</sup> This does not hold true in San Francisco, however, where the figure is slightly lower. Halter argued that “the U.S. Census indicated that among whites, a complete reversal has occurred in the relationship of ethnic identification to social class. Those of European descent who answered the question about ancestry on the census forms with “American” rather than a specific ethnic heritage had higher rates of poverty and lower levels of

136 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*.

137 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 365.

138 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 76.

139 See Chapter Six for activities carried out by the Bay Area Basque clubs to promote the Basque language

140 See Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 81.

141 United States Census Bureau, “U.S. Census,” (2000).

education than those who listed their ethnic designation. For example, of those who wrote “American,” only 10 percent had college degrees, compared to 25 percent of those who reported a specific ancestry.”<sup>142</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Basque immigration into America is not a new phenomenon, although it is quite recent in the United States compared to that of Central and South America, which goes back to the fifteenth century. Basque immigration was traditionally linked to the expansion and contraction of the Hispanic Monarchy (1492-1898) and to a lesser extent to French and Portuguese overseas exploration and colonization. The land of the Basques could not provide for all its sons and daughters and a lack of resources together with political uprisings and brutal wars forced thousands of Basques to leave in search of a new and prosperous life in the New World.

The first massive wave of Basque immigration into California, alongside many other groups, dates back to the discovery of gold and the subsequent “gold fever” that spread out throughout the planet. Basques entered into the mining business as well as other occupations and relatively quickly monopolized the sheep industry for nearly a century, triggering successive waves of immigrants from the Old Country. For the reasons detailed above, the sheep business fell into decline at the end of the nineteenth century in California, and many Basques left the state pursuing new open-ranges throughout the American West, while others settled in urban areas where there was an increasing demand for wage laborers. By the beginning of the twentieth century the San Francisco Bay Area became the main Basque settlement in California (particularly for immigrants from the northern part of the Basque Country and Nafarroa), becoming the largest of the nation in the decades to follow.

In the next Chapter, we will address the structure of current Basque communities in the Bay Area by exploring in detail the composition of membership in their socio-cultural and recreational institutions.

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<sup>142</sup> Marilyn Halter, *Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), 11.



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## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there were over 57,000 self-defined Basques in the United States, and over one-third of them lived in California, thereby constituting the largest Basque enclave in the country.<sup>143</sup> Despite the fact that there are Basques in every single state, 80% of the entire Basque population lives in the thirteen states of the American West. The Basques of California—the most populated American state with nearly thirty-four million people—represent 45.4% of the Basque population in the American West.<sup>144</sup> Approximately, 3,500 of these Basques live in the San Francisco Bay Area—i.e., 16.7% of the Californian Basques and over 6% of the Basque population nationwide (see Table 1).<sup>145</sup> That is, the Bay Area boasts the single largest concentration of Basques in California, followed by the communities of Los Angeles County with 15.71%, Orange County with 8.26%, and Kern County with 6.21%.

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<sup>143</sup> U.S. Census, (2000).

<sup>144</sup> Nearly 6% of the Basque population lives in the states of Florida and New York, and over 14% of Basques live in the rest of the country (not including the American West).

<sup>145</sup> The U.S. 2000 Census has not data available for Basques residing in Marin, Napa and Solano counties. There are nearly seven million people living in over 100 cities in the San Francisco Bay Area, and there are only 549 self-defined Basques in San Francisco City.

**Table 1. Basque population in the American West as of 2000**

Alaska	276
Arizona	1,655
<b>California</b>	<b>20,848</b>
(San Francisco Bay Area)	(3,476)
Colorado	1,674
Hawaii	175
Idaho	6,637
Montana	564
Nevada	6,096
New Mexico	600
Oregon	2,627
Utah	1,361
Washington	2,665
Wyoming	869
<b>Total American West</b>	<b>46,047</b>
<b>Total U.S.</b>	<b>57,593</b>

Source: U.S. Census, 2000.

From an institutional point of view, Basque culture in the U.S. is promoted and sponsored by socio-cultural, recreational and educational associations. As of 2007, thirty-eight of these (from ten states), are associated with North American Basque Organizations, Incorporated (NABO), which was established in 1973.<sup>146</sup> Individual memberships in NABO clubs total nearly 6,400.<sup>147</sup> Approximately 96% of the total membership corresponds to clubs located in the American West, which reflects the geographical distribution of the Basque communities in the country. Assuming that one person represents one membership, only 11.1% of Basques in the U.S. belong to a Basque association<sup>148</sup> (see Table 2).

The oldest surviving Basque association in the U.S. is the Euzko Etxea Basque Club established in 1913 in New York City. The newest one is the Santa Rosa Basque Club—a splinter group of the Danak Bat Basque Club from Winnemucca, Nevada— set up in 2007 (see Table 3). The largest Basque club in the nation is the

<sup>146</sup> For further information on NABO's history see Argitxu Camus Echeopar, *The North American Basque Organizations (NABO), Incorporated-Ipar Amerikako Euskal Elkarteak (1973-2007)*, Urazandi (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2007).

<sup>147</sup> There is no data available for the Santa Rosa (Winnemucca, Nevada), Washington D.C., and Mountain Home (Idaho) clubs.

<sup>148</sup> However, as we will see, in the case of the Bay Area, many Basques are inclined to hold more than one membership, so at a national level the actual number of Basques who belong to clubs might be much smaller



**Table 2. Basque Association Membership in the U.S. by State as of 2006**

California	2,671
(San Francisco Bay Area)	(973)
Colorado	80
Idaho	2,104
Nevada	886
New York	212
Oregon	90
Utah	142
Washington	74
Washington D.C.	n/a
Wyoming	133
<b>Total U.S.</b>	<b>6,392</b>

Source: NABO.

**Table 3. Basque-Californian Associations' Founding Years and Membership as of 2006**

Kern County Basque Club (Bakersfield, 1944)	780
Basque Cultural Center (San Francisco, 1979)	450
Basque Club of California (San Francisco, 1960)	300
Fresno Basque Club (Fresno, 1978)	256
Los Banos Basque Club (Los Banos, 1964)	200
Marin-Sonoma Basque Association (Novato/San Rafael, 1989)	140
Chino Basque Club (Chino, 1967)	133
Iparreko Ibarra Northern Valley Basque Club (Rocklin, 2005)	99
Anaitasuna Basque Club (San Francisco, 1991)	83
Itxas Alde Ventura County Basque Club (Thousand Oaks, 1993)	80
Susanville Basque Club (Susanville, 1975)	60
Southern California Basque Club (Chino, 1946)	50
Los Angeles Oberena Basque Club (Downey, 1980s)	40
<b>Total Bay Area</b>	<b>973</b>
<b>Total California</b>	<b>2,671</b>

Source: NABO.

Euzkaldunak from Boise, Idaho, with approximately 1,000 members. In California there are thirteen active clubs with a combined membership of over 2,600. The largest as well as the oldest surviving Basque association in California is Kern County Basque Club with nearly 800 members and 29.2% of the total Californian membership, established in Bakersfield in 1944. It is followed by the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, Incorporated (BCC hereafter) and the Basque Club of California, Incorporated (also known as the San Francisco Basque Club; Basque Club hereafter). The smallest California association is Oberena Basque Club from Los Angeles. The combined membership of Bay Area Basque clubs accounts for 36.4% of the total Californian membership (see Table 3).

I estimate that a total of 456 people belong to the different Bay Area Basque associations: Anaitasuna Basque Club, Incorporated (Anaitasuna hereafter), Marin-Sonoma Basque Association, Incorporated (MSBA or Marin-Sonoma hereafter), Basque Club of California, and the Basque Cultural Center.<sup>149</sup> That is 13.11% of the total Bay Area Basque population. In other words, as of 2007 thirteen of every 100 Basques belong to a Basque association in the Bay Area. Members of these Bay Area Basque associations live in fifty-three locations throughout the Bay Area, in other Californian towns and cities, in the states of Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, and Texas, and in the Basque Country (see Table 4).

**Table 4. Bay Area Club Membership by Place of Residence**

	California (outside Bay Area) (5.82%)	Outside California (1.56%)	Outside U.S. (0.4%)
Bay Area			
92.18%	Elk Grove, Hollister, Los Angeles Los Banos, Marysville, Oakdale, Rocklin, Roseville, Stockton and Woodland	Boise (Idaho), Gardnerville (Nevada), Lubbock (Texas), and Phoenix (Arizona)	Donibane Garazi (Nafarroa Beherea)

Over 92% of the Basque club members live in thirty-eight towns throughout the Bay Area's nine counties. The majority of members live in San Mateo County (e.g., 9.3% in South San Francisco, 6.2% in Burlingame, 5.4% in Redwood City, 5.1% in

<sup>149</sup> A survey was designed to learn about the composition of the Bay Area Basque associations. It was carried out in 2007, and it was answered by 256 people. Those who responded to our survey hold 546 different memberships. Therefore, I can *cautiously* estimate that if 256 people represent 546 memberships, the total number of people that represent the existing 973 memberships across the different Basque associations is 456 (see also Methodological Notes).

Millbrae, and 4.6% in San Bruno), in San Francisco County/City, in Marin County (Corte Madera, Greenbrae, Mill Valley, Novato and San Rafael), and in Sonoma County (Cotati, Penngrove, Petaluma and Sonoma) (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Bay Area Club Members' Place of Residence by County**

San Mateo (11 towns)	41.01%
San Francisco	26.17%
Marin ( 5 towns)	8.2%
Sonoma (4 towns)	5.07%
Solano (3 towns)	3.9%
Santa Clara (4 towns)	3.12%
Contra Costa (6 towns)	2.73%
Alameda (3 towns)	1.95%
Napa (1 town)	0.39%
<b>Total Bay Area (38 towns)</b>	<b>92.18%</b>



*Klika band, adult and children dance groups posed in front of the Basque Cultural Center as part of its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary weekend events. February 17, 2007. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

The majority of the participants belong to the BCC, followed by the Basque Club, Marin-Sonoma and Anaitasuna associations, which reflects the size of their respective membership (see Table 6a).<sup>150</sup> In addition, 78% of total members, and particularly those over forty-six years old and male, belong to more than two Bay Area Basque clubs, which reveals a close interrelation among different Basque communities in the San Francisco region and their institutional network (see Table 6b). For instance, over half of the Anaitasuna and the Marin-Sonoma association members belong to all four of the other Bay Area Basque clubs (see Table 6c).

**Table 6a. Bay Area Basque Club Membership**

Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	Basque Cultural Center
25.8%	37.9%	62.9%	86.7%

**Table 6b. Bay Area Number of Club Memberships by Gender and by Age**

	By total percentage	By gender		By Age				
		Female	Male	18-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	Over 75
1 club	32%	50%	50%	14%	16%	22%	24%	6%
2 clubs	35.9%	37%	63%	9%	25%	17%	29%	12%
3 clubs	18.8%	16.7%	83.3%	4%	16%	3%	19%	6%
4 clubs	13.3%	23.5%	76.5%	2%	3%	5%	19%	5%

**Table 6c. Number of Club Memberships by Club**

	Bay Area clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
1 club	32%	3.03%	5.15%	6.21%	29.27%
2 clubs	35.9%	9.1%	22.7%	44.72%	37.83%
3 clubs	18.8%	36.36%	37.1%	28%	17.56%
4 clubs	13.3%	51.5%	51.51%	35%	15.31%

<sup>150</sup> Regarding the survey, notice that in many instances the total exceeds 100% as participants could choose more than one option. For an individual analysis of each association's membership see Chapters Four and Five.

# A PROFILE OF THE BASQUE CLUBS MEMBERS

## Place of Birth

Most of the members were born in the Basque Country followed by those who were born in the Bay Area. There are members from every single homeland province with the exception of Araba. They were born in sixty-five locations: thirty-nine from the north of the Basque Country or Iparralde and twenty-six from the south or Hegoalde.<sup>151</sup> Over 90% of those localities are indeed rural and small. Despite the varied geographical origin of these members, the largest concentration of immigrants (20.7% of membership) comes from the neighboring valleys of Baigorri (particularly from the villages/towns of Aldude, Baigorri and Ortzaze) and Baztan (mainly from the villages/towns of Arizkun and Erratzu) alongside the Franco-Spanish border. Those valleys have a combined population of over 13,000 people.

The majority of members were born in Iparralde, particularly in the territory of Nafarroa Beherea. Over 42% of members were born in both territories of Nafarroa —i.e., Nafarroa Beherea and Nafarroa. Within Nafarroa Beherea over 87% were born in the cantons of Baigorri (in nine of its eleven towns), Donibane Garazi (in eleven of its nineteen towns) and Iholdi (in five of its fourteen towns). Within Nafarroa 89.5% were born in the Pyrenees valleys of Baztan (in eight of its fifteen towns), Erroibar and Doneztebe (see Table 7a). Club composition varies little with regard to member origin; however, Anaitasuna presents the largest percentage of

**Table 7a. Bay Area Club Membership by Place of Birth**

Basque Country (50%)			
South (17.2%)	North (32.8%)	U.S. (46.5%)	Outside the U.S. (3.5%)
Nafarroa (14.8%)	Nafarroa Beherea (27.3%)	California (45.3%)	Colombia, France,
Bizkaia (1.5%)	Lapurdi (4%)	Bay Area (41.4%)	Germany, Italy,
Gipuzkoa (0.8%)	Zuberoa (1.5%)	Outside California: Idaho,	Mexico, Peru,
Araba (0%)		Nevada, Texas (1.2%)	Spain

<sup>151</sup> The localities are in Bizkaia—Gernika, Ibarangelu, Lekeitio and Zamudio—in Gipuzkoa—Renteria and Zarautz—in Lapurdi—Ahetze, Ainhoa, Baiona, Gixune, Hazparne, Kanbo, Makea and Ustaritze—in Nafarroa—Almandoz, Amaiur, Arizkun, Arraioz, Baztan, Donamaria, Doneztebe, Elizondo, Erratzu, Erroibar, Esnotz, Etulain, Etxalar, Iruña, Irurita, Nabazkoze, Orondritz, Sunbilla, Uztarroz, Ziga and Zilbeti—in Nafarroa Beherea—Ahatsa, Aintzila, Aldude, Anhaize, Armendaritze, Arnegi, Azkarate, Baigorri, Banka, Bidarrai, Duzunaritze-Sarasketa, Ezterenzubi, Heleta, Irisarri, Irulegi, Izpura, Landibarre, Larribarre-Sorhapürü, Mehaine, Mendibe, Ostankoa, Ortzaze, Donibane Garazi, Donamartiri, Eihalarre, Uharte Garazi, Urepele and Zaro—and in Zuberoa—Eskiula, Lohitzüne-Oihergi and Maule.

members from Hegoalde (30.2%), while the Marin-Sonoma club exhibits the largest percentage of members from Iparralde (42.3%). On the other hand, the Basque Club and the BCC have the largest percentage (43.5% and 44.6%, respectively) of members born in the U.S., which indicates a more balanced composition of members from the immigrant generation and their descendants (see Table 7b and also Table 10b).

**Table 7b. Membership Place of Birth by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
<b>Basque Country</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>65.1%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>52.2%</b>	<b>52.8%</b>
<b>South</b>	<b>17.2%</b>	<b>30.2%</b>	<b>23.7%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	<b>17.5%</b>
Nafarroa	14.8%	25.7%	20.7%	17.5%	14.8%
Bizkaia	1.5%	1.5%	1%	0.6%	1.8%
Gipuzkoa	0.8%	3%	2%	1.2%	0.9%
Araba	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<b>North</b>	<b>32.8%</b>	<b>34.8%</b>	<b>42.3%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>35.3%</b>
Nafarroa Beherea	27.3%	28.8%	35.1%	26.1%	29%
Lapurdi	4%	4.5%	3.1%	5.6%	4.5%
Zuberoa	1.5%	1.5%	4.1%	1.24%	1.8%
<b>U.S.</b>	<b>46.5%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>43.5%</b>	<b>44.6%</b>
California	45.3%	30%	31%	42.2%	43.2%
Bay Area	41.4%	28.8%	29.9%	39.1%	40%
Outside California	1.2%	0%	0%	1.3%	3.2%
<b>Outside the U.S.</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>

## Gender

In three cases, the survey was administered during the celebration of *mus*<sup>152</sup> tournaments that take place during the year in the different Basque Bay area clubs. These tournaments are dominated by male participants, and consequently the respondents to the survey in these particular instances were mostly men. However,

<sup>152</sup> Mus is a card game similar to poker.

*Félix Istilar, Sebastien Curutchet, Jean Pierre Cabalette, Cruz Oteiza and Félix Bilbao playing at the BCC's 2006 Mus Tournament.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



according to the information provided by eighty-nine or 55% of Basque clubs registered with the Basque government in 2006, the majority of clubs worldwide are also predominately male.<sup>153</sup> Over 64% of Bay Area Basque clubs members are male (see Table 8a). But this percentage increases if we consider the situation of each

**Table 8a. Bay Area Basque Club Membership According to Gender**

	Bay Area Membership (2007)	Worldwide Membership (2006)
Male	64.5%	54%
Female	35.5%	46%

<sup>153</sup> Miren Bilbao and Kontxi Kerexeta, "Análisis de los Socios y Encuesta Gaztemundu " (paper presented at the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities, Bilbao, July 9-12, 2007). In 1994 the Basque government established a registry of Basque clubs abroad (meaning outside the administrative limits of the Basque Autonomous Community, BAC) as a legal requirement under Law 8/94 that regulates the relationship between the BAC public institutions and the Basque institutional diaspora. Basque associations abroad need to be registered with the government in order to receive any financial assistance, for example. See also Oiarzabal, Pedro J. "The Basque Diaspora Webscape: Online Discourses of Basque Diaspora Identity, Nationhood, and Homeland." PhD Dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, 2006.

club individually. For example, three of every four members of the Anaitasuna and Marin-Sonoma clubs are male (see Table 8b). Within the overall Basque population of California, over half (54.25%) of self-defined Basques are male.<sup>154</sup>

**Table 8b. Members' Gender by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
Male	64.5%	78.8%	78.35%	70.2%	63%
Female	35.5%	21.2%	21.64%	29.8%	37%

## Age

The membership of Bay Area Basque institutions is older than the average of their counterparts around the world—i.e., over 65% of their members were over forty-six years old (75.2% in the case of the Marin-Sonoma club), while only over 11% were between eighteen and thirty years old (7.2% in the Marin-Sonoma club). In addition, the percentage of people between forty-six and sixty years old is nearly half of the average percentage of other Basque clubs (see Tables 9a and 9b). The median age of self-defined Basques in California is thirty-nine, while nationwide it is thirty-seven.<sup>155</sup>

**Table 9a. Bay Area Basque Club Membership According to Age**

	Bay Area Membership (2007)	Worldwide Membership (2006)
18-30	11.3%	13% (18-29 yrs)
31-45	23.4%	21% (30-45 yrs)
46-60	18.4%	33% (46-64 yrs)
61-75	35.5%	26% (over 65 yrs)
Older than 75	11.3%	
Over 46	65.2%	59%
Over 61	46.8%	26% (over 65 yrs)

<sup>154</sup> U.S. Census, 2000.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.



**Table 9b. Membership Age by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
18-30	11.3%	10%	7.21%	10.5%	10%
31-45	23.4%	19.7%	17.52%	26.7%	23.8%
46-60	18.4%	13.6%	16.5%	13.6%	17.1%
61-75	35.5%	48.5%	43.3%	37.26%	36.5%
Older than 75	11.3%	9.1%	15.46%	11.8%	12.6%
Over 46	65.2%	71.2%	75.25%	62.73%	66.21%
Over 61	46.8%	57.6%	58.76%	49.06%	49.09%

Some writers, such as Climo, Simic and Stoller argue that individuals between twenty-five and fifty years old—the so-called lost generation—are less active in identity maintenance, but I do not feel that this is necessarily the case in the San Francisco Basque associations.<sup>156</sup> For example, over 23% of members are between thirty-one and forty-five years old (26.7% in the case of the Basque Club membership), and 53% are part of the first generation born outside the Basque Country (see also Table 10c).

## Heritage

According to a study of the database of Basque clubs registered with the Basque government, the immigrant generation is rapidly disappearing. That is, as of 1999, 83% of members of Basque clubs worldwide have been born outside the homeland.<sup>157</sup> For example, FEVA, the Federation of Basque-Argentinean Entities, estimated that only 2% of its membership was born in the Basque Country.<sup>158</sup>

On the contrary, the results of our survey demonstrate that the majority of Bay Area Basque club membership is still constituted by the immigrant generation (50% of total membership; and over 65% in the cases of the Anaitasuna and Marin-Sonoma associations). Their children and grandchildren comprised the bulk of

<sup>156</sup> Jacob Climo, "Transmitting Ethnicity through Oral Narratives," *Ethnic Groups* 8 (1990), Andrei Simic, "Ethnicity as a Resource for the Aged: An Anthropological Perspective," *Journal of Applied Gerontology* 4 (1985), Eleanor P. Stoller, "Sauna, Sisu, and Sibelius: Ethnic Identity among Finish Americans," *The Sociological Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1996).

<sup>157</sup> Gobierno Vasco, *World Congress on Basque Communities, 1999. Vitoria-Gasteiz, October 26-29* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2000), 27-32.

<sup>158</sup> FEVA, "Euskal Etxeak de Argentina: Diagnóstico y Proyección de Futuro" (paper presented at the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities, Bilbao, July 9-12, 2007).

remaining club membership. The successful Basque socialization of the first generation born in the U.S. has been achieved, and generational replacement is secure for now due in part to the effective establishment of Basque cultural associations such as the BCC that offers a clubhouse where members of the community can meet. However, there is a need to incorporate a new generation of young Basques in order to maintain not only the institutions, but also the activities they carry out, in the near future (see Tables 10a and 10b).

**Table 10a. Bay Area Basque Club Membership by Heritage**

	Bay Area Membership (2007)	Worldwide Membership (1999)
Immigrant generation (Born in the Basque Country)	50%	17%
Parent immigrated (1 <sup>st</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	39.8%	n/a
Grandparent immigrated (2 <sup>nd</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	3.9%	n/a
Other heritage	6.3%	n/a

**Table 10b. Membership Heritage by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
Immigrant generation	50%	65.15%	66%	52.17%	52.7%
Parent Immigrated	39.8%	28.8%	31%	38.5%	39.63%
Grandparent Immigrated	3.9%	1.5%	0%	2.5%	3.6%
Other heritage	6.3%	4.5%	3.1%	6.8%	4.05%

As mentioned above, the immigrant generation is aging. That is, 81.3% of members of this generation are older than sixty-one—i.e., they were born in the 1930s and 1940s. On the other hand, the majority of these immigrants’ children (53%) are between thirty-one and forty-five years old. Three of every four members of the first generation of Basques born in this country are between eighteen and forty-five years old. Finally 50% of the immigrants’ grandchildren are between eighteen and thirty years old (see Table 10c).

**Table 10c. Heritage of Bay Area Basque Club Members by Age**

Age	By heritage		
	Immigrant generation	Parent Immigrated	Grandparent Immigrated
18-30	0%	22.5%	50%
31-45	4%	53%	0%
46-60	14.8%	19.6%	30%
61-75	61%	4%	20%
Older than 75	20.3%	1%	0%

In addition to their Basque identity, some members also claim other heritages such as French, Italian, Irish, Spanish, German, Croatian, Colombian, Breton, and Peruvian, having the Roman Catholic faith as a common denominator. Consequently, they have also joined other Bay Area cultural associations that represent these other identities including the Italian-American Heritage, the United Irish Cultural Center, and the San Francisco Chicano Association.

## Citizenship

Members born in the Basque Country have retained their respective national citizenship—Spanish or French—and at the same time the majority of them have acquired U.S. citizenship. The largest percentage of members bearing Spanish passports is found in the Anaitasuna club, while the largest percentage of French citizens is found in the BCC, followed by the Marin-Sonoma Basque Association. According to Decroos, by the late 1970s, 75% of San Francisco immigrants were already naturalized.<sup>159</sup> The author interpreted this fact as a symbol of assimilation into the American society. In addition, according to our questionnaire, the immigrants' grandchildren hold only U.S. citizenship, having lost their grandparents' citizenship. With regard to other clubs around the world, the Basque government indicated that merely 3% of members of the Basque clubs registered with them in 1999 hold dual citizenship—state of origin and the state of residence (see Tables 11a, 11b).<sup>160</sup> But in the Bay Area, nearly 45% of members maintain dual citizenship (see Tables 11c, 11d). According to the U.S. Census, in California over 10% of self-defined Basques are foreign-born.<sup>161</sup> In San Francisco, that number exceeds 25%.

<sup>159</sup> Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983).

<sup>160</sup> Gobierno Vasco, *World Congress on Basque Communities, 1999. Vitoria-Gasteiz, October 26-29, 27-32.*

<sup>161</sup> U.S. Census, 2000.

**Table 11a. Bay Area Basque Club Membership by Citizenship; Also by Heritage**

	By total percentage	By heritage		
		Immigrant generation	Parent Immigrated	Grandparent Immigrated
Spanish	12.9%	18.8%	6.9%	0%
French	41%	51.6%	34.3%	0%
U.S.	91%	83.6%	99%	100%

**Table 11b. Members' Citizenship by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
Spanish	12.9%	24.24%	18.55%	14.3%	11.7%
French	41%	30.3%	44.32%	40.37%	44.6%
U.S.	91%	84.8%	88.65%	90.06%	91.4%

**Table 11c. Bay Area Basque Club Membership by Number of Citizenship(s) Held**

	Bay Area Membership (2007)	Worldwide Membership (1999)
1 citizenship	54.7%	97%
2 citizenship	44.9%	3%

**Table 11d. Number of Citizenship(s) by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
1 citizenship	54.7%	60.6%	48.45%	54.65%	52.25%
2 citizenship	44.9%	39.4%	51.54%	45.34%	47.74%

According to Decroos' study of the San Francisco Basque community, in the 1970s "two-thirds of the first [i.e., immigrant] generation (of both French and Spanish origins) identified themselves as "Basques."<sup>162</sup> The first time that Americans could

162 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 90-91.

specify their ethnic identity over the previous option of nationality (national origin) in the U.S. Census was in 1980. Until then, Basques did not have any other option other than to define themselves as French or Spanish, masking the real number of Basques present in the country.<sup>163</sup> Since then, Basques have been able to define themselves as “Spanish-Basque” or “French-Basque” or just “Basque.” For example, if in 1980, 52% of Basques chose the option of simply “Basque,” without specifying their state of origin, a decade later the number increased to 72%. This shows an increasing trend among Basques to cease to identify with the forefathers’ states of origin.<sup>164</sup>

## Languages

The Basque language, Euskara, is one of the most distinctive identity markers of both diaspora and homeland Basques. According to the Basque government, slightly over 13% of the membership of Basque clubs in 1999 knew Basque.<sup>165</sup> In the Bay Area over 66% of Basque club members speak Basque, and over 31% speak not only Basque but also Spanish, French and English.<sup>166</sup> This is particularly relevant for the oldest members. For example, nearly 59% of members over seventy-five years old and 70% of male members speak four languages (see Tables 12a, 12b, 12c and 12d).

English is the only language shared by all generations, and it is the only one that seems to survive among the immigrants’ grandchildren, who have lost their grandparents’ languages— Basque, French and/or Spanish. Nearly 97% of members over seventy-five years old speak Basque. According to the U.S. Census, over 77% and 65% of self-defined Basques in California and San Francisco, respectively, speak mainly English at home.<sup>167</sup> Unfortunately, less than 1% of the immigrants’ grandchildren’s generation (over eighteen years old and members of the different Bay Area Basque clubs) speak Basque (see Tables 12a and 12e). Despite the fact that many Basques speak Euskara, they did not transmit it to their children.

The majority of interviewees stated that one of the reasons for not speaking Basque to their children was because it would be of little value in the job market, and they would have little opportunity to use it in the Old Country. For example, Yvette Urruty, who came to the U.S. in 1967, argued that at home she and her husband Jean Baptiste, who left the Basque Country in 1960, spoke French to their children: “We thought it might be more necessary for them to learn [French] if they

163 William A. Douglass, “Re-Counting Basques,” *Basque Studies Program Newsletter* 1993.

164 U.S. Census, 1980, 1990.

165 Gobierno Vasco, *World Congress on Basque Communities, 1999. Vitoria-Gasteiz, October 26-29, 27-32.*

166 Our survey indicates the number of languages spoken by the members of the Bay Area Basque clubs. It does not measure the level of understanding, fluency and literacy.

167 U.S. Census, 2000.

were to travel around, travel back home [a lot of their nieces and nephews don't speak Basque]. We have family in Paris, Saint-Jean-de-Luz [Donibane Lohizune], so we thought it would be easier to learn French rather than Basque. But I think we did a mistake. If I were to start all over I would want to teach them Basque because we could have taught them both languages at the same time.”<sup>168</sup> Auguste Indart who was born in Ortzaize in 1940 and came to San Francisco in 1963, also said that he never tried to teach Basque to his children, “No, I never did. I should have, but I never did. I regret it, and they [the children] regret it too. They blame me for it. We all make mistakes.”<sup>169</sup> In addition to the languages mentioned above, a minority of members reported that they speak others such as Italian, Portuguese, or German.

**Table 12a. Bay Area Basque Club Membership by Languages Spoken; Also by Heritage**

	By total percentage	By heritage		
		Immigrant generation	Parent Immigrated	Grandparent Immigrated
French	58.6%	61.3%	32.7%	1.3%
Spanish	60.5%	61.3%	33.5%	0.6%
Basque	66.4%	67.1%	31.8%	0.6%
English	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Table 12b. Languages Spoken by Members by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
French	58.6%	47%	62%	57.1%	62.6%
Spanish	60.5%	60.5%	74.2%	65.2%	60.3%
Basque	66.4%	62.12%	69.1%	64%	72.5%
English	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

<sup>168</sup> Jean Baptiste Urruty, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2001, Yvette Urruty, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2001.

<sup>169</sup> Auguste Indart, interview by Elizabeth Barthe, South San Francisco, California, November 17, 2006. See also Grace Franchisteguy, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2007, Leon Franchisteguy, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2007.

**Table 12c. Bay Area Basque Clubs. Number of Languages Spoken by Gender and Age**

	By total Percentage	By gender		By Age				
		Female	Male	18-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	Over 75
1 language	9%	52.2%	47.8%	31%	11.7%	12.8%	1.1%	0%
2 languages	27.7%	36.6%	63.4%	34.5%	46.7%	31.9%	18.7%	3.4%
3 languages	32%	35.4%	64.6%	20.7%	20%	31.9%	41.8%	37.9%
4 languages	31.3%	30%	70%	13.8%	21.7%	23.4%	38.5%	58.6%

**Table 12d. Number of Languages Spoken by Members by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
1 language	9%	1.5%	3.1%	8.1%	7.2%
2 languages	27.7%	34.84%	25.7%	29.2%	24.3%
3 languages	32%	39.4%	34%	31%	34.2%
4 languages	31.3%	24.24%	37.1%	31.6%	34.2%

**Table 12e. Bay Area Basque Club Membership by Basque Speakers**

	By Age				
	18-30	31-45	46-60	61-75	Over 75
	37.9%	53.3%	61.7%	76.9%	96.6%

## Membership in Other Clubs

As we have seen, many individuals participate in more than one Bay Area Basque club. At the same time, over 78% of the respondents also belong to other associations: Basque clubs outside the San Francisco area (41.4%), as well as French (29.7%) and Spanish (7%) socio-cultural and recreational associations based in San Francisco. The majority of those who stated that they belong to non-Bay Area Basque clubs are members of associations in Gardnerville, Nevada

(59.4%), Los Banos (40.5%), Rocklin (33%) and Fresno in California (11.3%), and in Reno, Nevada (10.4%).<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, over 47% of the respondents belong to two or more non-Bay Area Basque clubs, mapping a network of associations across the states of California, Idaho, and Nevada. Over 56% of non-Bay Area Basque clubs' members are immigrants born on both sides of the Pyrenees; 39.6% are children of immigrants; and only 1% are grandchildren of immigrants. However, we cannot infer the degree of member identification with any given club beyond the direct benefit of being associated; such as the right to participate in local mus tournaments (see Tables 13a, 13b and 13c).

Respondents also belong to twelve different French clubs, including Ligue Henri IV (73.7%), Les Faneurs (55.7%; The Haymakers), Les Chasseurs (23.7%; The Hunters), Les Jardiniers Français (23.7%; The French Gardeners) and Lodge Franco-Américaine # 207 (21%; The French-American Lodge).<sup>171</sup>

Only 7% of participants belong to Spanish associations. All of these belong to Unión Española de California (Spanish Union of California), the only Spanish club in San Francisco. It was established in 1923 and is considered the heir of La Sociedad Española de Beneficencia (The Spanish Society of Beneficence), set up in 1876 (see Table 13a). As of 2007, Unión Española had Spanish-affiliated societies in Sunnyvale, Hayward, Hollister, Sacramento, San Joaquin Valleys and Southern California, and it is a member of the Federation of Spanish Associations and Societies of California (formed by eight entities as of 2007; no Basque association is currently associated with the Spanish Federation). The Anaitasuna Basque Club is housed at the Unión Española's San Francisco clubhouse (on 2850 Alemany Boulevard; until 1984 the clubhouse was located at 827 Broadway). In 2000 there were over 22,000 self-defined Spaniards in California and just over 700 in San Francisco.<sup>172</sup> Jon Elu from Lekeitio, Bizkaia, and brother of Louis Elu, the latest owner of San Francisco's Hotel España (established in 1908 at 785 Broadway), explained the reasons for joining Unión Española, "When I came to this country, there was nothing for the Basques, and Unión Española was the closest to us."<sup>173</sup>

Similarly, the French associations in San Francisco are associated with the Alliance Française (French Alliance) of San Francisco, which is also part of the Federation of Alliances Françaises in California (formed by fourteen local associations)—a chapter of the Federation of Alliances Françaises in the United States. According to the U.S. Census, as of 2000 there were over 8.3 million self-defined French (except Basque)

170 Other associations named are in Susanville, Mountain Home, Chino, Boise, and New York (the Society of Basque Studies in America, which actually was incorporated in 1979 in San Francisco).

171 Other associations are Société "La Gauloise" (Société Française de Secours Mutuel), Union des Français de L'Étranger, Anciens Combattants d'Afrique du Nord, Chambre de Commerce Franco-Américaine, Alliance Française de San Francisco, Lycée Français la Pérouse, San Francisco, and Église Notre Dame Des Victoires.

172 U.S. Census, 2000.

173 Jon Elu, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, October 8, 2006. See also Jean Paul Barthe, interview by Elizabeth Barthe, South San Francisco, California, October 3, 2006.



in the country, over 780,000 in California, and nearly 18,000 in San Francisco. As of 2007, the French Alliance of San Francisco was composed of twenty-two associations. The Basque Club of California and the BCC are considered by the General Consulate of France in San Francisco as French or Francophile associations. Similarly, the Spanish Embassy in the U.S. also includes Basque associations (e.g., Chino Basque Club, California, Elko Basque Club, Nevada or New York Basque Club, New York) in a list of the existing “Spanish” associations in the country. However, none of the Bay Area Basque clubs have registered with either the French or Spanish embassies’ census as either French or Spanish associations. They are, however, registered with the Basque government as Basque associations abroad.

The particular role that Basques have played in the management of French associations is quite relevant. For example, six out of fifteen members of the 2006 Board of Directors of Les Faneurs, a mutual beneficence association established in 1927 and with a current membership of 220, were of Basque origin. (Those were Jean Gorostiague, President of Honor, Jean Sorhouet, President, and four directors: Leon Franchisteguy, Dominique Hauscarriague, Michel Marticorena and Jacques Oyharçabal.)



*Members of the Anaitasuna Basque Association socializing after a meeting at the Unión Española's clubhouse, c. 1998. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

**Jean Gorostiague** came to the United States in June 1958 at the age of nineteen from Eihalarre, Nafarroa Beherea and worked for a year as a shepherd at the Arizona ranch of Pete and Louis Espil, from Baigorri. Then, advised by his cousin Pierre Etchebehere who lived in San Francisco, in May 1959 Jean moved into the Bay Area to pursue his cabinet and carpentry career. In 1961 Jean married Yolanda Benedetti, who had previously emigrated from Italy. Since 1965, Jean has been a general contractor and for over forty years has been quite actively involved with Basque and French associations in the San Francisco area. For example, Jean was a director of the board of the San Francisco Basque Club between 1967 and 1980 and was President between 1971 and 1972. He was also the founding President of the Basque Cultural Center between 1979 and 1982. Since then Jean has served on the board of directors. Because of his particular role in the founding of the BCC, the President of the French Republic made Jean Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite (Knight of the National Order of Merit). In addition, since 1968, 1970 and 1971 Jean has been director of the boards of Les Chasseurs, Les Faneurs and La Ligue Henri IV, respectively. He has also served as president of those three organizations on various occasions. On November 1, 2008, at its 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Basque Hall of Fame, the Society of Basque Studies in America honored Jean for his leadership in the Bay Area Basque community.

Alphonse Acheritogaray has been President of the Anciens Combattants d'Afrique du Nord since 1985; Franchisteguy as well as Jean Pierre Etcheber, Marticorena and Oyharçabal have been presidents of Les Jardiniers. In addition, Franchisteguy and Pierre Ausquy have been presidents of Société "La Gauloise." Finally, Franchisteguy has been the Secretary of both Les Jardiniers and Les Chasseurs since 1982 and 1994, respectively. Marticorena has been in charge of the Lodge Franco-Américaine # 207.

At the annual members' banquet dinner of Les Faneurs held at the BCC's clubhouse<sup>174</sup> (at 599 Railroad Avenue, South San Francisco) on February 10, 2007, Bernadette Iribarren, wife of the late Jean Leon Iribarren, President of the Basque Club between 1966 and 1968, stated, "At one time there were about fifty French associations in San Francisco. What is the difference between them? The same difference that there is between the BCC and the Basque Club. The same members are in both."<sup>175</sup> Indeed, 69% of Basques belong to two or more French associations, which demonstrates a clear cross-membership.

<sup>174</sup> Les Faneurs Board of Directors' meetings take place at the BCC.

<sup>175</sup> Bernadette Iribarren, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, February 10, 2007.



*Jean Gorostiague with  
Jean Baptiste Uhalde at  
the Basque Cultural Center's  
Banquet Hall, February 18,  
2008. Photograph by  
Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

Pierre Ausquy who came to the U.S. in 1947 from Arnegi (Nafarroa Beherea), commented on the relationship between San Francisco Basques and the French associations as he is a member of many of them: “Many Basques used to belong to a lot of the French clubs. It was important to belong to the French community as well [...] There were more associative memberships to help each other out if one got sick or got injured—a support system—and it worked well, those clubs are millionaires now, they have a lot of money. There are mostly older people in those clubs, but there are still quite a few members. Compared to the Basque Cultural Center’s strength and youth involved, the Basque clubs are stronger. Even Les Faneurs has millions of dollars, but they don’t have any youth involved to carry it on. I am not sure how long those clubs will be around.”<sup>176</sup>

Basque membership in French and Spanish associations varies between generations. Nearly 66% of those Basques who belong to French associations are immigrants born in the northern Basque Country, and only 34.2% of the immigrants’ children are members of French clubs. Over 83% of Basques who belong to Unión Española were born in the southern Basque Country, but only 16.2% of their

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<sup>176</sup> Pierre Ausquy, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, October 28, 2006.

children are members. In other words, at present there is a stronger tendency for Spanish Basques to identify with Spanish associations than for French Basques to identify with French associations (see Table 13c).

**Table 13a. Bay Area Membership in Other Clubs**

Spanish	French	Basque
7%	29.7%	41.4%

**Table 13b. Membership in Other Clubs by Club**

	Bay Area Clubs	Anaitasuna	Marin-Sonoma	Basque Club	BCC
Spanish	7%	21.21%	12.4%	11.2%	7.65%
French	29.68%	24.24%	33%	30.43%	32.43%
Basque	41.4%	75.75%	60%	48%	41.9%

**Table 13c. Bay Area Membership in Other Clubs by Heritage**

Heritage	Spanish	French	Basque
Immigrant generation (Born in the Basque Country)	83.3%	65.7%	56.6%
Parent immigrated (1 <sup>st</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	16.2%	34%	39.6%
Grandparent immigrated (2 <sup>nd</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	0%	0%	1%

It is quite significant that 34% of the respondents from the southern part of the Basque Country also belong to French associations. This might indicate their integration into the larger group of Basques from the northern provinces due to close interaction and personal relationships as well as their shared membership in many of the Basque associations of the Bay Area. Likewise, 17% of the respondents from Iparralde also belong to Unión Española. This reflects to some extent the porosity of cultural and identity borders between French and Spanish-Basque groups. No

grandchildren of immigrants currently belong to French or Spanish associations. This indicates no current identification with French or Spanish associations among the grandchildren of immigrants. However, they do timidly tend to identify with Basque associations. As we have seen, by 1990 nearly three-quarters of Basques identified as just Basques over French or Spanish Basques.<sup>177</sup>

In sum, Basques not only maintain Basque identity and its cultural expressions, but also French and Spanish cultural and recreational activities throughout the Bay Area by participating and sustaining their principal institutions. Simultaneously, they reinforce their own national identities by identifying with their respective states. However, this tendency vanishes among younger Basque-American generations.

## REVISITING BASQUE IDENTITY<sup>178</sup>

### Homeland

In relation to Basque homeland identity maintenance, several authors have attempted to identify specific markers or attributes of Basqueness and the degree of being Basque between two identity poles—Basque and Spanish.<sup>179</sup> Specifically, Basque government sociological surveys estimated that during the period between 1995 and 2002, an average of 45.8% of the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) population felt exclusively Basque or more Basque than Spanish.<sup>180</sup> By the end of 2003, the government stated that 47% of its constituency felt Basque.<sup>181</sup> In a similar study

<sup>177</sup> U.S. Census, 1990.

<sup>178</sup> A previous version of this section on Basque identity was published in Pedro J. Oiarzabal, “A Review of Theoretical Approaches to Identity: The Basque Case,” *Journal of the Society of Basque Studies in America* 27 (2007).

<sup>179</sup> Juan J. Linz, “From Primordialism to Nationalism,” in *New Nationalisms of the Developed West. Toward Explanations*, ed. Edward A. Tiryakian and Ronald Rogowski (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1985), Eugenia Ramírez Goicoechea, *De Jóvenes y sus Identidades: Socioantropología de la Etnicidad de Euskadi* (Madrid: Siglo XXI-CIS, 1991), Javier Elzo, *Euskalerria en la Encuesta Europea de Valores* (Bilbao: Universidad de Deusto, 1992), Xabier Aizpuru, *Euskararen Jarraipena: La Continuidad del Euskera* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 1995), Javier Elzo, *Los Valores en la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco y Navarra. Su Evolución en los Años 1990-1995* (Bilbao: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 1996), Gobierno Vasco, Gobierno de Navarra, and Institut Culturel Basque, *Sociolinguistic Study of the Basque Country 1996: The Continuity of Basque II* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, Departamento de Cultura, Viceconsejería de Política Lingüística, 1997), —, *Encuesta Sociolingüística de Euskal Herria 1996: La Continuidad del Euskera II* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, Departamento de Cultura, Viceconsejería de Política Lingüística, 1997), Gobierno Vasco, *Basque in Education in the Basque Autonomous Community* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Departamento de Educación, Universidades e Investigación, Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2000), —, *World Congress on Basque Communities, 1999. Vitoria-Gasteiz, October 26-29*, —, *Retratos de Juventud no. 5* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Presidencia y Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica del Gobierno Vasco, 2003).

<sup>180</sup> Gobierno Vasco, *Sociometro Vasco no. 21* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Presidencia y Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica del Gobierno Vasco, 2003), 76-77. Additionally, a study on Basque youth stated that 51% of the Basque youth felt Basque, 32% felt exclusively Basque, and 19% more Basque than Spanish, while 36% felt as Basque as Spanish. Gobierno Vasco, *Retratos de Juventud no. 5* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Presidencia y Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica, 2003), 32-33.

<sup>181</sup> —, *Sociometro Vasco no. 23* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Presidencia y Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica, 2003), 21-22.

encompassing all historical territories of the Basque Country in 2006, Baxok et al. stated that 44% of the population of Euskal Herria or the cultural and anthropological homeland felt only Basque (57% in the BAC, 10% in Nafarroa, and 17% in Iparralde).<sup>182</sup>

Linz argued that Basque identity is a combination of three complementary criteria: primordial, i.e., based on ancestry or *jus sanguinis*, and language; territorial, i.e., based on birth or *jus solis*, to work or *jus laboris*, and/or to live/reside in the Basque Country or *jus domicile*; and subjective; i.e., based on self-perception or willingness to be Basque (consciousness of belonging to a historical collectivity).<sup>183</sup> Research carried out during the 1990s and the early years of this century reinforced the argument that the primordial marker of Basque language is not an essential characteristic in defining Basque contemporary identity in the homeland.<sup>184</sup> For example, in the late 1990s with the exception of Iparralde (40%), the populations of the rest of the Basque territories—BAC, 16%; Nafarroa, 10%—do not consider the Basque language as an essential attribute in defining Basqueness.<sup>185</sup>

Sociological studies of the BAC's population stated that the main criteria for Basqueness, were "To feel Basque" (64%), "To live and to work in the Basque Country" (50%), "To be born in the Basque Country" (28%), "To speak Basque" (11%), and "To have Basque ancestry" (10%).<sup>186</sup> With regard to all historical territories of the Basque Country as a single unit, Baxok et al. stated that the most important conditions for a person to be considered Basque were similar to the studies on the BAC, but the results were more balanced: "To feel Basque" (42%), "To live and to work in the Basque Country" (41%), "To be born in the Basque Country" (39%), "To speak Basque" (17%), "To defend the Basque Country" (16%), "To have Basque ancestry" (9%), and "To have Basque surnames" (4%).<sup>187</sup> Within this subjectivist tendency, "To feel Basque," is increasingly positioning

182 Erramun Baxok et al., *Identidad y Cultura Vascas a Comienzos del Siglo XXI* (Donostia: Eusko Ikaskuntza, 2006), 47-50.

183 Linz, "From Primordialism to Nationalism." See also Steven J. Ybarrola, "Ideology and Identity: Who Is Basque?" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, San Francisco, December 2-6, 1992), Catherine Petrissans, "When Ethnic Groups Do Not Assimilate: The Case of Basque-American Resistance," *Ethnic Groups* 9 (1991), William A. Douglass, "Basque American Identity: Past Perspectives and Future Prospects," in *Change in the American West: Exploring the Human Dimension*, ed. Stephen Tchudi (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1996).

184 Eugenia Ramírez Goicoechea, *De Jóvenes y sus Identidades: Socioantropología de la Etnicidad de Euskadi* (Madrid: Siglo XXI-CIS, 1991), Xabier Aizpuru, *Euskararen Jarraipena: La Continuidad del Euskera* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 1995), Gobierno Vasco, Gobierno de Navarra, and Institut Culturel Basque, *Sociolinguistic Study of the Basque Country 1996: The Continuity of Basque II* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, Departamento de Cultura, Viceconsejería de Política Lingüística, 1997), —, *Encuesta Sociolingüística de Euskal Herria 1996: La Continuidad del Euskera II* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, Departamento de Cultura, Viceconsejería de Política Lingüística, 1997). Baxok et al., *Identidad y Cultura Vascas a Comienzos del Siglo XXI*, Gobierno Vasco, *Sociometro Vasco*.

185 Gobierno Vasco, Gobierno de Navarra, and Institut Culturel Basque, *Sociolinguistic Study of the Basque Country 1996: The Continuity of Basque II*, —, *Encuesta Sociolingüística de Euskal Herria 1996: La Continuidad del Euskera II*.

186 Gobierno Vasco, *Sociometro Vasco* no. 23, 26-27.

187 Baxok et al., *Identidad y Cultura Vascas a Comienzos del Siglo XXI*. Surveys focusing on the BAC youth indicated that the most significant conditions for a person to be considered Basque were "To feel Basque" (72%), "To live and to work in the Basque Country" (43%), "To be born in the Basque Country" (29%), "To speak Basque" (20%), and "To descend from a Basque family" (13%) (Gobierno Vasco, *Retratos de Juventud* no. 5, 36-37).



itself as the key marker of Basque identity in the homeland, while other more objective markers, such as language, ancestry, or place of birth—territoriality—are losing importance.

## Diaspora

With the passage of time more studies—anthropological, historical, sociopolitical, and linguistic—have begun to focus on Basque diaspora identity.<sup>188</sup> They attempted to shed some light on the process of preservation, maintenance, and transmission of identity among Basque descendants abroad as well as the political role of individuals and institutions of the diaspora and their transnational interaction with homeland and hostlands. In addition, Oiarzabal and Oiarzabal’s work approached diaspora and homeland identities, transcending national borders in order to include all Basques who defined themselves as such regardless of their geographical location.<sup>189</sup>

According to Totoricagüena, Basques of the diaspora exhibit a more conservative approach toward Basque identity than Basques in the homeland that is based on a biological—ancestry or race—component as the primary criterion in defining who is Basque.<sup>190</sup> She argued that this exclusive definition of Basqueness is to some extent a consequence of early Basque nationalism that redefined Basques by ancestry, race and religion. This ideology, created in the late nineteenth-century, was present in the diaspora almost since its inception. However, its direct influence was particularly prevalent in the diaspora after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, and the subsequent exile of the Basque government and thousands of ordinary Basques that lasted until the restoration of democracy in Spain in the late 1970s. The author conclusively stated, “Diaspora definitions therefore remain exclusive and lag behind civic changes in the homeland.”<sup>191</sup>

On the contrary, I argue that the existence of different interpretations of what being Basque means to homeland and diaspora Basques is the result of a variety of factors. Firstly, one must take into account the socio-historical context that conditions the identity markers or symbolic boundaries of these groups as well how they have been and continue to be maintained. Like any other social group, diaspora

188 Baxok et al., *Identidad y Cultura Vasca a Comienzos del Siglo XXI*, Ander Gurrutxaga, *La Producción de la Idea del Nosotros: Somos porque Estamos* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2005), Alfonso Pérez-Agote, J. Azcona, and Ander Gurrutxaga, *Mantener la Identidad: Los Vascos del Río Carabelas* (Bilbao: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 1997), Gloria P. Totoricagüena, *Identity, Culture, and Politics in the Basque Diaspora* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2004).

189 Agustín M. Oiarzabal and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, *La Identidad Vasca en el Mundo: Narrativas sobre Identidad más allá de Fronteras* (Bilbao: Erroteta, 2005).

190 Totoricagüena, *Identity, Culture, and Politics in the Basque Diaspora*.

191 *Ibid.*, 79-80.

communities such as the Basques exhibit several specific characteristics—e.g., language or ancestry—which bond their members together, while differentiating them from other groups. As time goes by these markers or cultural norms evolve in relation to their changing socio-economic, political context, historical processes, and to their own group’s reflections on what constitutes identity. That is, over time, identity borders such as language, ethnicity or religion are reevaluated and recreated.

Diasporas such as the Basques are heterogeneous communities, reinvented by overlapping generations with different perspectives and goals, who have experienced different historical and acculturation processes in their host societies. For many individual Basques and community-based institutions in the diaspora, the maintenance of identity and culture has become a priority in their agendas. One of the reasons these diaspora communities continue to demonstrate a relatively restricted or primordial definition of what ‘Basque’ means is related to their desire to preserve their collective identity as it is. There is, to some extent, a conscious strategy to protect the boundaries of the group in order to maintain its identity. In other words, the primordial definition of identity within the Basque diaspora, based on criteria such as language or race, is related to the collective defense of the group’s external identification markers.<sup>192</sup>

Taking into account the different perspectives that the homeland and the diaspora have on Basque identity, I also argue that the so-called center-periphery model (production-reception) between homelands and diasporas is outdated. This model purports that identity is created in the homeland and then “exported” to the diaspora. That is, the diaspora assumes the role of mere imperfect reproducers of that identity.<sup>193</sup> Anderson argued that, “Communities care to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.”<sup>194</sup> This problematic issue of a false dichotomy of diaspora as inauthentic, symbolic, exotic, or folkloric culture versus homeland as the authentic culture is vividly exemplified by migration and diaspora researchers who live in the diaspora “condition.”<sup>195</sup> Moreover, Tölölyan stated that diaspora populations “need not apologize for their alleged lack of authenticity, for the hybridity of diasporan identity, as if it represented mere decline from some purer homeland form.”<sup>196</sup>

192 See Pedro J. Oiarzabal, “The Basque Diaspora Webscape: Online Discourses of Basque Diaspora Identity, Nationhood, and Homeland” (PhD Dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, 2006).

193 Oiarzabal and Oiarzabal, *La Identidad Vasca en el Mundo: Narrativas sobre Identidad más allá de Fronteras*.

194 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

195 See also Carmelo Urza, “Basque Ethnic Identities: Old World and New World Expressions,” in *Solitude: Art and Symbolism in the National Basque Monument*, ed. Carmelo Urza (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1993), Pauliina Raento and Cameron J. Watson, “Guernika, Guernica, Guernica? Contested Meanings of a Basque Place,” *Political Geography* 19 (2000): 720, Pedro J. Oiarzabal, “Los Vascos de Euskal Herria son tan desconocedores de la Realidad de la Diáspora como lo pueden ser los de la Diáspora sobre Euskal Herria,” *Hermes* 10 (2003): 52-53.

196 Khaching Tölölyan, “Rethinking Diaspora(s): Stateless Power in the Transnational Moment,” *Diaspora* 5, no. 1 (1996): 7. See also Andrea Klimt and Stephen Lubkemann, “Argument across the Portuguese-Speaking World: A Discursive Approach to Diaspora,” *Diaspora* 11, no. 2 (2002): 156.



I agree with the assumption that identity created in the Basque Country is not purer, more authentic or more perfect than the that of the diaspora, and that Basque diaspora identity is not a mere reflection or reproduction of homeland identity. I strongly believe that the future of Basque identity in the diaspora is influenced by the acknowledgement of this assumption by homeland and diaspora Basques alike. The Basque diaspora is producing its own culture as it has done for centuries; however, its influence on today's homeland is less significant than in previous eras.<sup>197</sup>

## The Limits of Identity<sup>198</sup>

Is Basque identity compatible with other identities? What is the degree of permeability that Basque identity exhibits in relation to other cultures? According to Oiarzabal and Oiarzabal Basques display dual identities (of “coexistence” meaning that separate identities are compatible, or “problematic,” meaning that separate identities are somehow in conflict) depending on whether they reside in the homeland or the diaspora.<sup>199</sup> The diverse degree of compatibility that diaspora and homeland Basques exhibit in relation to other identities becomes a major differentiating factor between them.

A “duality of coexistence” is characteristic of Basque communities abroad, but not exclusive to them. They promote non-exclusive identity and display dual consciousness and a non-hierarchical loyalty towards the Basque Country and their country of residence. The Basque diaspora constitutes heterogeneous spaces, where national, ethnic or religious traditional boundaries become blurred. Consequently, diaspora Basques operate within a complex network of interactions and exchanges between different cultures that, to a certain extent, invalidates any notion of Basque identity as immutable, static or exclusive.

Diaspora Basques, as exemplified by the Basques in San Francisco, form diverse and plural communities under a common identification as Basques. This generic identification and understanding of being Basque still reflects current Old Country politico-territorial, administrative and geographical divisions particularly within the immigrant generation; however, in general terms, Basques born in the U.S. are replacing their parents and grandparents' French or Spanish state identities and loyalties to France and Spain with their American citizenship and allegiance to the U.S. Consequently, they possess non-hierarchical hyphenated identities. In other words, Basque Americans are creating a new notion of Basqueness by accommodating their heritage within a multicultural context of American society.

<sup>197</sup> See for example, Juan Javier Pescador, *The New World Inside a Basque Village: The Oiartzun Valley and Its Atlantic Emigrants 1550-1800* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2004).

<sup>198</sup> A version of this subsection was previously published in Oiarzabal and Oiarzabal, *La Identidad Vasca en el Mundo: Narrativas sobre Identidad más allá de Fronteras*.

<sup>199</sup> Oiarzabal and Oiarzabal, *La Identidad Vasca en el Mundo: Narrativas sobre Identidad más allá de Fronteras*, 86-92.

A “problematic duality” is characteristic of certain sectors of the Basque population residing in the Basque Country. However, some Basques abroad also experienced this incompatibility of identities. They see Basque identity as a national identity in opposition to Spanish and/or French identities—Basque Country versus Spain/France; Basque versus Spanish/French. That is, they participate in an alternative identity processes in which populations compete for loyalty in one geographical space, the Basque Country. Basque identity is defined in exclusive terms. Spanish or French identities are denied as they are seen as artificial or imposed in order to affirm Basque identity that is viewed as natural or real.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Basque population of California is the largest in the country, while the San Francisco Bay Area represents one of the oldest and largest concentrations of Basques in the nation. The Bay Area Basque community is built upon four socio-cultural and recreational associations, which constitute some of the Basque cultural powerhouses of the American West. The combined membership of these institutions



*Basque Club's Zazpiak Bat dancers performed "Bandera Dantza" (Flag Dance) in 1983.*  
Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

is larger than those of many neighboring states, such as Nevada, which is home to the third largest population of Basques in the country.

The great majority of the Bay Area Basque associations' members are male, over sixty-one years old, and natives of the Basque Country. Most of them were born in the neighboring Pyrenean valleys of the provinces of Nafarroa Beherea and Nafarroa—traditional sending areas of emigrants. Nearly all of them hold United States citizenship and as well as French or Spanish citizenship in many cases. However, they regard themselves as mainly Basque. That said, a large percentage of members (particularly immigrants) also belong to French and Spanish associations, thereby managing, sustaining and promoting French and Spanish cultures, languages and identities throughout the Bay Area. The compatibility of Basque identity with other identities, such as French, Spanish or American is seen as non-conflictive and natural. Nevertheless, new generations of Basques born in the U.S. are rapidly losing any sense of Spanish or French identity by reifying a new sense of Basque identity in a complex and intimate relationship with their own understanding of Americanness.

Despite the fact that the Basque language is regarded by observers and practitioners as one of the main identity markers of the Basques, and besides the fact that the bulk of the immigrant generation speaks Basque (with competence in French and/or Spanish), the preferred language at home is English. Consequently, intergenerational transmission of the Basque language is minimal. Is this an indication that Basque culture and linguistic identity in San Francisco is “diluting”? And if so, how would the San Francisco Basque communities in general and the non-Basque speaking generations in particular articulate their own sense of identity as part of a global Basque culture?

In the next Chapter, I will focus on one the most powerful Basque institutions that ever existed in Basque America, the boardinghouses or hotels, which became central to Basque identity maintenance.

# ‘Euskal Hiria’: of San

(03)

# In the Streets Francisco

No history can fully account for human experience, nor can this one fully explain why the *ostatuak* [Basque boardinghouses] have been so dear to the *Amerikanuak* [Basque Americans]. Cherishing a thing of the past, feeling nostalgic for “times gone by;” and recalling those who have gone before us perhaps heightens our fondness for things that will not come again. Beyond the longing for the past also lies the truth of Basque-American history: generation after generation of Basques who have come to the hotels to discover themselves, relying upon an institution that has been embedded in their culture.

(Echeverria, Jeronima, *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses*. Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999, 246.)

## BOARDINGHOUSES—*OSTATUAK*—AND RESTAURANTS

### Homes Away from Home and the *Hotelerak*

The centennial Fairmount Hotel on Nob Hill, now a historic landmark, was under construction when on April 18, 1906 an earthquake (magnitude 8.3 on the Richter scale) shook the city. The hotel not only survived the earthquake, but also escaped unharmed from the subsequent fires that devoured the city for four days. It finally

opened in 1907.<sup>200</sup> Such tremendously good luck was not shared by everyone in the city, and downtown was completely devastated. It is estimated that nearly half of the population of San Francisco was left homeless as approximately 23,000 buildings were destroyed, and over 3,000 people died. The first San Francisco “Basque Town” or *Euskal Hiria* was erased from the face of earth, and many early Basque private residences; boardinghouses, inns or *ostatuak*; restaurants, bars and other establishments perished. The 1906 earthquake was a turning point for San Francisco and its diverse communities, including the Basques. Many residents moved to adjacent towns such as Oakland or San José, or to the neighboring state of Nevada.

In response to the increasing and continuous flow of Basque immigrants into the country, boardinghouses and hotels were privately established by Basques for a clientele composed exclusively of their countrymen beginning in the 1860s wherever Basques were found in substantial numbers and needed a place to stay. For example, the Winnemucca Hotel (Winnemucca, Nevada) was built in 1863, one year before Nevada became a State. In California one of the earliest recorded precursors of a Basque hotel was Julian Ursua’s Plaza Hotel, which was established in the 1850s in San Juan Bautista.<sup>201</sup> However, those Basque hotels were not unique to the U.S. Similar types of hotels were also found in Argentina, where Basques had migrated to the tens of thousands.<sup>202</sup>

Douglass and Bilbao and Echeverria considered the Basque hotel the oldest and most important ethnic and social institution of the Basques of the American West.<sup>203</sup> The *ostatuak* constituted a network of businesses spread throughout the open-range sheep districts’ main towns, all of which had a railroad station from which sheep would be transported. In fact, most of the hotels were in close proximity to the train station. That is, there was a parallel development of hotels in areas of Basque settlement, which in turn reflected the development of both the sheep industry and the railway system. Basque-American boardinghouses reached their zenith between the 1890s and the 1930s.

The hotels functioned as “home[s] away from home” or surrogate home/families as well as cultural brokers to ease the transition from the Old World to the New World

200 Just to have an idea of the scale of The Great 1906 Earthquake, the October 17, 1989 earthquake had a magnitude of 7.1. The Fairmount Hotel was popularized in the Basque homeland and around the world by the 1980s ABC television series, “Hotel,” under the fictitious name “St. Gregory Hotel.” Currently, it serves as the United States President’s official residence during his visits to the city. See Sandoval-Strausz A. K., *Hotel: An American History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2007).

201 Jeronima Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels” (PhD Dissertation, North Texas State University 1988), —, *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999), —, “The Basque Hotelera: Implications for Broader Study,” in *The Basque Diaspora/La Diáspora Vasca*, ed. William A. Douglass, et al. (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999), —, “Expansion and Eclipse of the Basque Boardinghouse in the American West,” *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (2000).

202 See Marcelino Iriani Zalakain, “*Hacer América.*” *Los Vascos en la Pampa Húmeda, Argentina (1840-1920)* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 2000).

203 William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1975), 370, Jeronima Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels” (PhD Dissertation, North Texas State University 1988), 2.

*Basque boarders, all from Ortzaize, at the Pyrenees Hotel (1959-1962). Standing (from left to right): Jean Acheritogaray, Louis Marticorena, Andre Arduain, Raymond Trounday, Marie Idiart, Michel Duhalde and Michel Marticorena. Sitting (from left to right): Michel Arduain and Albert Dutaret. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



for recently arrived Basque immigrants—the majority in their teens and early twenties who knew very little English. Basque hotel operators became interpreters, bankers, lawyers, and doctors for newly arrived immigrants.<sup>204</sup> Within the context of this “home away from home” Grinberg and Grinberg described the immigrants’ quest for family and new friends in the following terms: “Friendships were kept up in the desire to reconstruct a family of brothers and sisters in the new country. People sought out other co-nationals to share with them all the things they have known and lost; with them, one could build a bridge to the future. Finding friends is related to the unconscious fantasy of being born again and needing to depend on the support (“holding”) of new surroundings and new “parents” who receive the subject and accept him.”<sup>205</sup>

Thus, the role of the Basque hotel keeper, usually female, regains new meaning in the eyes of many young immigrants, who have become separated from their parents for first time. The *hotelerak* or female hotel managers and/or owners (i.e., the *etxeko andre*, the lady of the house or housewife) are regarded by many

204 Jeronima Echeverria, *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999).

205 Leon Grinberg and Rebecca Grinberg, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 200-01.

former boarders as their surrogate mothers, their “American mothers.” Somehow, the social status that these Basque women achieved through their involvement in private businesses and in their Basque-American communities counterbalances the protagonism of the shepherd in Basque America.

These hotels also provided work for young single Basque women who soon married Basque men. Consequently, there was a constant demand for female helpers as serving girls and housekeepers. Mari Jeanne Urrutia, born in Aldude, came to the U.S. in 1959. After a short stay in Stockton, she moved to San Francisco where she worked at Hotel de España for two and a half years. She also lived at the hotel until she married Jean Pierre Pagadoy, who had been in the country since 1955. She stopped working at the hotel when she was expecting her first daughter, Bernadette, in 1961. Mari Jeanne had replaced Elena Elizalde who had also worked at Hotel de España until she left to get married.<sup>206</sup> Despite the hoteleras’ prominent role in the boardinghouses throughout the American West and within their respective Basque communities, many Basque women living in isolated rural areas remained at home. These women often found it extremely difficult to function in society because they lacked language and driving skills, as well as knowledge of banking or health systems.<sup>207</sup>

Former San Francisco hotelera—Marthe Bigue, Begoña Bilbao, Marie Elu, and Yvonne Vizcay—recalled the important fact that, in addition to running a business (and making it profitable) in a highly competitive area such as Broadway where there were many diverse Basque inns, they also raised their own children, their own families, and did everything at once.<sup>208</sup> “Family always came first,” they said. They remembered that in their boardinghouses (Hotel de España, Hotel du Midi, and Basque Hotel) there was a wonderful atmosphere in which they always felt like a big family particularly with longtime boarders, always willing to help each other.<sup>209</sup> Marie (Esnarro) Elu, born in 1923 in Westwood, California—her father was from Abadiño, Bizkaia and her mother from Mutriku, Gipuzkoa—elaborated on their attitudes about helping one another:

Do you remember when people used to come [and said] they were on their way home to Europe? [...] “Well, we have our tickets, and we’re leaving tomorrow on such and such a flight.” And I’d say, “Yes. But do you have a tax clearance?” “A what? I don’t know what that is.” “Well, before you leave the country you must have what they call a tax clearance.” “Oh, well my boss never told me that.” “OK, so then you have to start from scratch, call the boss,

206 Marie Jeanne Pagadoy, interview by Marie Laxague Rosecrans, San Francisco, California, January 6, 2007.

207 Jeronima Echeverria, “The Basque Hotelera: Implications for Broader Study,” in *The Basque Diaspora/La Diáspora Vasca*, ed. William A. Douglass, et al. (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999).

208 Begoña Bilbao et al., focus group interview on *Boardinghouses-Hotelera*, facilitated by Valerie Arrechea and Marisa Espinal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.

209 At one point José Mari Echamendi and Marthe Bigue owned Hotel du Midi, and they leased it to Begoña Bilbao. Later on, Bigue bought a building where she established the Basque Hotel. Yvonne Vizcay worked as a cook at the du Midi for Echamendi for a year, while Marie Elu owned Hotel de España. Later on Bigue sold Hotel du Midi to Marie. (Yvonne was born in Uruguay from Basque parents. Her mother was a founder of the Centro Euskaro Español, one of the Basque clubs in Montevideo). See below for further information about those inns.



and then they have to give you all these details about who paid how much tax and what.” And sometimes these fellas that were supposed to go tomorrow morning were there a whole week because the boss had to get all this paperwork and send it down to San Francisco, and then we had to process it and take it down here on McAllister Street. One time the guy [who dealt with the paperwork at the tax office]—a great big tall Jewish man—asked me, “How much do you get paid for this?” And I said, “I don’t get paid anything. These people have been working in a sheep camp, and they’ve been saving every penny that they have just to go back home for a visit.” Boy, he never asked me anymore. I mean, they think that you’re going to charge all of these people? How? They were making a paltry sum, saving every penny they could just so that they could go back to see their families. (Begoña Bilbao, Martha Bigue, Marie Elu, and Yvonne Vizcay, focus group interview on *Boardinghouses-Hotelerak*, facilitated by Valerie Arrechea and Marisa Espinal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007).



*Pierre and Marthe Bigue, c. 2008.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



*Begoña Bilbao at her home  
in Belmont, California, 2008.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

“But the fact is by helping one [boarder] you helped the other boarder who saw you helping somebody [else],” Marthe Bigue added. Marthe Daniel Bigue was born in Dordogne region, France, and began working at the Centro Vasco Hotel in Chino, California. After a year or so she moved to San Francisco.<sup>210</sup>

However, not all the hotelers held only fond memories about their years in the hospitality industry. For example, Begoña (Laita) Bilbao commented, “I still dream about the du Midi, I dream about it all the time. I was in the kitchen day and night [...] I’ve never lived happy in the du Midi, never [...] I was like invisible, I thought that I was invisible. I really did. I never had a day off, and I lived frustrated. When I used to go out and get a haircut [for example] was the only time I saw the sun for three or four months at a time.” Begoña used to do everything but shopping, which was her husband’s job. Her great helper was Marie Elu’s mother, *amama* Tomasa. “Amama, she was [like] my mother. She used to help me a lot. She was so clean, so neat, so perfect,” Begoña emphasized.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Bilbao et al., facilitated by Valerie Arrechea and Marisa Espinal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.

<sup>211</sup> Bilbao et al., facilitated by Valerie Arrechea and Marisa Espinal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.



*Yvonne Vizcay, 2008.*  
Photograph courtesy of  
San Francisco Urazandi  
Collection.

Johnny Etchevers, son of Juanita and John Etchevers, former operators of the Cosmopolitan Hotel and the Hotel de France, recalled the deep affective impact of the hotelera—“The Women of Broadway Street” as he called them—during his childhood growing up in North Beach:

They were some tough, strong women. I mean Katixa [Bordalampe], Madam Sorhondo—Amelie—Marie Elu...Those were tough women that were running businesses and were raising kids and families and dealing with everybody’s problems, and they all did it. They were really remarkable women in my eyes. They’re a part of history that many of us can still remember. It’s kind of sad that generations from now won’t experience that [...] Growing up I never saw weak women. I always saw very strong women, and so when people are talking about women being downtrodden and all that, that was kind of foreign to me because the women I saw that I grew up with and that were disciplining me were always very tough, strong women [...] Marie Elu and my mother they were both Vizcaínas [Bizkaians], and we [...] used to hang around Hotel de España upstairs for a multitude of reasons. And we always used to get in trouble, but the rule was Marie Elu could discipline me like she was my mother [...] like I was her kid. That would be unheard of today that somebody else’s mother has the ability, without calling the other mother, to just simply spank some kid. But it was great. (Johnny Etchevers, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, May 5, 2007).

On May 23, 1993 the Basque Cultural Center honored **Amelie Sorhondo** for her work at the Pyrenees Hotel and for “four decades of love and caring,” and on November 1, 2008, the Society for Basque Studies in America recognized her “devotion to Basque immigrants” at its 28<sup>th</sup> Basque Hall of Fame. On November 11, 2006 in a ceremony that took place at the Basque Cultural Center’s Banquet Room, the Society of Basque Studies in America also inducted **Aña Iriartborde** into the 26<sup>th</sup> Basque Hall of Fame for her contribution to Basque culture and welfare provided to many young immigrants in need. As the years passed, Aña became the unofficial historian of the San Francisco Basque community and its institutions. She has served as director of the board of the San Francisco Basque Club and is still a director of the Basque Educational Organization. Aña also sings with the San Francisco Basque Club’s Elgarrekin Choir.



*From left to right, San Francisco hotelera, “The Broadway Broads:” Marie Elu, Juanita Etchevers, Catherine Goyhenetche, Aña Iriartborde and Amelie Sorhondo. Basque Cultural Center, c. 1994. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

The boardinghouses became the nuclei of Basque communities filled by Old Country values. They were spaces for experiencing identity and for cultural and folkloric expressions as well as for maintaining Basque awareness. They functioned as a “one-stop-shop”—i.e., the place to establish one’s first contact in the new country or the first stop for new immigrants on their way to the sheep districts. The hotels became the main employment and recruitment agencies for many immigrants as well as the focus of social and recreational life. Decroos argued that “both the hotels and the restaurants are highly instrumental in maintaining the cohesion and identity of the group. Since they function nearly every day of the year, they offer a permanent meeting ground for the Old-World Basques as well as milieu in which Basque-Americans can experience a part of their ethnic heritage.”<sup>212</sup>

In her seminal work on Basque boardinghouses Echeverria identified 331 of them in the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. California *ostatuak* outnumbered those of every other state (i.e., 38% of all Basque hotels nationwide).<sup>213</sup> They were found in thirty-three Californian locations. Throughout the history of Los Angeles and San Francisco there had been twenty-four and twenty-two boardinghouses on record, respectively. As of 2008 only four inns remain open in California (Bakersfield, Chino and Fresno) and six in Nevada (Elko, Gardnerville, Reno and Winnemucca).

## The First Euskal Hiria

According to all evidence, by the 1880s and 1890s there were small well-established Basque neighborhoods or “Basque towns” not only in San Francisco, but also in Los Angeles. Both Basque towns “featured clusters of *ostatuak* within compact geographical areas [which] emerged as social centers for the greater American Basque community in the state and also led to the expansion of *ostatuak* in outlying areas.”<sup>214</sup> The 1930s depression, WWII, and major urban redevelopments brought about the end of Los Angeles’ Basque Town, which was concentrated between Alameda and Aliso streets. Consequently, San Francisco’s Euskal Hiria (between Broadway and Pacific, and Stockton and Powell streets) became the oldest Basque neighborhood in the history of California (and most likely the oldest in the country) as the last boardinghouses there remained open until the end of the twentieth century. However, newly established Basque restaurants in downtown

<sup>212</sup> Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983), 48.

<sup>213</sup> Echeverria, *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses*.

<sup>214</sup> ———, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels,” 64.



San Francisco remind us, in the twenty-first century, of the rich legacy of one of the oldest European nations and its historical presence in the Bay Area.

Among the early Basque hotels or boardinghouses in San Francisco for which we have documentation, were the Aguirre Hotel and the Yparraguirre Hotel. The Aguirre Hotel (some sources mentioned different names such as Hotel Vasco or Basque Hotel) was opened by Juan Miguel Aguirre in c. 1866 at 1312 Powell Street. It is argued that this was San Francisco's first Basque hotel. Aguirre was from Etxalar, Nafarroa and immigrated first to Montevideo in 1845, where he married Martina Labayon (from Areso, Nafarroa). From there they moved to San Francisco four years later. He first became involved in the business of supplying water. He transported and sold water from the Presidio to the old downtown area. Today's San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, in charge of the water supply system, identified Aguirre as one of the first entrepreneurs that provided fresh water to San



*Historical picture of the Aguirre Hotel or Hotel Vasco in the late nineteenth century.*  
Photograph courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

Franciscans. According to Echeverria, he then went into the real estate business and acquired a piece of property at the intersection of today's Grant Avenue and Ashburton Place.<sup>215</sup> In downtown, Aguirre built his hotel, a Basque handball court on Post Street (the first one in the city), and also Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe) on Broadway, between Mason and Taylor streets. The church was completed by Father Andres Garriga, and it is considered the first Basque church in San Francisco.<sup>216</sup>

Aguirre's daughter, Kate, married the son of an Italian sheep owner named Julius Trescony, and often recruited Basques for his sheep ranch in Salinas Valley through Aguirre's hotel, as it was a reference point for new immigrants and those living outside San Francisco. The city offered a wide range of services (e.g., recreational, religious, legal, medical, financial) that smaller towns, particularly in the rural areas, did not offer.<sup>217</sup> San Francisco was also a main importing and exporting seaport, vital to the economy of the wool industry, which also benefited from the transcontinental railroad. Aguirre's son Ramón owned a building on Powell Street, and both he and his other brother Pedro worked as official court interpreters in San Francisco. A third brother, Martin, had a candy business in North Beach.

Aguirre is considered a founding figure of the Basque community in the Bay Area, similar to Bernardo and Pedro Altube in northern Nevada, Jean and Joannes Esponda in Buffalo, Wyoming, and Valentín Aguirre in New York. Juan Miguel Aguirre was honored by the Society of California Pioneers. He passed away at the age of eighty-four.

The Yparraguirre Hotel was owned by Juan Francisco Yparraguirre from Etxalar (Nafarroa) and was established in c. 1880. He married Marie Etchebarren from Urepele (Nafarroa Beherea) at Notre Dame des Victoires (NDV). The hotel located at 1347 Powell Street, on the southwest corner of Powell and Broadway, also had its own handball court on Pacific. Like the Aguirre Hotel, the Yparraguirre became a meeting point for newly arrived immigrants as well as for Basques visiting the city. The Basque community used the hotel as a venue for all kinds of celebrations. For example, Juan Francisco's nephew, Frank, stated that his parents first met at the hotel where they would eventually get married. He was later born at the hotel in 1903 with the help of a Basque doctor named Echeverria. He was then baptized at Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, which, as stated earlier, used to be mainly attended by Basques from Spain.<sup>218</sup> There are two conflicting reports about the fate of the

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>216</sup> Christiane Bouesnard, "Basque emigration to California and Nevada since 1960" (TER, Université de Pau et des Pays de L'Adour 1976), Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels."

<sup>217</sup> Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels," 52.

<sup>218</sup> See section on religion in Chapter Six.



*Historical picture of the Hotel des Alpes in the early twentieth century.*

Photograph courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

Yparraguirre hotel. The first one indicates that the hotel burned down in 1906, and Juan Francisco moved into other businesses and became a citizen with the help of a local Basque attorney called Orel M. Goldarecena.<sup>219</sup> The second one states that the hotel (under different owners) was rebuilt after the earthquake in 1907, and its handball court survived until 1958.<sup>220</sup>

Other Basque hotels that existed prior to the 1906 earthquake, according to the records, were the Hotel de France (c. 1890, at 618 California Street), the Europa Hotel (c. 1890, on Broadway), the Hotel des Basse-Pyrenees (c. 1890, at 614 North Broadway), the Loui Savart's Boardinghouse (c. 1896, at 616-618 California), the New Pyrenees Hotel (c. 1899, on Stockton Street), the Hotel des Pyrenees (c. 1900), and the Hotel des Alpes (c. 1904, at 612 Pacific Street).<sup>221</sup>

<sup>219</sup> Thomas Robert King, *Frank Yparraguirre: A Contribution to a Survey of Life in Carson Valley, from First Settlement through the 1950s* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1984), Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels."

<sup>220</sup> Adrian Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans L'Ouest Américain* (Bordeaux: Editions Eskila, 1955).

<sup>221</sup> Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels," 88. Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 380, informed us about the high rate of turnover of Basque hotel ownership. The transfer of ownership between the old and the new generations in the same family proved difficult, and many of them ended up



## The Post-1906 Euskal Hiria

Despite the 1906 natural catastrophe, the city slowly recovered and a second Basque Town materialized in the Broadway and North Beach neighborhood, reaching its zenith between the late 1950s and early 1960s. As early as 1907, there is evidence that new Basque establishments (boardinghouses, restaurants and bars) were in full operation in downtown San Francisco. Among the earliest post-1906 earthquake *ostatuak* were Ambrosio Yrionda's Boardinghouse (1907-c. 1920), the Hotel de España (1908-1983, at 785 Broadway), and Justino and Manuel Yriarte's Hotel Yberico (1908-1930s, at 1034 Pacific), which was bought by Juan Basabe, a.k.a. "Gernika" Basabe, in 1919, who renamed it the Jai Alai. It was closed by WWII.<sup>222</sup>

According to Rogers' account of the history of Martin's Español Hotel, Martin Abaurrea, from Ezcaya (Nafarroa) bought La Vaporina in c. 1907 after six years of working as a miner and dynamiter in central California.<sup>223</sup> La Vaporina was a small Basque hotel on the corner of Broadway and Davis streets (at 674 Broadway) that apparently survived the effects of the earthquake. It was run by Martin and his wife Angelita also from Ezcaya. In 1917 Martin sold La Vaporina and with the help of his friend and now partner, Santiago Aranguren, who also owned a tavern a few doors away, bought a much larger building to establish their new hotel that they called Hotel Español, and which also became known as Martin's Español (at 719 Broadway). Until then, the building had also been a Basque boardinghouse, whose owner was about to retire. It was situated between two other businesses, The Parisian French Bread and the Figeac Bros. Groceries.<sup>224</sup>

With the passage of time, Martin's hotel became the temporary home for many new Basque immigrants and sheepherders on vacation or on their way back to the ranchos. Abaurrea joined the Wool Growers Association as a good way to attract new boarders and went also into the sheep business. As part of a new housing project at the north end of Chinatown, Martin's hotel, as well as many other establishments and residences, was demolished in 1958. However, by the end of the same year Martin managed to open a restaurant called Martin's Español in a building down the street at 674 Broadway Street. It closed down in 1966.

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being leased at least to various families of Basque origin with the passage of time. Consequently, it is extremely problematic to recount the history of the ownership of many of the Basque hotels. Many of whom, by the way, were former herders themselves. For example, originally the Hotel de España at 785 Broadway was owned by José and Miguel Lugea, and then it was sold or leased to Henri Yrigoyen, later to José Mari Echamendi, then to Fermín Huarte and Louis Elu, and finally to Louis and Marie Elu. Regardless of the official name of the hotel, locals would identify them by the owner or leaser's surname. See also, Claudine Chalmers, "L'aventure Française a San Francisco pendant la Ruée Vers L'Or 1848-1854" (PhD Dissertation, Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis, France 1991).

222 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 372.

223 Ann Rogers, *A Basque Story Cookbook* (New York: Scribner, 1968).

224 The Parisian French Bread closed down in 2005 after baking sourdough bread for 149 years. French bakeries such as the historical Boudin bakery (the first one established in San Francisco, dating back to 1849) or the Larraburu Brothers Basque bakery (see below) made French sourdough-style bread the signature bread of San Francisco as the mother or starter yeast's flavor comes from unique wild yeast only found in San Francisco.



*Basque celebration at La Cancha's handball court in the early twentieth century.* Photograph courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

Returning to the early days of San Francisco Basque hotels, José and Dionisia Yriberry established a boardinghouse in the 1910s, and Hotel de France was opened in 1912 at 1312 Powell Street. In 1912, the Hotel des Alpes was also established. Adjacent to the Basabe's hotel, on the southeast corner of Powell and Pacific, at the back of Pyrenees Hotel, there was a handball court that dated back to 1907 (possibly the old court of the Yparraguirre hotel).<sup>225</sup> According to Echeverria, Jerónimo "Antón" and Salermia Meabe bought this handball court in the 1920s and managed it until 1948.<sup>226</sup> Later, Jean and Elise Saparart from Donibane Garazi managed the indoor handball court called La Cancha ("the handball court" in Spanish), which also had rooms upstairs, between 1955 and 1958, when it was torn down.<sup>227</sup>

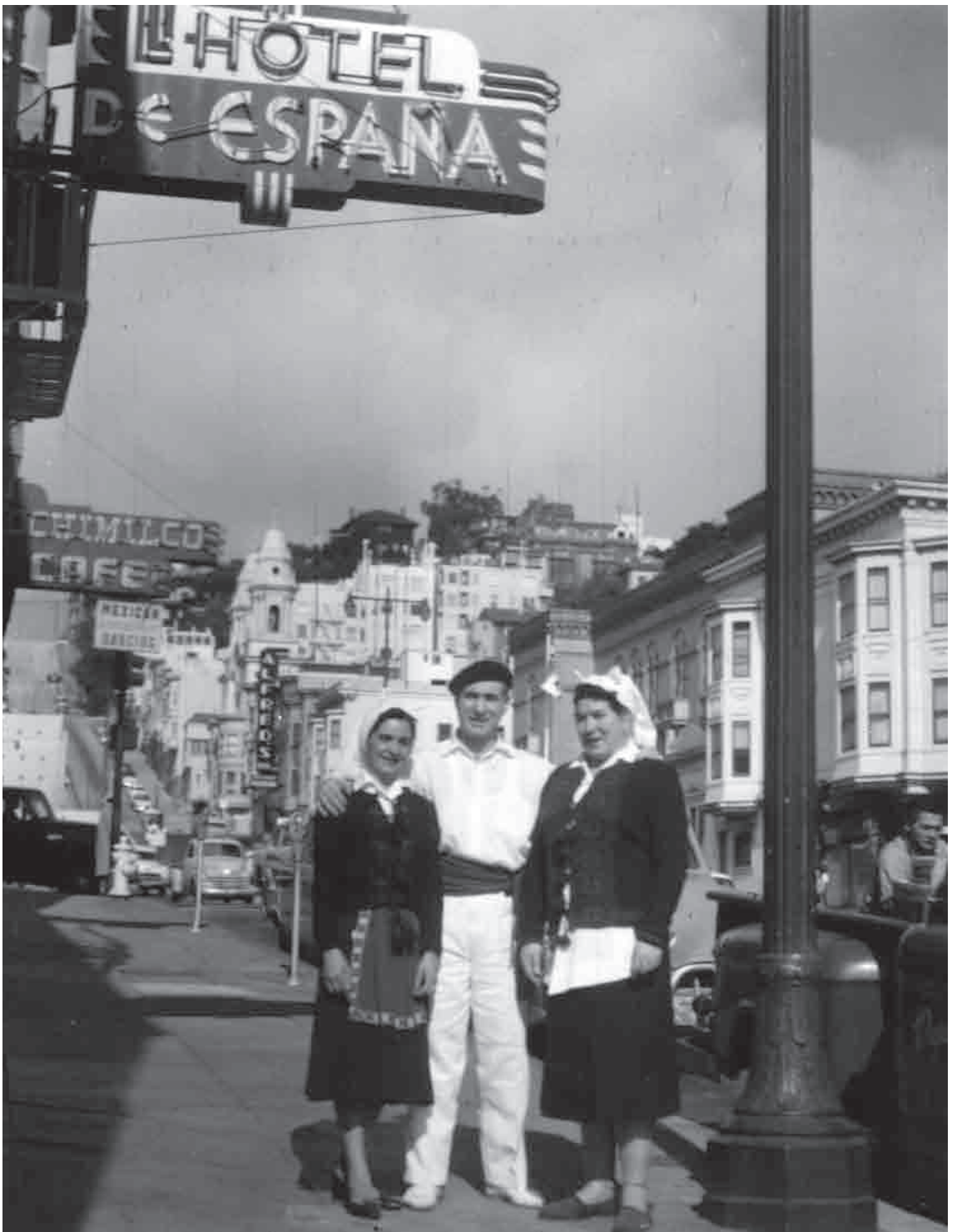
In 1916, the Hotel de España, the Hotel de France (at 776/780 Broadway), and the Hotel du Midi were also established for a Basque clientele.<sup>228</sup> They constituted a historic cluster of Basque hotels along the 700 block of Broadway that lasted for

<sup>225</sup> Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans L'Ouest Américain*, 60.

<sup>226</sup> Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels."

<sup>227</sup> Nancy Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 2nd ed. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 187, 203, Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels."

<sup>228</sup> Echeverria, "California-ko ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels."



*Louis Elu, Marie Elu and Louis' sister, Lucia (Elu) Gutierrez posing in front of the Hotel de España's sign in 1960. Photograph taken after an interview and dancing for a local television program. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



*Picture taken in the 1980s of the Hotel des Alpes' street sign with view of the Golden Gate Bridge in the background. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

over half a century. For example, the Pyrenees Hotel was located at 759 Broadway next to the Belfast Bottling Plant, between the Parisian Bread Bakery, off of Cordelia Way, and the Hotel de España. The Hotel de España was at 785 Broadway and adjacent to it was the Hotel du Midi at 1362 Powell Street. Both hotels were connected. The Hotel des Alpes at 732 Broadway, near Stockton Street, and the Hotel de France at 780 Broadway were across the street.

According to Decroos, in 1925 there were nine hotels owned or operated by Basques (not necessarily boardinghouses catering exclusively to Basques).<sup>229</sup> Five of them were owned by a Basque family by the name of Salabert (Achille and Elie Salabert) and their associates. They were the Grand Hotel (at 50 Clay Street), the Hotel Norden (at 774 Howard Street), the Hotel Irwin (at 104-4<sup>th</sup> St.), the New Colombian Hotel (at 32 Sacramento Street) and the Westchester Hotel (at 74-3<sup>rd</sup> Street). The Hotel Bernard (at 344 Jones Street) was owned by Julius (Jules) Altube, born in Stockton, California in 1866. Julius was the son of Bernardo Altube.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>229</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 31, 104.

<sup>230</sup> See Richard W. Etulain and Jeronima Echeverria, eds., *Basque Portraits in the New World* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1999).

The Hotel Brownell (at 335 Larkin Street) was owned by A. Etcheber. In the late 1930s, Altrocchi also mentioned El Globo Hotel as a new Basque inn on Broadway.<sup>231</sup>

In the 1940s, a new Basque boardinghouse, the Obrero Hotel (1943-1993), was opened by Juan and Nieves Yriarte on the edge of North Beach at 1208 Stockton Street. The couple ran it until 1961. In later years the Obrero Hotel changed hands several times beginning with Pierre and Catherine Goyhenetche (1961-1975), Marie (Catherine's niece) and her husband, Arnaud Mendisco (1975-1978) and finally Bambi MacDonald (1978-1993). Department store magnate Cyril Magnin became a regular client of the Obrero.<sup>232</sup> In a letter written on October 22, 1969 to Mary Ann Goyhenetche (daughter of Pierre and Catherine) Magnin stated, "I go to dinner once a week and for many years have had dinner in so-called "exclusive" restaurants [...]. This week we came to your hotel, and I want you to know how much we enjoyed the dinner there and especially the party which you were so kind to include us in [...]. PS: Your mother is a good cook." Magnin became the best public relations that any city establishment could have. San Francisco discovered the wonders of Basque cooking and the boardinghouses, which in many cases were as old as the San Francisco City Hall itself. The 1970/1971 Restaurant Guide of Los Angeles Magazine reported, "One of Magnin's favorite hideout places is a Basque boardinghouse, Hotel Obrero, at 1208 Stockton, and little wonder, for the food is fantastic. Your climb up a small stairway to a tattered dining room: tables are covered with oilcloths, and you dine with the Basque boarders who look like Cartier-Bresson photographs [...]. No better bargain for the price anywhere in America, I'm sure."

In 1955 Amelie and Jean Sorhondo took over the lease of the old Pyrenees Hotel from Marcial and Jeanne Marie Gonzales. Amelie was born in 1919 in Irisarri, and Jean was born in 1913 in Baigorri, a couple of miles apart. Jean's father, Pierre, had actually passed away in America when Jean was three or four years old. According to Leon Sorhondo, Pierre's grandson, that was the reason his father always wanted to visit America.<sup>233</sup> The Sorhondo's Pyrenees (1955-1957 at 759 Broadway; 1957-2000 at 517 Broadway) was defined by Echeverria as the classic Basque boardinghouse per excellence, open to Basques only; Americans by invitation only.<sup>234</sup> The Obrero Hotel and the Sorhondo's hotel were sold in 1993 and 2000, respectively, ending the history of some of the most popular ostatuak in San Francisco.

In c. 1950 Juanita (Ormasa) Etchevers opened the Cosmopolitan Hotel on the corner of Broadway and Stockton streets, which was a boardinghouse serving a mix of Basques, Spaniards and merchant marines from all the corners of the world.

<sup>231</sup> Julia Cooley Altrocchi, "The Spanish Basques in California," *Catholic World* CXLVI (1938): 423.

<sup>232</sup> Cyril Magnin was San Francisco Chief of Protocol at the time and heir of Joseph Magnin, founder of Joseph Magnin Co., Incorporated a chain of upscale clothing and accessories stores for women. By the end of 1969 Magnin Co. had opened thirty-two stores throughout San Francisco and the state.

<sup>233</sup> Leon Sorhondo, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, May 25, 2006.

<sup>234</sup> Echeverria, "California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California's Basque Hotels," 180.



Juanita was born in New York City in 1914 but her parents were from Bizkaia. Juanita met her husband John Etchevers at a dance at the Obrero Hotel, and they married in 1946. John, born in Donazarre, immigrated to the U.S. before WWII and, like many Basques, he was drafted into the United States Army. He worked as a shepherd in Bishop, California, in a dairy farm in Chino, California and as a butler in San Francisco until he bought a bar called The Hideaway in San Anselmo, California.<sup>235</sup>

By the late 1950s and early 1960s a new generation of Basque operators and owners had taken over many of the old Broadway hotels. For instance, Fermín and María Huarte were the owners of the Hotel de España when Louis Elu, who had worked for fourteen years as a chef at the Palace Hotel (today’s Sheraton Hotel), went into partnership with them in 1957. Then, a year later the Huartes sold their share of the business to Louis. Louis, together with his wife Marie, ran the business until 1983, when they sold it to a Chinese businessman. The Basque Cultural Center used to hold its board of directors meetings at Louis’ hotel every Monday (when it was closed) until the clubhouse was finally built in South San Francisco.<sup>236</sup> The hotel also served as the headquarters of the Wool Sheep Cattlemen Association in the 1960s and 1970s. On the lower floor of the hotel, the Elus opened Elu’s Basque Restaurant.<sup>237</sup>

Ganix Iriartborde with his cousin Joanes Bordalampe and wife Katixa managed the Hotel des Alpes between 1956 and 1966; the year that the Bordalampes retired. Earlier, the Bordalampes had been partners of the Huartes at Hotel de España. Ganix’s wife, Aña Etchehandy, came to the U.S. in 1962, four months after their wedding in her birthplace, Eihalarre (Nafarroa Beherea). She helped them run the business until it was sold to Ciriaco and Elaine Iturri in 1975. The hotel and Sunday lunch were reserved for Basques only. On Sundays, Basques played at the Helen Willis Playground’s “handball court” (on the corner of Broadway and Larkin streets), then went to des Alpes or the Pyrenees for lunch with their families and friends. Some played mus, while others went out to the local bars (e.g., the Sinaloa, Fugazi Hall—an Italian dance club on Green Street—and Montmartre), coming back for some *mozkor salda* or garlic and bread soup at night. Aña recalled those days, “The ambiance was so wonderful [...] I felt like in the Basque Country.” In the 1990s Basilio Arraiz and Agustín Oroz (from Erroibar, Nafarroa) were in charge of the hotel until they sold it in July 1999. It was considered the last *active* Basque boardinghouse in the city.<sup>238</sup>

In the late 1950s, John Etchevers and his nephew Claude Berhouet leased the Hotel de France, which had previously been managed by Arnaud Etcheto and Jean

235 Johnny Etchevers, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, May 5, 2007.

236 Marie Elu, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, January 21, 2005 and February 5, 2005.

237 Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels,” Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*.

238 Aña Iriartborde, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, June 26, 2005. See also Joseba Etxarri, *Aña Etchehandi (1935)* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Editorial de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2007).

Camino who had been Etchevers' neighbor in the Old Country. John had previously sponsored Claude, also from Donazaharre, to come over to San Francisco. Hotel de France was at 780 Broadway and mostly catered to Basques from Iparralde, while Hotel de España served the population from Hegoalde. Claude cooked, John tended the bar, Claudine (Claude's wife) waited tables, and Juanita was the hostess. Berhouet was one of the founders of the San Francisco Basque Club, which was established in 1960. He served as its first President until 1966. For many years his hotel housed the activities of the Basque Club directors, officers, and members. The Etchevers and Berhouets worked at the Hotel de France until c. 1963.<sup>239</sup>



*Hotel de France's restaurant and bar area were decorated with colorful murals.* San Francisco, 1960. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>239</sup> Johnny Etchevers, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, May 5, 2007.

In 1964 Marthe Bigue opened the Basque Hotel and Restaurant at 15 Romolo Place, off Broadway, between Columbus Avenue and Kearney Street. Over the forty years that followed, the establishment changed hands several times. Among its operators were Madeline and Joe Gestas, Sauveur Anchartechar and Anna (Ansola) Anchartechar, Antoinette (Ansola) Oroz and Francisco Oroz (1978-1985), and Rebecca and Jean Emile Idiart. In 1997, it was sold to Greg Lindgren.<sup>240</sup>

Agustín Oroz’s brother, Francisco (born in 1946 in Erroibar), first immigrated to Chile in 1969 and then moved to the U.S. in 1973. After a short period in New York, where his brother Daniel lived, he moved to San Rafael, where he found a job at Raymond and Eugenie Coscarat’s Chalet Basque thanks to his friend José Urrutia. Francisco’s future wife, Antoinette Ansola (born in 1946 in Ortaize) moved to San Francisco in 1967 to join her sister Anna. Antoinette worked for six years at Jeanne Mocho’s restaurant Fleur de France on Geary Street, and then another two years at the French restaurant La Maisonette. (Jeanne Mocho owned Fleur de France from 1966 to 1972. Jeanne and Gratien Mocho had previously owned The Tricolor restaurant also on Geary Street between 1960 and 1963.) In 1975, Antoinette bought a small restaurant on Polk Street and Washington that she called Izarra. She ran the place for three years. While substituting Eugenie Coscarat, who left for a visit to the Old Country, at the Chalet Basque, for a month, she met Francisco. They married in January 1979 and in August of the same year obtained the lease of the Basque Hotel from Antoinette’s sister and brother-in-law. The Oroz family managed the boardinghouse until 1985, when they bought Chalet Basque from the Coscorats who were retiring. The Coscorats had owned the business since 1962. The Orozes sold Chalet Basque to Roger Minhondo in 2000.<sup>241</sup>

Roger Minhondo, born in 1949 in Irisarri, came to San Francisco in 1970 sponsored by Raymond Coscarat to work for him as a chef at Chalet Basque. Minhondo had previous experience in the catering business as his family owned a restaurant in his natal village. He also studied at a hotel-school in Biarritz and worked for two years in Paris. Roger worked and lived with the Coscarat family for two years, and then he started his own restaurant business in Sausalito, which he called Guernica.<sup>242</sup>

Félix Bilbao, born in the Bizkaian town of Zamudio in 1917, became the operator of the Hotel du Midi in 1963. Bilbao came to the U.S. to work for Calvert McPherrin’s sheep ranch in Marysville, California, in July 1951.<sup>243</sup> He worked from five in the morning to eight at night every day at the ranch (mainly as a cook), seven days a

240 Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels,” Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*.

241 Antoinette Oroz, interview by Natalie Oroz, San Rafael, California, March 9, 2005, Francisco Oroz, interview by Natalie Oroz, San Rafael, California, March 12, 2005, and by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, February 16, 2008. See also Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*.

242 Roger Minhondo, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, March 15, 2005.

243 For more information on the McPherrin’s ranch. See McPherrin, Calvert. *The Long Way to Make a Million*. Sutter Buttes, California: Calvert McPherrin, 2005.



week, for a monthly check of \$150. Of that amount he sent \$100 to his wife, Begoña (born in 1930 in Zamudio), and three children who remained back home. After two years of work without much hope of making a decent living, Bilbao decided to go to San Francisco hoping to improve his lot. He stayed at the Hotel du Midi for a few days where he met another boarder, Gabriel de Sujes from Gipuzkoa, who told him about a job at Los Altos Golf and Country Club (Los Altos, California). “When I came to the du Midi I thought I was back in the Basque Country,” Bilbao commented. That is, all the du Midi clients were Basque and spoke Basque and Spanish.<sup>244</sup> Bilbao worked for the country club first as a janitor for two years and then as a gardener for nearly seventeen more. “I woke up every day at five to go to work, and I did this for nearly twenty years, and I never missed a day of work,” Bilbao proudly said.<sup>245</sup> After finishing his eight-hour job, he spent his evenings taking care of the gardens of members of the club. In 1956, Begoña and their oldest child, María, joined Félix at Los Altos and three years later their other two sons, Luis Mari and José Félix, who had living with their grandparents, joined the rest of the family. The family was finally reunited after eight long years of separation.<sup>246</sup>

In 1963, José Mari Echamendi from Erroibar (Nafarroa) leased the Hotel du Midi to Félix and Begoña who managed it for a decade. In 1970, while Felix was visiting the Basque Country, Louis Elu, owner of Hotel de España, bought the Hotel du Midi. Later, in 1973, Elu leased the hotel to Felipe Cerdán, also from Erroibar. He finally sold it in 1983. During the time that the Bilbao family ran du Midi, Félix continued to work at the country club and helped at the hotel, but Begoña was the one who managed it and cooked on a daily basis. Félix explained that “the hotel had fifty rooms, a restaurant, and a small bar, and although we didn’t have a liquor license [some of the other Basque hotels did not have one either], we used to sell alcohol. If there weren’t for the drinks, the food wouldn’t have been enough [to keep the hotel open]. The whole family worked at the du Midi. David [only son who was born in the country] practically grow up in the inn. It went well for us. I woke up at seven, and many times, I went to bed at two. It was very hard. The majority of our clients were Basque shepherders, but the restaurant was open to the public [...] We used to charge \$3 for the dinner, and everyday there was a different menu.”<sup>247</sup> In 1974, Félix and Begoña opened Bilbao’s Basque Corner on Market Street for five years. He retired in 1979 at the age of sixty-two.<sup>248</sup>

As we have seen, the history of these boardinghouses is intertwined with the history of the families who owned or managed them. In this sense, the children of the last wave of San Francisco hotel operators—the first generation of their family born

<sup>244</sup> Félix Bilbao, interview by Marisa Espinal, Belmont, California, April 12, 2005.

<sup>245</sup> Félix Bilbao, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007.

<sup>246</sup> Begoña Bilbao, interview by Marisa Espinal, Belmont, California, April 12, 2005.

<sup>247</sup> Bilbao, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007.

<sup>248</sup> Pedro J. Oiarzabal, “Félix Bilbao: Un “Gudari” en San Francisco,” *Euskonews & Media* 391 (2007), <http://www.euskonews.com/03912bk/kosmo39101.html>.



*“The Broadway Basque Children” (from left to right): Leon Sorhondo, Yvonne (Sorhondo) Cuburu, Lucille (Elu) Andueza and Gracian Goyhenetche, with Marie Elu (center), former owner of Hotel de España at the Basque Cultural Center’s restaurant. March 11, 2007. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

outside the Basque Country (i.e., parents immigrated)—are privileged witnesses of two different worlds that coexisted side by side at the heart of the town where they grew up. These children were part of an extended Basque family, whose domains were a “buffer zone” called Broadway, which ran between Chinatown towards South Pacific, and today’s North Beach to the north, towards Vallejo Street.

This was the case of Lucille (Elu) Andueza (Hotel de España), Leon Sorhondo and Yvonne (Sorhondo) Cuburu (Sorhondo’s Pyrenees Hotel), and Gracian Goyhenetche (Obrero Hotel), who all grew up in Basque boardinghouses on Broadway and lived an “unusual” life by American standards.<sup>249</sup> Leon explained, “We had a more expanded family than your traditional nuclear [family] because we had all the other boarders who were really almost like our big brothers [...] I now have the experience of seeing what the nuclear family is like, and I wonder if my kids aren’t having the same feeling of growing up with us that we had with the boarders, which was very

<sup>249</sup> Lucille’s parents, Marie and Louis Elu, were born in the U.S. Lucille was born in 1948 in San Francisco, Leon and Yvonne were born in Alturas, California in 1949 and in 1950, respectively, to Amelie and Jean Sorhondo, and Gracian, born in 1949 in Ely, Nevada, was the child of Catherine Inda and Pierre Goyhenetche, both from Urepele. Pierre was born in 1907.

different. I really kind of enjoyed that. I missed it at the time but now I'm happy that I went through it that way.”<sup>250</sup>

Gracian remembered that “as a group we were kind of this little unit of kids, and we were pretty proud about the fact that we were Basque [and we always talked about it] because we were surrounded by the Italians and the Chinese [...] and we were just a little group of Basque kids, and we all stick together [...] Today, we still feel very closed to each other [...] We are long life friends forever. [For instance], Lucille Elu, she and her husband are the godparents of my youngest son. Leon [Sorhondo] is the godfather of my oldest son.”<sup>251</sup>

Leon and Yvonne's parents immigrated to Oregon in 1949 and moved from there to San Francisco in 1955. That same year when Leon and Yvonne were six and five years old, respectively their parents took over the Pyrenees Hotel. Their father, a former shepherd, worked at a tanning company at Hunter's Point during the day and bartended at night, so their mother dealt with all the duties that the hotel and kitchen required on a daily basis. The hotel had approximately thirty-eight rooms that would double up when needed, and “the bar would be just a little tiny room we had in the back room. It was just one of the old hotel rooms that had been converted into a little cabinet that we had where we would store some drinks” for the boarders to socialize, Leon said.<sup>252</sup>

At the age of seventeen Gracian's father arrived in Nevada to work first as a shepherd and then as a copper miner. In WWII he was drafted into the U.S. Army and became an American citizen. After the army he raised sheep, and in approximately 1948 he went back to his home in Urepele at the age of forty. There, he married and soon both he and his wife returned to live in Ely, Nevada for six years. After Gracian and his sister Mary Ann were born, the family again returned to France, but later they moved back to San Francisco since Gracian's father's brothers Jean Baptiste and Beñat lived in the city. Their father went into gardening, and their mother found a job at a laundry. In 1961, they took over the Obrero Hotel, which had some boarders and a small public restaurant that seated about fifty people. Gracian was twelve years old and the time and was in charge of dishwashing. His sister waited tables, his mother cook, and his father bartended.<sup>253</sup> When Lucille's parents got the lease for the Hotel de España in 1957 she was nine years old. She remembers that they did not have many boarders, but they had a public bar and restaurant.

During the week, all of the children had chores to do before going to school in the morning and after returning in the afternoon. They helped with dinners,

250 Leon Sorhondo, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, May 25, 2006.

251 Lucille Andueza, Yvonne Cuburu, Gracian Goyhenetche, and Leon Sorhondo, focus Group Interview on *Children of Basque Boardinghouse Owners*, facilitated by Nicole Sorhondo and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.

252 Leon Sorhondo, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, May 25, 2006.

253 Gracian Goyhenetche, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, Pollock Pines, California, April 23, 2006.



*The Goyhenetche family at the Hotel Obrero's kitchen, c. 1960s. From left to right: Catherine, Mary Ann, Gracian and Pierre. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

salads, refilling bottles of wine, making and packing lunches for the boarders, and dishwashing. (At the Pyrenees, the boarders made their own breakfast.) Then, they had their school work to do. Their responsibilities increased exponentially on the weekends due to the number of parties (e.g., weddings, birthdays, anniversaries) that they used to cater. Sometimes their parents hired some extra help for certain busy days or special events. Lucille stated, "The whole family contributed and learned to make work fun." Once a week, the hotels closed but only to the public, so they still had to clean the rooms, make the beds, do the laundry, and prepare the meals for the boarders. When the children grew older, they would do other types of chores such as driving boarders to the airport.<sup>254</sup>

Around 1961, the Obrero Hotel charged \$1.50 for dinners (soup, salad, one or two entrees, a special of the day, which was the main course, cheese, dessert, wine, and coffee) and \$80.00 a month for boarders, which included everything. After years of exhausting work their parents retired. Some passed away, and some sold their businesses. New Basque immigrants stopped coming, many former boarders married and moved into their own houses, and in the case of the

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<sup>254</sup> Leon Sorhondo, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, May 25, 2006.

Sorhondo's Pyrenees the rooms were left empty or were rented to "outsiders."<sup>255</sup> The children did not follow in their parents' footsteps. If the Sorhondos', Elus', and Goyhenetches' children have something in common it is that they would never work in a restaurant and/or hotel again, although they confessed that they do really miss those days.<sup>256</sup>

Their American friends, if any, were "school friends." Many Basques attended French grammar school at NDV as it was near Broadway, and that is also where their Basque friends were. Johnny Etchevers, born in 1946 in San Francisco, grew up in the Cosmopolitan Hotel with Claude and Claudine Berhouet's children and recalled the old days growing up on Broadway Street with other Basque children:

I really think I had a very rich childhood growing up on Broadway Street because we had a lot of freedom. Because all of us and Leon [Sorhondo], Louis Elu [born in 1950], Félix Elu [born in 1946] [...] all our folks were working really hard. They worked seven days a week. My folks took one day off every other week. That was the deal. And my mom's running a rooming house, and that means changing the beds and, you know, doing all that kind of stuff in the hotel, and then in the afternoon and the evening she'd be the hostess in the restaurant which meant...the kids, we were loose. We were free, and it was great, and San Francisco, North Beach in those days was very, very safe, and we ran crazy. We did a lot of things we shouldn't have done. It was a lot of fun. I had a lot, a lot of fond memories of growing up in North Beach. I mean we did a lot of fun things, you know, as a kid. (Johnny Etchevers, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, May 5, 2007.)

## The End of an Era and the Birth of New Restaurants and Cafés

By the 1950s and 1960s, the boardinghouses started to decline dramatically throughout the American West, relying increasingly upon a non-Basque clientele. In San Francisco Basque inns and restaurants were filled by Basques particularly on the weekends, but during the week Americans were their main clients. Former hotel owner, Marie Elu argued, "You can't go just with the Basque [people] anymore. Here's an example right here in this building [the Basque Cultural Center]. We wouldn't have what we have here if we depended [exclusively] on the Basque community [...] We can have them as members and do what we're doing—all of the different festivities and everything here and the co-mingling of all of the young people and all—but to actually depend [only] on the Basque people for business purposes you cannot do it."<sup>257</sup> The decline and final disappearance of the *ostatuak*

<sup>255</sup> Leon Sorhondo, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, May 25, 2006.

<sup>256</sup> Lucille Andueza, Yvonne Cuburu, Gracian Goyhenetche, and Leon Sorhondo, focus group interview on *Children of Basque Boardinghouse Owners*, facilitated by Nicole Sorhondo and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.

<sup>257</sup> Begoña Bilbao, Martha Bigue, Marie Elu, and Yvonne Vizcay, focus group interview on *Boardinghouses-Hotelerak*, facilitated by Valerie Arrechea and Marisa Espinal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.



## MENU

CLOSED MONDAYS

- TUESDAY** - SWEET BREADS AND PRIME RIB
- WEDNESDAY** - MEAT BALLS OR BEEF TONGUE  
WITH MUSHROOMS AND VEAL T-BONE
- THURSDAY** - SWEET BREADS AND CHICKEN
- FRIDAY** - FISH - STEAM CLAMS WITH RICE  
AND STEAK
- SATURDAY** - LAMB STEW AND PRIME RIB
- SUNDAY** - SWEET BREADS AND CHICKEN  
FILET MIGNON STEAKS DAILY



*Family-style dining was offered in many of the Basque hotels of San Francisco. Here, Hotel des Alpes' hearty weekly menu. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

were related to the collapse of the sheepherding industry, the lack of new Basque immigrants, and the original clientele settling down permanently and no longer requiring lodging. In addition, the creation and growth of Basque socio-cultural clubs replaced the boardinghouses as the social and recreational centers of Basque local community life.<sup>258</sup>

However, in the case of the Bay Area Basque community, some of the promoters and active members of the San Francisco Basque Club—the only Bay Area Basque association for nearly two decades—were owners, former owners and operators of Basque hotels (e.g., the Elus, Berhouets, Orozes). Furthermore, the only Bay Area clubhouse (the Basque Cultural Center, BCC) was not opened until 1982, and it was not built in downtown but in the city of South San Francisco. Echeverria argued that “while the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center may rival the downtown hotels, it has not supplanted the role of the Broadway district’s hotels.”<sup>259</sup> In other words, Zubiri suggested that “ironically, hotel owners had been among the

<sup>258</sup> Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels,” 181-82, 202-03, ———, *Home Away from Home: A History of Basque Boardinghouses*.

<sup>259</sup> Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels,” 182.



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ETORRI



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Family-style dining provided by Arnaud and Marie Mendisco. Recipes from the valley of the Nives in the French Pyrénées. Small upstairs restaurant, intimate and friendly. One serving only (at 6:30 p.m.); reservations required.

Monday	Oxtail stew and roast beef
Wednesday	Spaghetti and chops
Thursday	Spare ribs with rice, and fried chicken
Friday	Fish and roast lamb
Saturday	Stew and roast beef
Sunday	Pipérade with chorizo, and roast chicken

CLOSED TUESDAYS

*"Slow food" cooking and abundant meals were a signature of Broadway Basque inns. Hotel Obrero's weekly set menu. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



biggest supporters of the construction of the center.”<sup>260</sup> For example, Ganix and Aña Iriartborde, former operators of the Hotel des Alpes, were the first managers of the BCC’s restaurant. Aña Iriartborde strongly stated, “What we lost when the boardinghouses disappeared, we got it back with the BCC.”<sup>261</sup> Past and present directors of the board (e.g., Alphonse Acheritogaray, Roger Minhondo or Jean Baptiste Lorda) of 599 Railroad Catering, Incorporated that supervises the BBC’s restaurant are current or former Basque chefs with strong and long ties with the Basque community in the Bay Area.

Echeverria also argued that “another factor responsible for this change is the assimilation of the late-generation Basques into the American society [...] In recent decades ‘hoteleros’ [hotel owners] have had to turn the old ethnic institutions that the hotels once were into semi-modern establishments that merchandise a “sense” of Basque culture [...] Later-generation Basques have used the Basque hotels to help them define and retain their cultural identity.”<sup>262</sup> Consequently, hotel owners emphasized the economic value of their bars and restaurants over the rooms, while they decided to accept a non-Basque clientele attracted to a sense of authenticity, family-style meals, abundant food (super-sizing *à la* Basque), and low prices. Decroos emphatically argued that “the commercialization of ethnicity is a reality few Basque establishments can or wish to escape.”<sup>263</sup> That is, there was a “gradual evolution from a Basque hotel to a restaurant with a Basque theme.”<sup>264</sup>

In 1958, the 700 block of Broadway Street, where most of the traditional Basque hotels were located, was torn down in order to build the Ping Yuen Public Housing Development, a twelve-story apartment building, as part of Chinatown’s inner-city redevelopment plan. The traditional gathering place of the Basque community of San Francisco was relegated to memory. The Pyrenees Hotel, Martin’s Español, El Globo Hotel, and the city’s indoor handball court were demolished. The Sorhondo’s Pyrenees reopened in a new location down the street at 517 Broadway in 1957, and as we have seen Martin’s Español did the same.<sup>265</sup>

By the 1970s, many Basques went back to the Basque Country after finishing their herding contracts. Moreover, in 1979, the Helen Willis Playground’s “handball court” had been torn down so fewer Basque people went to North Beach to spend their free time on the weekends. According to Marie Elu, Broadway Basque hotels and restaurants noticed the decline of business after the closure of the handball court.<sup>266</sup>

260 Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 191-92.

261 Aña Iriartborde, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, February 11, 2006.

262 Echeverria, “The Basque Hotelera: Implications for Broader Study,” 134-35.

263 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 47.

264 Echeverria, “California-ko Ostatuak: A History of California’s Basque Hotels,” 202.

265 Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 188, Rogers, *A Basque Story Cookbook*.

266 Marie Elu, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, January 21, 2005 and February 5, 2005.

By the 1970s there were still a number of Basque hotels as well as cafes, bars and restaurants throughout San Francisco (e.g., the Basque Hotel at Romolo Place, the Elu's Basque Restaurant, the Obrero Hotel, and the Hotel des Alpes). For instance, Jean Loui Arteta's Café du Nord was located in the basement of the Swedish-American Society at 2170 Market Street. It ceased being a Basque restaurant in 1992. Jean Cornu, from Bidarraï, opened Villa Basque for three years on Geary Street and 18<sup>th</sup> in the Richmond District. Annie Mocho's La Crosiëtte was at 745 Columbus Avenue and was opened between 1976 and 1978. Côte Basque was at the 1900 block of Lawton Street in the Sunset District. Bilbao's Basque Corner was on Market Street; Le St. Tropez was at Clement Street; Chez Leon at 124 Ellis Street; and Izarra on Polk Street.

In addition to Basque boardinghouses, there were also a few single-occupancy type hotels run by Basques in San Francisco (e.g., the Liguria in North Beach, the Royal Hotel in Chinatown, or the Castro Hotel). In 1978, Pierre Ausquy, born in 1925 in Arnegi, purchased the lease of the Castro Hotel (at 705 Vallejo Street, between Columbus Avenue and Broadway Street) from Dolores and Michel Gortarri from Baigorri who had been in charge of the hotel since July 1962. Pierre came to the U.S. in 1947. After seven years working as a sheepherder in Buffalo, Wyoming, he went back to the Old Country in 1955 and married Therese Boloquy. Both Pierre and Therese came back to the U.S. that same year. Pierre worked construction for two years while Therese worked at the Overland Hotel in Gardnerville, Nevada. They later decided to settle in San Francisco.

Pierre worked at the San Francisco Produce Market that used to be located at today's Embarcadero (later it would move to South San Francisco) for seven years. Pierre recalled that many other Basques also worked at the market. Jean Laxague, born in 1933 in Aldude, worked as a sheepherder for seven years in Rock Springs, Wyoming since his arrival in the country in 1957, and then moved to San Francisco in 1964, where he worked at the produce market for seven years. Michel Marticorena, born in 1928 in Ortzaize, worked at the market for thirty-six years. Brothers Jean Pierre and Auguste Indart, originally from Ortzaize, came to San Francisco in 1957 and 1963, respectively. They too worked at the market for years. Additionally, Bernard Intchausepe, Jean Pierre Ospital, Ferdinand Tapia, José Mari "Joe" Miura, and Erramun and Pierre Trounday worked at the market for a number of years.<sup>267</sup>

Between 1963 and 1977, Pierre had his own gardening business that he bought from Jean Baptiste Goyhenetche. Pierre ran the Castro Hotel until 1990. In 1991 he sold the lease to Maurice Bigue, from Béarn, and his wife Mayi (Arretche) Bigue, who came from the Basque Country at a young age. Mayi's parents owned the

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<sup>267</sup> Auguste Indart, interview by Elizabeth Barthe, South San Francisco, California, November 17, 2006, Jean Laxague, interview by Marie Laxague Rosecrans, Burlingame, California, October 27, 2006, Michel Marticorena, interview by Marisa Espinal, Redwood City, California, March 15, 2005.

Woolgrowers Restaurant in Los Banos, California. Maurice’s brother Pierre Bigue and his wife, Marthe, were the former owners of the Basque Hotel. Maurice and Mayi, in turn, sold the lease of Castro Hotel to Martin and Monique Falxa both from Urepele. Monique continues to run the business after the death of her husband.<sup>268</sup>

In 1991, Basque restaurateurs Gerald Hirigoyen and Jean Baptiste Lorda opened Fringale at 570-4<sup>th</sup> Street. Prior to Fringale, Lorda had Le St. Tropez on Clement Street. They also owned a French bistro called Pastis. Hirigoyen sold his share of Fringale to Lorda and bought the other half of Pastis from his partner, which he renamed Piperade (at 1015 Battery Street) in 2003. It became the forerunner of modern Basque cuisine in San Francisco, which Hirigoyen described as “West Coast Basque.” Then, in 2004 Hirigoyen opened Bocadillos at 710 Montgomery Street. In addition, in the same year Mattin Noblia, one of Hirigoyen’s former chefs, opened the restaurants Iluna Basque (at 701 Union Street on Powell Street) and Eguna Basque Crepe Restaurant, which is next door at 1657 Powell Street. Finally, Ramuntxo Arbelbide from Baigorri opened the French bistro Côte Sud at 4238-18<sup>th</sup> Street in the Castro District in September 2002.

Outside the city limits of San Francisco, Jean Felix and Marie Galzagorry ran San Rafael’s Café Villa Basque between 1988 and 1997. Jean Felix was the chef and Marie was the hostess. Pierre “Peyo” Lagourgue has run the Chez Peyo in Sebastopol since 1971 as well as Chez Leon in San Francisco; and Roger Minhondo owned Sausalito’s Guernica restaurant between 1972 and 2003.

In South San Francisco, Arnaud Etcheto managed Garden Club until his death in 1995. The restaurant was sold to an Italian American family but many of the patrons are still Basque. The Basque Cultural Center Restaurant (at 599 Railroad Avenue) has been open to the public since its official inauguration in 1982. It has been managed by Basque-Californian François Camou since 1996, and its chef is Michel Veron from Billy-Berclau, northern France. In Millbrae Jean Baptiste and Rose Larrateguy ran La Côte Basque until Jean Baptiste passed away in 1995. Larrateguy also ran a restaurant with the same name in San Francisco’ Sunset District for ten years. Annie Mocho, former owner of La Croisette, ran Nouveau Trattoria in Palo Alto between 1993 and 2005.<sup>269</sup>

## OTHER BUSINESSES: BAKERIES AND LAUNDRIES

Basques were involved in the hospitality and food industry not only through hotels, restaurants and bars, but also through bakeries. There have been Basque bakeries in Bakersfield, Fresno, La Puente, San Francisco and Santa Monica. One

<sup>268</sup> Pierre Ausquy, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, October 28, 2006. E-mail exchanges with Nicole (Ausquy) Sorhondo, April 17, 2008.

<sup>269</sup> Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*.

of the most cherished Basque bakeries in San Francisco, the Larraburu Brothers Bakery (at 365-3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, between Geary and Clement streets) was founded in 1896 by two brothers, Jean and Saint Larraburu. It was sold in 1945 to their employees. “Like salty fog air and the waft of coffee from the Hills Brothers building, Larraburu bread provided one of the great ‘Smells of San Francisco,’” the San Francisco Western Neighbourhoods Project reported on the Larraburu bakery.<sup>270</sup> This San Francisco institution remained open until c. 1976, when it went bankrupt as one of the delivery vans tragically struck a child.<sup>271</sup>



***“One of the great Smells of San Francisco.”*** Larraburu Brothers Bakery’s delivery trucks and drivers lined up for a unique picture c. 1940. Photograph by John Freeman.

270 San Francisco Western Neighborhoods Project, “Larraburu Brothers Bakery,” <http://www.outsidelands.org/larraburu.php>.

271 Christiane Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada Since 1960” (TER, Université de Pau et des Pays de L’Adour, 1976), 20, 34.



*Dominique Jambon, one of the last independent bakery owners of San Francisco, posing with his own brand of bread, c. 1970s. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



Pierre Saldubehere and Dominique Jambon were partners in the Royal Bakery until 1987 when they sold their shares of the business. According to Zubiri, Saldubehere and Jambon “were the last Basques involved in baking in the city.”<sup>272</sup> From 1956 to the 1980s, Gracian and Lili Guerra owned the Sonoma French Bakery in Sonoma.

Before immigrating to San Francisco some Basque young women had already moved out of their villages and towns to larger urban areas such as Biarritz, Baiona, Bordeaux, Pau or Paris. For example, Grace Franchisteguy and Etiennette Sabarots who came to San Francisco in 1957 and 1961, respectively, worked in Paris as housekeepers. While working in Paris Etiennette actively volunteered at the Pariseko Eskual Etxea, the Paris Basque clubhouse, which had been established a couple of years prior her arrival in 1957 by Loui Domecq and Jeanne Idiart.<sup>273</sup> Grace married her fiancé, Leon Franchisteguy one week after her arrival in San Francisco and worked as a housekeeper for a number of years. Similarly, Etiennette also married her fiancé, Auguste Lapeyrade, in San Francisco two weeks after her arrival and worked for a year and a half at the Peninou French Laundry on Sacramento Street. Her sister Marie Sabarots, who married Auguste’s brother Joe, worked at the same laundry.<sup>274</sup>

According to Decroos, there were at least five Basque-owned laundries in San Francisco in 1925, while many Basques worked at other laundries, mainly owned by Béarnaise people.<sup>275</sup> By the turn of the twentieth century Jose Lopez, Jr., who immigrated to San Francisco from Maule, Zuberoa, opened the New Parisian French Laundry Company at 2633 Clement Street in San Francisco’s Richmond District. The laundry employed Basque, French and Spanish people between the early 1900s to the 1960s.<sup>276</sup>

According to Marie Elissetche (born in 1925 in Ortazaize) and Marie Simone Barreneche (born in 1931 in Banka), there were many French laundries in San Francisco when they first came to the Bay Area, in 1952 and 1958, respectively, but now, they have all disappeared. Both women came to the U.S. planning to work for a few years and then return. Barreneche stated,

I wanted to have a better life, to work six, at the most, years and go back “rich.” But that didn’t happen. I started to work in a laundry, and I thought this was a piece of cake working with nice clean clothes all the time compared to what we had to do back home—

<sup>272</sup> Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 195.

<sup>273</sup> See Argitxu Camus Echeopar, *La Maison Basque de Paris-Pariseko Eskual Etxea (1952-2002)*, Urazandi (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2003).

<sup>274</sup> Grace Franchisteguy, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2007, Etiennette Lapeyrade, interview by Nicole Lapeyrade, San Francisco, California, March 24, 2007.

<sup>275</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*.

<sup>276</sup> Philippe Acheritogaray, e-mail exchange, August 27, 2008.

[you had to] go down the river [and clean everything], not having running water in the house—and it was just beautiful to work here. [Although American people were saying “that’s the hardest job that you’re doing,” but I didn’t think so. Compared to what we were used to doing back home, it was nice.] After six years, when I went back, I said, “What are we going to do back here [in the Basque Country]? We have a better life in United States.” So we stayed [...] I remember my mother saying, “if you have a better life in the United States maybe you should stay because you know what kind of life we have here; working so hard, you know, on a little farm.” There were a lot of people working for nothing. So, we decided, well we have a better life here [in the U.S.]. Everybody thought that coming to the United States that was to get rich. But that didn’t happen. I mean we knew older people, mostly the shepherders that did that. They stayed here [in the U.S.] a few years and went back [and] got married. (Marie-Simone Barreneche and Marie Elissetche, focus group interview on *French Laundries*, facilitated by Yvonne Hauscarriague and Nicole Sorhondo, South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007.)

Barreneche and Elissetche found work at two different French laundries as soon as they arrived. They both agreed, not knowing much English, ironing was a job that did not require any language skills, but it was a way to earn some money. Barreneche worked at Toulouse Laundry on Lincoln Way for five years. Then, she went to a cosmetology school and opened her own salon. Her husband, Jean Pierre, worked as a gardener. Elissetche worked at the aforementioned Peninou French Laundry for twenty years. After eleven years, Elissetche and her family (her husband, Ganix, worked at a French bakery in San Francisco) planned to return to the Basque Country for good, but after a year they decided to move back to the States. They both remember that many Basque women worked at those laundries, e.g., Therese Ausquy, born in 1933 in Luzaide, worked at Peninou for a year in the mid-1950s.<sup>277</sup> In addition, Toulouse’s wife was also Basque, and at Peninou, one of the supervisors was also a Basque lady. Elissetche’s two sisters joined her in America in 1953 and 1954. One of them, Marie Jeanne Berterretche also worked for a while at Peninou and later on in a Basque hotel. Her other sister, Louise Michelena found a job at Hotel du Midi.<sup>278</sup>

Anne Marie Goyhenetche, born in Aldude in 1933, married Rene Duboscq, a baker from Baigorri, in 1953, and both came to the U.S. with their four children in 1966. Anne Marie’s sister (Marie) and three brothers (Jean Pierre, Jean Baptiste and Emile) had already lived in San Francisco for a number of years. Anne Marie’s first job in San Francisco was at a French laundry called Loustau (on Sacramento Street), whose owners were Jean and Loui Loustau. Anne Marie worked there for six years, then she graduated from John O’Connell Vocational School on South Van Ness and went to work as a housekeeper for the Hilton Hotel for three years. Later Anne

<sup>277</sup> Therese Ausquy, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, October 28, 2006.

<sup>278</sup> Marie-Simone Barreneche and Marie Elissetche, focus group interview on *French Laundries*, facilitated by Yvonne Hauscarriague and Nicole Sorhondo, South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007.



*From left to right, Theodora Calbo and Adela (Borau) Lopez, wife of New Parisian Laundry proprietor Jose Lopez, Jr., posing in front of the laundry, c. 1926.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



*From left to right, Adoración (Borau) Gil, Joseph Steven Lopez and Adela (Borau) Lopez pictured in front of a New Parisian Laundry delivery truck, c. 1926. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

Marie worked as a cashier for a few local stores until she retired.<sup>279</sup> Yvette Urruty is another Basque woman who worked at the Toulouse Laundry for over a year. She stated, “I started working right away in a French laundry where everybody was French and Basque. It felt like home. It was an easy transition for me. [Working at the laundry] was very easy for me compared to the work we did back home.”<sup>280</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

As private enterprises, the *ostatuak* became the backbone of Basque America for over one hundred years by caring for the well-being of their guests who were not seen as mere customers but as countrymen. In a sense, the inns were safe havens for newly arrived immigrants. In today’s terms the *ostatuak* would be closer to the concept of social entrepreneurship than to a classical interpretation of capitalism due to the wide range of non-profit and free services that the *ostatuak* provided. The symbolic role of the Basque woman as a domestic and nurturing mother is key to understanding the meaning of the Basque boardinghouses in America as homes away from home as well as surrogate family households.

In all views, the Basque *ostatuak* on Broadway—at the core of an historical Euskal Hiria or Basque Town—need to be considered as part of a golden era of downtown San Francisco. They were as quintessential to San Francisco’s history as today’s neighborhoods of Chinatown, North Beach or Japantown, the Beat generation movement, or the City Lights Bookstore and Press. The void of a physical Basque Town one can visit is filled by a space of intertwined memories of thousands of Basques who lived it—the echoes of the sounds made by the *pilota* or ball, hitting the cement wall at Helen Wills Playground, the hotel bells that announced dinner to the boarders, or the loud and cheerful songs in an ancient language resonating after a copious lunch or intense evening card game that took them back to their Old Country.

In the next Chapter we will explore the creation of socio-cultural and recreational associations as the new venues for socialization and identity maintenance throughout the Bay Area and their role of recreating a Basque Country abroad.

<sup>279</sup> Anne Marie DuBosq, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, November 2, 2006.

<sup>280</sup> Yvette Urruty, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2001.



# ‘Euskal Elkar a Basque

(04)

# teak’: Building Country

On a general level, the imaging of a community as a unified and more or less homogeneous is a normal or perhaps necessary procedure for any kind of politics of identity because every individual member of a community embodies a multiplicity of diverse identities that may engender conflict and contradiction.

(Martin Sökefeld, “Alevism Online: Re-Imagining a Community in Virtual Space,”  
*Diaspora* 11, no. 1 (2002): 113.)

## **EUSKAL ELKARTEAK: BASQUE ASSOCIATIONS**

### **Historical French, Spanish and Basque Associationism**

As stated in a previous Chapter, between 1849 and 1852 there was a massive immigration of Europeans into California as the result of the discovery of gold. The failed Revolution of 1848 worsened the socio-economic conditions of France, which also provoked the exile of many French nationals. As early as 1849 a French Consulate was set up in San Francisco, which indicates the massive and rapid influx of French immigrants into the city. As mentioned earlier, Cesareo Lataillade, a Basque from Donibane Lohizune, became the first French Consul of

San Francisco. The French community grew exponentially, and by the early 1850s it established its own ethnic neighbourhood, the so-called French Camp, Quarter or Frenchtown, between Montgomery and Commercial streets. By the 1860s the French Quarter had expanded toward the north of the city, reaching North Beach a decade later.<sup>281</sup>

A series of religious, recreational, philanthropic or mutual-aid institutions, and French-language newspapers were founded in order to accommodate the increasing needs of the San Francisco French community. For example, L'Adelphi Theatre was inaugurated in 1850; the Société Française de Bienfaisance Mutuelle (the French Society of Mutual Beneficence) was established in 1851, becoming the first mutual insurance association in the country; and a Roman Catholic church, the Notre Dame des Victoires (NDV), was founded in 1856 at 566 Bush Street at the heart of the historical French Quarter in downtown. In 1887, Pope Leo XIII designated NDV the French National Church of the city. Today, NDV is an historical landmark. The aforementioned beneficent association built La Maison de Sante or the French Hospital on Geary Street, which became the "major medical center in Northern California" at the time.<sup>282</sup> Throughout its history, the French Hospital has been widely used by Basques. Today, the French Society of Mutual Beneficence has approximately 8,000 members.

A French national, Raphael Weill, who immigrated into San Francisco in 1853, became one of the most prosperous merchants of dry goods in California and helped establish a committee to celebrate the annual French national holiday, Bastille Day or July Fourteenth, in San Francisco in 1880. Since then, the Bay Area French community has joined their counterparts around the world in the celebration of this festivity.<sup>283</sup> Currently, the Comité Officiel de la Communauté Française de San Francisco et de la Baie (The Official Committee of the French Community of San Francisco and the Bay) is in charge of the organization of Bastille Day. Upon the creation of the San Francisco Basque Club's dance group in 1961, the President of the Official Committee, Simon Toulouse, invited the dancers to perform for the 1961 edition of Bastille Day at the Golden Gate Park Music Concourse and at the Scottish Right Auditorium. The dancers, and later

281 See Frank Soulé and et al., *The Annals of San Francisco* (San Francisco, California 1855), 387, Henry G. Langley, *The San Francisco Directory* (San Francisco, CA, 1890-1891), *San Francisco Blue Book*, (San Francisco, California: Charles C. Hoag, 1905), "San Francisco," in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (London 1910-1911), *Almanach des Français en Californie*, (San Francisco: Lauson & Garfinkel, 1925).

282 Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983), 31.

283 See Abraham Phineas Nasatir, *French Activities in California: An Archive Calendar-guide* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 1954), Claudine Chalmers, "L'aventure Française a San Francisco pendant la Ruée Vers L'Or 1848-1854" (PhD Dissertation, Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis, France 1991), Annick Foucier, *Le Rêve Californien. Migrants Français sur la Côte Pacifique, XVIIIe-XXe Siècles* (Paris: Belin, 1999). Around the same time, the French Savings and Loan Society (1860) and the Ligue National Française (the French National League, 1871, on Sutter Street) associations were also established. See *San Francisco Blue Book*.

*The Basque Club's Zazpiak Bat Dance Group performed at the Music Concourse of Golden Gate Park to celebrate the 1961 edition of Bastille Day. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



*The Basque Club's Klika band performed at the Music Concourse of Golden Gate Park on July 4, 1978. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



on, the club’s *klika* corps (drums and bugles marching band) became regulars at this annual event. It seems that the tradition ended after the Music Concourse was damaged during the Loma Prieta earthquake on October 17, 1989. A Basque from Bidarra, Frederic Fuldain was program director for the Bastille Day events, at least between 1965 and 1970. He was also the founder of the dance and *klika* groups and was Honorary President of the Basque Club for thirty years beginning in August 1975. (The first Honorary President, Jean Sallaberry born in Bildoze-Onizepea, Zuberoa, died in May 1975 at the age of ninety-two; and Claude Berhouet, the next in line, also died in May 1971 at the age of forty-two.) Fuldain was born in 1929 and passed away in 2006.

According to Chalmers the majority of French immigrants who arrived at San Francisco after 1871 were from the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, the mountain regions of Hautes-Alpes and the Atlantic Pyrenees (Béarn and the Basque provinces), and Aveyron.<sup>284</sup> Some of these immigrants established their own associations such as La Société Alsace-Lorraine (The Society of Alsace-Lorraine). The first Basque association or *euskal elkartea*, La Sociedad Vascongada de Beneficencia Mutua, Incorporated (The Basque Society of Mutual Beneficence) would be established over a half a century later, in 1923, and its founders and/or at least the majority of the members were from the Basque provinces of Spain. Different sources stated that the association was still functioning by the late 1970s, at least in a symbolic manner; nevertheless, the information about it today is rather vague.<sup>285</sup> Plagiarulo stated that a short-lived Basque club was also established in Stockton in 1907, which would make it the first of its kind to be founded in California and first in the entire country.<sup>286</sup>

It would take another four decades for Basque immigrants (this time from the provinces of France) to organize another social club. Gachiteguy argued that by the 1950s “the French Basque community was loosely organized and lacked ‘vitality’ as a result of being incorporated, in part, into the French cliques and associations of the city [of San Francisco].”<sup>287</sup> As we have seen, Basque boardinghouses were at the core of the community for much of the Basque history of the Bay Area and throughout the country for that matter.

However, this does not mean that Basques did not get together and organize informal gatherings in Basque hotels or private residences. For example, Douglass and Bilbao stated that Basques held picnics sponsored by prominent Basque

284 Chalmers, “L’aventure Française a San Francisco pendant la Ruée Vers L’Or 1848-1854.”

285 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*.

286 Carol Pagliarulo, “Basques in Stockton” (M.A. Thesis, 1948), 54.

287 Adrian Gachiteguy, *Les Basques dans L’Ouest Américain* (Bordeaux: Editions Eskila, 1955), 61-63. See next section on the Basque Club of San Francisco.

ranchers before the establishment of social clubs.<sup>288</sup> The decline of the San Francisco boardinghouse network would partially open the door for members of the community to forge new associative expressions in order to maintain and strengthen its cohesion. In addition, urban redevelopment and the rise of the housing market in San Francisco pushed many residents to the outskirts of the city and county, where they would establish their homes and businesses (e.g., gardening and landscaping in the case of many Basques). The Basques of the San Francisco Peninsula organized themselves and following the establishment of the San Francisco Basque Club they set up their own club, the Menlo Park Zazpiak Bat Club, in Redwood City in 1964.

The early Spanish immigrant community of San Francisco also set up their own association called La Sociedad Española de Beneficencia (The Spanish Mutual Benevolent Society; today's Unión Española de California or Spanish Union of California) on Sacramento Street in 1876. According to Decroos a person named José Alcayaga, presumably of Basque origin and who had come into the country via Chile, was the Secretary of the Spanish society in 1880.<sup>289</sup> Similarly, the author reported that in 1890 Mrs. M. Aguirre, also of Basque origin, was the Treasurer of the Société de Bienfaisance des Dames Françaises (the French Ladies' Benevolent Society) established in 1867 on Sutter Street. (By 1891, the Spanish Society and the French Ladies' Society had 120 and 130 members, respectively.<sup>290</sup> This demonstrates, as I argued in a previous Chapter, that the integration of Basques into current French and Spanish welfare, mutual-aid and recreational associations has been the norm rather than an exception. This is also the case for the early history of French and Spanish associationism in San Francisco.

The creation of fraternal, benevolent or mutual-aid societies, where members were the ultimate beneficiaries of their activities, was quite common among early immigrant groups in America. They responded to a sense of solidarity among co-nationals, within the context of a weak and incipient welfare system. For example, during the first three decades of the twentieth century, the Basques of Boise, Idaho established La Sociedad de Socorros Mutuos (The Mutual Aid Society, 1908), La Fraternidad Vasca Americana (The Basque-American Fraternity, 1928), which was similar, for instance, to the San Francisco French club, La Fayette (1916) as both prepared their members for United States citizenship; and the Basque-American Fraternity Auxiliary Group (1930). On the East Coast, the Central (Centro) Vasco-Americano: Sociedad de Beneficencia y Recreo (Basque-American Club: Society of Benevolence and Recreation) was established by the New York Basque immigrant community in 1913.

<sup>288</sup> William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1975), 387.

<sup>289</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*.

<sup>290</sup> *San Francisco Blue Book*.

## Current Euskal Elkartek

The Basque Club of California was established in 1960 (the third oldest in California), followed by the Basque Cultural Center (BCC) in 1979, Marin-Sonoma Basque Association (MSBA) in 1989, and Anaitasuna Basque Club in 1991.<sup>291</sup> The establishment of the Basque Club can be contextualized as part of an identity revival movement that took place throughout the Basque-American West, according to Douglass and Bilbao, following the success of the first Basque regional festival in the U.S., which was celebrated in Sparks, Nevada in June of 1959.<sup>292</sup> The authors argued that the festival “served as both a stimulus and model for future Basque festivals, which began to proliferate throughout the American West during the 1960s. It sparked the creation of many [...] Basque clubs. All sponsor annual picnics [and] the festivities usually include a Basque-language Mass celebrated by one of the Basque chaplains in the American West, Basque athletics, in which herders vie for prizes in wood chopping and stone lifting, folk dance performances, an open-air barbecue with Basque cuisine, and a public dance in the evening.”<sup>293</sup> However, this Basque identity revival movement was not unique to the Basque population in America.

Robert Laxalt’s 1957 *Sweet Promised Land* emphasized the potential assimilation of immigrants as part of the successful accomplishment of the American dream. The “Melting Pot” policy attempted to assimilate immigrants into a prior “American” mainstream culture defined by Anglo and northern European parameters. But, by the 1950s the policy had not had much effect. The assimilation model, which had been implemented for decades, had failed. Since the 1960s social and political change (e.g., the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and the 1965 Immigration Reform bill, which ended preferential quotas for Europeans) has favored multiculturalism and the recovery of Old Country identity among many groups across America. During the following decade, an “ethnic” revival movement searched for authenticity lost in the past, specifically among white America. There was an unparalleled reclamation of roots and ancestry. For example, the 1974 Ethnic Heritage Act supported “the funding of initiatives that promote the distinctive cultures and histories of the nation’s ethnic populations.”<sup>294</sup> Public display of hyphenated and voluntary “ethnic” identity in the form of parades, festivals, cultural and folkloric events would eventually become the new way of being American.<sup>295</sup>

In the context of a rapid disintegration of the San Francisco Basque community, pushed to the Bay Area suburbs by new housing developments, the BCC responded

291 For a full online guide of the Bay Area Basque associations see <http://www.sfbasque.org>. For those and other Basque diaspora associations on the Web see <http://euskaldiaspora.com>.

292 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*.

293 *Ibid.*, 389-90.

294 Marilyn Halter, *Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity* (New York: Schocken Books, 2000), 5.

295 Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990).

to a younger generation of Basques unhappy with the situation at the Basque Club. They wanted a permanent pilota or handball court and a clubhouse to meet in. The MSBA was the result of a great number of Basques living in both Marin and Sonoma counties. Although Anaitasuna Basque Club was originally established by Basque and non-Basque members of the Unión Española to obtain “Basque institutional status” in order to play mus in the NABO internal tournament, this original goal was soon surpassed, making the club another local association that actively promotes Basque culture.

## ZAZPIAK BAT: TOWARDS BASQUE INCLUSIVENESS

In earlier studies I have argued that the Basque diaspora reifies the homeland Basque nationalist project of building a nation-state based on an imagined ancestral territory formed by seven historical provinces or *herrialdeak* under the nineteenth-century nationalist motto of *Zazpiak Bat* (Seven as One).<sup>296</sup> Within the context of the dissemination of the Basque homeland nationalist ideology throughout America in the late nineteenth century, Basque diaspora associations such as the Asociación Vasco-Navarra de Beneficencia (Basque-Navarrese Beneficence Association) from Havana, Cuba (1878) and the Laurac Bat of Montevideo began to promote a more inclusive approach towards Basques from the other side of the Franco-Spanish border.

As a reflection of this new inclusive policy, the Basque club from Montevideo was renamed *Euskaldun Guztiak Bat* (All Basques as One) a decade after its creation, while the Basque club from Havana removed its Laurak Bat motto in order to include Basques from the northern Basque Country. These associations began to construct an early pan-Basque or *Zazpiak Bat* identity, expressing a new consciousness about being Basque, and a new way of imaging themselves as a people united across homeland political and administrative divisions. This project would be disseminated to other Basque diaspora associations throughout the world.

Tápiz Fernández argued that by 1903 Basque nationalist ideology had already spread throughout the Basque communities in countries such as Argentina and Mexico.<sup>297</sup> However, it was not until the 1920s that a true process of Basque national “politicization” of diaspora associations took place in Argentina, Chile,

<sup>296</sup> See, for example, Pedro J. Oiarzabal, “The Basque Diaspora Webscape: Online Discourses of Basque Diaspora Identity, Nationhood, and Homeland” (PhD Dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, 2006). The *Zazpiak Bat* motto was designed by Antoine D’Abaddie and refers to the territorial and political unification of seven provinces—Araba, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Lapurdi, Nafarroa, Nafarroa Beherea, and Zuberoa—that share historical, anthropological, linguistic and cultural commonalities.

<sup>297</sup> José María Tápiz Fernández, “La Actividad Política de los Emigrantes: El Caso Vasco (1903-1936),” in *Las Migraciones Vascas en Perspectiva Histórica (Siglos XVI-XX)*, ed. Óscar Álvarez Gila and Alberto Angulo Morales (Bilbao: Servicio Editorial de la Universidad del País Vasco, 2000).

Cuba, Mexico, the Philippines, the United States and Uruguay. For instance, the Basque community in Mexico D.F. witnessed clashes between Spanish institutions such as the Casino Español (Spanish Casino) and Centro Vasco, the Basque club of D.F., created in 1907. In November 1911, a considerable number of members wrote a letter to the Centro Vasco’s board of directors pushing for an exclusive Basque identity of the association as it integrated Basques from the seven provinces. The authors of the letter asked the board to remain independent from Spanish and French institutions, “although [the Basque club] is formed by French and Spanish subjects, it cannot be defined as French or Spanish, but exclusively Basque.” In December 1911, the board of directors defined the club as exclusively Basque.<sup>298</sup>

The promotion of a nationalist interpretation of identity and culture has intensified since the establishment of the Basque government of Euskadi in the 1980s. That is, the diaspora identifies more with a Basque national project than a regional or sub-state project within France or Spain. The great majority of the current Basque institutional diaspora identifies with the representation of the homeland as an ancestral territory uniting all seven provinces, coinciding with the imagined homeland of the Basque nationalist movement. This notion of the homeland includes Basques from both sides of the Pyrenees.

This *Zazpiak Bat* project in San Francisco, for instance, is exemplified by the inclusive membership approach taken by Basque associations, which includes Basques and their descendants from any of the seven provinces as well as non-Basques (e.g., spouses of Basque members and others without any family affiliation).<sup>299</sup> For example, Pierre Bigue from Béarn, married to Margie Harguindeguy from Oakland, California, became the first (and only, so far) non-Basque President of the Basque Cultural Center eleven years after its establishment.<sup>300</sup> The implementation of a *Zazpiak Bat* attitude also fosters the creation of a cultural project that encompasses traditions of most of the seven provinces. The Basque institutional diaspora promotes the unity of all Basques in a single and common project as Basques; not as Spanish or French Basques, without explicitly highlighting any province or region in particular. At the same time it participates in the construction of an imagined united homeland formed by the seven historical provinces according to primordial identity criteria of ancestry and birth place.

In the Basque diaspora, the promotion of specific regional or provincial identities is overshadowed by the construction of a homogeneous and united identity. That is, the Basque institutional diaspora endorses a generic sense of

<sup>298</sup> Amaya Garrritz Ruiz, Centro Vasco de México, <http://www.centrovascomexico.com>.

<sup>299</sup> For example, the Basque Club and Basque Cultural Center do not require potential members to be of Basque ancestry. This non-requirement differs from many of their counterparts in the United States and throughout Latin America.

<sup>300</sup> Pierre Bigue was a director of the BCC board between 1987 and 1989, its Vice-president between 1989 and 1990, and the President for the following two years.

Basque identity—as an overarching or umbrella identity concept—that covers a wide range of local, regional, provincial, and national identities, among others in both the homeland and the hostlands. It is a conscious attempt to dissolve the individual particularities, generational differences, and the internal barriers of the Basque community in order to unite all Basques in a more homogeneous manner.

Regardless of the reception of educational and socialization activities designed by diaspora associations and federations such as FEVA and NABO, which embody the Zazpiak Bat “spirit;” they are currently designing and executing a Zazpiak Bat policy as part of a diaspora-wide project. For example, dance groups teach dances



*The Basque Club's Klika and Dance Group in 1965 in Los Banos, California.* Top row (from left to right): Jean Pierre Poydessus, Jean Louis Arduain, Raymond Bidondo, Gratien Alfaro, Michel Oyharçabal, Jacques Oyharçabal, Rene Arduain, Pierre Etchebehere, Andre Arduain and Alphonse Acheritogaray. Second row (from left to right): Jean Louis Oçafrain, Arnaud Mendisco, Pettan Lahargou, Leon Choutchourou, Haspandar, Jean Pierre Goyhenetche, Sauveur Anchartechar, Sebastien Curutchet, Jean Baptiste Urruty and Frederic Fuldain. Third row (from left to right): Pierre Etcharren, Jacques Unhassobiscay, Jean Baptiste Gueçamburu, Jean Cordova, Felix Ahunçain (Tambour Major), Fermín Alzuri, Jean Pierre Petrissans, Joseph Gestas and Andre Etcheber. Fourth row (from left to right): Denise Etcharren, Mayie Bigue, Catherine Brady, Angele Goyhenetche, Mary Ann Brady, Catherine Petrissans, Mireille Labat, Jeanne Hirigoyen and Geraldine Fitzgerald. Front row (from left to right): Juan José San Mames, Pepito Oxandaburu, Jean Gueçamburu, Jean Baptiste Saparart, Jean Acheritogaray, Michel Arduain, Jean Pierre Anorga, Jean Pierre Aldabe, Carmelo San Mames. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



from all Basque provinces as a way to integrate different traditions blurring the particularities between specific local traditions. However, Douglass and Bilbao reminded us that this was not the case in the particular context of the U.S. three decades ago: “All of the dance groups develop a repertoire of folk dances that again reflect and reinforce the Old World regional origins of the local Basque community.”<sup>301</sup> However, the Basque clubs of San Francisco, Chino, Bakersfield and Rocklin have maintained some level of cultural individuality by promoting the *klika*, for example. This musical tradition, tied to the origins of their members, *Iparralde*, does not exist in clubs such as the one in Boise whose membership is mainly from Bizkaia.

NABO became the maximum promoter of the *Zazpiak Bat* project in the nation, and its impact has become quite visible with the passage of time. In this regard, we should bear in mind that the San Francisco Basque Club was one of the founders and promoters of NABO.<sup>302</sup> Darlene Ammons, former assistant coordinator of the University of Nevada, Reno’s Basque Studies Program between 1978 and 1981 and Janet Inda, former and first female President of NABO (1979-1980) reflected on the creation of NABO and its *Zazpiak Bat* mission:

A group of Basque-Americans met in Reno, Nevada back in March of 1973 with a questionable proposal, especially considering Basque history. This group hoped to forge a federation and create a network with the larger Basque community of the United States. The Basques had never been united, neither in the Old Country nor in the New World. The Basque Country or ‘Euskal Herria’ had never been ‘Zazpiak Bat’ [...] representing a unified, self-conscious political community [...] Basques from Bizkaia in the South, for example, had little interaction with Basques in the Northern Province of Zuberoa. This detachment was reflected in the Basque communities of the United States [...] [This group was] attempting to cross the divide—real and imagined—between Basque-Americans [...] Would “French” Basques and “Spanish” Basques join a federation to work together? [...] Seventeen years later, the answer remains a resounding yes! [...] Most Basque-Americans have set aside their Old World differences of ‘Spanish’ and ‘French’ to work together. The member clubs of NABO have realized that they all share a common purpose—to promote and preserve their unique cultural heritage—and they know that this can best be accomplished with a strong ‘*lotura*’ (bond) to help one another. (*Basque Studies Program/Center for Basque Studies Newsletter*, Reno, Nevada: Basque Studies Program/Center for Basque Studies, 1981).

NABO sponsors didactic summer camps for Basque children and young adults—Music Camp and Pilota Camp (today’s *Udaleku*) since 1975 and *Gaztealde* since 2007—on Basque culture (e.g., Basque language classes, traditional musical instruments, dances, games, and sports). These educational gatherings are instrumental

<sup>301</sup> Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 393.

<sup>302</sup> See next section for further information.



for the socialization of Basque children and young adults, because they promote and construct a generic sense of Basqueness and Basque culture, while showing children, parents, and audience in general, different Basque cultural traditions by highlighting their points of Basque territorial commonality as a single entity. In this regard, the Basque Cultural Center and even Les Faneurs (e.g., in 2001) have given donations to sponsor children to go to Udaleku.

Nevertheless, visitors can still witness how diaspora Basques, particularly those born in the homeland, refer to France/French or Spain/Spanish when interacting with each other. For example, reflecting on the particular context of Argentina, Magdalena Mignaburu, President of the Basque-Argentinean Diaspora Association (Avellaneda, Argentina) felt that currently Basque clubs lack of political direction fail to educate their members: “Therefore, you hear members saying, ‘I’m Spanish or I’m French...I’m going to Spain or I was back home, in France.’ ‘No, no, and no,’ I always say; ‘this is a Basque club, and we are Basque.’ Otherwise there is no point of being Basque. We will end up being Spanish or French. The clubs need to educate



*Txistulariak or flute players at NABO's First Udaleku (former Music Camp) in 1977.* Yon Oñatibia (far left) was the children's instructor. Among some of the participants from San Francisco, there were Alain and Henriette Erdozaincy, and Daniel and Christian Iribarren. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

*This portrait of the Basque Club’s Zazpiak Bat Dance group, Gazteak (children dance group) and Klika taken in Los Banos, California in 1965 reflected the multiple identities of the club at the time. The United States and French flags are on the left and the Basque flag or Ikurriña on the right, the Zazpiak Bat logo is painted on the drum in the center of the photograph, and four small drums are painted with the Ikurriña’s colors, on both sides of the drum. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



their members. They need to say that there is no such thing as being French Basque or Spanish Basque.”<sup>303</sup>

In the Bay Area, the first associative attempt to include all Basques, regardless of their country of origin was the Zazpiak Bat Club. It was established in 1924 in San Francisco and lasted for approximately a decade. Decroos stated that “It was riddled by internal tensions between the Spanish and French Basques [...] At its zenith it had approximately 80 members.”<sup>304</sup> Forty years later, the San Francisco Basque Club organized a dance group that was named Zazpiak Bat, as the idea was also to include dances from the provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa to complement those from the province of Nafarroa Beherea (origin of majority of its members at the time). Three years later, the San Francisco club formed a klika band, which was also named Zazpiak Bat, despite the fact that this type of music group was virtually unknown in the rest of the country.

<sup>303</sup> Interview November 3, 2005, Buenos Aires, quoted in Oiarzabal, “The Basque Diaspora Webspace: Online Discourses of Basque Diaspora Identity, Nationhood, and Homeland.” See also Christiane Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960” (TER, Université de Pau et des Pays de L’Adour, 1976), 44.

<sup>304</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 32.

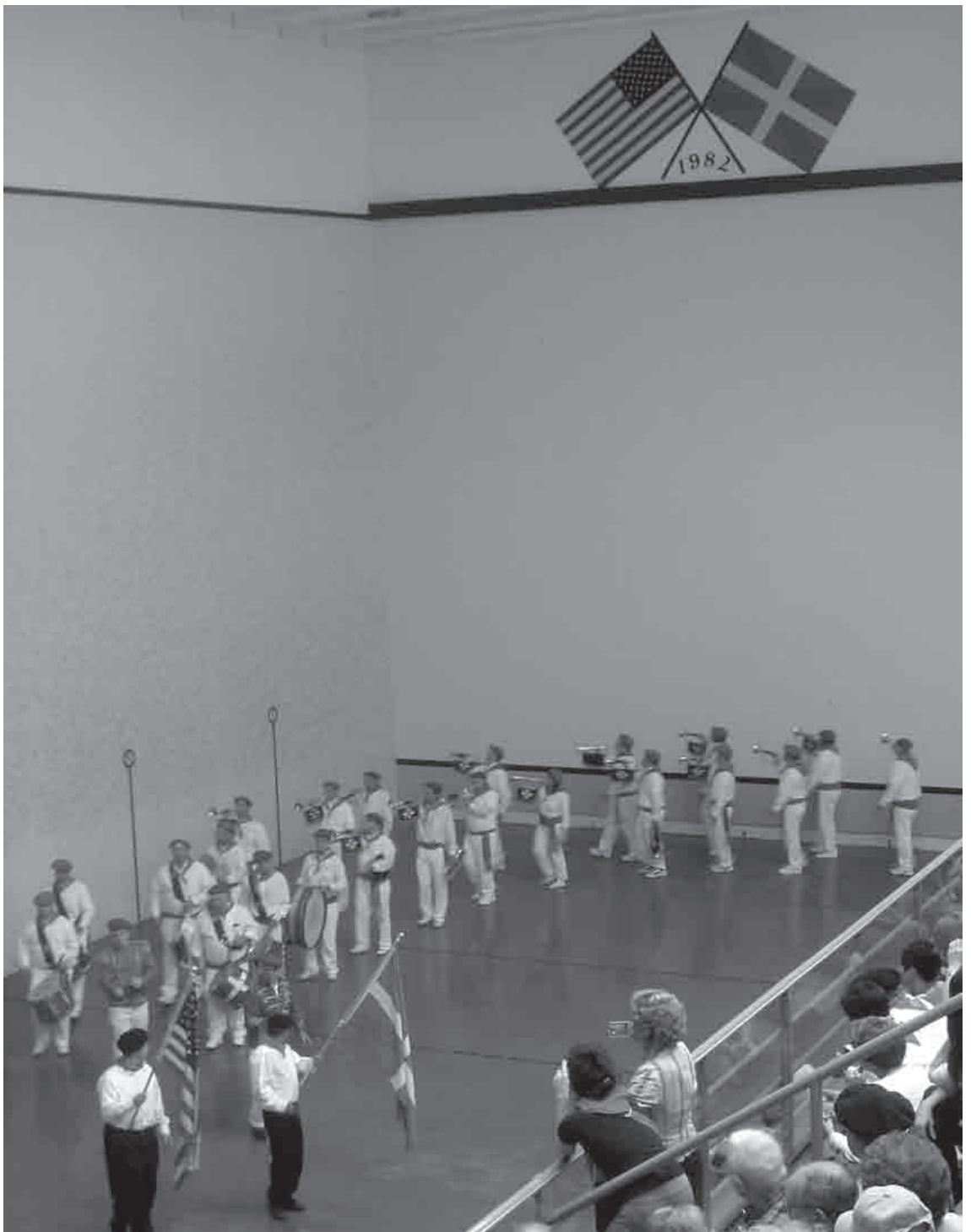


Dominique Hauscarriague, a director of the Basque Club between 1987 and 1990 and again between 1991 and 1996, recalled some early problems among members of the Basque Club: “Because we were French Basques we had a French flag also [i.e., in addition to the Basque flag or *Ikurriña* and the American flag] and the Spanish Basques, they didn’t like that. So, they wanted to have the Spanish flag. But, we disagreed on that.”<sup>305</sup> Indeed, the Spanish flag never represented the public identity of the club and its membership. With the passage of time, the French flag fell into disuse, and currently only the *ikurriña* and the American flag officially represent the Basque Club and the Basque Cultural Center. Both flags reflect the Basques’ dual loyalties to the homeland and hostland.

From the very beginning the BCC realized that in order to attract as many people as possible to their common project they needed to avoid issues that divided the community, including the use of the French flag. A founding member of the BCC stated, “We didn’t want to see that again because that does not bring unity. It’s dividing people [...] We should never have either French or Spanish flag. We should have [the] Basque and the American [flags] like we have now.” According to this member, issues such as

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<sup>305</sup> Dominique Hauscarriague, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Bruno, California, 2001.



*The Klika corps entered the Basque Cultural Center's handball court carrying only the Ikurriña and U.S. flags as part of the Cavalcade Ceremony that took place during the Basque Cultural Center's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events on February 16-18, 2007. The front wall of the court is also decorated with both flags. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*



*At the flag raising ceremony that took place at the South San Francisco City Hall as part of the commemorative events of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Basque Cultural Center in February 2007, the Ikurriña, as the symbolic representative of the Basque community, was raised together with the U.S. flag.*

Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.



the use of symbols were discussed during the formation of its first board of directors, but most of the members were not aware of those conversations.

As previously mentioned, Basques from the San Francisco Peninsula also chose the name Zazpiak Bat for their club (Menlo Park Zazpiak Bat Club). According to Zubiri, the club sponsored an annual picnic at Flood Park in the city of Menlo Park and dinner dances at Eagle Hall in Redwood City.<sup>306</sup> The association dissolved c. 1983 after the Basque Cultural Center had already begun the construction of the Bay Area's first Basque clubhouse in the city of South San Francisco. In February 1981 the club's funds (over \$18,400) were donated to the BCC to help with the construction costs of the clubhouse. Back then, the club was formed by approximately sixty families. Contrary to popular belief, the donation did not imply any transfer of membership. That is to say, former Menlo Park members did not automatically become BCC members. Nevertheless, on an individual level some members eventually became part of the BCC.<sup>307</sup> In sum, today all Bay Area Basque clubs promote a generic

<sup>306</sup> Nancy Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, Second Edition. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 214.

<sup>307</sup> Jean Baptiste Moustirats, interview by Robert Iriartborde, Redwood City, California, November 8, 2006.

cultural project around the idea of a seven-province homeland as evidenced by their mixed membership and leadership.

## **NORTH AMERICAN BASQUE ORGANIZATIONS AND THE U.S. FEDERATION OF PELOTA**

As of 2007, there were thirty-eight active member clubs in NABO, five of them from the Bay Area (Anaitasuna Basque Club, Basque Club of California, Basque Cultural Center, Basque Educational Organization, and Marin-Sonoma Basque Association). Every member club participates in NABO by sending up to two delegates to its tri-annual meetings. The San Francisco Basque Club was one of NABO's founding members along with seven other associations: Kern County Basque Club (Bakersfield, California, founded in 1944), Ontario Basque Club (Ontario, Oregon, founded in 1947), Euzkaldunak Incorporated (Boise, Idaho, established in 1949), Elko Euzkaldunak Club (Elko, Nevada, founded in 1959), the Western Slopes Association (Grand Junction, Colorado, established in the 1960s; today it is inactive), the Basque Club of Ely (Ely, Nevada, established in 1960; today it remains inactive), and Zazpiak Bat Basque Club (Reno, Nevada, established in 1966).

Numerous members of Bay Area Basque clubs have been part of NABO's managerial structure since its creation. To date there have been three NABO presidents from San Francisco clubs: Jacques Unhassobiscay (3<sup>rd</sup>), Jean Leon Iribarren (8<sup>th</sup>) and Pierre Etcharren (11<sup>th</sup>). In addition, Martin E. Minaberry, born in 1937 in Ortzaize, immigrated to San Francisco in the early 1970s, and became NABO's International Chairman between 1982 and 1991 as part of the San Francisco Basque Club's delegation. During those years Minaberry was NABO's main contact with the Basque government. He was also NABO's Calendar Coordinator for a number of years in the 1980s. (Minaberry passed away in 2001 in Los Angeles, California.) At the time of this writing, among the 2007-2008 NABO leadership are Pierre Etcharren (Vice-president and also Chair of the Mus Committee), Evelyne Garat (Chair of the Pilota Committee; previously the Chair was Maurice Negueloua), Valerie Arrechea (Chair of the Udaleku Committee) and Gina Espinal (Junior Mus Tournament).

The Basque Cultural Center became a member of NABO in 1982. Anaitasuna Basque Club joined in 1991, the same year that it was founded. Marin-Sonoma Basque Association was accepted as a member club in 1996. The Basque Educational Organization (BEO) was the fourth Basque-American educational organization to be accepted as a full member of NABO, following the Basque Museum and Cultural Center (Boise, Idaho) that joined in 1990, the Society of Basque Studies in America (New York, New York) that joined in 1995, and the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno that joined in 2001. Under the leadership of BEO

*Franxoa and Esther Bidaurreta (left corner), Basque Educational Organization delegates to NABO, attending a federation meeting in Gardnerville, Nevada, on October 21, 2006.*

The meeting took place in the Basque boardinghouse, Overland Hotel. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.



Chairman, Anton Laxague, BEO joined NABO on February 15, 2003. At the time, Pierre Etcharren was NABO President and Esther (Anchustegui) Bidaurreta also from San Francisco was its Secretary. NABO unanimously waved existing bylaws and allowed BEO to be a member despite the fact that is not a club.

According to the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment of NABO's bylaws (August 1997) "the applicant must register their organization with the Autonomous Basque Government to qualify for membership." Basque diaspora associations registered with the government are eligible for benefits under Law 8/94 that establishes the legal framework for relations between Basque Autonomous Community's public institutions and Basque diaspora institutions. NABO registered with the Basque government in July 1999. As of 2007, thirty-five clubs out of thirty-eight are registered with the Basque government. For example, in California there are fourteen NABO clubs, and all but BEO and the clubs of Susanville (founded in 1975) and Rocklin (founded in 2005) are registered with the Basque government.<sup>308</sup> The San Francisco Basque Club and

<sup>308</sup> The Iparreko Ibarra Northern Valley Basque Club of Rocklin, California, with nearly 100 members might play an increasingly important role in the promotion of Basque culture in California as a significant number of young Basques from San Francisco are moving into the Sacramento area. Currently, the President of the club is Noel Goyhenetche, originally from San Francisco.



the BCC registered with the government in April 1997, Anaitasuna in February 1999, and Marin-Sonoma Basque Association two months later.

Out of thirty-five annual NABO conventions, two have taken place in the Bay Area; one in 1979 and the other in 2002. Moreover, the Bay Area Basque clubs have hosted seven NABO music/pilota summer camps or Udaleku programs out of thirty-two; in 1977 (in conjunction with Boise and Reno), 1979, 1991 (it was hosted by the BCC, San Francisco Basque Club and Marin-Sonoma Basque Club and took place at Notre Dame des Victoires), 1995, 1999, 2003 and 2007; thirteen NABO inter-club handball tournament finals out of thirty-three; in 1977, 1981, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2003, 2005 and 2008; six NABO inter-club mus tournament finals out of thirty-one; in 1985, 1986, 1998, 2003, 2005 and 2007; and seven NABO inter-club junior mus tournaments; in 1991, 1993, 1997, 1998, 2004, 2006 and 2007.<sup>309</sup>



***Basque Club members and delegates to NABO visiting the Basque Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Reno on March 12, 1977.*** From left to right: Alain Erdozaincy, Jon Bilbao (founder and Bibliographer of the Basque Studies Program), Jill Berner (Secretary of the program), Denise Etcharren, Jean Leon Iribarren, Dorothy Unhassobiscay, Pierre Etcharren and Franxoa Bidaurreta. Photograph by Richard Lane. Courtesy of Basque Studies Library, University of Nevada, Reno.

<sup>309</sup> Argitxu Camus Ehecopar, *The North American Basque Organizations (NABO), Incorporated-Ipar Amerikako Euskal Elkarteak (1973-2007)*, Urazandi (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2007).

*Mayor Feinstein and Pierre Etcharren shook hands after the proclamation of NABO's convention weekend as "San Francisco Basque Days." San Francisco, August 25, 1979. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



NABO's 1979 annual summer convention at Fort Mason (Golden Gate National Recreation Area) was hosted by the San Francisco Basque Club and was coordinated by Pierre Etcharren. As part of the convention, participants had the opportunity to parade through the Marina District, where Fort Mason is located. The Mayor of San Francisco at the time, Dianne Feinstein proclaimed the convention weekend, August 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, as the official San Francisco Basque Days.<sup>310</sup> In conjunction with the two-day convention, the San Francisco Basque Club also hosted the annual children's music camp and the Second World Mus Championship that attracted players from Argentina, Chile, France, Mexico, Spain, Venezuela and the U.S. (see below).

The 1979 NABO convention is still remembered by organizers, participants and the public in general as one of the largest and most enjoyable Basque events they had ever witnessed in the Bay Area. "Until [19]79 all the conventions were a meeting with a dinner at the end. We [Franxoa Bidaurreta, Frederic Fuldain, Jean Leon Iribarren and Jacques Unhassobiscay] decided to look to do something different, and we decided to look for a place where we could maybe bring the groups together on a larger scale,"

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<sup>310</sup> Feinstein was the first and only female Mayor of San Francisco to date. She held office between 1978 and 1988. She has been a U.S. Senator from California since 1992.



*"It was the first time all the dance groups from California, Nevada, and Idaho performed together."*

Overall view of NABO's gathering at Fort Mason, San Francisco, August 27, 1979. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



*Father Jean Pierre Cachenaout celebrating mass as part of NABO's convention events. Klikas from Bakersfield, Chino and San Francisco participated in the celebration of the Eucharist. San Francisco, August 27, 1979. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

Pierre Etcharren said.<sup>311</sup> Zubiri argued that the San Francisco NABO festival “became the model for NABO’s subsequent summer conventions. It was the first time all the dance groups from California, Nevada, and Idaho performed together.”<sup>312</sup> Also, it was the first time that the different klika groups got together. The festival was attended by an estimated 10,000 to 13,000 people, becoming the biggest Bay Area Basque reunion to date. For example, the BCC’s 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was attended by approximately 3,000 people over the course of the weekend celebration (February 16-18, 2007).

NABO’s member clubs host their own mus tournaments as part of an annual inter-club mus competition that is organized by the federation. Every single player who takes part in any of the tournaments needs to register as a member of the

**Pierre Etcharren**, born in Uharte-Garazi in 1941, came to the U.S. in 1958. He has received many awards for his remarkable contribution to Basque culture at state, national and international levels. In 2007 Pierre received the Basque Club of San Francisco’s Claude Berhouet Lagun Ona (Good Friend in Basque) Award (established that year) for his endless work at the club. He has been a member of the board since 1967, and officer (Secretary 1969-1979, Vice-president 1979-1980 and President 1985-1987), a member of the klika band and the choir. Pierre instructed and directed the club’s dance group for over twenty-five years. He was also a founding member and has served as director (1982-1988, 1990-present), and officer of the Basque Cultural Center (Chair of the Entertainment Committee 1982-1988, 1990-present, Chair of the Mus Committee since 1982 and President 2000-2003). In 2006, NABO awarded Pierre the Bizi Emankorra or Lifetime Contribution Award. Pierre has been a founding NABO Basque Club delegate until 1982 and its Vice-president (2004-present) and President (2000-2004). He also helped to create Music Camp, which has become one of the most successful cultural pillars of NABO’s outreach programs. Since 1982, Pierre has been NABO delegate for the BCC. He has also been NABO’s Mus Chairman (1978-1981, 1983-2000, 2007-present) and one of the promoters of the International Federation of Mus and its President in 1986, 1995 and 2002 when NABO hosted the World Mus Championship. Pierre was honored in 2004 in Acapulco, Mexico for contributing to the promotion of Mus for the last fifteen years. Pierre was honored in October 1992 with lifetime membership and a medal to “L’Ordre des Corsairs Basque de Saint Jean de Luz et de Ciboure” (The Order of the Basque Corsairs of Donibane Lohizune and Ziburu) and on May 11, 1994 with “L’Etoile Civique, Diplome d’Argent” (The Civic Star, Silver Award) by the French government for cultural leadership in the Basque community.

<sup>311</sup> Pierre Etcharren, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 6, 2006.

<sup>312</sup> Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 198.



*Pierre Etcharren is accepting the San Francisco Basque Club Claude Berhouet Lagun Ona Award, with Basque Club Honorary President Jean Gorostiague (left) and Basque Club President Christian Iribarren (right) at a ceremony that took place on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2007.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

participating club and pay the respective membership fees plus an entry fee. A percentage of those fees go to NABO to cover the travel expenses of sending the winners of the NABO tournament to an international mus competition as representatives of U.S. team. The accommodation expenses are paid by the hosting country. Pierre Etcharren argued that, “Mus keeps not only a lot of people together, or gets a lot of people together, but also it keeps a lot of Basque communities going [...] When you look at the list of the NABO club members probably I would say one third of the clubs wouldn’t exist if we didn’t have that yearly mus tournament.”<sup>313</sup>

According to Etcharren, two homeland associations, Union Basque (Basque Union from Baiona, Lapurdi) and Unión Artesana (Artisan Union from Donostia-San Sebastián, Gipuzkoa) that used to organize an international mus tournament, contacted the San Francisco Basque Club in order to send the winners of their tournament to San Francisco as a kind of reward as they had previously done in the early 1970s. At this time, Etcharren suggested allowing the Bakersfield team (that year’s winners of the NABO internal tournament) to participate as representatives of the U.S. Back then, Pierre Etcharren was Chairman of NABO’s Mus Committee. They

<sup>313</sup> Pierre Etcharren, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 6, 2006.



agreed, and the two-person team and Etcharren, as their coach, participated in the 1978 International Mus Championship along with four teams from the southern part of the Basque Country and three for the northern part. This was the beginning of today's World Mus Championships.

On September 13, 1980, the International Federation of Mus was organized in Donostia-San Sebastián, and the first official board was elected with Antonio Correcher as President, who was the President of Mus for Euskadi at the time. (Each year the President of the Federation is elected by the hosting country. Manuel Arriola, the Secretary General, from Argentina is the only permanently elected officer.) The tournament was renamed in 1982 as the International Mus Championship of Basque Collectivities (Agupación Internacional de Mus de Comunidades Vascas). According to Pierre Etcharren the name was changed because Euskadi wanted to represent the Basque Country and not Spain. In 1988 and 1989, Spain and Nafarroa were represented respectively as separate entities in the international federation.<sup>314</sup>

The U.S. has hosted the International Mus Championship on three occasions: in 1986 in Las Vegas, Nevada, on September 16-23, 1995 in San Francisco, and in



*The 1979 San Francisco Basque Club Mus Tournament was celebrated at Notre Dame des Victoires.*  
From left to right: Pierre Irola, Frederic Fuldain, Johnny Curutchet, Franxoa Bidaurreta, Jean Louis Maitia and Jean Baptiste Maitia. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>314</sup> Pierre Etcharren, e-mail exchange, August 19, 2008.

2002 in Boise, Idaho. In 2002, the San Francisco championship's opening and closing ceremonies were hosted at the clubhouses of the BCC and Unión Española, respectively.<sup>315</sup>

Similar to the inter-club mus tournament, NABO has also organized an inter-club pilota tournament since 1976. It rotates annually through those Basque communities that have handball courts—Bakersfield, Chino, Fresno and San Francisco, in California, and Elko, in Nevada. The winners of the NABO tournament are sent as U.S. representatives to an international tournament held every four years since 1978.



*International Mus Tournament hosted by Anaitasuna in 1995 at Unión Española.* Pictured are the first and second place team, with Martin Vizcay and Pierre Etcharren in the background. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>315</sup> Franxoa Bidaurreta and Pierre Etcharren, focus group interview on *Basque Folklore and Culture Preservation*, facilitated by Esther Bidaurreta and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007, Camus Echeopar, *The North American Basque Organizations (NABO), Incorporated-Ipar Amerikako Euskal Elkarteak (1973-2007)*.



San Francisco Basques have also been responsible for the creation of the United States Federation of Basque Pelota (USFP). Contrary to what other sources have stated, NABO did not establish the USFP. According to Franxoa Bidaurreta, one of its two surviving founding members, together with Pettan “Bert” Aphessette, the USFP was created as a private initiative of a small group of Basques from California who happened to also be part of NABO. Back then, François Pedeflous was NABO President (1981-1983), Franxoa Bidaurreta was NABO Pilota Committee Chairman and Jacques Unhassobiscay was one of the two San Francisco Basque Club delegates to NABO. In addition, Aphessette was President and Pilota Committee Chairman of the Chino Basque Club, and Martin Minaberry was President of the San Francisco Basque Club. (Minaberry would become one of the founders of the Confederación Panamericana de Pelota Vasca—The Pan-American Confederation of Basque Pilota—and its President for six years.) Pedeflous was also an active member of Los Banos and Fresno Basque communities, founder of the Fresno Basque Club in 1978, and founding member of the BCC. He passed away in 2008.<sup>316</sup>

In 1977 as the International Pilota World Championship or *Mundial* that took place in Biarritz in 1978 was approaching, Aphessette, Bidaurreta, Pedeflous and Unhassobiscay met with Jean Baptiste Dunat, in charge of that year’s delegation from the French Federation of Basque Pilota (Federation Française de Pelote Basque, FFPB in its French acronym) who was visiting the U.S.<sup>317</sup> Their goal was to explore the possibility of Basque-American players participating in the Mundials, which take place every four years. Much to their disappointment, they were told that in order to compete in the Mundials they needed to be part of a federation that was affiliated with the International Federation of Basque Pilota (Federación Internacional de Pelota Vasca, FIPV in its Spanish acronym). In a letter of October 6, 1977, Maurice Abeberry, President of the FFPB, host of the 1978 *Mundial*, confirmed to the “*petit-committee*” the impossibility of establishing a U.S. federation in time for their participation in the tournament. However, Abeberry made an exception and invited the U.S. *esku pilota* or handball players to participate in the Mundials under NABO.<sup>318</sup>

In the fall of 1979 Jesús Iriondo, President of the FIPV, met with the Mexican Pelota Federation in Mexico City to discuss building a new *trinkete* (a version of the traditional handball court or *frontón* used for some modalities of the game) and retrofit the existing *jai-alai* or *cesta punta* handball court in order to host the 1980 Pelota World Cup and the 1982 Mundials.<sup>319</sup> Bidaurreta, Pedeflous and Unhassobiscay took advantage of Iriondo’s attendance and traveled to Mexico City to meet with him to discuss correct procedure for federation formation that would allow U.S. pilota players to participate in the Mundials without special invitations.

<sup>316</sup> Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, October 7, 2006 and July 13, 2008.

<sup>317</sup> Since 1975, the FFPB has sent players to the U.S. every two years to play exhibition games in different handball courts.

<sup>318</sup> François Pedeflous, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, South San Francisco, California, November 10, 2006. Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, July 13, 2008.

<sup>319</sup> Iriondo was elected President of FIPV in 1978.

**Franxoa Bidaurreta** was inducted into the Society of Basque Studies in America's 26<sup>th</sup> edition of the Basque Hall of Fame in November 2006 in San Francisco for "his loyal support and promotion of Basque culture and identity." He has dedicated half of his life to his landscaping business, and he has combined that with his passion of nurturing the Basque culture, and overall the game of pilota in the Bay Area and across the nation. As a member of the San Francisco Basque Club he has served for several terms on the board of directors and as President, and has been *makilari*, leader of the *klika* group, for over twenty-five years. With regard to the sport of pilota, Franxoa remembers that the priest of his hometown of Aldude gave him two things when he was coming to San Francisco—a bible and a pilota—which illustrates his love for the game. Franxoa was the club's second director of the handball program, replacing Frederic Fuldain, as well as the first founding director and later President of USFP. He was also the first Pilota Chairman for NABO and for the Basque Cultural Center. Franxoa was a founding member of the BCC and its President between 2003 and 2005. He has also been the chair and director of the Basque Educational Organization.

In 1980, Aphessetche, Bidaurreta, Pedeflous and Unhassobiscay set the establishment of a U.S. pilota federation in motion. A lawyer, Mr. Barada, drew up the bylaws of the federation under the name of the United States Federation of Basque Pelota (USFBP) in 1980. United States *esku pilota* players took part in the 1981 Pelota World Cup playing for NABO. The 1982 Mundials, like the 1981 World Cup, were hosted by the Mexican Pelota Federation, but on this occasion all the U.S. pilota players participated under the recently established USFP. In the 1982 competition the U.S. pilota players participated in different game modalities including *esku*, *paleta cuero* (wooden racquet), *frontenis*, and *cesta punta*. Since that time, all U.S. players have participated at every Mundial and Pelota World Cup, always under the United States Federation of Pelota, USFP.

Unhassobiscay contacted the different pilota associations in the country to encourage them to join the newly forming USFBP in order for their players to participate in the Pilota Mundials. The Southwest Frontenis Association of Texas and the Phoenix Frontenis Association of Arizona had already agreed to become members of the new USFBP. On December 19, 1981, a meeting was organized by Unhassobiscay (interim President) in Miami, Florida to introduce the USFBP to the U.S. Athletic Frontón Association and the U.S. Amateur Jai-Alai Players Association, both of Miami, to see if they would be interested in joining. In attendance at that meeting were Aphessetche, Bidaurreta, Pedeflous and Unhassobiscay, and



*Franxoa Bidaurreta with his family after the cavalcade parade that officially opened the Basque Cultural Center's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations on February 17, 2007. From left to right: Esther, Franxoa's wife, Nick, their son, Franxoa, and Olivia, their daughter. Nick and Franxoa are members of the Basque Club's Zazpiak Bat Klika. Franxoa is the makilaria (baton major) and Nick is one of the zapurrak (literally, sappers). Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

representatives of the U.S. Athletic Frontenis Association. The U.S. Amateur Jai-Alai Players Association failed to attend, so on January 31, 1982 Unhassobiscay wrote to Robert Grossberg, President of the Jai-Alai Players Association, to let him know about the outcome of the meeting and to seek his support.

The federation’s first official meeting, also organized by Unhassobiscay, took place on March 20, 1982 in Miami. The meeting was held to further organize the federation and vote in the first officers and board of directors. In attendance were Aphessetche, Bidaurreta, Minaberry, Pedeflous, Unhassobiscay, Iriondo, Grossberg, Juan Maiztegui, Fred Pettit and Howard Kabek, representing the U.S. Amateur Jai-Alai Association, Pedro Bacallao, President of U.S. Athletic Fronton Association, William T. Troth of the Southwest Frontenis Association and Dr. Theodore Dietrich of the Phoenix Frontenis Association. Grossberg made the motion to change the name of the federation. Pedeflous seconded it, and the name of the federation changed to the United States Federation of Pelota (USFP). The USFP became the official link between the diverse affiliated U.S. pilota organizations and the FIPV. Unhassobiscay (President, 1982-1984), Bacallao (First Vice-president), Pedeflous (Second Vice-president), Grossberg (Treasurer), Minaberry (Secretary) and the following four directors—Aphessetche, Bidaurreta, Maiztegui and Troth—constituted the first board of directors. NABO joined the USFP c. 1982/1983.

Pedeflous was USFP’s second President (1984-1999), followed by Bidaurreta (1999-2004), Richard Troth (representative of Southwest Frontenis Association, based in Dallas, Texas, 2004-2007) and Xabier Berrueta (2007-present; Berrueta was also Secretary between 1998 and 2003). Currently, the only standing members of USFP are NABO and the Southwest Frontenis Association.<sup>320</sup> On September 19, 1993, the organization Pilotarien Biltzarra (the Council of Pilota, founded in 1957 in Baigorri) held a ceremony at the BCC to honor individuals who had been active in the promotion of the game of handball. Among them were several Basques from the Bay Area and members of the BCC: Franxoa Bidaurreta, Frederic Fuldain, Jean Baptiste “Damatit” Goyhenetche, Ganix Iriartborde, Andre Larre, Martin Minaberry, Jean Leon Oçafrain, François Pedeflous and Jacques Unhassobiscay. In December 2000, the Council of Pilota also honored the following BCC members in a ceremony that took place in Baskerfield: Ángel Arriada, Jean Pierre Cabalette, Johnny Curutchet, Arnaud Duhart, Etienne Jorajuria and Maurice Negueloua.

Damatit Goyhenetche was born in Aldude in November 1931 and passed away in Redwood City in May 2008. He came to the U.S. in 1950 and worked as a sheepherder in Nevada and California. In 1963 he moved to San Francisco where he worked as a gardener, and later became a co-owner of Williamson Landscape Supply of Redwood City. He was regarded as a talented esku pilota player and was

<sup>320</sup> François Pedeflous, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, South San Francisco, California, November 10, 2006. Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, July 13, 2008.

also honored by the BCC in 2006 for his lifetime involvement in the promotion of pilota. Damatit was an instructor of pilota at the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center and the USFP esku pilota team coach for several international competitions.

## TOWARDS A ZORTZIGARREN HERRIALDEA

Since the return of democracy in Spain and the establishment of the Basque Autonomous Community in the late 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, its government has proactively engaged Basque diaspora communities and institutions regardless of their homeland origins in order to foster cultural, socio-economic, and political relationships. This has brought Bay Area Basque institutions and individuals more closely into line with Basque political reality according to the premises of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV in its Spanish acronym). Since the 1980s, the Basque government has been dominated by elected Basque nationalist parties and coalitions. *Lehendakaritza* or the President's Office is the home of the General Secretariat for Foreign Action and the Directorate for Relations with Basque Communities Abroad. The President's Office, the Secretariat, and the Directorate have always been in the hands of the PNV.<sup>321</sup>

The government has sponsored Basque-language courses, visits by homeland musicians, other cultural performers and government officials (e.g., Miren Azkarate, Minister of Culture and Spokesperson in 2002 and 2007 and Joseba Azkarraga, Minister of Justice, Employment, and Social Security in 2004). For example, José Antonio Ardanza and Juan José Ibarretxe, former and current Basque presidents or *Lehendakariak* of the Basque Autonomous Community, have visited the San Francisco Basque community in March of 1988 and February of 2008, respectively. The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the BCC (February 13-18, 2007) was attended by Miren Azkarate. The opening ceremony began with Sue Elicetche performing the American National Anthem and the Elgarrekin Choir singing the Basque National Anthem.

Between 1986 and 2006, the Basque government has provided over €17.5 million (over \$24 million) in financial assistance—subsidies, grants, etc.—to 150 diaspora associations and federations.<sup>322</sup> For example, from 2004 to 2007, the Basque government gave nearly €4.5 million (over \$6 million) to diaspora institutions. Nearly 46% of that amount went to Basque institutions in Argentina; approximately 14% to Basque institutions in the U.S.; almost 11% to Venezuela; and over 10% to Spain. With respect to Bay Area Basque clubs, the Basque Cultural Center received over

321 Pedro J. Oiarzabal, "We Love You: The Basque Government's Post-Franco Discourses on the Basque Diaspora," *Revista Sancho el Sabio* 26 (2007).

322 Alex Ugalde, "Memoria 1980-2005: 25 Años de Relaciones con las Colectividades Vascas del Exterior" (paper presented at the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities, Bilbao, July 9-12, 2007).





*Lehendakari José Antonio Ardanza visited President Ronald Reagan in company of Pete Cenarrusa, Secretary of State of Idaho, and Paul Laxalt, U.S. Senator from Nevada.* President Ardanza presented President Reagan with a traditional Basque makila or walking stick as a gift to the American people. From left to right: Ardanza, Cenarrusa, Laxalt and Reagan at the Oval Office, White House, Washington D.C., on March 22, 1988. Reagan was Governor of California between 1967 and 1975 and President of United States between 1981 and 1989. Laxalt and Cenarrusa are both of Basque ancestry. Photograph courtesy of the Ronald Reagan Library.

€108,000 (over \$166,500) from the Basque government between 1999 and 2005; while the Basque Club received \$2,000 in 2006.<sup>323</sup>

Following the dictates of Law 8/1994, the Basque government has organized and hosted diaspora congresses, every four years, since 1995 as well as the Gaztemundu (Young World) program, an annual workshop aimed at diaspora youth, since 1996. At the Third World Congress of Basque Collectivities (Vitoria-Gasteiz, Basque Country, July 2003) the institutional representatives of the Basque diaspora (i.e., the delegates to the congress) decided to unanimously define themselves as *Zortzigarren Herrialdea* or The Eighth Province.<sup>324</sup> This self-identification implies not only a psychological or emotional attachment and commitment to the homeland, but a desire to physically belong to the homeland as its natural territorial prolongation; as a totality, without making a distinction between homeland and diaspora. This definition blurs all physical and emotional barriers that separate one from another. That is to say, the

<sup>323</sup> Gobierno Vasco, "Evaluación del Plan 2003-2007 y Programas Vigentes" (paper presented at the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities, Bilbao, July 9-12, 2007), Alexander Ugalde Zubiri, *Memoria 1980-2005* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2007).

<sup>324</sup> Gobierno Vasco, *Aurrera Goaz. III World Congress of Basque Communities* (Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio Editorial de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2004), 254.

*During his trip to the U.S. Lehendakari Juan José Ibarretxe visited the Bay Area Basque community and gave a speech at the Basque Cultural Center on February 16, 2008. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*



institutional representatives of the Basque diaspora, though asserting their dispersed and deterritorialized condition, began to imagine and perceive themselves as a unitary geographical entity, eager to seek a presence, a voice in homeland matters.<sup>325</sup>

In this sense, San Francisco Basques have also extended their role into diaspora affairs to a certain degree, constructing an imagined Eight Province by participating through NABO in the First Basque American Congress in Euskadi (Donostia-San Sebastián, Basque Country, 1982), the World Congress of Basque Centers (Bahía Blanca, Argentina, 1989), and the World Congresses of the Basque Collectivities Abroad (Vitoria-Gasteiz, Basque Country, 2003 and Bilbao, Basque Country, 2007) and the Gaztemundu program. World congresses have become venues where diaspora institutional leaders are able to articulate institutional declarations and future action plans as well as personal and institutional relationships. For example, on October 20, 2006 NABO hosted a meeting in Reno, Nevada of North American Basque clubs from Vancouver, Montreal, and Mexico D.F. in order to explore the willingness of their Canadian and Mexican counterparts to join NABO. In September 2008, the

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<sup>325</sup> See Oiarzabal, "The Basque Diaspora Webscape: Online Discourses of Basque Diaspora Identity, Nationhood, and Homeland."



Zazpiak Bat-Vancouver Basque Club finally joined NABO. This demonstrates NABO’s redefinition of Basque identity by emphasizing its transnational character over a country-based identity.<sup>326</sup>

Martin Minaberry and Jean Leon Oçafrain were elected by NABO as the U.S./NABO delegates to the 1982 congress. Minaberry was also nominated for the 1989 international gathering. Pierre Etcharren, President of NABO at the time, gave a presentation on the Udaleku program at the 2000 National Basque Week (Semana Nacional Vasca or FEVA’s annual convention) that took place in Necochea, Argentina, reinforcing the links between the two most powerful diaspora federations, FEVA and NABO. In 2002, Lehendakari Ibarretxe invited Etcharren to give a report on NABO’s activities in preparation for the 2003 World Congress. Etcharren proposed that the government move the dates of the Gaztemundu program from the fall to July in order to increase the participation of Basque Americans. Etcharren headed the U.S. delegation at the 2003 congress.

In 2007, Philippe Acheritogaray, BEO delegate to NABO, was elected by NABO as one of the three U.S./NABO representatives to the World Congress. Etcharren and Xabier Berrueta (President of the BCC at the time) were invited by the Basque government to be part of the U.S. delegation to the 2007 congress as the government was to honor the BCC for its twenty-fifth anniversary at the opening ceremony. President Ibarretxe presented the award to Pierre Etcharren. The attending institutional delegates elected Berrueta as one of three members of the Advisory Board of Relations with Basque Communities for 2007-2011. The Advisory Board was established by Law 8/94 and meets annually to discuss the ongoing programs designed by Basque institutions and the overall relationship between the government and the diaspora.

A total of thirty-seven young Basques from the U.S. (8.8% of total participants) participated in Gaztemundu between 1996 and 2005.<sup>327</sup> Seven young San Francisco Basques have taken part in the youth program: in 2002, Valerie (Etcharren) Arrechea; in 2003, Philippe Acheritogaray, Christian Iribarren and Xabier Berrueta; in 2006, Idoya (Salaburu) Urruty; and in 2008, Nicolas “Nick” Bidaurreta and Lisa Etchepare.

## THE SAN FRANCISCO BASQUE CLUB, INCORPORATED

Two Basque homeland *bertsolariak* or verse improvisers, “Xalbador” and Mattin, accompanied by Charles Iriart, came to the U.S. in June of 1960 for a month to perform at the annual picnics of the Basque communities of La Puente, Reno,

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ugalde Zubiri, *Memoria 1980-2005*. From 1996 to 2006, 451 young people from fourteen countries (including the U.S.) have taken part in Gaztemundu. Miren Bilbao and Kontxi Kerexeta, “Análisis de los Socios y Encuesta Gaztemundu “ (paper presented at the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities, Bilbao, July 9-12, 2007).

and Bakersfield as well as at the picnic of the San Francisco French association, Les Jardiniers, whose membership was also made up of a considerable amount of Basques.<sup>328</sup> Les Jardiniers' picnic took place at Saratoga Wild Wood Park (today's Saratoga Springs) on June 19<sup>th</sup> and was attended by approximately 2,500 people.<sup>329</sup> To the dismay of both performers and Basques attending the Les Jardiniers' event, power to their microphone was cut off—intentionally according to some and unintentionally according to others.

The reaction of some young Basques was to establish their own organization under the leadership of Claude Berhouet, owner of Hotel de France, in order



***Xalbador and Mattin on their way to San Francisco, 1960.*** From left to right: André Ospital, Xalbador, Michel Labéguerie, Mattin and Charles Iriart. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>328</sup> Fernando Aire a.k.a. "Xalbador" was from Urepele, born in 1920 and deceased in 1976, and Mattin Treku was from Ahetze born in 1916 and deceased in 1981.

<sup>329</sup> Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe, "Our Two Basque Singers are off to California for a Month," *California Livestock News* 36, no. 23 (1960).



*“Mr. Berhouet was a very generous and helpful person back at that time as he was in San Francisco.”*

Claude Berhouet in 1963.  
Photograph courtesy of  
San Francisco Urazandi  
Collection

to protect and promote the culture of their homeland in San Francisco. Michel Marticorena, one of the first members of the club, and Claude sat next to each other in school during World War II in France, during the German occupation and recalls that “Mr. Berhouet was a very generous and helpful person back at that time as he was in San Francisco.”<sup>330</sup>

Paul Castech and Jean Acheritogaray were present at the meeting that ignited the creation of the Basque Club: “Claude said, ‘Why don’t we organize a Basque club?’” Castech, born in 1938 in Ortzaize, came to the U.S. in 1956, and became one of the founding directors of the Basque Club.<sup>331</sup> The Basque Club of California was born in June 1960.<sup>332</sup> John Etchevers, Claude’s uncle and business partner was the first person to join the club. The first board of the club was formed by Berhouet (President), Michel Arduain (Vice-president), Jean Acheritogaray (Secretary), Jean Cornu (Treasurer), Michel Duhalde (Treasurer), and by the following seven directors: Andre Arduain, Pierre Arhancet, Joseph Castech, Paul Castech, Robert Gassuan,

<sup>330</sup> Michel Marticorena, interview by Marisa Espinal, Redwood City, California, March 15, 2005.

<sup>331</sup> Paul Castech, interview by Philippe Acheritogaray, South San Francisco, California, March 12, 2007.

<sup>332</sup> The Basque Club of California’s online home: <http://www.basqueclub.com/>



*Basque Club banquet at the Hotel de France, November 1960.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

Cyprien Mendiboure, and Gratien Oçafrain. Six directors (Acheritogaray, Duhalde, the Arduain brothers and the Castech brothers) were from Orizaize.

According to the club's bylaws, "Its purpose and objectives are to promote and encourage the welfare of all people of the Basque region of France and Spain by birth or descent, and to promote their social, recreational, intellectual, cultural, physical and moral welfare." In addition, the club provides "sick benefits" to their members in the sum of \$1.00 per day up to \$100.00, which financially seems insignificant by today's standards; nevertheless, it represents a long history of mutual-aid and welfare associations, particularly from the French tradition in the Bay Area.

The beginnings, however, were not always smooth, Jean Cornu, bartender at the Hotel de France between 1959 and 1962, pointed out that there was a problem of trust among some individuals of the Basque community, particularly among the older ones—the generation who came to country before WWII. Some did not feel the need for creating a club just for Basques when there were so many French clubs in San Francisco: "All the people who were here in San Francisco for years, some of them thirty years, they said, 'Well, hell, we did it without a Basque club before. Why

do we have to...? [...] Well, we didn't start one. Why should we have these youngsters come over here and tell us what...?"<sup>333</sup>

Cornu was born in 1937 in Bidarraï and came to the U.S. as a shepherd in 1954. Since 1976 he has owned a real estate business, Cornu & Associates. He remembers the success of the first club picnic, celebrated at the Sunnyview Family Club in Mountain View on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1961, in terms of participation (an estimate of over 1,500 people), number of volunteers, and donations received from Basque boardinghouses such as the Obrero and the Pyrenees. "Our first picnic I always remember was fantastic [...] We made quite a bit of money [...] We had all kinds of games and a lot of people." Some Basques overcame their initial apprehension about joining the club. They realized that it would become a successful club, and it



*Hotel de France's staff between 1962 and 1964.* From left to right: Martin Errecart, Ginette Kroner, Jean Louis Arduain, Jacqueline Bidondo, Claude Berhouet and Helene Elissalde. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>333</sup> Jean Cornu, interview by Philippe Acheritogaray, South San Francisco, California, March 13, 2007.

could do as well as other Basque clubs such as the one in Bakersfield. “After that I think the Basque Club has been doing alright.”<sup>334</sup>

The membership was open to Basque and non-Basques, and actually some Béarnaise people joined the club. By October 1960, the membership of the club included over 100 individuals. The 1960s was a time of great excitement for the San Francisco Basque community at large and its associations. The Basque Club established an annual picnic in 1961, two folkloric dance groups, one for adults and another for children in 1960 and 1961, respectively, an annual mus tournament in 1963, the first ever klika corps in the country in 1964, and an annual pilota tournament in 1968. A cultural agenda was in full motion, but this was undermined by failed attempts of purchasing land on which to build a clubhouse in order to secure it (e.g., 1962 and 1970; see below for more information). Looking back, Franxoa Bidaurreta, former President of the Basque Club, described the imperative need to build a clubhouse of their own: “Basques needed to have their own space, without having somebody from outside looking over you.”<sup>335</sup>

In addition, by the late 1960s and early 1970s a new wave of Basque immigrants was eager to further the club’s cultural agenda by emphasizing its “Basque” content and the need for a clubhouse. Bidaurreta explained those years in the following manner:

There were members of the Basque Club that wanted the club to be like some of the French clubs. [They wanted to] have a picnic and a couple of dinners—one in the spring and one in the fall. They wanted to keep it as a social club. Many of the young people coming [to San Francisco] from Europe or other places [within the U.S.] played klika, pilota or danced. They were interesting in seeing more culture. Some directors felt it wasn’t necessary to push culture as much. [Their rationale was that] we were in the U.S., and we should be a social club [...] The spring dinner was at an Italian restaurant [part of the Italian association, San Francisco Athletic Club on North Beach’s Washington Square] with Italian music, the picnic and then the fall dinner [again] at an Italian restaurant with Italian music. When I became president [in 1976] I wanted to stop having our dinners at the Italian restaurant. [However, I didn’t force the dinners to be stopped, but we presented an alternative plan to the members, which became well accepted]. Some said we couldn’t do it because we always do it that way. So in spring instead of doing the same thing we would have pilota finals Sunday morning, then lunch in [the basement of] the French church [the Notre Dame des Victories, NDV] that members would cook. In the fall we would have pilota day with the same schedule [...] We would invite players from other clubs, Idaho, Elko and Southern California. We would play pilota until about four in the afternoon. There would be lunch under the church, and then we would have a dance. The people liked the new style and got used to it. They liked seeing the culture more. That’s how it was done until we built the center [the Basque Cultural Center in 1982]. (Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Robert Acheritogaray, Petaluma, California, 2001.)

334 Jean Cornu, interview by Philippe Acheritogaray, South San Francisco, California, March 13, 2007.

335 Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, October 7, 2006.



## A Profile of the Members

As of 2007 the membership of the Basque Club is nearly equally divided between those born in the Basque Country and the United States. The members born in California number slightly fewer than the ones born in both territories of Nafarroa (43.4%) (see Appendix: Table 14). Within Nafarroa, the majority of the members were born in the valleys of Baztan (50%), Erroibar (21.4%) and Doneztebe (10.7%). Within Nafarroa Beherea, most of the members were born in the cantons of Baigorri (45.2%), Donibane Garazi (31%) and Iholdi (9.5%).

If in the 1970s, Basques immigrants from the Basque region of Spain and their children felt “loosely attached to the San Francisco Basque Club, which has traditionally been dominated politically by French Basque immigrants,” today they are fully integrated into the San Francisco Basque Club and other newer organizations, such as the BCC.<sup>336</sup> Despite the fact that those associations are still predominantly controlled by Basques from the northern part of the Basque Country and their children, many southern Basques have timidly reached leadership roles. Needless to say, in the Bay Area the majority of the Basque population is from Iparralde.

The San Francisco Basque Club has the second largest membership of all Basque clubs in the Bay Area (30.83% of total members or 300 individuals). Like the memberships of Anaitasuna and the MSBA, nearly 93.8% of San Francisco Basque Club members belong to two or more Basque clubs in the Bay Area. However, only one-third belongs to four clubs. Also, nearly half of Basque Club members belong to non-Bay Area Basque associations, and nearly one-third to French associations (see Appendix: Tables 15 and 16). The Basque Club is mainly formed by men and by those over forty-six years old, which is similar to the Anaitasuna and MSBC memberships. In addition, nearly half of the membership is over sixty-one years old (see Appendix: Tables 17 and 18).

Over half of the Basque Club membership is formed by the immigrant generation, while their children represent nearly 40% of the membership. The grandchildren’s generation is a minority within the membership as it also is in the Anaitasuna and Marin-Sonoma associations (see Appendix: Table 19). Less than half of the Basque Club members hold two citizenships. Over 40% have French citizenship, and 90% are U.S. citizens (see Appendix: Tables 20a and 20b). Like members of the Anaitasuna and Marin-Sonoma associations, nearly all the Basque Club members also speak two or more languages (92%)—e.g., over one-third of the membership speaks four languages. After English, the second most

<sup>336</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 70.



spoken language is Spanish, followed by Basque, and French (see Appendix: Tables 21a and 21b).

Following the tradition of the Bay Area French clubs, the Basque Club was also a male-only association until 1979, when the board accepted women as members for the first time. This situation exemplified a dialectical clash between preserving “traditions” and promoting gender equality. Because of the work done by all the Basque women at the San Francisco 1979 NABO convention, the club decided to accept women as equal partners, and they opened membership up to them: “After the festival the same month, that was in August, in September we voted in the San Francisco Basque Club to accept—seeing all the work they did—open up membership. Until then the Basque Club was men only. Right away we picked up probably one-third of the members, and it was the first French Club in the Bay Area to accept women. That was because of that festival,” Pierre Etcharren commented.<sup>337</sup>

The first women to be part of the board of directors were Malvina (Choutchourrou) Oyharçabal, born in 1937 in Irisarri, and Mayie (Guerra) Etcheverry, born in 1935 in Baigorri. Malvina was the Secretary of the club between 1979 and 1982 and director between 1982 and 1983, and Mayie was a director between 1979 and 1996 (a Treasurer from 1980 to 1982). Since 1980 other women have become directors, among those were: Suzie Etcheverry (1980-1981), Linda Franchisteguy (1980-1982), Evelynne Lahargoue (1980-1982), Esther Bidaurreta (Treasurer, 1982-1986), Aña Iriartborde (1983-1986), Mayte Oçafrain (Secretary, 1986-1994), Julia Ondarts (1989-1995, Treasurer between 1991 and 1995), Valerie (Etcharren) Arrechea, who became the first female Vice-president (1991-1992) and first female President of the history of the club (1993-1996), and Isabelle (Oçafrain) Bushman, who became the second female Vice-president (1998-2000) and second female President (2000-2003). It is noteworthy that Mary Kelly has been a director of the club since 1995 and a consummate volunteer worker in all Basque events for decades. Mary was born in San Francisco in 1952 and is of Irish ancestry. At the first Basque function that she ever attended, which was held in the basement of NDV, she met Johnny Curutchet, her future husband. She married Johnny in August 1978. They have two children, Tommy and Michael.

## CONCLUSIONS

San Francisco Basque associations and individuals have played a leading role in maintaining folklore, games, sports, the language and various cultural traditions, and by transcending their local interests, constituencies and geographical scope for

<sup>337</sup> Pierre Etcharren, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 6, 2006.

a common cause. The initiative of representatives of the San Francisco Basque Club, and later the BCC, propelled them across international borders and established long-standing relationships with multiple federations and associations in pro of the Basque culture. In this vein, they were influential in the foundation of international alliances in the fields of pilota and mus as well as the establishment of the North American Basque Organizations. Time has demonstrated the vital role that NABO has played in the maintenance and active promotion of Basque culture and identity in America operating within a framework of inclusiveness under the Zazpiak Bat motto.



# The Pursuit

(05)

# of a Dream

## A BASQUE CLUBHOUSE IN THE BAY AREA

Jean Gorostiague arrived in San Francisco in May 1959 and joined the Basque Club of California immediately after its founding in 1960, becoming one of the first members of the club. Since 2006, Jean has been the Honorary President of the Basque Club. He remembers that from the beginning many members wanted to build a traditional handball court as this was, for many, their favorite pastime; a lot of them even used to go to play on Sundays at the Central Hotel's small handball court in Stockton—sixty-three miles away from San Francisco.<sup>338</sup> Andre Larre remembers going to Stockton to play pilota as part of annual tournaments every Sunday for two years, 1965 and 1966. Between 1974 and 1988 he was a pilota coach for the United States team when they participated in international competitions. Larre, born in 1940 in Baiona, came to California in 1962 and moved to San Francisco two years later.<sup>339</sup>

Gorostiague said that in 1965 some players found a building at the municipal Helen Wills Playground.<sup>340</sup> The owner of the building allowed them to play against the cement wall only on Sundays until 1:00pm. This wall became San Francisco's temporary Basque "handball court." In the building there was a bowling alley where the Basque Club held

<sup>338</sup> Jean Gorostiague, interview by Jean Luc Chiramberro, San Francisco, California, 2001.

<sup>339</sup> Andre Larre, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, South San Francisco, California, January 7, 2007.

<sup>340</sup> The playground was built in 1915 and named the Springs Valley Playground. In 1929 was renamed it Helen Wills.

many bowling tournaments on Friday nights as a way to show some appreciation to the owners for letting them practice *klika* and dances free of charge.<sup>341</sup>

However, the wall was too low, and they were granted permission to build a ten-foot extension to the height of the existing wall in 1971, which became known as “San Francisco Plaza.”<sup>342</sup> It had a rounded top imitating the courts in the Basque Country. Jean Baptiste Bidegaray and Ángel Arriada began to organize *pilota* tournaments by age and/or modality at Helen Wills after 1975. Bidegaray was born in Irisarri in 1949 and moved to San Francisco in the early 1970s, where he married Yvette Saldubehere, from Fresno, in 1976. Later Jean Baptiste and Yvette settled



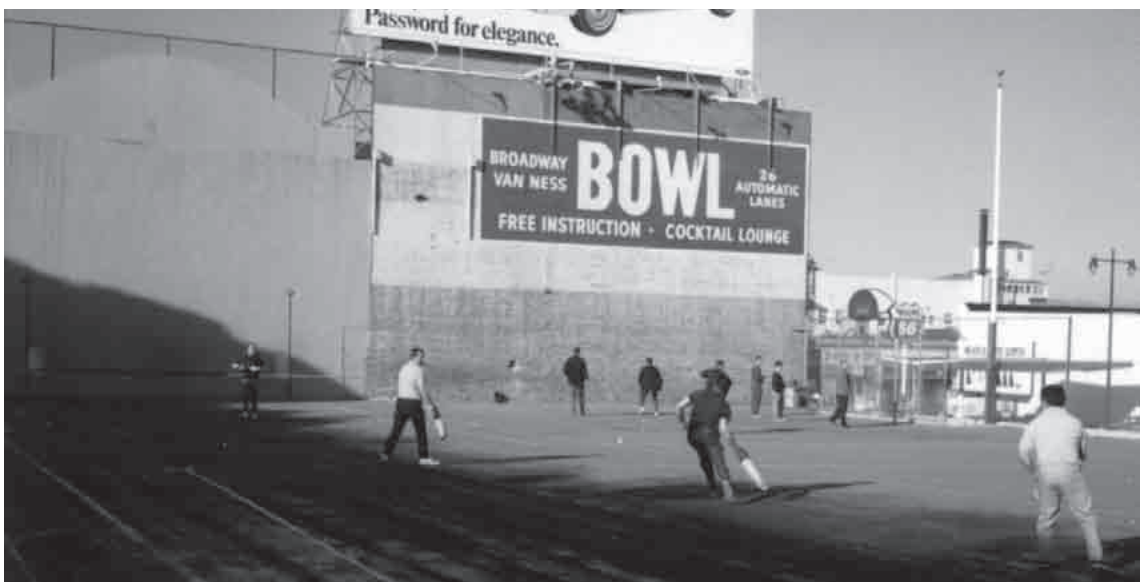
*From left to right, the 1968 pilota finalists Etienne Jorajuria, Simon Elicetche, Andre Larre and Jean Bidart. The little boy is Robert Iriartborde. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

<sup>341</sup> For many years before that they used to practice at the Unión Española's clubhouse on Broadway Street. After the bowling alley building was torn down, it became extremely difficult to secure a place where to practice.

<sup>342</sup> Frederic Fuldain, “San Francisco Bay Area ‘Pelota’ History as We Know it” (1989).

*A group of Basques building an extension to the Helen Wills "handball" wall in 1971.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



*Some Basques played jai-alai with txisteras (wicker curved gloves) while others (in the background) hit the ball against the wall with bare hands at the Helen Wills "court" in the early 1970s.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



down in Fresno. (Arriada organized some of the early tournaments at the BCC's clubhouse for ten years and became a director between 1993 and 1996). "On those occasions, the surrounding atmosphere came very close to the one reigning in Basque Country village *frontones* [courts]," Aña Iriarborde explained.<sup>343</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s the Basque Club attempted to pursue the dream of building, if not a clubhouse or *euskal etxea*, at least a pilota court for their members and the Bay Area Basque community at large. A Special Committee (formed by Michel Antoine, Pierre Arrabit, Samson Bidart, Jean Baptiste Etchepare, Dominique Erdozaincy, Jean Leon Iribarren, Andre Laherrere, Chris Le Cornec, Henri Pardeilhan and Gaston Ruspil) was set up by the Basque Club to seek a piece of land where



*The Basque Club's Zazpiak Bat dancers parading through Helen Wills Playground in 1968.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>343</sup> Aña Iriarborde, "History of the Birth of the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center," <http://www.basqueculturalcenter.com/history/index.html>, Nancy Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, Second Edition. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Robert Acheritogaray, Petaluma, California, 2001, Ángel Arriada, interview by Arantxa Arriada, Daly City, California, November 23, 2006.

they could build a proper and permanent court as well as a building with a hall for dining and cultural activities and a kitchen, within the limits of San Francisco City, Los Gatos and Marin County. Unfortunately those attempts failed dismally, increasing the frustration among the membership.

As early as 1962, the club, with approximately 300 members, attempted to buy a piece of property offered by the City Hall of San Francisco in the so-called Western Addition, between Geary and Post streets and between Steiner and Van Ness Avenue, but the proposal failed for a number of reasons.<sup>344</sup> It has been argued that the club was too immature to take on such a financial risk, and there was also some level of inter-generational rivalry as well as some resistance from well-established Basque hotel and restaurant owners. In the words of Decroos, “The younger members saw the need but didn’t have the influence or resources; the older ones didn’t see the need [...] A few individuals speculated that the establishment of a center outside the North Beach neighborhood would have been harmful to their businesses in the area by diverting a population accustomed to gather there for their recreational activities.”<sup>345</sup> This was the first and last opportunity to build a Basque clubhouse within the limits of the City of San Francisco.

Gorostiague remembers the support received in locating a property for the club by the officials of the city including Mayors George Christopher and Joseph Lawrence Alioto, “who liked the Basque community” as well as John A. “Jack” Ertola who was President of the Board of Supervisors in San Francisco—the legislative branch of the City and County of San Francisco—who proved to be of great assistance.<sup>346</sup> However, this inestimable support was not enough to achieve their goal.<sup>347</sup> By the mid-1960s, the Basque Club was “the most active cultural club I would say in all California: size wise and activity wise,” Pierre Etcharren stated.<sup>348</sup> In 1970, the Basque Club took the risk to purchasing a twelve-acre property in Los Gatos in Santa Clara County, but local residents opposed the idea, and they were forced to sell it in c. 1975/1977. Leon Franchisteguy commented on the members’ disappointment with that land, “People have to be crazy to go there. There was only poison oak there.”<sup>349</sup> A few years later, the club found an existing clubhouse in Novato, but there was not enough space to build a handball court, and some members continued to oppose the idea.

<sup>344</sup> Back then the Western Addition was a subdivision that began to be populated particularly by Japanese immigrants after the 1906 earthquake, constituting the foundation of today’s Japantown or Nihonmachi. The vacant site became the Japan Center, which officially opened in March 1968 at 1625 Post Street.

<sup>345</sup> Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983), 52, 106.

<sup>346</sup> Christopher served between 1956 and 1964, and Alioto served between 1968 and 1976. Ertola, of Italian ancestry, was a member of the Supervisors Board between 1964 and 1971.

<sup>347</sup> Comité du Hall du Club Basque, “Maison Basque de San Francisco: Le Club Basque a l’honneur et le plaisir de vous soumettre un projet de construction d’une Maison Basque et vous demande de libre attentionnement ce qui suit...” (San Francisco, California, 1962).

<sup>348</sup> Pierre Etcharren, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 6, 2006.

<sup>349</sup> Leon Franchisteguy, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2007.

In addition to the aforementioned frustration, the announcement of the demolition of San Francisco's only "handball court" in late 1978 triggered the reaction of a group of young members (among them, Franxoa Bidaurreta, Jean Gorostiague, José Mari "Joe" Miura and Jacques Unhassobiscay), which would result in the establishment of a parallel Basque association called the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center in 1979. Its main goal was to achieve their long-awaited dream. "Since some of the Basque Club members (not being handball players) were against building a pelota [or pilota] court, Jacques Unhassobiscay thought it would be a good idea to create a new Basque club in order to build one. I agreed, and he encouraged me to move forward with the idea and take charge," Gorostiague explained.<sup>350</sup> It seems that at the time a significant number of the members of the Basque Club opposed the project. They only needed to rally one-third of the membership in order to block it. In addition, some of them argued that the Basque Club's bylaws did not explicitly take into account the possibility of building a clubhouse. However, there had already been an antecedent with the purchase of the property in Los Gatos with the intent of development. Franxoa Bidaurreta, President of the Basque Club at the time, stated,

If we tried to restructure the club to allow building [a clubhouse] those members against [it] would have to leave. Instead of doing that, we decided to see if it can be done separately [by forming a new association to take charge of building a clubhouse]. A few other directors and myself stayed up talking about this new idea until four in the morning [...] My biggest fear was that before we started that [new] organization we were going to split the Basque community, [and] that [was something] I didn't want to see happening. I stayed out from the first board of directors [of the new association to be] because I was President of the Basque Club and being President of the Basque Club if I jumped to another organization you know how that would effect. I even talked to some people about it, how we're going to do that without splitting the Basque community. (Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Robert Acheritogaray, Petaluma, California, 2001; and by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, August 6, 2006.)

Pierre Jaureguito, born in Mendibe, Nafarroa Beherea, came to the U.S. in 1954 and became one of the first members of the San Francisco Basque Club. He remembers how upset he was when "the Basque Club split in two" at a time when they needed to be together the most. He said that many Basques were not convinced that the BCC would be successful, so it caused some unhappiness among some, even between friends. Some people were reluctant, some afraid, but when the goal of building the center was accomplished, those hesitant people eventually joined it. Jaureguito became a volunteer worker in the construction of the BCC's clubhouse.<sup>351</sup>

On March 27, 1979, a meeting attended by seventy-three people was held at the hall of NDV. There they selected a temporary board formed by seven people to

350 Jean Gorostiague, interview by Jean Luc Chiramberro, San Francisco, California, 2001.

351 Pierre Jaureguito, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, June 29, 2006.

start looking into the creation of an association with the goal of building a handball court. The seven-man-board elected, among themselves, Gorostiague as President, Miura as Vice-president, Leon Sorhondo as Secretary, Leon Franchisteguy as Treasurer, and Félix Berrueta, Raymond Caballero and Jean Jauretche as directors.<sup>352</sup> Sixty-seven attendants pledged \$1,000 each to support the initiative. The temporary board decided to meet weekly, first at Franchisteguy's house, and then at Louis Elu's Restaurant, every Monday night.

Several people including Unhassobiscay, Jean Leon Oçafrain, and Gorostiague began to search for property for the court. Gorostiague found one and a half acres of land in South San Francisco, at 599 Railroad Avenue, for the price of \$235,000: "It was a very depressing piece of land that looked like a dump yard with a canal going through it, but the price was reasonable [...] Initially, I wished to build a traditional handball court in the San Francisco area. During this process, I saw a vision for a greater plan—a cultural center, a place to preserve our culture and heritage."<sup>353</sup> With the passage of the time, the handball court project would become a full-fledged clubhouse with meeting rooms, banquet rooms, a kitchen and a public restaurant. That is, it would also have enough space for the klika and dance groups to practice. In the first part of May 1979 an offer was made on the South San Francisco property, and it was accepted.

Isabelle Laxague remembers the influence that the Basque chaplain Jean Pierre Cachenaute (from Iholdi, Nafarroa Beherea) had on the Basque community regarding the issue of building a clubhouse. Father Cachenaute arrived in 1977, and at the Basque Club's annual picnic mass at Castle Rock Park in Walnut Creek, June 1979, he enthusiastically supported the project in his homily: "He put on the plate that project of building a Basque Cultural Center to keep our culture [...] Everybody was very, very silent listening," Isabelle added.<sup>354</sup>

Marcel P. Biscay, a well-known Basque lawyer within the community volunteered to form a non-profit tax exempt corporation that was established on June 21, 1979 under the name of San Francisco Basque Cultural Center.<sup>355</sup> As stated in its Articles of Corporation, the BCC's purpose is "to furnish social and recreational activities for the members of the club with an emphasis on Basque culture."

The first official meeting of the board of directors took place at the NDV hall on June 24, 1979, where they decided to issue membership certificates to each

352 Miura was also the first and so far the only member born in Hegoalde who became President of the Basque Club, between 1979 and 1981. Miura was born in 1936 in Erratzu, Nafarroa. He came to the U.S. in 1952 and to San Francisco in 1959.

353 Jean Gorostiague, "The Beginning of the Basque Cultural Center: My Best Recollection and Involvement," (Burlingame, California, 2006). Jean Gorostiague, interview by Jean Luc Chiramberro, San Francisco, California, 2001.

354 Isabelle Laxague, interview by Marie Laxague Rosecrans, Burlingame, California, October 27, 2006. Father Cachenaute stayed in the country until 1986. For more information on the Basque chaplains see next Chapter.

355 Biscay later became a Municipal Judge of San Mateo. He passed away in 1991. The Basque Cultural Center's online home: <http://www.basqueculturalcenter.com>.

person who would contribute \$1,000 in order to raise money to secure loans to buy property. That is, the initial donors would become full members of the new association by donating \$1,000. The spouse of a certificate holder could also buy a membership for \$1,000 prior March 10, 1980. However, once the construction started the membership fees was raised to \$2,000. This decision angered many Basques in the community as it was interpreted as a punishment for those who initially did not favor the association and/or did not have the financial solvency to afford the initial payment.<sup>356</sup>

In October 1981, the board decided to raise the membership fee once again to \$4,000 as of December 1, 1981. At that time, active member Pierre Sallaberry opposed the decision because, in his opinion, a cultural center “should be opened to all members and to our children in the future.”<sup>357</sup> In the BCC’s minutes, we find two main reasons for raising the initial fee. Firstly, there was an urgent need for more revenue as the construction bills escalated; some members argued that the fewer memberships, the more they had to pay for dues. As of September 1981, there were 334 members and over \$140,000 in the bank. A month earlier, the board had estimated that over \$227,000 was still needed to finish the construction and pay off the land.

Secondly, another group of people argued that “the more certificate memberships [...] the less value per share is worth.” Indeed, in the early years of the history of the BCC, some members shared the perception that their memberships gave them legal ownership rights over the Basque Cultural Center’s assets. Therefore, they argued for a limit on the numbers of members, which clearly contradicted BCC’s Bylaws Article 2, Section 2.08: “There is no limit on the numbers of members the corporation [i.e., the BCC] may admit.” In addition, Bylaws Article 12, Section 13.01 states, “No member, Director, officer, employee, or other person connected with this corporation, or any other private individual, shall receive at any time any of the net earnings or pecuniary profit from the operations of the corporation.”

Nicole Sorhondo shared her thoughts about the possible origin of this “misconception.” At the very beginning of the establishment of the BCC, she explained, potential members “purchased” their memberships in an effort for the BCC to raise as much money as possible for the construction of the cultural center. In addition, since 1981 the members were also asked to pay monthly or annual dues. That is, on top of these dues, there is also, as stated earlier, a once in a lifetime membership fee or application fee (i.e., not share), the amount of which is unparalleled by other Basque clubs elsewhere in the U.S.<sup>358</sup> According to Anita Arduain, BCC Treasurer, between 1981 and 1982 the membership dues were \$5.00 per month. Dues were raised to \$10.00 per month between 1982 and

<sup>356</sup> See Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 205.

<sup>357</sup> BCC Board of Directors’ Meeting Minutes, October 4, 1981.

<sup>358</sup> Nicole Sorhondo, conference call, July 2, 2008.

1992. In 1993, that amount was lowered to \$5.00 per month again as soon as all the main expenses were paid. Then, in 1998 it was again lowered to \$2.50 a month once the restaurant began generating enough revenue to cover part of the members' dues. The BCC's Article of Incorporation VII does not leave any room for misunderstanding: "Upon the dissolution or winding up of the corporation, its assets [...] shall be distributed to a non-profit fund."<sup>359</sup>

The first general membership meeting was also held at the NDV hall on August 2, 1979. By then, 108 people had obtained their membership certificates. Under the first bylaws, the first board was elected. The officers and directors remained the same as the preliminary board, while new directors were added: Marcel Biscay, Johnny Curutchet, Marcel Durquet, Louis Elu, Gracian Goyhenetche, Auguste Indart, Jean Baptiste Saparart and Jacques Unhassobiscay. In October of 1979 the board of directors voted in favor of buying the 599 Railroad Avenue property. George Rescalvo, originally from Argentina, was first hired as the main architect and drew up the preliminary floor plans, which were approved at a general meeting held at the French church. Jean Jauretche became project superintendent, and Gorostiague was the general contractor who supervised the construction.<sup>360</sup>

During that time, several fundraising events took place at Santo Cristo Society Hall, the Portuguese Hall in South San Francisco. In October 1980, the homeland folk group Arrantzaleak held a fundraising event in Donibane Lohizune, and the proceeds were donated to the BCC. The construction permits were approved by the South San Francisco Planning Department in February 1981, and on March 20, 1981 a ground breaking ceremony took place. Three days later construction began. The center was completed by February 10, 1982.

The construction of the building was possible through the generous donations of materials, money, expertise, time, and manpower by individuals from Basque communities throughout the Bay Area and California at large for a period of ten months. For example, Horacio Yrueta of Basco Construction donated the sheetrock. Over 150 volunteers helped out during the process of construction. For example, Curutchet and Indart were responsible for recruiting workers; Saparart was in charge of painting; William "Bill" Etchegoin (a retired constructor) was in charge of paving

<sup>359</sup> Since 1992, young people twenty-one years of age (and only while they are twenty-one) can purchase a regular membership for \$1,000 if the parents are regular members. Regular membership entitles one to voting rights compared to associate membership that holds no voting rights. Currently, associate membership costs \$500 per single person, and \$1,000 per family, which includes children up to the age of twenty-one. If a twenty-one year old person wishes to join the association, but the parents are not regular members, she/he needs to prove her/his Basque ancestry. The fee for this type of membership is \$1,500. This policy was established in 2008. In addition, the BCC board of directors also decided that any person over the age of twenty-one who is interested in becoming a regular member is required to fill out an application in writing that must be endorsed by two or more members, plus pay the application fee and first month's dues. The application is then evaluated and approved by a majority of directors with a quorum of eight directors.

<sup>360</sup> Auguste Indart, interview by Elizabeth Barthe, South San Francisco, California, November 17, 2006, José María Miura, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, April 2, 2005, and by Nadine Goyhenetche, South San Francisco, California, July 16, 2006.





and the handball court bleachers; Bidaurreta and Miura were the landscapers (they were partners in a landscaping business at the time); Berrueta, Elu, Michel Marticorena, Oçafrain, Ganix Iriartborde and Joseph Castanchoa (a professional carpenter by trade and the project's weekend foreman) in addition to working, mostly on the weekends, recruited members and fundraised.<sup>361</sup>

Since the BCC was not a formal group with assets, no lending institution ever agreed to lend money to the BCC project. At the very beginning, loans offered by individuals to the BCC were not subject to any interest as many lenders treated their money as a donation without expecting any personal profit. However, Marcel Biscay warned the BCC board that they could no longer borrow money without paying interest. Consequently, the board began paying interest. Individual Basques lent the necessary money, in spite of the fact that the BCC offered them an interest that was lower than what they could get at a bank. Lending rates at that time were 19-20%. This indicates the commitment and good will of many of those contributors. The project was at a crucial juncture; individuals could only donate so much, and it was evident that the project could come to a standstill for a period of time until further

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<sup>361</sup> Castanchoa would become the President of the BCC between 1983 and 1985.





**Basque Cultural Center ground breaking ceremony on March 20, 1981.** From left to right: Gracian Goyhenetche holding son James, Jean Leon Iribarren, José Mari Miura, Mattin Zubieta, unidentified (partially hidden), Joe Kwartz, George Rascalvo, Johnny Curutchet (partially hidden), Anthony Palladino (President of the South San Francisco Chamber of Commerce), Bill Cazatt, Auguste Indart, Jean Gorostiague, Leon Sorhondo, Louis Elu, Miss South San Francisco, Michel Marticorena, Jean Jauretche, Ronald Acosta (Mayor of South San Francisco), Ganix Iriartborde, Joe Canstanchoa, Gus Nicolopulos (Vice-mayor of South San Francisco), Marcel Durquet, Jacques Unhassobiscay, Jean Sorhondo, Félix Berrueta and Bill Etchegoin. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



**Basque Cultural Center's first board of directors.** Back row (from left to right): Jean Baptiste Sapparart, Jacques Unhassobiscay, Jean Leon Oçafraïn, Félix Berrueta, Ganix Iriartborde, Johnny Curutchet and Joe Castanchoa. Front row (from left to right): Michel Marticorena, Leon Franchisteguy, José Mari Miura, Jean Gorostiague, Leon Sorhondo, Graxian Goyhenetche and Louis Elu. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



*Bill Etchegoin and Jean Gorostaigue at the construction site of “the future home of the Basques”. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

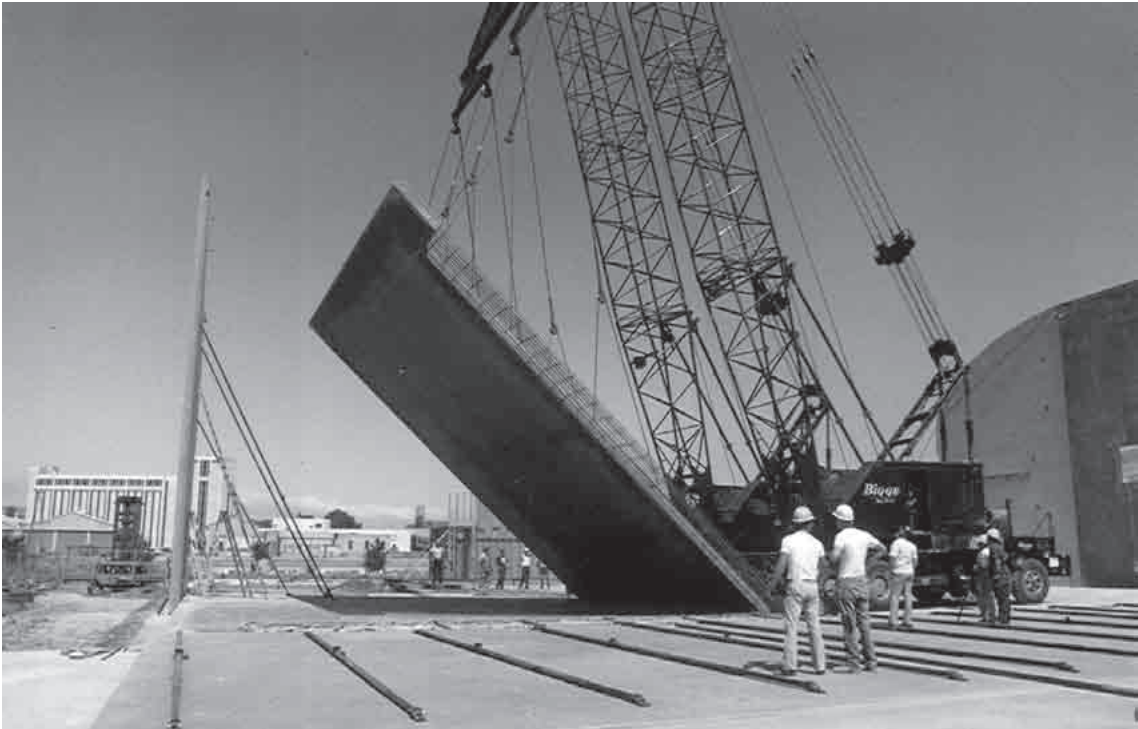
funding was obtained. Jean Pierre Elissondo, originally from the province of Zuberoa and a resident of Walnut Creek, California, became a true community benefactor and savior of the overall project. He enabled the project to continue without stopping and to be completed within the appropriate timeframe.

Jean Pierre Elissondo, a friend of Jauretche and Marcel Durquet, joined the corporation by donating \$10,000 in August 1981, but he was unknown by the majority of the community. Elissondo, and old bachelor, had recently sold his garbage pickup company and had enough money to lend a total of \$200,000 at 10% interest, which was much needed to complete the project. Castanchoa remembers the event: “The first time we met him [Elissondo] was at Notre Dame des Victoires, I think—a little guy. He walked into the front of the meeting, and he said, ‘You guys need some money. I’ve got some. How much you need?’”<sup>362</sup>

Gorostaigue approached the board with the idea of transforming the lounge area into a restaurant open to the public as a way to generate some income. The board approved the idea of a restaurant, and in October 1981 after being advised

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<sup>362</sup> Joseph Castanchoa, interview by Anton Laxague, January 30, 2005.



*Building a dream in South San Francisco, 1981.* Photographs courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.





*The Basque Cultural Center's Opening Ceremony took place on March 27, 1982.*

The U.S. and Basque flags had been raised, and the Basque Club's Zazpiak Bat Klika, directed by Franxoa Bidaurreta, honored them.

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



“Many people were very excited about the project,” he said.<sup>364</sup> At the same time, the Basque Club loaned \$50,000 at 6% interest.<sup>365</sup>

The final cost of the building was \$1,250,000, which was funded in its entirety by the Basque community.<sup>366</sup> According to Miura, in September 1981, the manager of the Bank of America’s Burlingame branch, Bernie Elicagaray, himself of Basque origin, appraised the building for \$1.7 million; and that was before the opening of the restaurant; “which was incredible to us,” Miura said.<sup>367</sup> A total of 378 individuals became the founders of the BCC. Two plaques at the entrance of the clubhouse name each one of them.

The construction of the BCC’s building was the materialization of a Basque dream on American soil. It is the only one in the Bay Area and the largest in the

<sup>364</sup> Leon Franchisteguy, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2007.

<sup>365</sup> For more information on the Basque Club’s financial support to the BCC see below.

<sup>366</sup> Jean Gorostiague, “The Beginning of the Basque Cultural Center: My Best Recollection and Involvement,” (Burlingame, California, 2006).

<sup>367</sup> José María Miura, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, April 2, 2005, and by Nadine Goyhenetche. South San Francisco, California, July 16, 2006.

country housing the largest handball court in the American West.<sup>368</sup> Pilota became and still is the BCC's *raison d'être*.<sup>369</sup> A banner across the main wall of the court summarizes such a rationale, "*Gure amodioa, gure jokoa; Our love, our game.*"

Since 1979 Gorostiague has been the Chairman of Buildings and Grounds Committee of the BCC and is in charge of all aspects regarding the clubhouse: "We had our first members' banquet [the Grand Opening Ceremony for members only] on February 14, 1982. It was on Valentine's Day, and I felt we had accomplished our goal and realized our dream of building our etxea [home]."<sup>370</sup> Aña Iriartborde remembers that date: "It was the most beautiful day of our lives. 'Our own place' opened its doors to its members and families. It is difficult to describe the joy and emotion shown on the faces, provoking some tears to roll down them. The dream that persevered for 20 long years finally came through. We, Basques in America, had our own house, '*Gure Etxea*' with a frontón. It was a marvelous feeling."<sup>371</sup>

## THE BASQUE CULTURAL CENTER, INCORPORATED

South San Francisco, "The Industrial City," celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2008. It has a population of over 60,000 residents and is the headquarters of some of the largest biotechnology companies in the world, making South San Francisco, the birthplace of biotechnology. The BCC site used to be the site of California Cut Stone and Granite Works, which was established in 1927 and closed in 1978. The South San Francisco Historical Society and the Historical Preservation Commission has declared it a "historic site."

Throughout the years, the BCC building has been expanded to accommodate new needs, particularly its booming restaurant. In 1989 and 1991, the Utah Construction Company from the State of Delaware deeded the BCC 10,000 square feet along the frontage of the property and 19,500 square feet respectively at no cost as the BCC had sought to expand the premises. Over the years, the kitchen (1993), the parking lot (1994) and the restaurant's dining room (1996) were enlarged, and a new banquet room to accommodate an extra fifty people and two bathrooms were added. In 1998, a strip of 320 square feet was leased from the City for an annual symbolic fee to be used as an outdoor covered barbeque area of particular importance for the annual festivals, and in 2007, an outside covered glass-windowed patio was also built.

<sup>368</sup> The BCC's indoor handball court has legal dimensions for international competitions. It is 120 feet long, thirty-eight feet high, over thirty-four feet wide, with a high back wall. It is a three-wall court, with a roof over the playing and seating surfaces. It has a seating capacity of approximately 500 people.

<sup>369</sup> See Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 204.

<sup>370</sup> Jean Gorostiague, interview by Jean Luc Chiramberro, San Francisco, California, 2001.

<sup>371</sup> Iriartborde, "History of the Birth of the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center." Italics in original.

Gorostiague personally loaned approximately \$160,000 to finance much of the improvements. The loan was paid back in eight years.<sup>372</sup> In addition, other members also loaned the necessary money, which was paid back at 6% over five years. In 2001, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Maintenance Services of the City of South San Francisco gave the BCC the South San Francisco Beautification Award in the Commercial Category for the improvements made to the building and grounds. The restaurant's occupancy is approximately 140, while the banquet hall and handball court can accommodate approximately 800 people for special functions and annual gatherings. An estimate of 1,000 people were served on Saturday dinner and another 1,000 on Sunday lunch during the BCC's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations' weekend (February 16-18, 2007).

The initial hostility between some members of the Basque Club and the BCC has eventually vanished, and many of the Basque Club's members are now members of the BCC. Today all Basque Club activities (klika, dance group, mus, and choir) although sponsored by the club, are held at the BCC. The Basque Club retained its own mus tournament (as the BCC also organizes its own competition) and its traditional annual picnic. The BCC's Entertainment Committee is responsible for coordinating the majority of annual events and activities that are held inside and outside the clubhouse wherever Basque culture is promoted (e.g., Frederic Fuldain's Omenaldia or homage in Bidarra in 2007). In this regard, the BCC sponsors a mus tournament in January together with the members' annual free lunch, an anniversary weekend festival in February, a fall festival or Udazkeneko Besta (later on known as Euskal Etxeko Jaialdia or Festival of the Basque Cultural Center) in September, and a New Year's Eve Party.

"One of the most important ongoing members' events is the weekly Sunday Lunch," Pierre Etcharren emphasized. "This gives members and their guests a chance to get together, play handball, play mus, sing and socialize with each other. It is also a good opportunity for visiting Basques to meet the Bay Area Basque community. Members are proud to show off their Euskal Etxea at Sunday lunch and introduce their visiting family."<sup>373</sup> Additionally, current BCC President, Isabelle Bushman stated, "Basque [Sunday] lunch for many is like a family lunch; many people have no other family here other than their Basque 'family.' If it weren't for my parents coming to Basque lunch every Sunday when I was a child, I would have never fostered the friendships I fostered and probably would have lost interest in the BCC. It kept lots of people coming to the center and built a great sense of community. It's the one regular thing our members can depend on."<sup>374</sup>

372 Jean Gorostiague, "The Beginning of the Basque Cultural Center: My Best Recollection and Involvement," (Burlingame, California, 2006). Jean Gorostiague, interview by Jean Luc Chiramberro, San Francisco, California, 2001.

373 Pierre Etcharren, e-mail exchange, August 19, 2008.

374 Isabelle Bushman, e-mail exchange, August 19, 2008.



The Entertainment Committee meets monthly and consists of representatives from the different BCC committees (e.g., Pilota, Youth, and Women’s Club) and is open to all interested members. It is the largest member committee of the BCC in terms of participation. Pierre Etcharren has chaired this committee for twenty-four years. It also works closely with South San Francisco and Bay Area institutions as well as with NABO, diverse Basque-Californian clubs (e.g., Bakersfield and Bakersfield) and organizations in the Basque Country. Among many of its accomplishments, this committee has organized the receptions for President Ardanza and President Ibarretxe, international and national pilota and mus tournaments, NABO annual meetings, conventions and Udalekus, and hosted Basque dance groups, music and art performers, and handball players from Europe and South America.<sup>375</sup> Other BCC committees also organize periodical activities throughout the year. The Basque Educational Organization (see below) hosts and sponsors lectures, Basque language classes, workshops, movie nights, and a bi-annual Basque Cultural Day since 1993.

Finally, the Women’s Club sponsors several family-oriented events throughout the year: a Basque Santa Claus or *Olentzero* Party, a Mardi Gras celebration, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day lunches and dances, an annual Reno-Lake Tahoe trip, a Senior Citizen’s Day, a Children’s Halloween Party, and a Christmas boutique, which generates money and contributes to a small scholarship fund for member college students.<sup>376</sup> The Women’s Club was founded in 1983 to support and promote activities that benefit the BCC members’ children. The first board was formed by Suzanne Elicetche (President), Lorraine Etcheverry (Vice-president), Suzanne Arotzarena (Secretary) and Anita Arduain (Treasurer). Other early officers were Mary Curutchet, Marlene Cordova, Carole Uharriet, María Arriada, Yvonne Cuburu, Mayte Oçafraïn, Louise Saparart, Betty Alzugaray, and Alice (Tourreuil) Jorajuria. Marie “Mayie” Sorhouet, born in 1950 in Landibarre, came to the U.S. in 1978. She has been involved in the Women’s Club for some years: “The BCC made a difference in my life as far as being able to meet other people because we get together for everything there,” Mayie commented.<sup>377</sup>

Gracian Goyhenetche, director of the BCC between 1979 and 1991, and Vice-president between 1987 and 1988, and his wife Nadine were the founders of the BCC’s official newsletter in 1982. Since then, Nadine has been the publisher and editor of the members’ newsletter called *Gure Euskal Etxea* (Our Basque Home). Gracian stated, “*Aita* [Father] Cachenaute [...] had done a speech [at the members’ opening ceremony], and he referred to the Basque Cultural Center as “Gure Euskal Etxea.” [...] Up that point I didn’t really think of it as “our home,” and when I heard that I was like, “Wow. This really is our home, not just a house but a home—Our

<sup>375</sup> Pierre Etcharren, e-mail exchange, August 19, 2008.

<sup>376</sup> Olentzero is a Basque folkloric figure roughly equivalent to Santa Claus.

<sup>377</sup> Marie Sorhouet, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Bruno, California, December 30, 2006. See next Chapter for more information on Basque activities carried out by the different Basque clubs.



*Gracian and Nadine  
Goyhenetche at the Basque  
Cultural Center on  
September 16, 2006.  
Photograph by  
Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

Basque Home.’ I thought that was a beautiful title for our newsletter and so starting with I believe it was our first newsletter in February 1982.”<sup>378</sup>

The history of the BCC also encompasses the history of its offspring: the 599 Railroad Catering (1982) and Basque Educational Organization (1984), which are unique assets of the Bay Area Basque community.

## **The Restaurant and the 599 Railroad Catering, Incorporated**

### ***The Restaurant***

Food is a central identifier of Basque culture in both the homeland and diaspora. Throughout Basque America, Basque cuisine has become a fundamental ingredient in annual gatherings such as picnics or festivals, where members and non-

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<sup>378</sup> Gracian Goyhenetche, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, Pollock Pines, California, April 23, 2006. Similarly, the Basque Club has published a newsletter for many years. In January 2004, it was named *Basque Club Aldizkaria* (i.e., Basque Club’s Newsletter or Magazine), and since then it has been published three times per year. Its goal is to better inform the members on issues regarding NABO, Basque America and the Basque Country. Philippe Acheritogaray has been its editor since 2004.

members of the community gather together to celebrate Basque heritage. We have already talked about the professional side of Basque cuisine by exploring some of the traditional Basque boardinghouses and today's professional restaurants. Nowadays, the Basque Cultural Center unites both traditional communal dinners (e.g., family-style Sunday lunches), where the barbecue reigns (e.g., annual festival dinners and lunches in February and in September), and sophisticated meals from both French and Basque gastronomies that are fused at its restaurant.

When the BCC's board of directors approved the decision of opening a restaurant to the public to help to pay the mounting bills, they rapidly approached Aña and Ganix Iriartborde to manage it because of their previous experience in the hospitality industry. The Iriartbordes accepted with the condition that they would only do it for six months. Gabriel Elicetche, from Milafranga, Lapurdi, was hired as the first chef of the restaurant. Against the advice of the Iriartbordes' accountant, Henry Sante, they used their personal credit history gained at the Des Alpes in order to establish a new line of credit for the BCC's restaurant with the State Board of Equalization and suppliers. Any new business was required to establish credit with this board and suppliers by depositing an estimated tax amount of \$30,000



*Cooks group preparing the barbecue for the Basque Cultural Center's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Saturday dinner (2002). From left to right: Leon Lucu, Jean Pierre Elissetche, David Barreneche, Juan Jayo, Robert Acheritogaray, Roland Cherbero, Gracian Etcheberhere and Sauveur Anchartechar. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

*Aña and Ganix Iriartborde sitting by the old Basque Cultural Center's fireplace that Frederic Fuldain made.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



up front. However, they were allowed to pay the deposit at a later date. Finally, they were ready to open the restaurant to the public, but three days before the opening date, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1982, South San Francisco City Hall representatives informed them that they did not have a special permit to do so. Jean Gorostiague decided to open the restaurant without the permit.

The first members of the staff were bartender Joe Gestas, waiters Marie Helene Azcona, Mari Jose Zabala, and Jose Mari Pagola, and dishwashers Guy Jeffroy and Miguel “Hipólito” Ramírez. Aña Iriartborde remembers that “from the first day the business boomed. People poured in, and the crew worked double shifts [...] We hired more personnel: Jean Pierre Minaberry for the kitchen, Jean Leon Cuburu, Isabelle Lesaffe and Mercedes Gestas to tend tables.”<sup>379</sup> Finally, by the end of the month, after the official inauguration ceremony and celebrations, March 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, the South San Francisco City Hall granted them permission to open to the public.

In Iriartborde’s opinion, “The most moving moment of the event [official inauguration] was certainly when Carlos Urrutia [a Gernika bombing survivor]

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<sup>379</sup> Iriartborde, “History of the Birth of the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center.”



*Carlos Urrutia planting the Gernika Tree at the front left corner of the Basque Cultural Center during its Opening Ceremony on March 27, 1982.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

brought in his wheelbarrow a young oak tree that he made sprout from a seed cropped from the Gernika Oak Tree. He planted it at the corner of ‘Euskal Etxea.’ Everyone sang in unison the national anthem Gernikako Arbola.”<sup>380</sup> According to Pierre Etcharren, coordinator of the ceremony, “I feel that Carlos Urrutia that day was probably the happiest man on earth.”<sup>381</sup> Urrutia was born in Winnemucca, Nevada in September 1915 and at early age of three returned with his parents to Gernika. In 1952, he came back to the U.S. and died in September 1982. South San Francisco Mayor, Gus Nicolopolus, the consuls of France, Gerard Errera, and of Spain, Emilio de Motta participated in the opening ceremonies.

On June 1, 1982, the Iriartbordes were replaced by a new manager, Ed Keyser, but unfortunately he resigned within a month due to the amount of work. After Keyser, the restaurant was managed by David Donati, Pat Jones, Martin Errecart, Marcel Mocho, Tom Ward and Louis Marticorena, who was the manager between 1986 and 1996. For fifteen years Marticorena was the chef of the French restaurant, La Bourgogne, on Mason Street. Since 1996, François Camou has been the manager of

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Pierre Etcharren, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 6, 2006.

*François Camou receiving the South San Francisco Chamber of Commerce's Outstanding Business Award for Business Success from Jacqueline "Jackie" Speier, 2002. Speier was a California State Senator between 1998 and 2006. Since April 2008 she is a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.*

*Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



the restaurant. He was assisted by Marie Helene Sapparrart between October 1999 and February 2008. Currently, Daniel Mindeguia from Oronoz-Mugaire, Nafarroa is the assistant manager. Since chef Elicetche there have been different people in charge of the kitchen, including Jean Felix Galzagorry, Pierre "Titou" Palomes, Michel Campillo, and Patrick Farjas, as well as assistants Joseph Biscar, Jean Pierre Minaberry, Tony Vrondisis and Roque Madrigal. Since c. 1998 Michel Veron has been the chef and is currently assisted by sous-chefs Philippe Garat and Jean Michel Duhalde.

In 2002, François Camou received the South San Francisco Chamber of Commerce's Outstanding Business Award for Business Success, on behalf of the BCC restaurant, which recognized a twenty-year history of dedication to quality and gastronomic culture.

### ***The Catering Board***

Following the suggestions made by the BCC's attorney, Marcel Biscay, and accountants Henri Sante and Joaquin Toomey on August 11, 1982, the 599 Railroad Catering, Incorporated, also known as the Catering Board was established as a



for-profit corporation to oversee the restaurant and catering operations. The goal was to preserve the non-profit status of the BCC, which would be in jeopardy if the restaurant had an outside income higher than that allowed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The BCC became the sole shareholder of the new corporation, and the initial lease of the restaurant space was set up at 5% of the business income for an initial period of six months. The Catering Board also purchased the kitchen equipment from the BCC. Despite all efforts made to preserve the non-profit status of the BCC, in January 1988, as a result of an IRS audit, the IRS revoked the BCC's non-profit status because more than 35% of its gross income was from non-exempted sources (i.e., it was from outside the membership).

The first board of the 599 Railroad Catering was formed by Jean Pierre Espil (President), Louis Elu (Vice-president), Gracian Goyhenetche (Secretary), Jean Leon Cuburu, Louis Marticorena, Jean Baptiste Saparart and Jacques Unhassobiscay. The precedent of this first board was a Housing Committee that was set up within the BCC in December 1981 to advise the restaurant's manager on selecting a chef, as well as the board on best practices to run the business effectively. The idea of the Housing Committee was suggested to the BCC by a member and former chef of the United Irish Cultural Center, Mike Duffy. The committee was formed by Cuburu, Elu, Espil and Marticorena.

Gracian Goyhenetche stated that, "The second corporation [the Catering Board] was formed because we found that the original board was always making all the decisions, and it just become too much [...] We were making decisions about what color plates and what kind of forks we had to buy and all that. It just got to be too ridiculously tedious and then most of us on the board really didn't have a lot of restaurant experience. And so we thought that it made sense to create a separate committee [...] which [...] was eventually incorporated as a second corporation."<sup>382</sup> In a sense, the BCC and the Catering Board attempt to strike a balance between running a successful business—i.e., an annual percentage of the restaurant's income is paid to the BCC for renting the space—and preserving food as an identity marker of the Basque community.

The 1983-1984 Catering Board was formed by Louis Elu (President), Jean Leon Cuburu (Vice-president), Gracian Goyhenetche (Secretary), Jean Baptiste Saparart (Treasurer), Alphonse Acheritogaray, Joseph Castanchoa and Jean Pierre Espil. The following term, 1984-1985, the Secretary would also become the Treasurer until the figure of the Treasurer disappeared in 1990, only to be reinstated in 1993. In 1985, Lorraine Etcheverry became the first female director. She was the Secretary and Treasurer of the board until 1987. The second female director was Mayi Etcheverry, who would be part of the board from 1986 to 1996, and Secretary between 1990 and 1996. In 1997, Lorraine Etcheverry became the Secretary and from 1998 to

<sup>382</sup> Gracian Goyhenetche, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, Pollock Pines, California, April 23, 2006.



2002, Robert Acheritogaray, who has been on the board since 1997 when he was the Treasurer. In 1998, Sue Elicetche became the Treasurer for the next four years. There have also been other members of the board at different times, including, Leon Franchisteguy and Jean Gorostiague.

Since 1998, the board has been composed of nine directors. The 2007-2008 board of directors was formed by Jean Baptiste Lorda (President), Alphonse Acheritogaray (Vice-president), Christine Elicagaray (Treasurer)—on the board since 1998—Rosemary Goyeneche (Secretary)—also on the board since 1998—and a total of five directors: Roland Cherbero, Gratien Etchebehere, Eric Garat, Jean Gorostiague and Roger Minhondo. In addition, the President of the BCC also sits on the board in the role of catering representative.



*The 2007 Railroad Catering Board.* Standing (from left to right): Jean Gorostiague, Roland Cherbero, Roger Minhondo, Gratien Etchebehere and Eric Garat. Sitting (from left to right): Rosemary Goyeneche, Jean Baptiste Lorda, Alphonse Acheritogaray and Christine Elicagaray. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

Roger Minhondo has been a director of the board since 1984 and was its President between 1986 and 1989. Alphonse Acheritogaray was born in 1933 in Baigorri but raised in Ortzaize, the same village where Louis Marticorena was born. Acheritogaray immigrated to San Francisco in 1961 and was the founding director of the Basque Club's Zazpiak Bat Klika in 1964. He has been a member of the catering board since 1983 and was its President between 1989 and 1991. Acheritogaray has also been a professional chef in number of San Francisco French restaurants including L'Orangerie. Jean Baptiste Lorda has been part of the board since 1990 and President since 1991.<sup>383</sup>

## Why Two Clubs? The Basque Educational Organization, Incorporated

Despite all the initial controversy and animosity between some members of the Basque Club and others of the BCC, there have been many initiatives to overcome those difficulties since the early years of the formation of the BCC. For a long time, the BCC and Basque Club have shared folkloric expenses, and children of non-members have been able to participate in activities such as klika, dance or Basque language classes. For example, since 1981, the Basque Club has donated and loaned money towards the Basque clubhouse project. One thousand four hundred dollars were raised at a handball game in which a delegation of players from the French Federation of Basque Pilota participated (September 20, 1981); over \$31,000 was loaned in December 1981 and another \$13,000 in December 1982, toward the soundproofing of the banquet hall; and finally over 250 surplus books were purchased from the Basque Studies Library at the University of Nevada, Reno, which were donated to the BEO's library in September 1984. As early as November 1981, the board of directors of the Basque Club showed constant willingness to get closer to the BCC and even to merge both organizations, as both needed each other to survive. The BCC has a building and the required facilities for events and practices, and the Basque Club has the cultural and folkloric activities—i.e., choir, dance and klika groups. However, the only agreement that both clubs reached, at the time, involved renting the facilities for the club's different activities and events.

By April 1982, eight past presidents (Frederic Fuldain, Jean Leon Iribarren, Dominique Erdozaincy, Jean Gorostiague, Jacques Unahossbiscay, Jean Belleau, Franxoa Bidaurreta, and Joe Miura) and the President of the Basque Club at the time (Martin Minaberry, 1981-1982) had met twice to discuss the fate of the club regarding the BCC.<sup>384</sup> They decided that “the Basque club should be kept alive

<sup>383</sup> Alphonse Acheritogaray, Jean Baptiste Lorda, and Roger Minhondo, focus group interview on *599 Railroad Catering, Incorporated*, facilitated by Nicole Sorhondo and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, June 14, 2007.

<sup>384</sup> Of those early presidents, the Basque Club and the community at large have unfortunately lost all but Gorostiague, Bidaurreta and Miura.

as a separate Association because it shelters a group of members who for some personal reasons that should be respected still count on this Association to be their link to the Basque community. However, we feel with a building made to keep and promote the Basque culture that the activities developed by the Basque Club until now will hopefully find a home at the Center and that in a few years benefiting from these facilities, will grow and expand.”<sup>385</sup>

In September 1982, both BCC and Basque Club agreed to jointly organize a single New Year’s Eve Party for the first time in order to avoid splitting the community. In addition, the BCC decided not to charge the club’s choir for practicing at the clubhouse as the choir members were also members of the BCC. However, in December 1982, the Basque Club requested organizing a single joint mus tournament, but the BCC declined the proposal as there were some club members that were not members of the BCC. In January 1983, a BCC special board meeting explored the possibility of taking over the Basque Club’s activities but they decided against as at the time they were not financially solvent.

By December of 1983, the board of directors of the San Francisco Basque Club began to explore the possibility of changing the status of the Basque Club from a social to an educational organization for tax purposes. According to some sources, the club was afraid of losing some of the profits obtained from selling the property in Los Gatos. The option proposed by their attorneys was to form a separate educational corporation and then to merge the Basque Club into that organization, which would be called the Basque Educational Organization (BEO). The Basque Club would most likely be dissolved.

In October 1983 the BCC set up an internal Educational Committee under the leadership of Franxoa Bidaurreta (Chairman), Martin Minaberry (Co-chairman) and Mayte Oçafrain, who was teaching Basque two days a week at the BCC’s clubhouse. A month later, Bidaurreta suggested the possibility of acquiring non-profit status so that people wishing to make contributions toward education could deduct them. By February 1984, the BCC’s board of directors and the certified public accountant (CPA) Leonard Soloway began exploring the possibility of creating a third corporation for educational purposes, which would take donations that would be tax deductible—i.e., a charitable organization. The IRS never considered the BCC a charitable organization, but rather a social club. That is, donations to the BCC were not tax deductible.

On February 21, 1984 BEO became incorporated as a non-profit public benefit corporation for charitable and educational purposes with 501(c)(3) tax exemption, thereby eligible to receive tax-deductible donations. The full board of directors of the Basque Club executed the articles of incorporation: Jean Baptiste Bidaurreta

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<sup>385</sup> Former Presidents of the Basque Club, “Letter to the Members,” (c. 1982).

(President), Frederic Fuldain (Vice-president), Martin Minaberry (Secretary), Esther Bidaurreta (Treasurer), Jean Leon Iribarren (Sergeant-at-Arms or Assistant Treasurer), Pierre Ausquy, Pierre Etchebarne, Mayi Etcheverry (at the time she was also the Secretary of the BCC), Aña Iriartborde, Jean Leon Oçafrain and Theodore “Ted” Ondarts. According to the BEO’s articles of incorporation its purpose was “to support, maintain and increase knowledge and appreciation of Basque culture and traditions.”

As a result of the creation of BEO, Soloway suggested to the BCC that there was no need to duplicate groups, and a merger with a non-profit educational organization would be advantageous to both the Basque Club and the BCC. In April 1984, a special meeting between the boards of directors of both organizations took place in order to discuss the possibility of forming a non-profit educational organization conjointly. The project was approved unanimously, and a temporary joint committee composed of directors from each board was also approved. The educational board was constituted by the following directors of the Basque Club—Esther Bidaurreta, Jean Baptiste Bidaurreta, Frederic Fuldain and Martin Minaberry—and directors of the BCC—Joseph Castanchoa (President), Jacques Unhassobiscay (Vice-president), Franxoa Bidaurreta and Leon Sorhondo.

A meeting of the general membership of the Basque Club took place at NDV on June 6, 1984 to address two issues: the possibility for Basque Club members to join the BCC as associate members for those who were not already members, and the transfer of the Basque Club funds to the BEO. Unfortunately, the transfer of the club’s assets to the BEO was never completed, and the Basque Club decided to abandon their common project towards consolidation. According to the BCC’s minutes, in June 1984, the BCC board of directors unanimously motioned to request that the Basque Club release the BEO to the BCC. The BEO bylaws were then amended to require that BEO directors be BCC members. An agreement was also reached between both the Basque Club and the BCC that allowed the Basque Club to use the BCC’s facilities for educational purposes at no charge.

BEO’s first board was formed in the fall of 1984. Back then there was no doubt that the Basque Club and the BCC were closely related.<sup>386</sup> The board was made up by three BCC officers—Franxoa Bidaurreta (Vice-president/Vice-chairman), Lorraine Etcheverry (Treasurer) and Leon Sorhondo (director)—and four BCC members who, by the way, were also Basque Club officers—Jean Baptiste Bidaurreta (Secretary), Frederic Fuldain (director), Jean Leon Iribarren (Treasurer) and Martin Minaberry

<sup>386</sup> At the time, there were also three people who were on both BCC and Basque Club boards. Pierre Etcharren and Jean Leon Oçafrain were directors at both clubs, and Mayi Etcheverry was director of the Basque Club and Secretary of the BCC. In addition, there were three former presidents of the Basque Club serving as directors of the BCC board: Jean Gorostiague (1970-1972), Jacques Unhassobiscay (1972-1974) and Franxoa Bidaurreta (1976-1979). Finally, two members of the 1984 BCC board would become presidents of the Basque Club (Etcharren, 1985-1987 and Oçafrain, 1991-1993).

(President/Chairman).<sup>387</sup> This board closely resembled the temporary joint committee established a few months earlier.

In September 1984, Franxoa Bidaurreta reported that the BEO's 501(c)(3) tax exemption had been received from the IRS. The first activity sponsored by BEO was the performance of Basque tenor Valentín Aguirre on October 14, 1984 at the First Unitarian Church in San Francisco. Throughout the years, the BEO has organized and sponsored many educational activities at the BCC. The 2007-2008 board was made up by Philippe Acheritogaray (Chairman), Yvonne Hauscarriage (Vice-chairman and NABO delegate), Nicole Sorhondo (Secretary), Esther Bidaurreta (Treasurer), Maitexa Cuburu (NABO delegate), Franxoa Bidaurreta, Aña Iriartborde, Idoya Urruty and Lucy Jaimerena-Zamattia.

## A Profile of the Members

With regard to the BCC's membership, despite the fact that the percentage of members born in the Basque Country is higher than those born in the U.S., the number of members born in California is nearly equal to that of those born in both territories of Nafarroa (43.8%) (see Appendix: Table 22). However, those born in the northern Basque Country account for nearly double those born in the southern part. Particularly within Nafarroa, most of the members were born in the valleys of Baztan (60.6%), Erroibar (12.1%) and Doneztebe (12.1%). Within Nafarroa Beherea, most of the members were born in the cantons of Baigorri (51.5%), Donibane Garazi (31.2%) and Iholdi (9.5%).

The Basque Cultural Center has the largest membership of all Basque clubs in the Bay Area with 46.24% of total members (i.e., 450 individuals). Nearly 71% of BCC members belong to two or more Basque clubs in the Bay Area, which represents the lowest percentage of affiliation among Bay Area clubs. That is, only 15% of the members belong to four clubs. Similar to the Basque Club, the BCC members also belong, by order of priority, to non-Bay Area Basque associations, and nearly one-third to French associations (see Appendix: Tables 23 and 24).

Exhibiting the same characteristics as the rest of Bay Area Basque organizations, the Basque Club is mainly formed by men and also by those over forty-six years old. In addition, nearly half of the members are over sixty-one years old (see Appendix: Tables 25 and 26). Very similar to the Basque Club membership, over half of the BCC membership is formed by the immigrant generation, while their children represent nearly 40%. The grandchildren's generation continues to be a minority in Bay Area Basque associations (see Appendix: Table 27). Almost identical to the Basque Club

<sup>387</sup> Jean Baptiste Bidaurreta was President of the Basque Club, Frederic Fuldain, Vice-president, Martin Minaberry, Secretary and Jean Leon Iribarren, Sergeant at Arms.

membership, less than half of BCC members hold two citizenships. Similarly, over 40% have French citizenship, and 90% are U.S. citizens (see Appendix: Tables 28a and 28b). Similar to the rest of the Bay Area Basque associations, nearly all BCC members also speak two or more languages (92.8%)—e.g., over one-third of the membership speaks four languages. Over three quarters of the members speak Basque, followed by French and Spanish (see Appendix: Tables 29a and 29b).

In comparison to the Basque Club, the BCC's membership was open to women since the first BCC board of directors found it imperative to recruit as many members as possible, which in turn meant a greater collection of revenues needed to build the clubhouse. Additionally, in this way, membership was not only limited to Basques only—i.e., it was open to non-Basque spouses. The first woman to serve on the board of directors was Mayi Etcheverry, 1982-1983, who then became Secretary between 1983 and 1994. Lorraine (Saldubehere) Etcheverry, born in the U.S., became Mayi's assistant between 1984 and 1992. Anita (Martínez) Arduain, born in Susanville, California, became Assistant Treasurer between 1985 and 1987 and has been the Treasurer since 1987. (Anita is one of the longest-standing officers of the BCC, with over two decades of volunteer service. On November 1, 2008, the Society of Basque Studies in America inducted Anita into the Basque Hall of Fame for her prominent role as a community organizer.) In 1992, Christine Elicagaray joined the board and became Secretary between 1994 and 1997. Since 1998, she has been the Secretary of the 599 Railroad Catering board. By the beginning of the twenty-first century an increasing number of women began to participate in the management of the club. Among those were: Allyn Goyhenetche, Betty Alzugaray, Valerie (Etcharren) Arrechea, Nicole Sorhondo (Secretary between 1998 and 2000) and Nicole Hauscarriague. The first ever female President was Isabelle (Oçafraïn) Bushman, 2007-present. Isabelle was also the BCC's Vice-president from 2005 to 2007.

## THE MARIN-SONOMA BASQUE ASSOCIATION, INCORPORATED

The Marin-Sonoma Basque Association was established in 1989 in order to bring together Basques in the Marin-Sonoma area as well as to pass the Basque traditions on to their children, and to reach Basques that were not yet involved in the San Francisco Basque Club and/or the BCC. A group of friends—Roland Cherbero, Jean Baptiste Etcheverria, Linda Etcheverria, Jean Felix Galzagorry, Mayie Galzagorry, Andre Larre, Joseph Uhalde, Danielle Uhalde and José Ugalde—decided to create a Basque club in the Marin and Sonoma counties as they knew that there were many Basque residents who felt that the BCC was too far away for them, but “we made it clear that we would not compete with the BCC.”<sup>388</sup> They drew up a list of approximately ninety

<sup>388</sup> Roland Cherbero et al., focus group interview on *Marin-Sonoma Basque Association*, facilitated by Esther Bidaurreta, August 13, 2007.



Basque surnames and sent out a letter to request their opinions about forming a club. They obtained about sixty favorable responses. Soon, they contacted Basque attorney Johnny Etchevers and got the paperwork approved.

The first board of directors was formed by Cherbero, the Etcheverrias, the Galzagorrys, Larre, the Uhaldes, Ugalde as well as Fernando Ballerena and Joe Miura. In the past the Basque association had their own dance group and used to organize ski and camping trips, and Joseph Uhalde and Larre taught pilota to the children. Currently, the club organizes an annual mus tournament and lunch, and a picnic every second Sunday of September at Penngrove Community Park.



***The ribbon cutting ceremony for the inauguration of the Marin-Sonoma Basque Association, which took place at Café Villa in San Rafael, California in October of 1989.*** The adults are the first board of directors, with director Roland Cherbero missing from the photograph. Back row (from left to right): Jean Baptiste Etcheverria, Andre Larre, Joe Miura, Linda Etcheverria with Katie Etcheverria in arms, Fernando Ballerena, Jean Felix Galzagorry (partially obstructed), José Ugalde, Marie Galzagorry and Joseph Uhalde. Front row (from left to right): Sebastien Uhalde, Judy Etcheverria, Peggy Ugalde, Stephanie Etcheverria, Stephanie Oroz, Natalie Oroz and Danielle Uhalde. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



## A Profile of the Members

The majority of the members of the Marin-Sonoma Basque Association were born in Nafarroa Beherea and in the Bay Area. Nearly 56% of members were born in either part of Nafarroa. Within Nafarroa, most members were born in the valleys of Baztan (35%), Erroibar (25%) and Roncal (10%). Within Nafarroa Beherea, the majority of members were born in the cantons of Donibane Garazi (44.1%), Baigorri (26.5%) and Iholdi (14.7%) (see Appendix: Table 30).

The Marin-Sonoma Basque Association has the second smallest membership of all Basque clubs in the Bay Area with 14.4% of total members (or 140 individuals). Similar to the membership of the Anaitasuna club, nearly 96% of Marin-Sonoma Basque Association members belong to two or more Basque clubs in the Bay Area, while over half of them belong to four clubs. MSBA members also belong, by order of priority, to non-Bay Area Basque associations, San Francisco French, and Spanish associations (see Appendix: Tables 31 and 32). Nearly identical to the Anaitasuna membership, the MSBA is mainly formed by men and by those over forty-six years old. Also, nearly 60% of the membership is over sixty-one years old, which, according to the management of the club, has become their “major concern” (see Appendix: Tables 33 and 34).<sup>389</sup>

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The majority of the MSBA membership is formed by the immigrant generation and the first generation born in this country. However, no grandchildren of the immigrant generation belong to the club (see Appendix: Table 35). Over 44% of Marin-Sonoma club members have French citizenship, while nearly 19% are Spanish citizens. Over half of the MSBA members have double citizenship (see Appendix: Tables 36a and 36b). Similar to Anaitasuna, 97% of Marin-Sonoma members speak two or more languages—e.g., over one-third of the members speak four languages. After English, the second most spoken language is Spanish, followed by Basque, and French (see Appendix: Tables 37a and 37b).

## THE ANAITASUNA BASQUE CLUB, INCORPORATED

Anaitasuna (Fraternity or Brotherhood) was founded in 1991 as a social and educational organization with the purpose of improving Basque cultural heritage. Its original board of directors was formed by José Zalba (born in 1928 in Orotz-Betelu, Nafarroa), Martin Vizcay (born in 1932 in Orondritz, Nafarroa), Domingo M. Mezquiriz (born in 1928 in Esteribar, Nafarroa), and Manuel “Manolo” Arranz Hume (born in 1940 in Madrid, Spain). Francisco Vicondoa, a founding member

<sup>389</sup> Roland Cherbero et al., focus group interview on Marin-Sonoma Basque Association, facilitated by Esther Bidaurreta, August 13, 2007.

of Anaitasuna, was born in 1944 in Irurita, Nafarroa. At the age of sixteen, he immigrated to Chile where he worked for thirteen years as a baker. Then, he moved to California where he worked as a shepherd. Francisco remembers that some members of Unión Española wanted to play in NABO mus tournaments but Unión Española could not be a member of NABO because it was not a Basque club. So they decided to create a Basque association within it. In other words, the *raison d'être* for organizing Anaitasuna was to play mus at NABO's tournament.<sup>390</sup> Anaitasuna became incorporated as a non-profit public benefit corporation and is exempted from federal income tax under Section 501(c)(3).

Another important figure in the development of the Anaitasuna club is Antonio "Tony" Espinal, cousin of funding director, Martin Viscay. Tony was born in 1937 in Errenteria, Gipuzkoa to parents from Orondritz, lived in Donostia-San Sebastián and came to the U.S. in 1955 to work as a shepherd in Bakersfield with his uncle Felipe Espinal. He later moved to San Francisco where he worked for a couple of years in the produce market and for forty-three years as a gardener. In addition, Tony is the current Vice-president of the BCC and the Chair of its Hospitality Committee. His biggest



*Anaitasuna board of directors meeting at Unión Española on February 17, 2007. From left to right: Lucio Machin, Gina Espinal, Francisco Vicondoa and Marisa Espinal. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

<sup>390</sup> Francisco Vicondoa, interview by Gina Espinal, San Francisco, California, February 19, 2005.

pastime is playing mus so he is a member of several clubs including Unión Española, Anaitasuna, San Francisco Basque Club, Marin-Sonoma, BCC and Susanville in California as well as the Basque clubs in Gardnerville and Reno in Nevada.

## A Profile of the Members

Zubiri defined the Anaitasuna as a *Navarrese* club as originally was dominated by members from Nafarroa.<sup>391</sup> However, currently the Anaitasuna club presents similar percentages of members born in the north and south of the Basque Country. If we calculate the total membership of individuals from both Navarrese territories it accounts for 54.5% of current members, followed by the Bay Area-born members. Within Nafarroa, members were born in the valleys of Baztan (35.3%), Erroibar (29.4%), Roncal (11.7%) and Doneztebe (11.7%). Within Nafarroa Beherea, the majority of members were born in the cantons of Donibane Garazi (52.6%), Baigorri (21%) and Iholdi (10.5%) (see Appendix: Table 38).

Anaitasuna Basque Club has the smallest membership of all Basque clubs in the Bay Area with just over 8.5% of total members (i.e., eighty-three individuals). Nearly 97% of Anaitasuna members belong to two or more Basque clubs in the Bay Area, while over half of them belong to four clubs. In addition, Anaitasuna members also belong, by order of priority, to non-Bay Area Basque associations, and San Francisco French and Spanish associations (see Appendix: Tables 39 and 40). Over three-quarters of the Anaitasuna membership is formed by men and by those over forty-six years old. Also, over half of the membership is over sixty-one years old (see Appendix: Tables 41 and 42). In addition, the majority of the members were born in the Basque Country, and only 1.5% of the members are second generation Basques (see Appendix: Table 43).

Nearly one-third of Anaitasuna members have French citizenship, while nearly 25% have Spanish citizenship. However, the majority of members are citizens of only one country (see Appendix: Tables 44a and 44b). Over 98% of Anaitasuna members speak two or more languages, and nearly one-quarter of the members speak four languages. After English, the second most spoken language is Basque, followed by Spanish and French (see Appendix: Tables 45a and 45b).

## CONCLUSIONS

Over one-third of current Bay Area Basque association members were born after 1960 within an environment of a progressive institutionalization of Basque identity and culture. The existence of the San Francisco Basque Club and the activities

<sup>391</sup> Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*.

it carried out for decades were reinforced by the establishment of the Basque Cultural Center's clubhouse as well as by the creation of the Marin-Sonoma and Anaitasuna associations. This institutionalization boosted the socialization process of Basque children, that to a great degree, had been taking place solely in family settings. Without much doubt, the role that the new Basque-American generations can play in maintaining and promoting the quantity and quality of Basque cultural, folkloric and educational activities that the community at large enjoys nowadays is paramount. They are in a more advantageous situation than those encountered by previous waves of immigrants upon their arrival to the Bay Area.

The history of Basque associationism in the Bay Area is a history of successive inter-generational and intra-generational and personal struggles. Earlier generations of Basques have been, to certain extent, challenged by new ones. However, the outcome of this power struggle has always been positive for the overall Basque community in general terms. The creation of the San Francisco Basque Club and the subsequent creation of a Basque Cultural Center are examples of this inter and intra-generational tension. Despite the complex and diverse socio-political sensitivities and cultural traditions of the Bay Area Basque communities and individuals, they all came together in a common project. The success of the Basque Cultural Center is measured by the complexity of the Basque individuals that inhabit it. On a much smaller scale, the San Francisco Basque communities are a microcosm that reflects the progressive, diverse and rich multicultural diversity of the Bay Area.

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## CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

Basque immigrants brought socio-cultural, recreational, linguistic and religious traditions, practices, values and experiences with them into their new country. Many attempted to maintain and nurture their culture on individual, familial and associative levels. This does not mean, however, that Bay Area Basque associations are mere reproducers of homeland culture. They also produce their own sense of Basque identity based on their migration experiences and adaptation to the host society. This transnational, diasporic or hybrid culture gives rise to a unique sense of Basque identity, which, consequently, differs from that of the homeland.

In the eyes of some homeland and diaspora Basques, culture produced in diasporic communities around the world seems to be outdated if not hopelessly anchored in the past.

In this regard, Roger Minhondo, long-standing member of the Bay Area Basque community, explained, “It seems like our Basque evolution coming from the Basque Country stopped probably in the late [19]60s, and it stayed the same way, which is beautiful. Actually, I had my sister here at the beginning of this year [2005], and she spent a day at the Basque Cultural Center, and she told me it was like turning the clock back fifty years. But, that’s positive though, that’s very positive, because we



*A traditional Basque cavalcade or procession as part of the Besta Berri or celebration of Corpus Christi going across the handball court of Bidarraí, Nafarroa Beherea, in 1946.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

have managed to...our evolution has been done among our communities, and the Basque communities we have been able to keep the way we understood it.<sup>392</sup>

Douglass and Bilbao stated that by the mid-1970s the leadership of most of Basque clubs in the American West was still in the hands of the immigrant generation. “Consequently,” they argued, “the emphasis is placed almost exclusively upon association and recreation rather than upon education. The Basque organizations of the American West have not, with very few exceptions, emulated other ethnic groups in creating language classes, library facilities, or lecture and publication series.”<sup>393</sup> Since then, the progressive involvement of children of the immigrant generation in the membership and board of directors of Bay Area Basque clubs has stimulated a shift from mainly recreational to educational activities, or at least has encouraged a combination of both, in terms of (self) discovery of heritage and origin. In a sense, purely recreational activities also serve to convey cultural practices although they are transmitted in informal settings.

<sup>392</sup> Roger Minhondo, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, March 15, 2005.

<sup>393</sup> William A. Douglass and Jon Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World* (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1975), 386.



In 1951 **Frederic Fuldain** immigrated to Bakersfield, California, where he worked as a sheepherder for three years. He then moved to San Francisco and soon began his landscaping business. Fuldain founded the San Francisco Basque Club's dance group and klika band and also organized the club's first mus and pilota tournaments. Fuldain was President of the Basque Club in 1963-1964, a director between 1967 and 1970, 1971 and 1973, and again in the 1983-1984 term, and Vice-president between 1983 and 1986. He was also an avid Basque historian and wood artisan. Some of the Basque motif-furniture that he crafted is on display in the entrance of the BCC's restaurant. He passed away at the age of seventy-six in Belmont, California. Fuldain was the recipient of many awards. On May 11, 1994, the French government honored him with "L'Etoile Civique, Diplome d'Argent" (The Civic Star, Silver Award) for his cultural leadership in the Bay Area Basque community. He was also honored by the Basque Cultural Center in 1995; posthumously by the Society of Basque Studies in America in 2006; and by his home village, Bidarra in 2007 for his lifetime unselfish dedication to Basque culture in America.



*Frederic Fuldain is honored by a dantzari or dancer who performs a dance called auresku at the Basque Cultural Center's handball court on April 2, 1995. Fuldain is surrounded by klika members (on the left) and choir members (in the back). Father Martxel Tillous is sitting on the far right. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

San Francisco area Basque clubs sponsor annual festivals, lunches, dinners, picnics, dances, music (e.g., choir, *txistu* or one-handed flute and *danbolina* or tabor drum, and *klika*), games and sports such as mus and pilota or handball tournaments. They provide scholarships and charitable donations for members of the community. With regard to education, they organize Basque language classes, public lectures, Basque film series, have a small library and publish their own institutional history. In these latter endeavors, the Basque Educational Organization constitutes one of the main instructive arms of the Bay Area Basque community. In addition to these activities, the first generation of Basques born in San Francisco has also attempted to become more politically engaged than their predecessors regarding homeland politics and the so-called Basque political conflict.<sup>394</sup>

## The Next Generation Today

The lack of new and younger members is a considerable threat to the continuation of the Bay Area Basque clubs and their activities as we know them. As mentioned earlier, their membership is aging and younger generations (particularly the first one, which accounts for nearly 40% of the Bay Area membership) have not completely replaced a very active “old guard,” who established themselves as the gatekeepers of Basque traditional culture. This change has occurred in other places like Boise, for instance. However, when the possibility of generational replacement presents itself, it does not happen without certain resistance. Decroos described this situation in the 1970s San Francisco while carrying out his own research: “Basque-American culture [...] tenets are sometimes hotly debate between the ultra-conservative immigrants who regard any deviation from the ‘good’ Basque way of life a ‘wrong,’ and the progressives who strive to reconcile their beliefs and values with those held by non-Basques.”<sup>395</sup> In the particular case of today’s BCC, Zubiri stated that “the shift from the immigrant generation to the younger generation is not occurring without a struggle. Basque-Americans inevitably battle with their elders over how to carry on the traditions.”<sup>396</sup> Jean Paul Barthe, born in 1951 in Dantxarinea, near Ainhoa (Lapurdi) remembers the animosity of some BCC members towards the modern Basque music that he played at some social venues where he was the DJ.<sup>397</sup>

For some years a number of young individuals have been positioning themselves within the leadership of their community clubs. The fact that some of their parents

394 Franxoa Bidaurreta and Pierre Etcharren, focus group interview on *Basque Folklore and Culture Preservation*, facilitated by Esther Bidaurreta and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007.

395 Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983), 87-88.

396 Nancy Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, Second Edition. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2006), 211.

397 Jean Paul Barthe, interview by Elizabeth Barthe, South San Francisco, California, October 3, 2006.

*As part of the Basque Club 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on June 3, 2000 Robert Acheritogaray, President of the Basque Club gave special awards to Andre Arduain and Jean Acheritogaray, founding directors of the Basque Club, and to Frederic Fuldain, the Basque Club Honorary President for twenty-five years. From left to right:*

*Robert Acheritogaray, Andre Arduain, Jean Acheritogaray and Frederic Fuldain.*

*Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



and relatives have been (or are still) engaged in the managerial structure of those organizations has served as a vehicle for their institutional socialization and helped them gain entry. For example, Philippe Acheritogaray, born in 1963 in San Francisco, has been a member of the San Francisco Basque Club and the BCC since 1997 and 2004, respectively. He has served as Treasurer of the Basque Club since 2000, a director of the BCC since 2005 and its Secretary since 2007 as well as a director of the BEO since 2004 and its Chairman from 2005 to 2008. He was NABO delegate for the Basque Club between 2002 and 2005 and is NABO delegate for BEO since 2005. In addition, since 2008 Philippe has been a member of the Advisory Board of the Center for Basque Studies at the University of Nevada, Reno. His brother Robert, born in 1969 in San Francisco, has also participated in the management of the Basque Club (e.g., President 1998-2000), BEO, 599 Railroad Catering, and BCC. Their father, Jean Acheritogaray, born in 1936 in Ortaize, immigrated to San Francisco in 1959 and is one of the founding directors of the Basque Club. He served as the club's Secretary for the first seven years of its existence. He is also a founding member of the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center and is one of the barbecue cooks for its two major annual festivals. Jean was one of the original klika players when it started in 1964. Philippe and Robert's mother, Marie (Etchecopar) Acheritogaray, was born in San Francisco and both her parents were born in Zuberoa. She danced in the Zazpiak Bat Dance group in the 1960s.



*“The passing of my father left me thinking about the influence he had on other Basque communities [...] Around that time, I had started my own family, and decided to be active.”  
Christian Iribarren.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

Christian Iribarren was born in San Francisco in 1964. He participated in several of the early NABO Udaleku camps and in the San Francisco Basque Club’s klicka, dance and txistu groups. “My earliest childhood memories,” Christian remembers, “are Sundays at the Basque Hotel and other Basque establishments nestled between one of the most urban parts of San Francisco, the Italian North Beach and Chinatown districts. In early grade school, I was taught pilota at the frontón in Helen Willis Playground on Broadway Street [...] I attended the Le Lycée Français La Pérouse [the French School of San Francisco], amongst many other Basque children, spent over other summer in Euskal Herria, and many of summer months going to Basque festivals [...] The passing of my father left me thinking about the influence he had on other Basque communities [...] Around that time, I had started my own family, and decided to be active.”<sup>398</sup> Christian has been a director of the Basque Club since 1993 and has served as its Treasurer from 1995 to 2000. He has been its President since 2003, making him the person to have served the most consecutive terms as President in the history of the club. He has also served as director of the Basque Cultural Center since 1992 and has been its History Chairman since 2005. Because of his musical background, Christian often organizes the sound

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<sup>398</sup> Christian Iribarren, e-mail exchange, August 12, 2008.



*For over two decades Valerie Arrechea has been the director of the Basque Club's dance groups.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

equipment for the groups that perform at the BCC. His father, Jean Leon Iribarren was born in Banka in 1936. He came to the United States in 1956 to work as a shepherd. He served in the U.S. army and finally settled in San Francisco. There, he started an insurance business at the age of twenty-six and married Bernadette Labat in 1963. Daniel, Christian's brother was born in 1966. Jean Leon was the President of the Basque Club between 1967 and 1968, Treasurer from 1974 to 1980, and NABO delegate and its second President from the Bay Area from 1987-1990. He was a founder of the BCC and an active member of the Elgarrekin Choir. Jean Leon passed away in 1992 in San Francisco. In September 2008, NABO awarded the Bizi Emankorra or Lifetime Contribution Award to Jean Leon as well as François Pedeflous. On November 1, 2008, both Jean Leon and François were inducted into the Basque Hall of Fame by the Society of Basque Studies.

Valerie Arrechea was born in San Francisco in 1970, and since 1986 and 1987 she has been the dance director of the children's dance group, Gazteak, and the Zazpiak Bat Group, respectively. She has also been a director of the Basque Club since 1990, the Vice-president between 1991 and 1993, and its President between 1993 and 1996. Valerie has been the Secretary of the Basque Club since 2000. In addition, she has been a director of the BCC between 1995 and 2007 and its Secretary between

2000 and 2007. She has been a NABO delegate since 1990. Valerie's father is Pierre Etcharren (mentioned in a previous Chapter), and her mother is Denise (Birabent) Etcharren, born in San Francisco in 1947. Denise was NABO's third Secretary between 1976 and 1978—following Miren Artiach from Boise and Janet Inda from Reno—under Jacques Unhassobiscay's presidency.

Xabier Berrueta was also born in San Francisco in 1972, and since he was a child he has participated in Basque dance, pilota and klicka. Between 1995 and 2000 Xabier was a director of the board of the Basque Club and its Vice-president between 1997 and 2000. Since 1999 he has also been part of the BCC's board of directors. He became, technically, the second Basque-American President of the BCC, after Johnny Curutchet (1992-1994). Xabier was the first President born and raised in the U.S. while Curutchet was born in the States, but raised in the Basque



*Xabier Berrueta and Philippe Acheritogaray at the Basque Cultural Center on February 17, 2007.*  
Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.



*Since 2005 Idoia Urruty has been the Euskara teacher at the Basque Cultural Center's Koxkorak Goiz Eskola.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



Country. Berrueta was also the first President (2005 to 2007) with ancestry from the southern Basque Country. He has been the BCC's Vice-president between 2003 and 2008. Between 1995 and 2007 Xabier was a NABO delegate and member of the Pilota Committee intermittently. His father Félix Berrueta was born in 1934 in Arraioz (Baztan Valley, Nafarroa) and moved to Bakersfield in 1952. In 1956, Félix returned to the Old Country, married Victoria "Bittori" Elizaincin in 1971, and three months later they moved back to America. Aitor, their second son was born in 1974. Félix is a founding director of the BCC as well as an active member and volunteer since its establishment. Bittori was born in 1936 in the neighboring Baztan Valley village of Gartzain. She was keen to speak Basque to her children, which became their first language at home. She has been a member of the Women's Club as well as a singer at the Elgarrekin Choir since its inception.

Idoya (Salaburu) Urruty was born in San Francisco in 1975. Her parents also emigrated from the Baztan Valley in Nafarroa. Her father, Pedro Salaburu, was born in Elizondo, and her mother, Mari Carmen Oscariz was born in Arizkun. Idoia has been a member of the BCC since 1996 and is part of its board of directors as well as the Euskara Committee Chairperson since 2007. She has also been part of the board of directors of the BEO and Secretary of the San Francisco Basque Club for a



**Isabelle (Oçafraïn) Bushman** was born in Burlingame in 1974. Isabelle is the first female and third Basque American to serve as President of the BCC; she is also the youngest. Isabelle served on the Basque Club board for seven years and was its second female President. Between 2000 and 2003, she was the Basque Club's NABO delegate. She has also been a director of the BCC since 2003 and was the Chairperson of the Youth Committee and a member of the Pilota Committee as well as part of the Women's Club. From 1998 to 2003 Isabelle was the Gazteak dance group instructor and musician. Her father, **Jean Leon Oçafraïn** was born in 1943 in Banka and immigrated to the U.S. at the age of twenty-one. He is a founding member of the BCC and served two terms as BCC President from 1988 to 1990. Jean Leon has served on the board for almost all twenty-six years of its existence. He has also served on the Basque Club board for many years and has been active in the promotion of the sport of pilota; he was NABO Pilota Chairperson and a member of the board of the U.S. Federation of Pelota. Jean Leon was honored by the Society of Basque Studies in America at its 28<sup>th</sup> Basque Hall of Fame on November 1, 2008.<sup>399</sup> Isabelle's mother, **Mayte (Dagorret) Oçafraïn** was born in 1946 in Ortzaize. In October 1968, she came to Bakersfield where she had an uncle. A month later she moved to San Francisco and joined the Basque Club's dance group soon after. Since 1990, Mayte has been part of the club's choir, and currently, she is a director of the Basque Club.<sup>400</sup>

number of years. She was a dancer of the Zazpiak Bat Dance group between 1989 and 2000 and its accordionist between 1990 and 2000. Idoya is also the Euskara teacher at the BCC's Koxkorak Goiz Eskola (The Little Ones' Early School) since 2005. Koxkorak Goiz Eskola is a Basque-language immersion school for children from two to ten years old. In addition, for two years (2005-2007) she was the U.S. Coordinator of Eusko Ikaskuntza's (the Society of Basque Studies, Donostia-San Sebastián) diaspora outreach program, EuskoSare. Idoya's brother, Xavier, was born in San Francisco in 1978 and played in the klika for many years. Their father, Pedro, was one of the founding members of the BCC and was its director between 1997 and 2002. He actively volunteers regularly at all BCC functions and occasionally participates in the Building and Grounds and Entertainment committees' meetings. Mari Carmen currently participates in the Women's Club and actively volunteers in all of the BCC's major events.

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399 Jean Leon Oçafraïn, interview by Robert Iriartborde, Millbrae, California, December 4, 2006.

400 Mayte Oçafraïn, interview by Robert Iriartborde, Millbrae, California, December 12, 2006.



*Isabelle Bushman playing  
accordion at the Basque  
Club's picnic in June 1997.*

Photograph courtesy of  
San Francisco Urazandi  
Collection.

## Sports and Games

### *Pilota*

The first known frontón built in America was established in Havana, Cuba in 1880, followed by the frontón Plaza Euskara, built in Buenos Aires in 1882, and the Eder-Jai, which was built by the Sociedad Mexicana de Sport Vasco (Mexican Society of Basque Sport) in 1895. In 1911, a frontón was also erected in Manila, the Philippines. In 1904 Basque handball was introduced to the United States during the Saint Louis World Fair, and in 1914 the Boise Frontón Association was established. By the 1920s courts were built in Miami, New Orleans, Chicago and New York. By the 1930s, the game was introduced in Shanghai and Tientsin, China. Basque pilota or handball, and particularly the modality of jai-alai, became quite popular around the world in the following decades, as it was intrinsically associated with gambling.

If in the 1940s there was only one court for professional jai-alai players (i.e., the Bizcayne Jai-Alai in Miami, Florida) four decades later, at the zenith of the Basque sport in the U.S., there were fourteen professional courts in Florida and Connecticut. Many young Basque men saw the sport as a good opportunity to escape bad socio-

economic conditions in the Basque Country, creating a very specific type of Basque migration composed of jai-alai players following the establishment of new courts throughout Europe, Las Americas and Asia.<sup>401</sup>

The oldest (and private) handball courts were built adjacent to or near many of the Basque hotels established throughout the American West, which indicates the significance of pilota among the immigrant generation as a pastime as well as a strong manifestation of their cultural heritage. Douglass and Bilbao and Urza mentioned the existence of established pilota competitions in Nevada and California by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>402</sup> In addition, competitions, mostly carried out by amateur players, were regularly organized during picnics and festivals in towns where there was a court. The handball courts still in use today are associated with old boardinghouses—e.g., the Noriega Hotel in Bakersfield, the Basque Hotel in Fresno and the Centro Vasco Hotel in Chino. Pedro Salaburu remembers attending Basque picnics like the one in Los Banos during the 1970s. They were, he said, “like on Mondays going to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port [Donibane Garazi], because we knew that everybody would be there [...] Every time there was a picnic or you had handball players coming from Europe or Bakersfield [to San Francisco] that’s a joy. It’s a big day.”<sup>403</sup>

There have been different handball courts around the Bay Area. The aforementioned Saparart’s La Cancha, an indoor handball court on Pacific Avenue between Stockton and Powell streets, was operating by c. 1907 and was in use until its demolition in 1958. A *trinkete* was established in Richmond, California on MacDonald and Second streets c. 1933. José “Joe” Berruezo, born in Oakland in 1920 to parents from Nafarroa, grew up in Richmond and remembers that the trinkete court was built by a Spaniard named Luis Díaz who used to own a small grocery store in the town.<sup>404</sup> Players also went to Stockton to play pilota until the building was torn down c. 1966. Then, there was the Helen Wills Playground on Broadway and Larkin streets, but that wall was also demolished in 1979 to build condominiums. Andre Larre and Arnaud Duhart taught handball to young people at the playground wall.<sup>405</sup> Basques also congregated to play on the “American” handball courts in Golden Gate Park on Sundays. By the mid 1970s, the only active handball courts left were in California: Bakersfield, Chino, Fresno, La Puente (La Puente Handball Court Association was established in 1947), Los Banos and San Francisco.<sup>406</sup> Then, in 1982 the BCC’s indoor left handball court wall was built in South San Francisco. In addition, a few private courts were also built in California in the 1980s: Mike J. Bidart built a frontón at his

401 “La Pelote Basque en Amérique et aux Philippines,” *Eusko Deya: La Voz de Euzkadi-La Voix des Basques* XXV, no. 323 (May) (1950), Carmelo Urza, *Historia de la Pelota Vasca en Las Américas* (Donostia: Elkar, 1994).

402 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 392, Urza, *Historia de la Pelota Vasca en Las Américas*.

403 Pedro Salaburu, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, August 16, 2006.

404 José Berruezo, interview by Gina Espinal, Flagstaff, Arizona, October 7, 2007.

405 Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 50, Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 202-03.

406 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 392.

residence in Chino; Xabier Aphessetche built a trinkete also in Chino; and Antonio Campos built a frontón in Caruthers, Fresno.

Besides the amateur games that took place on local handball courts throughout the Bay Area and the rest of California, as early as 1968, the San Francisco Basque Club invited players from the French Federation of Basque Pilota (FFPB in its French acronym), who had already played at the Mexico championship as part of the Olympic Games, to play in San Francisco at the Helen Wills Playground. According to the Boise-based newspaper, *Voice of the Basques*, Frederic Fuldain organized the first esku tournament in Stockton in 1966, and in 1968 the Basque Club organized its first tournament at Helen Wills Playground.<sup>407</sup> The winners of the latter were Andre Larre and Jean Bidart, and in second place, Etienne Jorajuria and Ximun Elicetche.<sup>408</sup> An informal group of players called Alegría played pilota tournaments at the Helen Wills court between 1974 and 1977. Jean Baptiste Bidegaray was the instigator of the Alegría group, which had two components, pilota games and theatrical plays (see below). The pilota group started out playing front-tennis and was formed by Ángel Arriada, Bidegaray, Félix Berrueta and Javier Etulain. The tournaments were divided into four divisions; three were made up of men, and one was made up of women.<sup>409</sup>

In 1971, players from the FFPB also visited San Francisco to play against local Basques as part of a tour that took them to different California towns including Bakersfield, Chino, Fresno and La Puente. As stated before, in 1975, the FFPB decided to send players to the U.S. every two years. This tradition lasted until 1993. The San Francisco Basque Club and the Basque Cultural Center took advantage of this situation and hosted some of the players who participated in the Basque Cultural Center's clubhouse and handball court inauguration in March 1982. They also played at the Pilota Mini Mundials (Mini-World Championship) that took place at the BCC's handball court on October 14-24, 1983. The championship was organized by the San Francisco Basque Club, the BCC and Menlo Park Zazpiak Bat Club. International amateur players from France, Mexico, Spain, and the U.S. competed in the Mini Mundials. On September 21-29, 1985, the U.S. Federation of Pelota organized an International Basque Handball Tournament for veterans (forty-nine years and older), which took place at the BCC and was the first of its kind. Teams came from France, Mexico, Spain and the U.S. The U.S. team formed by Peyo Aphessetche, Emile Goyhenetche, Ganix Iriartborde and Auguste Lapeyrade won the bronze medal, while Spain received gold medal and Mexico silver. Lapeyrade played pilota until he was sixty-five years old.<sup>410</sup>

The Spanish Federation of Basque Pilota (Federación Española de Pelota Vasca) also sponsored players to visit San Francisco in 1984 and 1985. As a result of the

<sup>407</sup> *Voice of the Basques*. September 1975, Boise, Idaho: edited by John T. Street.

<sup>408</sup> Auguste Lapeyrade, interview by Nicole Lapeyrade, San Francisco, California, March 24, 2007.

<sup>409</sup> Yvonne Cuburu and Jean Baptiste Bidegaray, e-mail exchanges, June 5, 2008.

<sup>410</sup> Auguste Lapeyrade, interview by Nicole Lapeyrade, San Francisco, California, March 24, 2007.



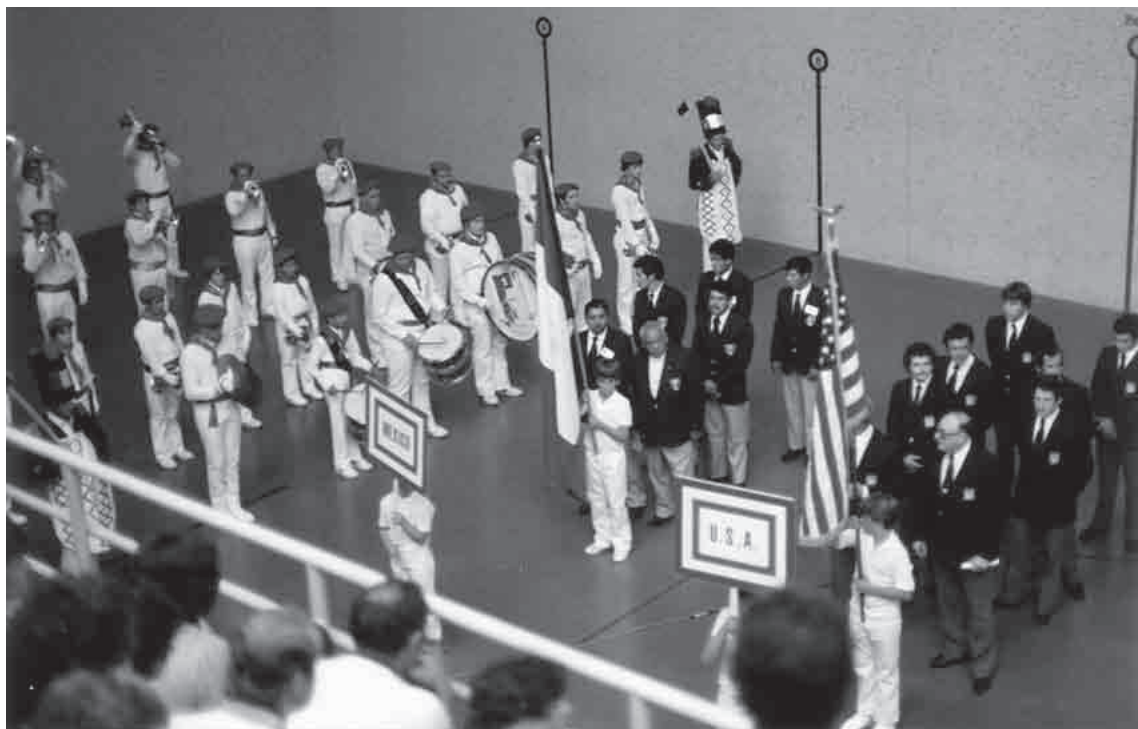
*Basque Club pilota finalists, from left to right, Ganix Iriartborde, Michel Martinez, Beñat Iribarren and Auguste Lapeyrade. Helen Wills Playground, 1970. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection*



*Alegría players at Helen Wills Playground, c. 1977. Standing (from left to right): Félix Saratea, Jean Baptiste Daramy, Pierre Iriartborde, Jean Marie Arbelbide, Xabier Etulain, Félix Berrueta, Ambrosio Huarte and Ángel Arriada. Kneeling (from left to right): Marie Maitia, Mayte Oçafraín, Danielle and Denise Michelena. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



establishment of the Basque government in the early 1980s, the Euskadi Federation of Basque Pilota (Euskadiko Euskal Pilota Federakuntza) has sent their own players to America since 1986. The San Francisco Basque community has, without a doubt, benefited from those federations and players. Also, the BCC annually hosts players from the Basque federation for its main events. At the same time, the BCC made teaching pilota to children one of its priorities. For example, from c. 1989 to 2000, Etienne Jorajuria, a BCC founding member, was the children's handball instructor. Etienne was born in 1944 in Ahetze, Lapurdi and came to the U.S. in 1961. Three years later he moved to San Francisco. He was a BCC director between 1992 and 2004 and its President from 1994 to 1997. Recalling the children's lessons Etienne said, "It was the most fun I ever had. Because you see those people, those little kids that cannot even hit the ball, and all of a sudden they're following me, and they can even beat you almost. But there were a lot. I think at one time I had twenty-two kids [on] Saturday mornings. They were fun kids."<sup>411</sup>



*The Zazpiak Bat Klika played at the Opening Ceremony of the International Basque Handball Tournament that took place at the Basque Cultural Center in September 1985. Pictured are the Mexican and U.S. delegations. François Pedeflous (right corner) headed the U.S. delegation. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

<sup>411</sup> Etienne Jorajuria, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 20, 2006.

The Euskal Pilota Txapelketa (Basque Pilota Championship) was the first international competition organized in the United States by Munduko Pilota Biltzarra (World Pilota Council), which was created in December 2006 with the goal of promoting the sport around the world. NABO, alongside other federations and associations, is a member of the World Pilota Council. Eighty *pilotariak* or pilota players from eight countries—Argentina (FEVA), Bolivia, Chile, Dominican Republic, Mexico, the Basque Country, the U.S. (NABO), and Venezuela—participated in the championship hosted by the BCC on September 6-15, 2007. It was sponsored by two saving banks from the provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa and the Basque government.

## *Mus*

Every single Bay Area Basque club organizes an annual mus tournament. The first San Francisco Basque Club mus tournament was organized by Pierre “Pete” Erreca with the assistance of Frederic Fuldain at the Pyrenees Hotel on May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1963. Erreca, originally from Hazparne (Lapurdi), was a director of the Basque Club between 1962 and 1965 (Vice-president, 1964-1965). The winners of the first



*Bay Area Basques attended the International Mus Tournament that was celebrated in Mar de Plata, Argentina, in 2003. Top row: Isidore Camou, Andre Arduain, Jean Pierre Elissetche, Anita Arduain, George Petrissans, Jean Louis Indart, Alphonse Acheritogaray, Michel Marticorena, Auguste Indart, Elda Indart and Louise Indart. Bottom row: Marie Claire Camou, Louis Marticorena, Mayie Marticorena, Maite Petrissans and Mayte Oçafrain. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



*Ángel Arriada and Marcel Elicagaray were the champions of the 2006 Anaitasuna Mus Tournament.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



competition were Andre and Michel Arduain. During some years, the tournament also took place at Unión Española on Broadway. The first ever female winners of the Basque Club mus tournament were Isabelle Echaide and Asuncion Sapparrat in 1989. The BCC organized its first tournament in 1982, and the winning team was Johnny Curutchet and Joaquín Machín. Currently, between sixty and seventy teams participate at the annual BCC's tournament. In addition, Anaitasuna, the Basque Club, and the BCC jointly organize a junior mus tournament for children.<sup>412</sup>

Idoya Urruty explained that “in the Basque Cultural Center’s early days, most women such as my mother [Mari Carmen] did not play mus. Many didn’t really know how. Since many women, including my mother, had small children at that time, they would go to the Center every Sunday with their kids and stay in the Children’s Room while the men would play pilota or mus. As kids got older, the women started talking about the possibility of learning how to play mus. Around the mid-1980s, Jesús Arriada offered to teach a group of women how to play. Six to eight women would show up for mus lessons, and they soon started playing amongst the men

<sup>412</sup> Leon Franchisteguy, interview by Yvonne Hauscarriague, San Francisco, California, 2007.

and eventually started playing in official tournaments.”<sup>413</sup> The first female winner of the BCC tournament was Jeanne Goyhenetche in 1985, with her partner Emile Goyhenetche.

For many Basques—men and women—mus has always been part of their lives, and many started playing it at a very young age. A mus game—tournament or not—is a social event that brings people together. Both players (or *muslariak*) and spectators live it with passion. The card game is regarded by many as an important part of the Basque culture and the community. Pedro Salaburu explained that “even in the Basque country I remember my parents playing. [For] my father, at that time, it was almost the only thing he could do. Cards and table and four chairs and play there. Every time they had some festivity or some dinner in some home or after work [...] there was the mus.”<sup>414</sup>

Cecilio Echamendi (born in 1931 in Esnotz, Nafarroa), a longshoreman in San Francisco for twenty-seven years and a former shepherd and operator of the Basque Hotel of Fresno, proudly admitted that he has played mus since he was five years old. In San Francisco, he began playing in mus tournaments at the Unión Española and then at the San Francisco Basque Club. His first partner was Bernardo Amaya and he currently plays with Tony Espinal, with whom he has won two NABO tournaments, representing the U.S. at two international competitions (Venezuela and France). Cecilio was a founding member and past President of Anaitasuna, the San Francisco mus club *par excellence*. “Mus,” Cecilio stated, “is the one of the reasons all the people get together.”<sup>415</sup> Roger Minhondo, an avid player, added, “Mus is like our language, it’s one of our private deep secrets, [and] nobody can get to learn or to understand. It is something that brings us very close to each other [...] We are all now living in a foreign country, and it’s an extremely important thing to be able to find your own people and go back to your roots.”<sup>416</sup>

## Dance and Music

### Dance

The first Basque folk dance group in California was organized by Jon Bilbao in 1941 at the University of Berkeley and was formed by regular American students.<sup>417</sup> Jon Bilbao was part of the Basque government-in-exile when it was based in New York in the 1940s. Bilbao also became the co-founder of the Basque Studies

<sup>413</sup> Idoya Urruty, e-mail exchange, July 5, 2008.

<sup>414</sup> Pedro Salaburu, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, August 16, 2006.

<sup>415</sup> Cecilio Echamendi, interview by Marisa Espinal, San Francisco, California, May 31, 2007.

<sup>416</sup> Roger Minhondo, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, March 15, 2005.

<sup>417</sup> Koldo San Sebastián, *The Basque Archives: Vascos en Estados Unidos (1938-1943)* (San Sebastián: Txertoa, 1991).

Program at the University of Nevada. Today, most of the Basque clubs in the United States and around the world have their own dance groups.<sup>418</sup>

Under the leadership of Frederic Fuldain and Juan Tellechea from Lesaka, Nafarroa, a Basque dance group, the San Francisco Basque Club *Zazpiak Bat*, was established in the fall of 1960. It is the oldest and only surviving dance group in the Bay Area. Back then most of the members of the Basque Club were familiar with dances from the province of Nafarroa Beherea. Juan Tellechea was the first instructor who formally introduced dances from the provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa to the group. In the beginning they used to practice at Unión Española and in an upstairs room of the bowling alley building's third floor. If in the first years taped music was used for practice, later the dancers were accompanied by three musicians—one accordionist, Jim Etchepare, and two *txistulariak* (flute and drum players), brothers Juan José and Carmelo San Mames. Juan has been a director of the board of the Basque Club since 2006. In 1966, another *txistulari*, Abel Bolumburu, joined the group. Over the years, various musicians assisted the dancers, including Alain Erdozaincy, Jean Flesher, Jean Loui Curutchet, Idoya Urruty, Valerie Arrechea, Caroline Izoco Chiramberro and Isabelle Bushman.



*Txistulariak Juan José and Carmelo San Mames playing at the Basque Picnic of Bakersfield, California, in 1964.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>418</sup> Lisa M. Corcostegui, “To the Beat of a Different Drum: Basque Dance and Identity in the Homeland and the Diaspora” (PhD Dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, 2005).



*Alain Erdozaincy playing the txistu and danbolina (drum) at the Basque Picnic of Elko, Nevada, in July 1976. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



Among the original dancers were Anita Arduain and Michel Arduain, Mayie Camino, Paul Castech, Frederic Fuldain, Bernadette Iribarren, Mayie (Labat) Oçafrain, Denise Ourtiague, and Michel Oyharçabal, and others. Denise (Irigoin) Ourtiague was born in Gamarte, Nafarroa Beherea in 1936 and came to the U.S. in 1959. She worked at the BCC's banquet room between 1986 and 2001.<sup>419</sup>

In 1961 a dance group for children (between seven and thirteen years old) called Gazteak (Youngsters), was set up by Michel Oyharçabal and Christine Maysonnave. A year later, Pierre Etcharren joined the dance group and began teaching the younger members. After Tellechea's departure to the Old Country in 1964, Etcharren became the director of both adult and youth groups. He would be the dance instructor for the next twenty-five years. Etcharren had previously danced



*The original Zazpiak Bat dance group, 1961.* Sitting front row (from left to right): Mayie Camino and Bernadette Iribarren. Sitting back row (from left to right): Mayie Oçafrain, Anita Arduain, Christine Uharriet, Denise Ourtiague, Catherine Dunat and Louise Sapparart. Standing (from left to right): Juan Tellechea, Jeannot Laxague, Michel Duhalde, Michel Arduain, Michel Antoine, Michel Oyharçabal, Pierre Labat, Gratien Oçafrain, Frederic Fuldain and Paul Castech. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>419</sup> Denise Ourtiague, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, Francisco, California, August 18, 2006.

with his hometown's dance group called Garaztarrak for a good number of years. The Gazteak group used to get together to practice on Sunday afternoons at Unión Española. Among the members of the original youth group were Félix, Louis and Lucille Elu; Alain, Linda and Yvette Erdozaincy; Gracian and Mary Ann Goyhenetche; Christine Elicagaray and her brothers George and Noel; and Albert and Roger Idiart. Throughout the years a number of individuals assisted the Zazpiak Bat group including Michel Oyharçabal, Christine Maysonnave, Michel Antoine, Juan Miura, Suzie Etcheverry, Alain Erdozaincy, Rosemary Goyeneche, Jean Flesher, Valerie Arrechea and Isabelle Bushman. Linda and Yvette Erdozaincy, Lisa Etchepare and Danielle Espinal assisted both dance groups as teachers.<sup>420</sup>



*Zazpiak Bat and Gazteak dance groups in 1963.* Top row (from left to right): Pierre Etcharren, Michel Oyharçabal, Paul Castech, Jean Gueçamburu, Pierre Labat, Jean Pierre Negueloua, Gratién Oçafraïn, Andre Arduain and Frederic Fuldain. Second row (from left to right): Jim Etchepare (accordion), Bernadette Iribarren, Anita Arduain, Louise Saparart, Christine Uharriet, Anita Etchevers, Mariane Figone, Marie Acheritogaray, Catherine Dunat and Juan Tellechea (txistu). Third row, sitting (from left to right): Roger Idiart, Robert Etchepare, George Erdozaincy, Albert Idiart, Felix Elu, Jose Gutierrez, Gracian Goyhenetche, Louie Elu, Joseph Pebet and Christine Elicagaray. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>420</sup> Pierre Etcharren, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 6, 2006.



*“Euskaldunak Californian” (Basques in California): Zazpiak Bat dancers in Elizondo, Nafarroa in 1993. Bottom row (from left to right): Martin Lasa, Xavier Oçafraïn and Xavier Salaburu. Middle row (from left to right): Idoya Salaburu, Isabelle Oillarburu, Maitexa Cuburu, Jeanette Etchamendy, Evelyne Etcharren, Elise Martinon, Rose Marie Etchamendy and Valerie Etcharren. Back row (from left to right): Elisa Lasa, Isabelle Oçafraïn, Valerie Gorostiague, Nicole Oçafraïn and Stephanie Duhart. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



Valerie Etcharren has been in charge of both dance groups as well as txistu instruction since the 1980s, getting closer to the record set by her father, Pierre. However, she admitted that “if you’ve gotten yourself into a point where you are irreplaceable then you haven’t done your job correctly.” She remembers that Alain Erdozaincy taught txistu to her and to other young Basque friends including Isabelle and Yvette Goyhenetche, Christian and Daniel Iribarren, Jacqueline Unhassobiscay, and Alain and Joel Urruty.<sup>421</sup>

The Zazpiak Bat dance group performed at the club’s first picnic in June 1961 in Los Altos. (Over the years, the picnic has taken place in different locations throughout the Bay Area. Since the mid-1980s, the picnic has been held at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds, located in Petaluma.) Despite the outburst of discontent toward some individuals of the French community that fuelled the creation of the Basque Club in 1960, the club maintained close ties with the city’s French associations. Thus, as previously mentioned, the Basque dance and klika groups performed at the French Bastille Day events for many years.<sup>422</sup> The Zazpiak Bat group participated in Open Studios, a Channel 9 PBS Station program that showcased Basque culture, dance and music on two different occasions. It also participated in San Francisco’s Ethnic Dance Festival and performed at charitable events for organizations such as the French Hospital and Laguna Honda Hospital.

For nearly five decades, the dance group has performed throughout the American West as well as abroad. For example, on July 18, 1993, the dancers participated in the Baztandarren Biltzarra, a festival of the valley of Baztan in Nafarroa that has taken place in Elizondo since 1963. “When the Zazpiak Bat dance group performed in Elizondo, we had the pleasure of having Juan Tellechea (the original director) watching the performance,” Valerie Arrechea stated.<sup>423</sup> Currently, the Gazteak and the Zazpiak Bat groups have twenty-five and twenty members, respectively.

### *Klika*

The oldest klika or Basque drum and bugle corps in the country was established and organized by Frederic Fuldain in San Francisco in the spring of 1964 as part of the Basque Club. As of 2008, there are three other klika formations that belong to the Basque clubs of Chino (1967), Bakersfield (1975), and Rocklin (2007). Along with the musicians, the San Francisco klika also includes different characters such as makilaria (baton major), *zapurrak* (sappers) and *banderak* (flag bearers).<sup>424</sup> It is

<sup>421</sup> Valerie Arrechea, interview by Marisa Espinal, South San Francisco, California, January 15, 2007.

<sup>422</sup> Frederic Fuldain, “Zazpiak Bat Dance Group,” (1989).

<sup>423</sup> Valerie Arrechea, e-mail exchange, August 15, 2008.

<sup>424</sup> Zapurrak are colourful characters that take part in the cavalcades or processions of the Besta Berri in some areas of the Lapurdi and Nafarroa Beherea. Its modern origin is indeed military, but it also has Basque mythological connotations.

*Klika players leading the cavalcade parade that opened the Basque Cultural Center's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebratory events on February 17, 2007. Pictured makilariak, François Camou and Franxoa Bidaurreta (on right). Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*



noteworthy that the San Francisco klika is the only one in the U.S. that incorporates the *cor de chasse* or French horn. Although the klika is not considered as an autochthonous tradition, it has been adopted and incorporated as such in many villages and towns of the northern Basque Country. On August 30, 2008, a “Klika in America” Tribute was organized by NABO as part of its annual convention in Chino, California within the framework of the Chino Basque Club’s fortieth anniversary.

According to Fuldain, “Many Basque played the bugle, trumpet, or drum in the [French] Army or in the local “klika” of their village. This group was easier to organize than the dancers since they already had the acquired experience and discipline.”<sup>425</sup> Simon Toulouse helped him to obtain the drums of a band, previously sponsored by Notre Dame des Victoires, which no longer existed. The club purchased the bugles through Charles Iriart and they were brought to San Francisco by a group of Basque immigrants. “Jean Baptiste Saparart painted the ‘Zazpiak Bat’ [Basque coat of arms] on the bass drum and the colors of the Basque flag on the others.”<sup>426</sup>

425 Frederic Fuldain, “Zazpiak Bat Klika,” (1989).

426 Ibid, —, “History of the Klika,” (1989).

***Zazpiak Bat Klika and Dance Group in 1964.*** Top row (from left to right): Jean Louis Oçafraïn, Sebastien Curutchet, Pierre Etchebehere, Jean Pierre Poydessus, Jean Louis Arduain, Arnaud Duhart, Rene Arduain, Jacques Oyharçabal, Andre Arduain, Jean Camino and Michel Arduain. Second row (from left to right): Juan José San Mames (txistu and drum), Bernard Iribarren, Raymond Bidondo, Jean Baptiste Gueçamburu, Fermín Alzuri, Felix Ahunçain (Tambour Major), Dominique Berhan, Pierre Etcharren, Jean Baptiste Urruty, Michel Lucu, Leon Choutchourou, Frederic Fuldain and Carmelo San Mames (txistu and drum). Third row, sitting (from left to right): Marie Acheritogaray, Marie Anne Brady, Yvonne Oxoby, Arlene Lissarague, Christine Uharriet, Catherine Oyharçabal, Bernadette Iribarren, Marie Bigue and Jeanne Hirigoyen. Front row (from left to right): Jean Gueçamburu, Jean Pierre Espil, Jean Pierre Aldabe and Alphonse Acheritogaray. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.







*The Zazpiak Bat Klika pictured in front of the San Francisco Federal Building in its inaugural year of 1964. Kneeling (from left to right): Frederic Fuldain, Pepito Oxandaburu, Jean Guecamburu, Jean Baptiste Saparart, Jean Acheritogaray, Michel Arduain, Jean Pierre Aldabe and Jean Pierre Espil. Standing (from left to right): Jean Pierre Negueloua, Jean Leon Oçafraïn, Michel Oyharçabal, Raymond Bidondo, Sebastien Curutchet, Arnaud Mendisco, Leon Chouchourou, Andre Arduain, Pierre Etchebehere, Alphonse Acheritogaray, Jean Pierre Poydessus, Rene Arduain, Felix Ahunçain, Jacques Oyharçabal, Jean Louis Arduain, Jean Pierre Goyhenetche, Pettan Lahargou, Jean Baptiste Urruty, Jean Baptiste Guecamburu (holding flag and obstructed), Arnaud Duhart, Paul Castech and Jean Leon Iribarren. Holding banner (from left to right): Bernard Maitia and Pierre Etcharren. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*



*Klika marching in front of San Francisco City Hall in 1964. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

Alphonse Acheritogaray became the first director of the San Francisco klika group, and on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 1964 the band debuted at the Basque Club's annual picnic. That year the Basque klika also performed at the Bastille Day festival, the Woolgrowers Picnic in Bakersfield, the first Basque Festival in Elko, the Grape Festival in Sonoma, and at the Columbus Parade in San Francisco on October 11<sup>th</sup>. Acheritogaray played in the klika through 1996. In the beginning, the San Francisco klika also used to practice at the Unión Española's clubhouse on Broadway. Among the original members of the 1964 klika were Beñat Iribarren, Pettan Lahargou, Jean Baptiste Gueçamburu, Sebastien Curutchet, Jean Pierre Poydessus, Jean Piere Espil, Pepito Oxandaburu, Bernard Maitia and Jean Pierre Negueloua.

The klika has also been directed by many individuals over the years, including Arnaud Duhart, Felix Ahunçain, Albert Dutaret, Guillaume Irola, Jean Paul Idiart, Pierre Labat, Edouard Dunat, Johnny Curutchet, Jean Barreneche, Emile Goyhenetche, Maurice Negueloua, Alain Saldumbide, Chris Bonson, Christophe Alfaro, Aitor Berrueta and Mark Sorhouet.

Klikas were traditionally male-only bands (i.e., in origin they were military marching bands at the time that the French Army was made up by men only);

however, for the last few decades the klikas both at home and abroad have begun to incorporate women. For example, a young woman, Aimee Goyhenetche, currently plays the bugle in the San Francisco klika. She is the daughter of Nadine and Gracian, active members of the BCC. Aimee was born in 1983 and taught herself to play the bugle. Her oldest brother, James, also played the bugle for a number of years. In the words of their parents, “Aimee and the rest of our children [James, Joe and Jerome] were literally raised at the BCC.”<sup>427</sup> Previously, Denise Azcona, Anne Marie Goyhenetche, Yvette Barreneche and Andrea Goyhenetche all played in the klika as well.



*Aimee Goyhenetche playing the bugle on June 1, 2008.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>427</sup> Gracian Goyhenetche, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, Pollock Pines, California, April 23, 2006.



## Choir

Among the earliest records of the history of San Francisco, we find that Santiago Arrillaga, an immigrant from Gipuzkoa, arrived at San Francisco from Santiago de Chile and taught music in 1875. His son, Vincent founded the Arrillaga Musical College. This could be considered the first “Basque” (or at least Basque-owned) music school in the Bay Area.<sup>428</sup>

Father Henri Tomei originally from Marseille, assisted by Albert Dutaret, organized a Basque choral group among some local Basque men and women, which lasted until his sudden death.<sup>429</sup> Denise Ourtiague remembers that Father Tomei taught them the song “Oh Say Those Stars Splendour,” which was the song the dancers had to sing when they were dancing.<sup>430</sup> It is not entirely clear if the group was



*Elgarrekin choir with director Jeanne Mazeris performing at the Basque Cultural Center in 1982.*

Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>428</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 22.

<sup>429</sup> Father Tomei was killed inside St. Mary's Catholic Church in Redwood City in November 1972 by serial murderer Herbert Mullin.

<sup>430</sup> Denise Ourtiague, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, Francisco, California, August 18, 2006.



*Jeanne Mazeris and Mattin  
Zubieta posing at Golden  
Gate Bridge in 1983.*  
Urazandi Collection.

disbanded at that time. It seems that another two priests, Fathers Marquis and Neyron took charge of the choir momentarily.<sup>431</sup>

The Basque Club's first choral group, the Elgarrekin (Together) Choir was founded in 1979 under the direction of visiting musician Martin "Mattin" Zubieta, director of the homeland choir Oldarra, from Baiona. Zubieta was born in 1925 in Kanbo and has directed several choirs in the province of Nafarroa Beherea, including Arraga and Garaztarrak. Shortly after that, Jeanne (Esperben) Mazeris, former director for Notre Dame des Victoires' choir, became the director of Elgarrekin. Mazeris was born in San Francisco. Her father, Philippe Esperben was from Uharte Garazi, and her mother, Marie Bordelampe, was from Armendaritze, Nafarroa Beherea. The choir first performed at the Basque Club New Year's Eve celebration in 1979. At the very beginning, the choir used to practice at the residence of Jean Leon and Bernadette Iribarren. After that, the choir practiced at Notre Dame des Victoires, and later on at the BCC.

Under the leadership of Mazeris and Zubieta, who had returned to San Francisco for a short visit, the choir recorded a performance at NDV on January 6, 1983. Forty-

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<sup>431</sup> Pierre Jaureguito, interview by Esther Bidaurreta, San Rafael, California, June 29, 2006.



two singers participated in the event. The recording has been digitally remastered and was presented at the Basque Club's June 1, 2008 picnic on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the original recording. Since 1997, Father Martxel Tillous directs the choir, which participates in religious and non-religious events. In absence of Aita Tillous, Charles and Jean Baptiste Moustirats, from Mehaine, conduct the choir. Charles was born in 1930 and Jean Baptiste in 1949.

Marie Isabelle (Etcheverry) Laxague was born in Elizondo, Nafarroa in 1935, and came to the U.S. in 1969. She joined the choir three or four years after its formation and still participates in it. Laxague argued that despite of the fact that none of the singers are professionals, the choir would happily celebrate its thirtieth anniversary in 2009.<sup>432</sup> The choir regularly performs at the Basque Club's annual picnic, the BCC's festivals, and religious events that take place at the BCC and at NDV on a regular basis. It has also performed at NABO conventions in Nevada and Idaho. Elgarrekin is one of two Basque choirs in America. The other is the Biotzetik Basque Choir from Boise, Idaho, which was established in November 1986.

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<sup>432</sup> Isabelle Laxague, interview by Marie Laxague Rosecrans, Burlingame, California, October 27, 2006.



*Elgarrekin, Basque Cultural Center, 2004.* Back row (from left to right): Gracian Goyhenetche, Jean Baptiste Urruty, Jean Baptiste Moustirats, Charles Moustirats, Johnny Curutchet, Pierre Labat, Joseph Jorajuria, Henri Oçafrain, Jean Berhan, Andre Arduain, Pierre Etcharren and Jean Leon Oçafrain. Front row (from left to right): Father Martxel Tillous, Simone Barreneche, Graciene Uhalde, Isabelle Laxague, Victoria Berrueta, Yvette Urruty, Bernadette Iribarren, Mayie Etcheverry, Angele Goyeneche, Aña Iriartborde, Mayte Oçafrain, Christine Elicagaray and Anne Marie DuBoscq. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

As of 2008 the choir was composed of the following active members: Marie Dominique Alfaro, Andre Arduain, Simone Barreneche, Jean Berhan, Bittori Berrueta, Johnny Curutchet, Anne Marie Dubosq, Christine Elicagaray, Pierre Etcharren, Mayie Etcheverry, Angele Goyhenetche, Gracian Goyhenetche, Aña Iriartborde, Bernadette Iribarren, Pierre Labat, Armand Lafitte, Robert Lafitte, Isabelle Laxague, Charles Moustirats, Jean Baptiste Moustirats, Henri Oçafrain, Jean Leon Oçafrain, Mayte Oçafrain, Antoinette Oroz, Graxana Uhalde, Jean Baptiste Urruty and Yvette Urruty.

## Euskara and *Bertsolaritza*

### *Euskara*

Euskara is one of the common cultural elements among both homeland and diaspora Basques. However, this cultural marker is, quite frankly, vanishing from Basque America. The San Francisco Basque Club's meetings were conducted in Basque most of the time, but their official meeting minutes were written in French until October 1974. When Joe Miura, from Hegoalde, became a member of the board,

it was decided to record the meetings in Basque as he did not speak French. From that date to at least December 1986, the minutes were written in Basque, and since then until the present in English. During the time that Leon Sorhondo was the Secretary of the BCC, and only then, the minutes were written in Basque as there were members who did not read English. Leon then translated the minutes into English for those who did not know Basque. Nowadays, board meetings of both associations are conducted in English, and consequently the business minutes are also recorded in English.

For a number of years many activities have been carried out by the different Bay Area Basque clubs with regard to promotion of the Basque language. For example, the BCC's Education Committee and the later on BEO have intermittently sponsored Basque language classes on the BCC's premises since 1983 and 1988, respectively. Among some of the early instructors that taught Euskara were Mayte Oçafrain and Martin Minaberry as well as visiting scholars from the homeland Joseba Koldo, Joseba Pérez de Heredia, who also taught txistu to children, and Irene Goikolea. The BCC set up its own Language Committee in 2001, and soon after it was chaired by Robert Acheritogaray. In 2004, the Language Committee was renamed Euskara Committee. In that year Juan Jayo became Chairman of the committee and was replaced by Philippe Acheritogaray in 2006. Since 2007, it has been headed by Idoya Urruty. At present, Maitexa Cuburu, BEO's director, is in charge of teaching the language.

For the past two or three years, the BCC's Euskara Program has organized a quarterly *afaria* or dinner where only Euskara is spoken in order for participants to practice. Furthermore, BCC and Basque Club members are eligible to utilize the Basque government's computer-based program to learn Euskara.<sup>433</sup> Moreover, some members of the BCC have promoted a Basque-language day at the clubhouse, which is a paradoxical attempt to normalize the use of the language by institutionalizing a day to speak it. Finally, at different times the BCC and BEO have promoted the Center for Basque Studies' Basque 101 online course by offering to pay the tuition of interested members.

Since January 2005 the BCC has organized the *Koxkorak Goiz Eskola*, which takes place in the BCC's Children's Room every Saturday morning between November and May. The Eskola is currently organized by Rosemary (Arriada) Keiper, Idoya Urruty and Lucy Jaimerena-Zamattia. In Urruty's words, "[The Eskola] provides an environment where children can gain exposure to Euskara, interact and socialize with other Basque children; [they learn] various pieces of Basque culture through music, books, media and games, [while we] assist fostering Basque friendships among the children and motivate them to come to Basque functions."<sup>434</sup>

Previously, between 2001 and 2002 Valerie Arrechea, Isabelle Bushman and Lisa Camou started an activity group called *Gure Xitoak* (Our Little Chicks) for children

<sup>433</sup> Hezinet since 2001, which was replaced by Boga in 2005.

<sup>434</sup> Idoya Urruty, e-mail exchange, July 5, 2008.



under seven years old. Yvette (Fantham) Gorostiague later on founded the Ama eta Ni (Mom and Me) playgroup or meeting group for Basque mothers and their young babies in 2003 or 2004. From the very beginning of the Basque Cultural Center, the board of directors recognized the need to embrace the children of its members and set up a room for them where they could interact and play with each other. They understood the importance of providing a venue in which the children could socialize with one another, establishing a second family outside of their households. For many children the BCC became their second home. Many join the dance groups (children and then adults), the klika, play pilota and/or mus. The BCC and members provided toys, and the parents take turns every week supervising the Children's Room.

### ***Bertsolaritza***

Bertsolaritza is the art of creating improvised verses as part of an oral literary tradition shared by many cultures around the world. The *bertsolari* (versifier), as a folk-poet sings improvised *bertsoak* (verses) to simple melodies before a live audience. The bertsolari not only sings about daily common concerns (lived experiences, history, desires, passions) shared with an audience, he or she also



***Bertsolariak Johnny Curutchet and Jesús Goñi at Basque mass celebrated at the Basque Cultural Center on February 17, 2008. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.***



creates and recites on behalf of the spectators as well as for those who constitute his/her own symbolic, cultural and sociopolitical community. Within bertsolaritza, the performer and the audience merge to form a single unit.

Since a bertsolari improvises on the spot, the ephemeral moment of creation, the moment of expression and emotion are one and the same, and the audience is left with no time to look for secondary interpretations. In this sense, the bertsolari challenges passivity and obliges the audience to respond to his/her spontaneous bertoak. The bertsolari encourages active participation and experimentation of the audience (e.g., choosing themes; and mentally creating verses and images) during the performance, thereby breaking the traditional concept of a conventional performance. The bertsolari



*Bertsolariak, from left to right, Jesús Goñi, Martín Goicoechea, Johnny Curutchet and Jesús Arriada were recipients of the 2003 National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship.*

Photograph by Jim Saah. Courtesy of the National Endowment for the Arts.

*Bertsolariak, from left to right, Johnny Curutchet, Jesús Goñi, Gratien Alfaro and Martin Goicoechea, performing at the Society of Basque Studies in America's Basque Hall of Fame Gala, Basque Cultural Center, November 11, 2006.*  
Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.



removes the distance between the interpreter and the receptor, by incorporating the audience into the performance. Similar to contemporary communication technologies like the e-mail and instant messaging, bertsolaritza simultaneously closes gaps that have traditionally existed between the production of culture and its consumption (as an end-product), and between the producer/transmitter of the culture and its receptor (who is at the same time an active producer).<sup>435</sup>

Among some of the immigrants who came to the American West there were a few bertsolariak such as Paulo Yanzi, Charles Moustirats and Martin Etchamendy. Some of today's most accomplished and active bertsolariak in the nation live in the Bay Area. They are Jesús Arriada, Gratien Alfaro and Johnny Curutchet. On September 20, 2003, Arriada, Curutchet (the only bertsolari born in this country), Martin Goicoechea (resident of Rock Springs, Wyoming) and Jesús Goñi (resident of Reno, Nevada) received the National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship, which is the nation's highest honor in popular and folk traditions, at a

<sup>435</sup> See Gorka Aulestia, *Improvisational Poetry from the Basque Country* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1995), Joxerra Garzia, Jon Sarasua, and Andoni Egaña, *Art of Bertsolaritza: Improvised Basque Verse Singing* (San Sebastián and Andoain: Bertsozale Elkarte, Bertsolari Liburuak, 2001), Joxe Mallea-Olaetxe, ed. *Shooting from the Lip: Bertsolariak Ipar Amerikan: Improvised Basque-Verse Singing* (Reno, Nevada: NABO, 2003).



*Johnny Curutchet was inducted by the Society of Basque Studies in America into the Basque Hall of Fame in 2006 for his lifetime dedication to Basque culture.* Basque Cultural Center, November 11, 2006. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.

**Jean “Johnny” Curutchet** was born in 1946 in San Francisco to parents, Jean and Ana, who came from Ezterenzubi, Nafarroa Beherea. When he was six months old the family traveled to Ezterenzubi to pick up his other two brothers who were staying with a relative. The original idea was to return to San Francisco, but this did not happen. Johnny finally returned to California in 1966. His brother, Sebastien, was already living in San Francisco. The day after his arrival he joined the San Francisco Basque Club and began participating in the dance group and klika. He also participated in the Antzerkia or Basque Theatre. He taught young Basques pilota and klika for over a decade. Johnny is a founding member and director of the BCC and is the first Basque American to become President of the San Francisco Basque Club (1987-1989) and President of the BCC (1992-1994). Currently, he sings in the Elgarrekin choir. His love for the Basque language and music led him to sing bertsoak, becoming a regular performer at Basque community events in the Bay Area and throughout the American West. The Society of Basque Studies in America inducted Johnny into the Basque Hall of Fame in 2006 for his lifetime dedication to Basque culture.

ceremony that took place in Washington D.C. Alfaro was born in 1947 in Urepele and immigrated to Los Banos in 1963 where he worked as a sheepherder for a year and a half. Arriada was born in 1935 in Arizkun, Nafarroa and immigrated to Bakersfield in 1963 and then to San Francisco in 1968. He has played pilota as well as mus for many years at the different Bay Area tournaments and was a director of the BCC between 1983 and 1986.

## ***Antzerkia-Theater***

As mentioned earlier, Jean Baptiste Bidegaray was the promoter of the Alegría Antzerkia (The Happy Theater) group together with the help of his cousin, Leon Sorhondo. By 1975, Jacques Unhassobiscay became the director of the group. The young Basque actors and actresses debuted on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1975 at NDV with a comedy, “The Daughter of Sweden,” which was written by homeland priest Piarres Larzabal. Among the players were Nicole Ausquy, Mayi Belleau, Gabriele Elicetche,



***Johnny Cuructchet acting at the Nevadarat Joan Nintzen play in 1989.*** Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

Suzanne Etcheverry, Mari Jose Gestas, Gracian Goyhenetche, Leon Sorhondo and Jean Leon Cuburu.

Gracian Goyhenetche, Leon Sorhondo, and Yvonne Cuburu were all involved in some of the early Basque plays. Leon maintains that this was one of the first Basque theatrical groups in the U.S. that performed publicly.<sup>436</sup> Actually, Leon Sorhondo met his wife, Nicole Ausquy as they prepared a play: “We met in the Basque community. That’s how we got to know each other, through a Basque play as a matter of fact.”<sup>437</sup> The Alegría group organized four different plays by 1979. Later, in 1989, the theatrical tradition of the Basque community was revived by Basque Chaplain, Jean Pierre Etcheverry who arranged a musical play, a traditional Basque *pastorale* or community play, called “Nevadarat Joan Nintzen” (I left for Nevada). This play was performed at the NABO Convention that took place in May 1989 in Los Banos and at the BCC in June 1989 on Father’s Day.

## Other Activities and Community Outreach

As part of the BCC’s Youth Committee, Leon Sorhondo, a founding director of the BCC, helped start a ski trip, some backpacking trips, and bicycle rides in the early 1990s: “We were trying to set up something to hopefully get more young people involved in there besides just so-called Basque activities as dancing and pilota. We tried to do something else that would involve kids that wouldn’t necessarily be doing those things but somewhere we just wanted to get all the Basque blood together so that they can just make friendships that way [...] In Europe you see young people aren’t necessarily doing Basque things. They play basketball. They do other things. I don’t want people to lock in too much that they just do the “Basque things” but just try and incorporate the Basqueness feeling and maybe other cultural aspects that they need to pass down.”<sup>438</sup>

BEO, the Women’s Club and the BCC’s Youth Committee sponsor non-traditional games (e.g., Family Feud-a at BCC, on March 30, 2008), organize group outings to non-Basque sport events (e.g., Kings versus Warriors basketball match on December 30, 2006; host an annual golf tournament since 1998), and plan trips (e.g., annual trips to Reno, Nevada or fishing trips to Half Moon Bay, California), lectures, or movie nights since 2004. There was even a BCC soccer team in 1986 made up of the restaurant’s kitchen staff and some younger members. Similarly, Anaitasuna also set up its own soccer team in 2007. The BCC also put together the BCC Lagunak (Friends), a co-ed softball team that played in the South San Francisco

<sup>436</sup> Lucille Andueza et al., focus group interview on *Children of Basque Boardinghouse Owners*, facilitated by Nicole Sorhondo and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.

<sup>437</sup> Leon Sorhondo, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, May 25, 2006.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.



league. They were the South San Francisco champions in both 2004 and 2005 tournaments. The purpose of these activities is to educate the membership and the Basque community at large by alternative means, as well as to attract new and younger members, particularly Basque Americans who have departed from Basque culture and are farther removed from its traditional aspects.

In other words, the goal of these activities is community building and individual bonding by spending time together and participating in common events (e.g., attending local baseball, football or basketball games), which do not necessarily need to be Basque-oriented. These activities, outings, and events convey the implicit message that you can be Basque and feel comfortable with being Basque without necessarily having to participate in Basque traditional activities at the clubhouse or at annual picnics or festivals. The emphasis is still on constructing a community of Basque individuals by including other activities that may also be attractive to Basques.



**Anaitasuna Soccer Team 2007.** Standing (from left to right): Nic Speros, John Konjicija, Mikel Vizcay, Jon Vizcay, Bob Lezcano and David Vizcay. Kneeling (from left to right): Oscar Espinal, Frank Vicondoa, Francisco Vicondoa and Nik Vizcay. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.



Though the majority of members and leaders of the community interviewed see the future of Basque culture and identity in the Bay Area in positive terms, others remained skeptical, and some expressed their concern about the sustainability of their flagship project, the BCC. For instance, Franxoa Bidaurreta argued,

I don't think we're going forward [regarding Basque culture]. We have now a building and things are running really, really good there, the business part [...] a lot of money and stuff but [...] we had a lot more activities going on when we opened the building than we do now [...] Our pilota players, probably 60% of the ones they played, they're probably over 50 years old. The young ones are very, very few [...] The money comes from the business but I don't think we're taking full opportunity to flourish, and it's going to be harder if we don't change the ways. It's going to be a lot harder because the Basque community is spreading farther. Young people that want to start families, probably half of them, cannot start them around where the Basque Cultural Center is. They're moving farther and farther, and they won't be able to bring their kids to participate in those activities [dance, klike, pilota]. We have to do something about that in the communities where people buy their houses [...] I'm not talking about old people that they don't come to play. I'm not worried about that, but [also about] young people, young kids. The Basque Cultural Center worries so much if they're members or not members. They shouldn't be worried about it. They should worry about pilota. They should worry about dance. If somebody is willing to participate in the Basque activities they should be allowed in that group activity (Franxoa Bidaurreta, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, August 6, 2006.)

Over the years Bay Area Basque institutions have been involved in several community outreach activities that go beyond their purposes as socio-cultural and recreational clubs. For example, as a result of the drastic effects of the October 17, 1989 earthquake, the BCC Restaurant donated 100 free hot meals to those in need in the immediate community. The gesture was acknowledged by State Senator Quentin L. Kopp (1986-1998), who wrote an appreciation letter that read as follows: "The genuine heroes of this disaster are people like yourselves, citizens of our area who shared, worked and survived together. This is truly the good stuff of our country."<sup>439</sup> In December 1990, BCC members donated and collected items for the U.S. Armed Forces stationed in the Middle East. The shipping was paid by the board. Similarly, the Women's Club encouraged members to participate in a "Toys for Tots" program organized by the South San Francisco Fire and Police departments. Toys were collected and distributed to local needy children (December 1995). On a regular basis the BCC has hosted a "blood drive," and encouraged the members to donate blood. The participants received a complimentary lunch ticket. According to the Basque Club's bylaws, Article X, "It is the duty of each member who is able to donate blood."

<sup>439</sup> BCC Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, December 1, 1989.

## POLITICS, POLITICS, AND POLITICS

If anything is reported in the media about the Basques, it is, unmistakably, violence and politics. It seems that the international observer is condemned to receive information that reduces Basque culture to simplifications and stereotypes. There is an overrepresentation of violence and politics over other aspects of Basque culture and identity. The media and the general public tend to equate violence with Basques, which provokes a negative reaction among homeland and diaspora Basques. In very general terms, in the diaspora many (particularly the immigrant generation) have shied away from politics altogether, and their interest on homeland political issues has become nearly inexistent. For example, Pierre Etcharren argued, “I never got involved in politics. I always been against politics and, in my opinion, if we are so united over here in the clubs or in NABO it is because we always kept politics outside.”<sup>440</sup>

The official non-partisan and apolitical stand of Basque institutions in the Bay Area (and elsewhere in the country) is also a reflection of such personal political apathy with regard to the homeland. Taking into account that the majority of the founders of the different Bay Area Basque clubs came from the northern part of the Basque Country, they tended to regard those issues as exclusively of the “Spanish Basques.” Moreover, historically there is a lack of political associations in the U.S. compared to other countries such Argentina or Uruguay, where organizations were set up by Basque immigrants to defend the autonomy of the Basque provinces in Spain after the abolition of their traditional laws at the end of the nineteenth century.

Contemporary events such as the Spanish Civil War, WWII, General Francisco Franco’s dictatorship (1939-1975) and ETA’s violence (“Basque Country and Freedom” in its Basque acronym) help explain the diverse degrees of politicization of Basques depending on which side of the Pyrenees they are from. It is estimated that 150,000 Basques went into exile, 100,000 people were imprisoned, and 50,000 died as a result of Franco’s victory, and subsequent political and cultural repression against republicans and nationalists. In 1936, the total population of the Basque provinces in Spain was 1.3 million. Ricardo López, a Bay Area resident, was one of the 25,000 Basque children sent abroad by the Basque government to protect them from aerial bombardments against the civilian population. Ricardo was born in Ortuella, Bizkaia in 1934. At the age of four he was sent to Hoboken, Antwerp (Belgium) with his two older brothers, Benito, eight years old, and Enrique, six. They returned to Spain in 1941. In 1957, Ricardo immigrated to Montreal, Canada following his parents who had immigrated four years earlier. He then married and moved to the U.S.<sup>441</sup>

<sup>440</sup> Pierre Etcharren, interview by Nadine Goyhenetche, San Francisco, California, September 6, 2006.

<sup>441</sup> Ricardo López Echave, interview by Philippe Acheritogaray, Corte Madera, California, February 3, 2005.



*Ricardo López (center) and his two brothers, Benito (left) and Enrique (right) in Hoboken, Belgium.* Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

Decroos argued that “as opposed to the French Basque immigrants who generally expressed benign feelings toward France, Spanish Basques often emphatically recalled bitter political experiences in their dealings with Spain.”<sup>442</sup> For example, Lucille Andueza stated that her family and many of their Basque boarders and regular clients at Hotel de España, who were from the Basque provinces of Spain voiced strong political sentiments against Franco. She recalled that non-Basque Americans did not really understand this as the U.S. government was pro-Franco, and the media did not presented them with a whole picture of the conflict.<sup>443</sup>

Decroos’ study substantiated that in the 1970s, San Francisco Basque immigrants from Spain were more politicized than their counterparts from France.<sup>444</sup> The author evidenced that nearly 90% of Basque immigrants from Spain followed Basque

<sup>442</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 81. See also Christiane Bouesnard, “Basque Emigration to California and Nevada since 1960” (TER, Université de Pau et des Pays de L’Adour, 1976), 45-46.

<sup>443</sup> Lucille Andueza, Yvonne Cuburu, Gracian Goyhenetche, and Leon Sorhondo, focus Group Interview on *Children of Basque Boardinghouse Owners*, facilitated by Nicole Sorhondo and Pedro J. Oiarzabal, South San Francisco, California, March 11, 2007.

<sup>444</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 80-81.

politics, while only 15% of those from France did so. However, the situation changed with the first generation of Basques born in the U.S. among which 60% of the children of immigrants from France followed Basque politics.

In 1970, ETA and the Basque cause received worldwide attention because of the international uproar generated by the infamous Burgos Trial, by which several ETA members were condemned to death. This international reaction resulted in the commutation of the sentences. For example, leading Basque-American politicians such as Pete T. Cenarrusa, Secretary of State of Idaho between 1967 and 1998, publicly repudiated Franco's dictatorship and the Burgos Trial. In addition, in 1972, the Idaho State Legislature passed Joint Memorial No. 115, which condemned General Franco's regime and urged peace and democracy in the Basque Country. San Francisco also mobilized against the last bastion of fascism in Europe.

Later, on October 11, 1975, "Over 500 people gathered before St. Mary's Cathedral in San Francisco [...] to protest the execution of five Spaniards [on September 27, 1975] by the Franco regime. Monsignor Flynn of the Commission of Human Rights of the San Francisco Archdiocese, called for an end to the reign of terror unleashed by Franco against the Basque people and an end to the executions."<sup>445</sup> The five people executed were ETA members Ángel Otaegi and Jon Paredes, a.k.a. "Txiki," and three non-Basques—José Luis Sánchez-Bravo, Ramón García and José Humberto Baena— who were members of FRAP (acronym for Antifascist and Patriotic Revolutionary Front).



**"Franco: Stop murdering Basques."** San Franciscans demonstrating against General Francisco Franco in 1975. Photograph courtesy of New York University's Tamiment Library.

<sup>445</sup> Robert G. Colodny, "Franco's Last Days; Bay Area Campaign for Spain," *The Volunteer*, no. December (1975): 4.



*Félix Bilbao at the Basque Cultural Center in March 2007. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

**Félix Bilbao** is the last surviving *gudari* or Basque soldier who lives in the Bay Area and probably in the nation. Bilbao fought on the side of democracy and the ideals of the Basque government against Franco's rebel troops during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). By August 1937, the war had ended in the Basque Country, but it continued in Spain. Bilbao and his comrades were detained and imprisoned. For two years, until the conflict ended, he was forced to perform inhuman labor throughout Spain. Upon his return to his home village of Zamudio in Bizkaia, he was conscripted in Franco's Army—his former enemy—and was forced to join the Spanish Legion based in North Africa and South Spain for three years. In 1944 he finally reunited with his family after eight long years. Bilbao continued to support the Basque nationalist resistance until 1948, when all hope to defeat the dictatorship was utterly lost. In July 1951 Bilbao decided to come to the U.S. to start a new life for him and his family.<sup>446</sup>

<sup>446</sup> Félix Bilbao, interview by Marisa Espinal, Belmont, California, April 12, 2005; also by Pedro J. Oiarzabal. South San Francisco, California, March 10, 2007. See Pedro J. Oiarzabal, "Félix Bilbao: Un "Gudari" en San Francisco," Euskonews & Media 391 (2007), <http://www.euskonews.com/03912bk/kosmo39101.html>.

***President of the Basque Autonomous Community Government Juan José Ibarretxe in front of the Basque Cultural Center's Gernika Tree on February 16, 2008.***

From left to right: Aitor Sotes (Delegate of the Basque government in the U.S.), Josu Legarreta (Director for Relations with the Basque Communities abroad), Pedro Gonzalez (Mayor of South of San Francisco), Isabelle Bushman (President of the Basque Cultural Center), Juan José Ibarretxe, Félix Bilbao (former soldier of the Basque Army) and Iñaki Aguirre (General Secretary of Foreign Action of the Basque government). Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.



These were the last executions of the Franco Regime. General Franco died on November 20, 1975.

If any symbol is “universally” recognized as Basque, it is the Tree of Gernika. The Bizkaian town of Gernika is home to this “sacred” Oak Tree and the Assembly House where representatives of Bizkaia met under the rule of consuetudinary laws for centuries until their abolition in 1876. During the Spanish Civil War this emblematic town became the target of the first intentional aerial bombings of a civilian population in Europe that caused great human loss and urban destruction. The devastation of Gernika along with other villages and small towns, such as Durango, by Nazi Germany in 1937, is constantly drawn on as an identity marker that defines Basqueness and recent Basque history. In 1937, Pablo Picasso created a painting called *Guernica* immortalizing the horrors of the war, while universalizing the name of the Basque town as a synonym of the Basque people’s collective suffering. *Guernica*, the painting, has become an expression of collective memory, identity and belonging in both the homeland and the diaspora.

For example, there are several oak trees planted abroad grown from acorns taken from the Gernika Oak Tree, including the one planted at the BCC’s clubhouse



on March 27, 1982.<sup>447</sup> On a plaque beneath the BCC tree there is a poem written by Jean Baptiste “Ximun” Bidaurreta that reads in English: “The young tree that came from the one in Gernika/ To look after our country Euskadi; planted oak tree/ Some good hearted Basque brought you as an acorn/ To you now we are praying new born tree/ Grow and take care of this house and the Basque Country.”

These oak trees represent old traditions transplanted into a new soil, as roots of identity and alleged historical continuity between the past and the present. Moreover, homeland and diaspora institutions worldwide join together to commemorate the anniversary of the bombing of Gernika. For example, within the framework of the seventieth anniversary of the destruction of Gernika the BCC organized a documentary on the aerial massacre of the city, a series of public lectures, and the planting of an oak tree at South San Francisco’s Sister Cities Park in honor of the symbolic Gernika Oak Tree. A memorial mass was officiated by Basque Chaplain Martxel Tillous.

## The International Basque Organization for Human Rights, Incorporated

The first generation of Basque Americans in San Francisco has been more eager to become involved in homeland politics than their parents’ generation. In 2003 a group of Bay Area Basques and non-Basques formed the International Basque Organization for Human Rights, Incorporated (IBO), which was based in Corte Madera, California, “as a result of another series of attacks against the Basque language as well as attacks on freedom of the press in the Basque Country.” The organization sought to involve Basques, Basque descendents, and friends of Basques worldwide. IBO’s purpose was “to educate the international community of human rights abuses against the Basque people of Euskal Herria (the Basque Country) in Spain and France,” while disseminating “information about the Basque people’s struggles and perspective”—i.e., an attempt to internationalize the Basque conflict. As an educational organization IBO was a federal tax exempted organization under the 501(c)(3) and was incorporated under the laws of the State of Idaho. It has not been active since 2005.

According to IBO’s founders, the association originated, in part, due to the failure of diaspora institutions to respond, totally or partly, to their demands to participate in politics or to allow a space for political discussion within their clubhouses. To address this, IBO set up their own offline and online space where they could make

<sup>447</sup> There are seedlings planted in several countries including Argentina (e.g., at the Basque clubs in Buenos Aires, Necochea, planted in 1944, and Bragado); Chile (e.g., at Plaza Vasca, Valparaiso, planted in 1931); the United States (e.g., at Cyrus Jacobs-Uberuaga boardinghouse, Boise and Ontario, Oregon, planted in 2007); and Uruguay (e.g., at La Plaza Gernika, Montevideo, planted in 1944).

*Protesting the closure of  
Egunkaria outside  
the Spanish Consulate  
in San Francisco on  
April 26, 2003.*

Photograph courtesy of  
San Francisco Urazandi  
Collection.



their voices heard, and consequently construct an alternative and plural discourse in contrast to the one constructed by the “official” institutional diaspora.

In April 2003, IBO organized an online petition “to call for immediate negotiations between the governments of Spain, France, the Basque Autonomous Community, the Autonomous Community of Nafarroa, and any other relevant organizations dedicated to peace, with the U.S. State Department, or other designated body.” As of May 2008, the petition has been signed by 851 individuals and organizations from twenty-three countries.

## RELIGION

If historically Basque religious men (e.g., Jesuits Juan María de Salvatierra and Eusebio Kino, and Franciscans Gregorio Amurrio and Fermín Francisco de Lasuén) were involved in the founding and management of some of the missions established in California under Hispanic rule, Douglass and Bilbao (1975: 355-356) reminded us that Basques were also responsible for erecting the first Roman Catholic churches in areas such as Jordan Valley in Oregon, Volta and Fullerton in California, Elko

and Gardnerville in Nevada, and Boise in Idaho.<sup>448</sup> In Boise the Church of the Good Shepherd was established in 1919 as the first-ever and only Basque parish in the country, which lasted for nine years.

According to Gariador, a Basque Benedict monk, Father Charles Espelette, from Aldude, Nafarroa Beherea, based at the monastery of Montebello in Los Angeles County served the Basque communities until his death in 1958.<sup>449</sup> Espelette is also considered one of the founders of the Southern California Basque Club (La Puente), which was established in 1946. Aita, Father, Espelette was associated with the Benedictine Sacred Heart Abbey of Oklahoma, which had a small but active community of Basque missionaries.<sup>450</sup> The abbey was set up in 1875 as a mission to evangelize Native Americans throughout the region. Gariador pointed out that since the foundation of the abbey Basque missionaries had played a significant role in the Oklahoma territory and elsewhere, and particularly with the incipient Basque communities of the West.<sup>451</sup> Father Leo Gariador also from Aldude, who arrived in 1888, established a monastery in Montebello in 1905. Aita Gariador acted as an itinerant missionary throughout the diverse Basque communities in the American West until 1909, when he was replaced by Father Hippolyte Topet. Aita Topet was then substituted by Aita Espelette around 1933. Gariador argued that Aita Espelette's death prompted local religious authorities to seek a more permanent Basque chaplain.

For over one hundred years, Basque Roman Catholic chaplains and missionaries have administered religious services in Euskara to the Basque communities scattered throughout the West. Over the years the Bishopric of Idaho and the Diocese of Fresno, California have asked their counterparts in the Basque Country (Bishopric of Vitoria-Gasteiz, whose jurisdiction also includes the provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa; and the Diocese of Baiona) to supply Basque priests to serve as chaplains for their respective Basque congregations.

In 1911, Aita Bernardo Arregui, from Tolosa, Gipuzkoa, arrived in Boise, Idaho to serve the communities of southern Idaho, eastern Oregon and northern Nevada, all mostly populated by Bizkaians. He was the first of another eleven Basque chaplains who would become the spiritual leaders of Basque America. The next priest to arrive in Boise was Father Patxi Aldasoro from Mutiloa, Gipuzkoa. He arrived in 1954 and stayed for five years. Aldasoro was followed by Fathers Santos Recalde from Ispaster, Bizkaia and Juan Mari Garatea from Lekeitio, Bizkaia.

According to Douglass and Bilbao, Aita Recalde attempted to organize a labor union among the contract herders in order to increase their wages and improve

448 Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 355-56.

449 Mitch Gariador, "The Forgotten Basque Benedictines of Sacred Heart Abbey, Oklahoma," Southern California Basque Club, <http://www.socalbasqueclub.us>.

450 Many of the Basque Benedictine monks who moved into the U.S. came from the Belloc Notre-Dame Abby in the Basque locality of Ahurti, Lapurdi, which was founded in 1875.

451 Gariador, "The Forgotten Basque Benedictines of Sacred Heart Abbey, Oklahoma."



**Aita Guillaume Copentipy,**  
1970. Photograph courtesy of  
San Francisco Urazandi  
Collection.

their living conditions.<sup>452</sup> Recalde even published a newsletter called “El Pastor” (The Shepherd) in 1967 through which they voiced their demands. His campaign forced the Spanish government to lobby to draft a new contract for shepherders, which included some of Recalde’s demands, such as two weeks annual paid vacation or the possibility to apply for permanent residency in the U.S. after the completion of the (third-year) contract. He left for Venezuela in 1971 and returned to southern Spain in the 1990s, where he passed away.<sup>453</sup>

During the 1960s, Fresno became another focal point of Basque religious activity. This time the Diocese of Fresno requested the services of a Basque priest from the Diocese of Baiona. Father Jean Leon Luro from Ahatsa, Nafarroa Beherea, was the first Basque chaplain to come to California to attend to the needs of the community composed mostly of members from Iparralde. Aita Luro arrived in 1961 and stayed for three years, being replaced by Father Jean Challet from Hazparne, Lapurdi who stayed for six years. Then, Guillaume Copentipy from Milafranga, Lapurdi came to Fresno around 1969 and was in charge of the Basque community

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<sup>452</sup> Douglass and Bilbao, *Amerikanuak: Basques in the New World*, 322-24.

<sup>453</sup> See also Santos T. Rekalde, *Deunor, Idaho'n Artzain ta Euskaldun* (Zarautz: Itxaropena, 1973).

until approximately 1971. He was replaced by Father Jacques Sallaberremborde from Altzürükü in Zuberoa. With Aita Sallaberremborde, San Francisco's French church, Église Notre Dame des Victoires (Our Lady of Victories) became the official residence for Basque chaplains who began serving all Basque communities throughout the American West regardless of their provincial origin. Sallaberremborde stayed at the private residence of Pierre Arrabit while in San Francisco. Kelly also mentioned that the Bakersfield Catholic Church sent for a Basque priest, Father Silvano Baquedano, to minister to the local Basque community's religious needs.<sup>454</sup>

Aita Jean Pierre Cachenaut was the second priest who took up residence in San Francisco. During his first three years in San Francisco he also stayed at Arrabit's home. According to Zubiri "Odette Etcheverry served as Father Cachenaut's answering service for the nine years he was in this country."<sup>455</sup> Odette (Herlax) Etcheverry was born in 1935 in Baigorri and came to San Francisco in 1956, where she and her husband Jean Pierre established the pioneering "Etcheverry Basque Imports" in 1963 on San Francisco's 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between Irving and Judah streets. It became one of the most successful importers of Basque souvenirs and goods



**Aita Jean Pierre Etcheverry, 1988.** Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.

<sup>454</sup> James P. Kelly, *The Settlement of Basques in the American West* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1967), 14.

<sup>455</sup> Zubiri, *A Travel Guide To Basque America: Families, Feasts, and Festivals*, 35.



***Aita Jean Eliçagaray, 1993.***

Photograph courtesy of  
San Francisco Urazandi  
Collection.

in America. Today, Odette and Jean Pierre's daughter Suzanne (Etcheverry) Fosse manages the business.<sup>456</sup>

Cachenaut was followed by Fathers Jean Pierre Etcheverry from Heleta, Nafarroa Beherea (1986-1989), Jean Eliçagaray from Duzunaritze, Nafarroa Beherea (1991-1994) and Father Martxel Tillous, from Eskiula, Zuberoa, who has been the chaplain since 1994.<sup>457</sup> Etcheverry, Eliçagaray and Tillous have all been sponsored by the Catholic Federation of the United States. Etcheverry lived at NDV, while Eliçagaray stayed at Marcel Eliçagaray's home. Aita Tillous first lived at Jean Mazeris' home and later on took up residence at the Basque Cultural Center's clubhouse in 1998, where he established his office. Consequently, the immediate Basque community has profoundly benefited from his presence.

Aita Tillous has become indispensable for the Basque community at large, not only because of his spiritual services, but for his active promotion of Basque

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<sup>456</sup> Odette Etcheverry, interview by Marisa Espinal, San Francisco, California, September 1, 2007.

<sup>457</sup> Joseba Etxarri, "Euskaldun Apezak-Basque Chaplains," *Renoko Aste Nagusia. Basque Cultural Week and NABO Convention booklet* 1999, 41-44.





*Basque Chaplains,  
from left to right,  
Jean Pierre Cachenaout,  
Jacques Sallaberremborde,  
Jean Challet and Jean Léon  
Luro, c. 1970s. Photograph  
courtesy of San Francisco  
Urazandi Collection.*

language and culture. He publishes the Basque-American Catholic Newsletter, *Lokarria*, which he created in 1994. *Lokarria* is an annual publication distributed to 3,200 people across the American West. As mentioned, Aita Tillous is the current director of the San Francisco Basque Club Choir, Elgarrekin. He was also singing and txistu the instructor at NABO's Udaleku program between 1994 and 2007. Father Martxel Tillous officiates most of (if not all) the religious ceremonies at the Basque annual festivals that take place throughout the year across the country as well as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. He travels approximately 60,000 miles a year on average. At the BCC's two major annual festivals, the handball court becomes the scene of Sunday morning's Basque-language Catholic mass, which is celebrated by the voices of the choir, improvised verses of the bertsolariak, acoustic and solemn music of the klike, melodies of the accordion and txistu, and agile dancers. The event is a communion of religious, folkloric, and linguistic elements of Basque culture in the peculiar setting of a sport venue. No setting in Basque America equals the BCC's, which represents the strength and vitality of the Bay Area Basque community.

Within today's global secularization movement and considering the lack of vocations, the possibility of a new native Basque chaplain to replace Father Tillous

**Aita Martxel Tillous** has received several awards that acknowledge and recognize his many spiritual and cultural contributions to the Basque-American community, including the BCC's Bizi Emankorra or Lifetime Contribution Award (2008); the San Francisco Basque Club's Claude Berhouet Lagun Ona Award (2007); NABO's Bizi Emankorra Award (2002); and his induction into the Society of Basque Studies in America's Basque Hall of Fame (2002). Tillous was born in 1934 in Eskiula. He entered the priesthood and became a missionary for twenty-six years in Ivory Coast, Africa. After returning to Europe he became the Basque chaplain for the Basque community of Paris, France where he stayed between 1990 and 1994. Tillous was then sent to the United States to serve as the chaplain of Basque America.



*On February 17, 2008, Isabelle Bushman (President of the Basque Cultural Center) presented to Aita Tillous the Basque Cultural Center's Bizi Emankorra or Lifetime Contribution Award. From left to right: Lehendakari Ibarretxe, Xavier Berrueta (Vice-president of the Basque Cultural Center), Aita Tillous and Isabelle Bushman. In the background, choir member, Germaine Alfaro. Photograph by Pedro J. Oiarzabal.*

in the American West in the near future is unlikely. It is probable that the Basque community will be mainstreamed in terms of religion if the tradition of having a Basque chaplain ends.

Notre Dame des Victoires and its elementary school (at 659 Pine Street) founded on the principles of the Marist Fathers Brothers, and the Lycée Française La Perouse (French government's subsidized education abroad) constitute the religious and educational cornerstone of the French community in San Francisco. Decroos stated that nearly 90% of Basque children from the French side attended San Francisco French private schools.<sup>458</sup> Currently, Father Rene Iturbe, who is of Basque origin, is the spiritual leader of NDV's French and Basque Catholic community. Basques from the French area have particularly benefited from the existence of the NDV, as they are able to confess and to attend monthly liturgical ceremonies in French and educate their children according to the French education system. In addition, every third Sunday of the month during the winter there used to be a Basque mass presided over by the Basque chaplain. During the summer the Basque chaplain used to tour the Basque communities throughout the American West.<sup>459</sup>

Isabelle Laxague recalled the role that Father Cachenaout played in the Bay Area Basque community: "He was very, very active, and he really had the ability to motivate people and attend those masses every third Sunday. He did a very good job, you know, making people attend the mass [...] He loved his job as a priest and also, very, very big love for anything Basque, so he was really pushing things to the Basque, anything Basque."<sup>460</sup> The Basque community has also been able to attend annual week-long retreats or "missions" that take place during the six evenings preceding Palm Sunday. This popular event was initiated by Aita Luro in the early 1960s, and became a true "Basque event," which attracted many Basque families to Broadway Street. On Palm Sunday, the Basque klike and choir would participate in the celebration of the mass.<sup>461</sup> The "mission" is widely advertised in the Basque Cultural Center's newsletter.

In relation to the Basques from the Spanish side, the San Francisco church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (Our Lady of Guadalupe) was regarded as their church for a number of years.<sup>462</sup> In addition, many Basques (regardless of their origin) attended any of the existing local churches in their residential districts. In the Sunset District, there are St. Cecilia, St. Anne and St. Gabriel. For example,

<sup>458</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*.

<sup>459</sup> Jean Leon Oçafrain, interview by Robert Iriartborde, Millbrae, California, December 4, 2006.

<sup>460</sup> Isabelle Laxague, interview by Marie Laxague Rosecrans, Burlingame, California, October 27, 2006.

<sup>461</sup> Aña Iriartborde, interview by Nicole Sorhondo, San Francisco, California, June 26, 2005.

<sup>462</sup> Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region*, 54-55.



*Klika playing at Notre Dame des Victoires on Palm Sunday, April 6, 2006. Photograph courtesy of San Francisco Urazandi Collection.*

those Basques who settled in the Richmond District attended the Star of the Sea Catholic Church at 4420 Geary Boulevard. The Star of the Sea was established as a mission in 1887 and as parish in 1894. The church was built first in 1914, rebuilt in 1929 and was consecrated in 1965. Basques also sent their children to the Star of the Sea School at 390-9<sup>th</sup> Avenue, which is part of the Star of the Sea parish church.

The role that Basque native missionaries and chaplains and particularly NDV have played for the last one hundred years is paramount and has sometimes been underestimated. They have not only maintained the practice of Catholicism among Basque immigrants and their descendants in an environment where the Roman Catholic religion is in many instances a minority faith, but they have also maintained and reactivated the Basque (also French and Spanish) language as an efficient communication tool for different Basque generations. In this regard, Decroos strongly argued that the Basque language “is closely related to religious affiliation” for Basque America. “By performing baptisms, marriages, and funerals, the church [NDV] also provides a context for expressing and solidifying the more deeply rooted emotional ties and sentiments of the [Basque] colony.”<sup>463</sup> That is, Catholicism is another significant identity marker for Basques. In sum, Basque priests have become the most qualified mediators between many Basque communities scattered throughout the American landscape, which until recently were isolated from each other. They have also been the best witnesses of their evolution. The Catholic Church and its clergymen are indeed a fundamental part of the social fabric of Basque America.

## CONCLUSIONS

For nearly half a century the Bay Area Basque community and northern California society at large have enjoyed folkloric and cultural activities as well as sports and games organized by the various Basque associations that took charge of Basque culture as Basque restaurants and boardinghouses, venues of expression of the community, slowly vanished. Those activities reflected, to a great extent, the desires and needs of the immigrant generation to continue their homeland traditions in their new country. Though, the older generation remains active, the first generation of Basques born in San Francisco are introducing less traditional and even non-Basque activities with the goal of building a community of Basques in order to sustain and promote their common heritage in the near future.

Despite the fact that the Bay Area Basque associations are non-partisan and apolitical in principle, there is no reason why the members, particularly the younger

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<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, 76, 54.

ones, cannot have the opportunity to learn about the socio-economic and cultural history of the Basque Country as well as more contemporary aspects of today's society including politics. There is an imperative need to educate the younger generations about their forefathers' country, but there is also a need to engage them in today's homeland realities as a way of preventing the Basque Cultural Center from becoming a mausoleum of nostalgia. In addition to memories, actions and strategies for the future must also inhabit the clubhouse.



Conclusions:  
all

# Against Odds

Without roots there can be no trees. But trees cannot exist without branches and leaves and new fruit. The Basque centers see to preserving these roots, disseminating Basque folklore as part of their activities [...] We are all the makers of history, but today's reality is much more than a struggle to keep our past alive. Remembering the past is essential, but we must do so while looking towards the future and setting our sights on the new reality.

(Josu Legarreta, Basque government's Director for Relations with the Basque Communities Abroad, "Progress and Renewal," *Euskal Etxeak*, 2002, 3.)

Being American is a matter of abstention from foreign ways, foreign food, foreign ideas, foreign accents.

(Margaret Mead, "Ethnicity and anthropology in America," in *Ethnic Identity: Cultural Continuities and Change*, ed. George DeVos and Lola Romanucci-Ross. Palo Alto, California: Mayfield Publishing, 1975, 189).

Basque immigration into the United States has nearly ceased. The immigrant generation is aging and, unfortunately, vanishing. At the institutional level, Basques born in America have not yet taken over full responsibility of the existing Basque socio-cultural and recreational associations, and the current leadership is struggling

to attract both new and young members. On the other hand, since the fatidic terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the climate surrounding multiculturalism, religious and linguistic diversity has been seriously questioned and affected. The promotion of tougher laws on illegal immigration, and declarations in favor of English as the official language in certain states issued by neo-conservative sectors of local and state government have exacerbated public opinion against “foreign ways.” These aforementioned sectors promote an outdated model of assimilation and acculturation as the best and only possible remedy against all foreign evil within America. In this context, the overall future of minority cultures such as the Basques seems bleak. (However, paradoxically, this post-9/11 situation has also instigated new discussions about the meaning of being American in a plural and multicultural society.)

The dilemmas that Basques in the United States are facing today are quite well exemplified by Mead and Legarreta’s statements. How can the Basques of the San Francisco Bay Area strike a balance between being American, while continuing to be Basque against all odds? That is, how can they remain faithful to their inherited cultural traditions, attract new and younger members, while at the same time embracing the identity and cultural values of America? In a sense, there is a dialectical contradiction between becoming similar to their new neighbors in their adopted country, and remaining different by affirming their uniqueness and exclusiveness within the new society and particularly in relation to other immigrant groups, such as the French and Spanish.

For the past decades scholars and students of migration and diaspora studies have considered it inevitable and even desirable for immigrants to assimilate into their host societies.<sup>464</sup> They regarded the inherited identity of subsequent generations as merely symbolic. Gaiser predicted that “by 1950 [Basques in the American West] will have closed their Basque culture book and have largely merged with the surrounding groups;”<sup>465</sup> later Kelly argued that,

The other young Basques in America—the second generation—have been completely Americanized [...] The old Basques are dying out, fewer new ones are coming to replace them, and the second and third generation Basques really can’t identify with the Old Country customs [...] Basque activity in California has declined considerably since the early 1900’s [...] With the older Basques—the mainstays of the Basque ethnic community—slowly becoming less active, the disappearance of their ethnic publications, and the submergence of the numerous California Basque colony within the overwhelming numbers of Americans, the future of the Basques as an easily recognizable group is clearly somewhat doubtful [...] It seems sad to say it, but in the ultimate analysis it

<sup>464</sup> For example, Milton Gordon, *Assimilation in American life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), and Robert Ezra Park, *Race and Culture* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1950).

<sup>465</sup> Joseph H. Gaiser, “The Basques of Jordan Valley Area: A Study in Social Process and Social Change” (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 1944), 188.

appears that are a vanishing breed in the Far West [...] fate seems to have combined its forces to mix Basque blood thoroughly the American melting pot. (James P. Kelly, *The Settlement of Basques in the American West*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1967: 40, 43-44, 45).

Furthermore, Douglass and Bilbao's 1970s observations regarding the future of Basques in the American West were quite conclusive: there was not much future, if any at all. Two decades later, Douglass wrote, "In short, the Basque-American ethnic identity created in the post-war period is clearly in crisis. To the extent that it is inspired by a European peasant heritage and an American shepherding legacy it elicits two worlds that have all but disappeared [...] Consequently, to the extent that Basque-American identity remains predicated upon such symbols it runs the risk of becoming more show than substance."<sup>466</sup> That is, according to Douglass, Basques have transformed themselves into the new cliché and folkloric stereotype of American society, struggling to preserve an ethnic identity. In sum, the authors concluded that Basque culture in the United States is perishing.

However, the passage of time has proved many of the theories behind the nineteenth-century concept of "the Melting Pot" wrong.<sup>467</sup> That is, immigrants in the United States were condemned to blend in with the rest of society under the auspices of the melting pot paradigm. Nevertheless, assimilation is not a straight line that leads to complete or full absorption of immigrants into the host society in which all traces of Old Country identity cease to be present. Later generations are not necessarily more assimilated than their predecessors. In sum, assimilation is not irreversible or inevitable. For example, second and third-generation Basques in the United States still exhibit a strong desire and motivation to keep their Basque identity alive. Basque Americans are living proof of the failure of the melting pot and assimilation and acculturation theories.

In addition, symbols, particularly national symbols (*the flag, the anthem, the language, monuments, clothing or food*) play a role in creating, maintaining, and expressing individual and collective identity as well as providing individuals with a sentimental or emotional attachment to the group. In other words, Smith argued that,

National symbols, customs, and ceremonies are the most potent and durable aspects of nationalism [...] that evoke instant emotional responses from all strata of the community [...] By means of ceremonies, customs and symbols every member of a community participates in the life, emotions and virtues of that community and through them,

<sup>466</sup> William A. Douglass, "Basque American Identity: Past Perspectives and Future Prospects," in *Change in the American West: Exploring the Human Dimension*, ed. Stephen Tchudi (Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1996), 196-97.

<sup>467</sup> Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Problem of the Third-generation Immigrant* (Rock Island, Illinois: Augustana Historical Society, 1937). See Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: the Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1963), Tamotsu Shibutani, "The Sentimental Basis of Group Solidarity," *Sociological Inquiry* 34 (1964), Tamotsu Shibutani and Kian M. Kwan, *Ethnic Stratification: A Comparative Approach* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965).

re-dedicates him or herself to its destiny. By articulating and making tangible the ideology of nationalism and the concepts of the nation ceremonial and symbolism help to assure the continuity of history and destiny [...] Through ceremonies and symbols the individual identity is bound up with the collective identity. (Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity*. Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 1992: 77-78, 160).

Alba, Gans, and Kivisto and Nefzger defined symbols as the last vestiges of ethnic identity among assimilated groups to their hostlands.<sup>468</sup> Gans described the phenomenon of consumption of ethnic symbols by third-generation individuals born in the United States as “symbolic ethnicity” or “leisure-time ethnicity.”<sup>469</sup> According to the author, those individuals look for “easy and intermittent ways of expressing their identity, ways that do not conflict with other ways of life,” such as the celebration of festivals, commemorations, cuisine, and parades. Regarding Basque Americans and particularly the descendants of the immigrant generation, Corcostegui argued that diaspora Basques “increasingly rely on symbols to formulate and bolster their ethnic identity.”<sup>470</sup> Furthermore, Petrisans stated that “it is possible to maintain an ethnic identity indefinitely through symbols.”<sup>471</sup> Is this where Basque Americans in San Francisco, California and elsewhere in America are heading? Are they becoming in the words of Douglass “more show than substance”?

Within the context of our metaphor of Basques as gardeners of identity, needless to say, gardeners have a very symbiotic relationship with their gardens, plants, flowers or trees. For thousands of years, humans have selected certain species because of their usefulness in terms of nutritional, medicinal and/or aesthetic values. Conversely, plants and flowers have also been able to adapt to the needs of their human caretakers. Similarly, in order to be nurtured, promoted and maintained Basque identity needs to hold significance for new generations of Basques who have been born and raised in the United States, and those still to come. Within a fragmented, impersonal, superficial and globalized world, Basque identity needs to become a useful, socially positive and added value to their complex and multiple identities and allegiances. This Basque identity could infuse meaning into their past, present and future in an environment of increasing individualism and uncertainty.

468 Richard D. Alba, *Italian-Americans* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1985), Herbert J. Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, no. January (1979), ———, “Symbolic Ethnicity and Symbolic Religiosity: Towards a Comparison of Ethnic and Religious Acculturation,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. October (1994), P. Kivisto and B. Nefzger, “Symbolic Ethnicity and American Jews: The Relationship of Ethnic Identity to Behavior and Group Affiliation,” *Social Science Journal* 30 (1993).

469 Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America,” 6.

470 Lisa M. Corcostegui, “Moving Emblems: Basque Dance and Symbolic Ethnicity,” in *The Basque Diaspora/La Diáspora Vasca*, ed. William A. Douglass, et al., *Basque Studies Program Occasional Papers* (Reno, Nevada: Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1999), 250.

471 Catherine Petrisans, “When Ethnic Groups Do Not Assimilate: The Case of Basque-American Resistance,” *Ethnic Groups* 9 (1991): 73. See also Mary C. Waters, *Ethnic Options: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1990).

That is, being Basque would provide a guide to interpret a chaotic or uncertain world. In the words of Castells, “Identity is becoming the main, and sometimes the only, source of meaning in a historical period characterized by widespread destructuring of organizations, delegitimation of institutions, fading away of major social movements, and ephemeral cultural expressions. People increasingly organize their meaning not around what they do but on the basis of what they are.”<sup>472</sup>

Basques in the United States cannot content themselves with the display of a symbolic, “part-time” or “mercurial”<sup>473</sup> identity reduced to punctual events and cyclical communal gatherings, celebrations and festivals. Observers and analysts of the Basque reality abroad, like historian Mikel Ezkerro, in charge of FEVA’s Cultural Area, warned us about this “symbolic” and “superfluous trend” with regard to Basque identity.<sup>474</sup> In the specific case of Argentina, where the majority of the membership of Basque associations is mostly composed of second, third, fourth and even fifth-generation Basques, Ezkerro pointed out the imperative need for a Basque curriculum to educate the new generations in order to prevent the loss of “substance” of Basque culture and identity. “For the last 50 years I have tried to teach our history to anyone who invited me to give a talk, here, in Argentina, or in Uruguay; anywhere. However, the people in charge of our *euskal etxeak* are more interested in teaching how to dance than on teaching why we dance what we dance. What is the result? New generations sing songs, ignoring their meaning or their history. We have to educate them as Basques.”<sup>475</sup>

History is still unfolding, and as we have seen, it is always extremely adventurous to forecast the future of any culture. Identities such as that of the Basques are constantly evolving as they are influenced by the group’s decisions and by multi-directional relations with their respective host societies and homelands and their attitudes toward them. Basques, generation after generation, have worked on a regular basis to maintain and preserve their identity across the globe against all odds. They are the owners of their own history, and it is up to them to keep their traditions and cultural heritage alive by adapting it to changing times, while inviting non-Basques to view them not only as different but as equal partners. The future of Basque identity in America is in their hands despite all apocalyptic presages of their inevitable disappearance.

472 Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*. The Information Age: Economy, Society, and Culture. Vol. I. Oxford; Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 470.

473 Linda White, “Basque Identity, Past and Present,” in *Endangered Peoples*, ed. Jean Forward (London: Greenwood Press, 2000).

474 Mikel Ezkerro is a member of the Centro de Estudios sobre Nacionalismo y Cultura Vasca Arturo Campion (Center for Basque Nationalism and Culture Arturo Campion, Laprida, Argentina) and President of the Basque homeland nationalist party Eusko Alkartasuna in Argentina. Ezkerro is also the author of *Historia del Laurak Bat de Buenos Aires*. Urazandi. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Servicio de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco, 2003.

475 At a FEVA meeting, November 11, 2005, Necochea, Argentina, quoted in Pedro J. Oiarzabal, “The Basque Diaspora Webscape: Online Discourses of Basque Diaspora Identity, Nationhood, and Homeland” (PhD Dissertation, University of Nevada, Reno, 2006).



Within the institutional history of the Basque presence in the American West, since the 1960s numerous Basque associations have been established, and thirty-eight of them are currently associated with NABO. This Basque-American federation has increasingly promoted communication and networking among their club members as well as with other Basque associations in Mexico, Canada and throughout the world. This trend suggests a proliferation of cultural and folkloric activities such as public annual festivals and other community-based events. Twenty five years ago, Decroos prognosticated “the waning of the [San Francisco Bay Area Basque] community in the 1990’s if the loss of the present middle-aged first generation [immigrants] is not compensated for by the arrival of a new contingent of immigrants.”<sup>476</sup> However, since then some developments have, if not changed the future of the San Francisco Bay Area Basque community, at least decelerated its deterioration and further disintegration despite the lack of the arrival of new waves of immigrants.

Those changes include the active role of the immigrant generation in the successful transmission of culture and identity to their children, and specifically to the creation of the Basque Cultural Center’s clubhouse in 1982, which rejuvenated the interest in Basque culture and identity within the community. The BCC also became a focal point—a beacon—for Bay Area and northern California Basque communities and a reference point for Basque communities scattered throughout the American West. It became *the* success story to emulate. Also, NABO’s inclusive approach toward different understandings of Basque identity and the promotion of a Zazpiak Bat model helped bridge the gap between Old World divisions separating Basques from both sides of the Pyrenees. This, in turn, fortified the diverse membership of Basque institutions and enriched linguistic, cultural and folkloric traditions in the Bay Area.

Also, the existing cross-membership among different Bay Area Basque associations helps to strengthen the cohesion of the community at large. In addition, since the early 1980s and particularly since 1994, the Basque government’s favorable policies towards the Basque diaspora translated into moral and financial support of its activities. Finally, taking into account the characteristics of today’s Basque economy and emigration patterns, the choice of Basque “temporary” immigrants—graduate students and liberal professionals—of an urban financial and technological hub such as San Francisco and surrounding suburban areas seems to be more viable than any potential migration to rural areas. Consequently, Basque communities in the Bay Area can indeed benefit from this new type of Basque migration.

All evidence indicates that Basque identity and culture in the United States and particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area has never been so strong, displaying sufficient resources and mechanisms to guarantee its maintenance in the near

<sup>476</sup> Jean Francis Decroos, *The Long Journey: Social Integration and Ethnicity Maintenance among Urban Basques in the San Francisco Bay Region* (Reno, Nevada: Associated Faculty Press and Basque Studies Program, University of Nevada, Reno, 1983), 100.

future. However, some questions remain with regard to this current display of strength of identity, that provide the basis for a potential dialogue among Basque institutional leaders and community activists at large in the United States. To what can we attribute this perdurability and maintenance of Basque identity? Is it due to an impermeability to change that prevents the reformulation of the meaning of identity? Or on the contrary, is it due to the openness and fluidity of the group's borders and identity markers that allow non-Basques to participate in the Basque culture? What strategies do Basque communities in the Bay Area need to develop in order to grow in a context where there are no longer new waves of immigrants? The future of Basque-American culture and identity will depend to some extent on which of these strategies are implemented.

Finally, there is an urgent need to continue the work initiated here in order to preserve collective memory, institutional or not, of the Basque community in San Francisco, the Bay Area and elsewhere in the state. It is necessary to collect immigrant life-histories as they are more likely to be lost if something is not done about it immediately. We have taken an initial step with the present work, which we hope will be followed by many others.

# Methodolo

# gical Notes

Similar to other volumes in the Urazandi collection that focus on Basque immigration, settlement, and formation of diaspora communities across the globe, this book records the history of the Basques in the San Francisco Bay Area using different methods to gather information. However, what is unique about this project is the fact that we have implemented a community development approach that we hope will go beyond this particular project. By implementing a grass roots approach we sought to empower and encourage people in the community to participate in future projects and to take action. That is, we have not only collected the history of the Basques in the San Francisco Bay Area, but we have also encouraged the local Basque communities and institutions to take ownership of their own history by taking an active role in different stages of the process of providing, collecting, and editing information. Consequently, we have tried to incorporate as many organizations and individuals as possible in order to gain from their skills, knowledge, and experience.

Consequently, a committee formed by nine members drawn from Anaitasuna Basque Association, the Basque Club of California, the Basque Cultural Center and the Basque Educational Organization was set up in order to manage the present volume. The methods used to collect the information were a combination of fieldwork and participant observation of Basque associations and events, carried out between 2006 and 2008; archival research of the Basque Cultural Center and Basque Club's records; and interviews and surveys. A total of ninety-

three key members of the community were interviewed by twenty-three volunteers drawn from the local Basque organizations. We conducted oral histories and eight focus groups that dealt with the 599 Railroad Catering corporation, the Marin-Sonoma Basque Association, folklore and preservation of Basque culture in the Bay Area, French laundries, boardinghouses, children of boardinghouse owners, first and second generation Basques returning to the Basque Country (i.e., reverse migration), and new or recent Basque immigration into the area (see the bibliography for a complete list of interviewers and interviewees).

The reader will notice that much of the information contained in this book is based on personal recollections of the past, and consequently they may not be free of error. In addition, the reader might find different dialectal spellings for particular names and surnames of individuals as they were not spelled out during the interviewing process. In a country where different cultures and languages coexist, we have primarily used the Basque language to refer to geographical locations where possible, following the dictates of the Royal Academy of the Basque Language, Euskaltzaindia.

Two hundred fifty-six people participated in a questionnaire on the Basque Area Bay clubs' membership. Five hundred and forty-six or 56.11% of members of the San Francisco Bay Area Basque clubs answered our questionnaire. As of 2007, the total number of members of the San Francisco Basque associations was 973. With regard to the response rate of each club, 79.51% of Anaitasuna Basque Club membership replied to our survey, followed by the Marin-Sonoma Basque Association with 69.2% of participation, the San Francisco Basque Club (53.6%), and the Basque Cultural Center (49.3%). The results were significant and made sense, particularly once they were compared to other partial surveys carried out by other institutions such as the Basque Autonomous Community Government. Finally, dozens of people from the local community had the opportunity to participate in the project by lending us personal memorabilia including photographs, letters, documents and newspaper clippings, which totaled over 500 items. In order to gather these materials, we organized the *Oroitzapen Egunak* or Memory Days on September 16 and 17 of 2006. Hundreds of people have quite actively participated in this project. In a sense, our bottom-up approach has placed the people of the community at the center of the study, and we hope that future work will follow this example.







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# Appendix

## TABLES

**Table 14. San Francisco Basque Club Members' Place of Birth**

Basque Country (52.2%)			
South (19.3%)	North (33%)	U.S. (43.5%)	Outside the U.S. (4.3%)
Nafarroa (17.5%)	Nafarroa Beherea (26.1%)	California (42.2%)	Colombia, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Spain
Bizkaia (1.2%)	Lapuri (5.6%)	Bay Area (39.1%)	
Gipuzkoa (0.6%)	Zuberoa (1.24%)	Outside California: Idaho, Texas (1.3%)	
Araba (0%)			

**Table 15. Number of Basque Club Memberships Held by Members of San Francisco Basque Club**

	Basque Club
1 club	6.21%
2 clubs	44.72%
3 clubs	28%
4 clubs	35%

**Table 16. San Francisco Basque Club Members' Membership in Other Clubs**

Spanish	French	Basque
11.2%	30.43%	48%

**Table 17. San Francisco Basque Club membership by gender**

	Basque Club
Male	70.2%
Female	29.8%

**Table 18. San Francisco Basque Club Members by Age**

	Basque Club
18-30	10.5%
31-45	26.7%
46-60	13.6%
61-75	37.26%
Older than 75	11.8%
Over 46	62.73%
Over 61	49.06%

**Table 19. San Francisco Basque Club Members by Heritage**

	Basque Club
Immigrant generation (Born in the Basque Country)	52.17%
Parent immigrated (1 <sup>st</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	38.5%
Grandparent immigrated (2 <sup>nd</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	2.5%
Other heritage	6.8%

**Table 20a. San Francisco Basque Club's Members by Citizenship**

	Basque Club
Spanish	14.3%
French	40.37%
U.S.	90.06%

**Table 20b. San Francisco Basque Club Membership  
by Number of Citizenships Held**

	Basque Club
1 citizenship	54.65%
2 citizenship	45.34%

**Table 21a. San Francisco Basque Club Languages Spoken by Members**

	Basque Club
French	57.1%
Spanish	65.2%
Basque	64%
English	100%



**Table 21b. San Francisco Basque Number of Languages Spoken by Members**

	Basque Club
1 language	8.1%
2 languages	29.2%
3 languages	31%
4 languages	31.6%

**Table 22. Basque Cultural Center Members' Place of Birth**

Basque Country (52.8%)			
South (17.5%)	North (35.3%)	U.S. (44.6%)	Outside the U.S. (2.7%)
Nafarroa (14.8%)	Nafarroa Beherea (29%)	California (43.2%)	France, Italy,
Bizkaia (1.8%)	Lapurdi (4.5%)	Bay Area (40%)	Peru, Spain
Gipuzkoa (0.9%)	Zuberoa (1.8%)	Outside California: Idaho,	
Araba (0%)		Nevada, Texas (3.2%)	

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**Table 23. Number of Basque club Memberships Held by Members of the Basque Cultural Center**

	BCC
1 club	29.27%
2 clubs	37.83%
3 clubs	17.56%
4 clubs	15.31%

**Table 24. Basque Cultural Center Members' Membership in Other Clubs**

Spanish	French	Basque
7.65%	32.43%	41.9%

**Table 25. Basque Cultural Center Members by Gender**

	BCC
Male	63%
Female	37%

**Table 26. Basque Cultural Center Members by Age**

	BCC
18-30	10%
31-45	23.8%
46-60	17.1%
61-75	36.5%
Older than 75	12.6%
Over 46	66.21%
Over 61	49.09%

**Table 27. Basque Cultural Center Members by Heritage**

	BCC
Immigrant generation (Born in the Basque Country)	52.7%
Parent immigrated (1 <sup>st</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	39.63%
Grandparent immigrated (2 <sup>nd</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	3.6%
Other heritage	4.05%

**Table 28a. Basque Cultural Center Members by Citizenship**

	BCC
Spanish	11.7%
French	44.6%
U.S.	91.4%

**Table 28b. Basque Cultural Center Members by Number of Citizenships Held**

	BCC
1 citizenship	52.25%
2 citizenship	47.74%

**Table 29a. Basque Cultural Center Languages Spoken by Members**

	BCC
French	62.6%
Spanish	60.3%
Basque	72.5%
English	100%

**Table 29b. Basque Cultural Center Membership by Number of Languages Spoken**

	BCC
1 language	7.2%
2 languages	24.3%
3 languages	34.2%
4 languages	34.2%

**Table 30. Marin-Sonoma Members' Place of Birth**

Basque Country (66%)			
South (23.7%)	North (42.3%)	U.S. (31%)	Outside the U.S. (3.1%)
Nafarroa (20.7%)	Nafarroa Beherea (35.1%)	California (31%)	Mexico, Spain
Gipuzkoa (2%)	Zuberoa (4.1%)	Bay Area (29.9%)	
Bizkaia (1%)	Lapurdi (3.1%)	Outside California:	
Araba (0%)		(0%)	

**Table 31. Number of Basque Club Memberships Held  
by Members of Marin-Sonoma**

	Marin-Sonoma
1 club	5.15%
2 clubs	22.7%
3 clubs	37.1%
4 clubs	51.51%

**Table 32. Marin-Sonoma's Members' Membership in Other Clubs**

Spanish	French	Basque
12.4%	33%	60%

**Table 33. Marin-Sonoma's Members by Gender**

	Marin-Sonoma
Male	78.35%
Female	21.64%

**Table 34. Marin-Sonoma's Members by Age**

	Marin-Sonoma
18-30	7.21%
31-45	17.52%
46-60	16.5%
61-75	43.3%
Older than 75	15.46%
Over 46	75.25%
Over 61	58.76%

**Table 35. Marin-Sonoma's Members by Heritage**

	Marin-Sonoma
Immigrant generation (Born in the Basque Country)	66%
Parent immigrated (1 <sup>st</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	31%
Grandparent immigrated (2 <sup>nd</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	0%
Other heritage	3.1%

**Table 36a. Marin-Sonoma's Members by Citizenship**

	Marin-Sonoma
Spanish	18.55%
French	44.32%
U.S.	88.65%

**Table 36b. Marin-Sonoma's Membership by Number of Citizenships Held**

	Marin-Sonoma
1 citizenship	48.45%
2 citizenship	51.54%

**Table 37a. Marin-Sonoma's Languages Spoken by Members**

	Marin-Sonoma
French	62%
Spanish	74.2%
Basque	69.1%
English	100%

**Table 37b. Marin-Sonoma's Number of Languages Spoken by Members**

Marin-Sonoma	
1 language	3.1%
2 languages	25.7%
3 languages	34%
4 languages	37.1%

**Table 38. Anaitasuna's Members' Place of Birth**

Basque Country (65.1%)			
South (30.2%)	North (34.8%)	U.S. (30%)	Outside the U.S. (4.5%)
Nafarroa (25.7%)	Nafarroa Beherea (28.8%)	California (30%)	Colombia, Mexico, Spain
Gipuzkoa (3%)	Lapurdi (4.5%)	Bay Area (28.8%)	
Bizkaia (1.5%)	Zuberoa (1.5%)	Outside California:	
Araba (0%)		(0%)	

**Table 39. Number of Basque Club Memberships Held by Members of Anaitasuna**

Anaitasuna	
1 club	3.03%
2 clubs	9.1%
3 clubs	36.36%
4 clubs	51.5%

**Table 40. Anaitasuna's Members' Membership in Other Clubs**

Spanish	French	Basque
21.21%	24.24%	75.75%

**Table 41. Anaitasuna's Members by Gender**

	Anaitasuna
Male	78.8%
Female	21.2%

**Table 42. Anaitasuna's Members by Age**

	Anaitasuna
18-30	10%
31-45	19.7%
46-60	13.6%
61-75	48.5%
Older than 75	9.1%
Over 46	71.2%
Over 61	57.6%

**Table 43. Anaitasuna's Members by Heritage**

	Anaitasuna
Immigrant generation (Born in the Basque Country)	65.15%
Parent immigrated (1 <sup>st</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	28.8%
Grandparent immigrated (2 <sup>nd</sup> generation born outside the Basque Country)	1.5%
Other heritage	4.5%

**Table 44a. Anaitasuna's Members by Citizenship**

	Anaitasuna
Spanish	24.24%
French	30.3%
U.S.	84.8%



**Table 44b. Anaitasuna's Members by Number of Citizenships Held**

	Anaitasuna
1 citizenship	60.6%
2 citizenship	39.4%

**Table 45a. Anaitasuna Languages Spoken by Members**

	Anaitasuna
French	47%
Spanish	60.5%
Basque	62.12%
English	100%

**Table 45b. Anaitasuna Number of Languages Spoken by Members**

	Anaitasuna
1 language	1.5%
2 languages	34.84%
3 languages	39.4%
4 languages	24.24%

Eusko Jurlaritzaren Argitalpen Zerbitzu Nagusia

Servicio Central de Publicaciones del Gobierno Vasco

ISBN: 978-84-457-2938-0



28 €