

What's Happening

I N C A L I F O R N I A ?

BY LAWRENCE GABLE

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The Golden Gate Bridge Celebrates its 75th!

The San Francisco Bay is a magnificent place. About 40 percent of California's water flows through it. It provides habitat for fish and

birds, and is home to one of America's most beautiful cities. At the entrance to the bay stands a great landmark, the Golden Gate Bridge. In May the city is celebrating the bridge's 75th anniversary.

Building a bridge over the Golden Gate's waters was once only a dream. For more than 100 years people took ferry boats to and from San Francisco. In the 1920s and 1930s the automobile industry was growing though. The pressure to build a bridge grew. The designer of the Golden Gate Bridge was Joseph Strauss. He and his crew built it in less than 4 years.

The Golden Gate Bridge is a suspension bridge. That means that cables hold the bridge up. The bridge opened to pedestrians on May 27, 1937, and to vehicles on May 28. At that time it was the world's highest and longest suspension bridge. It stretches 1.7 miles from San Francisco to the counties to the north.

In addition to its beautiful design, people also love the bridge's color. The color is called "international orange." It is pretty, and it makes seeing the bridge easier in the fog. Because of the wind, moisture and salt air, workers paint the bridge constantly.

The bridge always has served two functions.

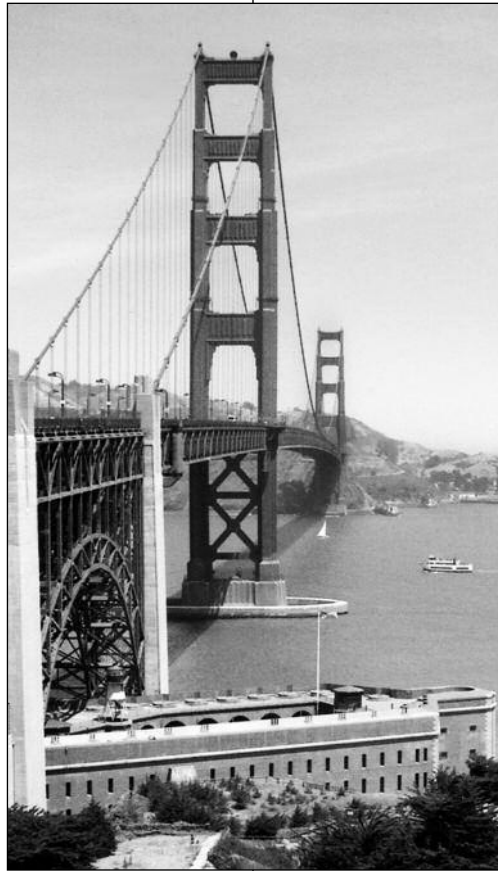
First, it is a working bridge. Every day 112,000 vehicles cross it. Second, it attracts about 10 million tourists a year. On summer days 10,000 pedestrians and 6,000 cyclists go there.

The bridge has had celebrations in the past. When it opened in 1937, the celebration lasted for a week. Then in 1987 there was a celebration for the 50th anniversary. Officials closed the bridge to traffic and invited the public to walk across it. About 300,000 people showed up. After a while people could barely move, and the bridge even started to sag a little. After that scary experience, officials decided to celebrate away from the bridge this year.

The celebrations this year begin on May 26–27.

They will take place on four miles of the bayfront, from below the bridge to Pier 39. People will see a boat parade, classic cars, dance performances and history exhibits. They can also hear music and eat good food. On Sunday evening fireworks will end the celebration.

Museums and arts organizations around the city are celebrating too. Their public programs are all called "75 Tributes to the Bridge," and they will continue through 2012. People all around the world know the Golden Gate Bridge. After 75 years it remains one of the world's most recognizable, and most beautiful, structures.



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BIOGRAPHY

CHARLES FRACCHIA

FOUNDER, SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Charles Fracchia was born and raised in San Francisco. As a historian, he has learned a lot about the city's past. He also has a special connection to the Golden Gate Bridge. Mr. Fracchia was born just a couple of months after the bridge opened.

As a boy, reading was his passion. Regularly he borrowed books from the public library. The librarians there knew him, and they let him get more books than the rules allowed. Charles developed a great interest in both history and literature. In fact, when he attended the University of San Francisco, he studied Medieval History.

After college Mr. Fracchia did a number of things. He joined the seminary to become a priest, but quit after a year. He attended law school, but never practiced law. In the early 1960s he got a job in investment banking. He traveled to New York once a month for business. It remains one of his favorite cities.

A fun and interesting thing happened in 1967. He met a man in San Francisco who wanted to start a music magazine. Mr. Fracchia gave him some money to get it started, and it became *Rolling Stone* magazine. Mr. Fracchia stayed connected to the magazine for about seven years. During that time he got to meet famous musicians like John Lennon and Bob Dylan.

In the early 1970s Mr. Fracchia wanted to return to academics. He started teaching classes

at City College of San Francisco. He also studied and earned three graduate degrees in Library Science, History and Theology. He became a librarian at City College, and has been working there ever since.



"I needed an outlet for my historical interests."

In those years Mr. Fracchia also turned to writing and history. Now he has written 14 books. Five of them are about the history of San Francisco. In 1988 he founded the San Francisco Historical Society. At that time he was giving walking tours of the city, so he gave people applications to join. He also taught an evening class and gave applications to students. Quickly it had 3,500 members and a solid beginning.

Things started happening fast. The city's history museum became part of the Historical Society. Then the city offered the organization the old U.S. Mint building. The building needs a lot of work, but someday it will become the permanent home to the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society. In the meantime it offers tours, lectures and temporary exhibits.

In May Charles Fracchia is retiring from City College. He will enjoy not going off to work every day. That will give him more time with his wife. He will read, write and go to movies. He also will have more time just to enjoy San Francisco, the city that he knows so well and loves so much.

Background Information

The day before the Golden Gate Bridge opened to traffic in 1937, 200,000 people crossed by foot and on roller skates. More than two billion vehicles have crossed it since then.

Organizers of the 75th anniversary celebration are inviting the public to share personal stories and photos of the bridge at

<http://goldengatebridge75.org/celebrate/share-stories-photos.html>

Vertical cables (“suspenders”) connect the bridge’s roadway to two huge cables that bear the weight. The two cables are fixed in concrete at anchorages on each end of the bridge, and pass through the two main towers.

At its center the bridge’s roadway is 200 feet above the water. During construction there was a safety net to prevent workers from falling into the bay. It saved the lives of 19 men, but 11 men did die. Ten of them died at once when their scaffolding collapsed and fell through the net.

Now the Golden Gate Bridge (4,200 feet) is the 9th-longest suspension bridge in the world. The longest is the Akashi-Kaikyo Bridge in Japan (6,529 feet).

Even though pedestrians enjoy great views from the bridge, it is far from calm. Often it is windy. Being close to traffic is noisy, and the vehicles cause the bridge to move up and down a little.

Autos pay a \$6 toll when crossing southbound into San Francisco. There is no toll going northbound.

The bridge has separate paths for pedestrians and bicyclists. Pedestrians use the east side and can go onto the bridge only during daylight hours. Cyclists use the west side and can cross day or night. Skaters and pets are not allowed on the bridge at all.

On May 7 the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy began 45-minute guided tours of the bridge.

According to the Golden Gate Bridge, Highway and Transportation District, the bridge has only been closed only three times due to weather.

Engineers have been retrofitting and reinforcing the bridge so that it will be able to survive an earthquake with a magnitude of 8.3. Seismologists think that is the largest magnitude possible for a quake in the Bay Area. They believe that the 1906 earthquake was a 7.9.

The American Society of Civil engineers has declared the Golden Gate Bridge one of the modern wonders of the world.

Topics for Discussion and Writing

Pre-reading:

- Identify a few landmarks in cities in the U.S. and around the world.

Comprehension:

- Give some details about the Golden Gate Bridge’s location, construction and design.

Beyond the Text:

- Tell about a landmark that you have seen, or would like to see someday.
- Describe a way other than suspension cables that bridges get held up.
- Name some things other than the Golden Gate Bridge that distinguish San Francisco from other cities.

Vocabulary

Article-specific: landmark; anniversary; ferryboat; crew; cable; to sag; tribute

High-use: habitat; pressure; designer; vehicle; function; exhibit; structure

Sources

San Francisco Chronicle May 7, March 12, 2012

San Jose Mercury News April 27, 2012

Montreal Gazette February 25, 2012

Chicago Tribune October 16, 2011

www.goldengatebridge75.org

www.goldengatebridge.org

CA Curricular Standards (4–12)

English - Language Arts

Reading 1.0 Vocabulary Development

2.0 Comprehension (Informational Materials)

Writing 1.0 Writing Strategies

2.0 Writing Applications

ELD—Intermediate and Advanced

Reading Vocabulary Development / Comprehension

Writing Strategies and Applications

History-Social Science

4.1; 4.2; 4.4