

VOLUME 29, NUMBER 9
JUNE 2006
www.pahistory.org

The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Annual Dinner Meeting

Wednesday, June 7

Social hour: 6:00

Dinner: 7:00

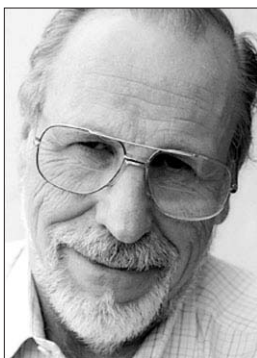
Sheraton Palo Alto

625 El Camino Real

Palo Alto

Unraveling History's Mysteries & Building Community Memory

SPEAKER:
Jay Thorwaldson
Editor,
Palo Alto Weekly



Jay Thorwaldson has been editor of the award-winning Palo Alto Weekly since June of 2000, but his journalistic and observer role in the Palo Alto area goes back 40 years. He is certainly in a position to discuss with authority the mystery and memory of our community. In 1966, he was assigned the Palo Alto City beat for the former Palo Alto Times, later the Peninsula Times Tribune. He covered city government, the community at large, parts of Stanford, the environment, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, regional transportation and air quality and other issues that came along, including police and fire stories.

He helped police break a secret neo-Nazi terror group in 1968 that had bombed the home of a liberal Palo Alto City Council

member, and broken Kepler's bookstore windows. After he left the Times Tribune in mid-1979, he did community work for two years and worked to keep the Stanford Theater from being demolished or converted to office use, prior to David Packard becoming involved.

In 1980-81, he also helped block a huge land development plan by Mobil Land Co. on Bair Island off Redwood City, prior to joining the Palo Alto Medical Foundation to become public affairs director. He has been a member of the boards or advisory boards for diverse community groups, including both the Chamber of Commerce and the Peninsula Conservation Center, and covering an age range from Adolescent Counseling Service to the Senior Coordinating Council (now Avenidas). He taught newswriting for five years at Stanford University.

He has three sons and four grandchildren, and enjoys scuba diving, playing in the desert and Sierra, travel and editing the Weekly.

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 193 • Palo Alto, CA 94302
650.326.3355 • www.pahistory.org

Susan Bright Winn, *Editor*

Harriette Shakes, *Design*

Omega Printing, *Printing*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Susan Bright Winn Judy Leahy
President *First Vice President*

Joe Shakes Jan Murphy
Second Vice President *Recording Secretary*

Carol Murden Dick Rosenbaum
Corresponding Secretary *Treasurer*

Steve Staiger
Historian

Gwen Barry William Bloom
Beth Bunnenberg Carolyn Caddes
Brian George Georgie Gleim
Karen Holman Ruth Lacey
Michael Litfin Peggy McKee
Carol Clifford Mitchell Tom Wyman

The Palo Alto Historical Association, a non-profit organization, was established in 1948 as successor to an earlier organization founded in 1913. Its main objectives are:

- Collect, organize, and preserve materials pertaining to the history and heritage of Palo Alto.
- Spread information about Palo Alto's history by means of programs, displays, and publications.
- Recognize and preserve historic sites and structures.

The Guy Miller Archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association are stored at the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road.

Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month (except for August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 p.m.

General meetings are held the first Sunday of each month (October–December, February–May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 p.m. Meetings include speakers. The final general meeting of the year is held in June and includes a dinner and a program.

The public is welcome at all meetings.

PAHA HERITAGE PROGRAMS
≈ CHANNEL 30 ≈

MAY: THE 1906 EARTHQUAKE

JUNE: "A WOMAN OF CERTAIN IMPORTANCE"

SCHEDULE

Wednesdays 8:00 p.m.

Thursdays Noon

Saturdays 1:00 p.m.

Videos of past PAHA meetings can be checked out from the Main Library's History Desk during historian's hours:

Tuesday evenings

Thursday afternoons

**A NOTE
FROM THE
PRESIDENT**

**Susan
Bright Winn**

I discovered the collection of Palo Alto memorabilia and photographs back in the '60s, when all the material was filed in unsecured cabinets at the Main Library on Newell. Later all the letters, newspaper clippings and photos dating back to the 1880s were placed in locked cabinets, but the historian on duty would gladly open the drawers for you, and arrange for copies of any photo or document that you wished.

Over time, the photos in the collection were being damaged, and it was this worrisome fact that motivated the late Betty Rogaway in 1995 to suggest that we use part of the revenue from sale of our *Palo Alto, A Centennial History* to purchase a scanner. If we scanned our photos, they would no longer be handled by the public and would thereby be protected against further wear and tear. A committee was formed to explore this idea.

First we learned that if you wanted a scanner, you had to have a computer, and a printer, and software. And you had to have a system whereby the public could view the scanned photo images. Frankly, there were years of hit-and-miss explorations into an existing technology only to see it become obsolete even as we tried to master it. We faced these challenges before there was even a hint of going online.

We had our work cut out for us. We contacted other groups with photo collections—how were they handling this new world? We visited other venues, corresponded with groups in other states, looked at software, chased promising leads time and again, only to be frustrated by yet another inappropriate solution.

Over time, however, a process did emerge. The fact that there are now 1,458 historic photos of Palo Alto accessible to anyone with a computer (www.pahistory.org), and a set of procedures in place for adding the remaining 9,000 photos, speaks highly of those involved.

Let me name names: the committee overseeing the project had as its first members Marda Buccholz, Steve Staiger, Barney Tanner and myself, and later Beth Bunnenberg, Warren Kallenbach and Tom Wyman. Professional cataloguer Michael LaPointe joined the team in 2001, and contributed much time and effort working with Steve Staiger to develop cataloguing parameters. In addition, he trained his replacement cataloguers. We are extremely grateful for all that Michael contributed to this project.

Current cataloguers Faith Van Liere, Diane Claerbout and Kathy Hyde deserve a note of appreciation, as do Lois Rehor and Lori Hastings, cataloguers now retired. Barbara Lawson, Molly Meschke and Olive Borgstadt are photo describers, and Terry Jue and Lynn Murphy of Digitalfish Designs facilitate placement of photos on the website. These volunteers are all especially deserving of our thanks and appreciation.

Cost of this project has been born not only by PAHA, but by the City of Palo Alto and a Cable Coop grant as well. From Betty Rogaway's suggestion 11 years ago to today has been quite a journey, which will reap rewards for years to come.

Congratulations!
PAHA Board of Directors 2006-2007

The Palo Alto Historical Association Board of Directors is pleased to announce that it has elected the following officers for the upcoming year:

President:	Dick Rosenbaum
First Vice President:	Judy Leahy
Second Vice President:	Joe Shakes
Recording Secretary:	Jan Murphy
Treasurer:	Bob Jack

READING THE OLD NEWSPAPERS ABOUT OREGON AVE.

Reading articles and letters to the editor published in old Palo Alto newspapers is enlightening. It seems that “the Palo Alto way” of discussing issues to death before taking action has been going on for a long, long time. Take Oregon Avenue, for example. There are many citizens in Palo Alto today who clearly recall the animosity between the pro’s and the con’s for converting Oregon Avenue into an expressway, a project which finally did go through in 1962. From reading the old newspapers, it turns out that Oregon Avenue had been the center of dispute long before the question of an expressway came up.

In the “olden” days of 1933, the Boards of Public Safety and Public Works recommended to the City Council that due to “an increase of volume of traffic on city streets and the consequent hazard to life and property” that steps be taken to condition Oregon Avenue from Bayshore Highway to Middlefield Road. Residents of Oregon were opposed to this development, pointing out that there were no sidewalks along narrow Oregon (see 1932 photo), and objecting to the relief of Embarcadero Road at the expense of Oregon Avenue. Oregon was paved and became the thoroughfare despite objections.

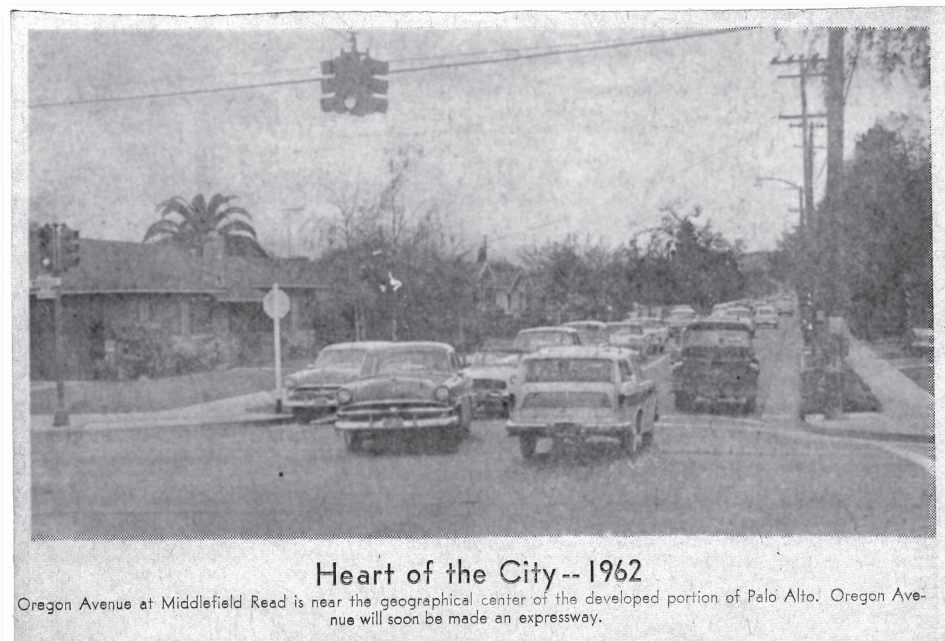
A discussion later raged for years about the need for an underpass at Alma connecting either Oregon or California Avenue to Page Mill Road. The voters finally chose the underpass at Oregon, which was completed in 1959. By 1962, however, Oregon was still clogged (see photo), and voters were once again asked to decide if they wanted to convert Oregon from the proverbial tree-lined suburban street to a modern expressway. Some feared that a freeway would be built. Compromises were made along the way, deciding that an expressway would be preferable to a freeway, that streets connecting north and south Palo Alto remain open, and that landscaping be included in the project.

The widening of Oregon resulted in the moving of 89 houses, 16 within Palo Alto and 73 to neighboring communities. The project did change the face of Palo Alto, but given what might have been, we are beholden to past decision-makers for such a beautiful “parkway.”



On the outskirts of Palo Alto-- 1932

Oregon Avenue was a country road 30 years ago. Photo of the Oregon-Middlefield Road intersection looks west. Note rural mailboxes at the left.



Heart of the City-- 1962

Oregon Avenue at Middlefield Road is near the geographical center of the developed portion of Palo Alto. Oregon Avenue will soon be made an expressway.

The above two photos are from an article in the Palo Alto Times prior to construction of the Oregon Expressway. (PAHA Archives.)

VOTE YES TO PASS THE UNDERPASS

SAVE LIVES • SAVE TIME • SAVE MONEY

- ✓ There have been tragic accidents at the California Avenue and Page Mill Road crossings. Protection by the fire and police is seriously hampered. The threats are steadily increasing.
- ✓ 32,000 vehicles converge on the California-Alma intersection daily. The waste of time and congestion is appalling. Predicted growth will make this problem worse.
- ✓ The Citizens' Advisory Committee for Capital Improvements has endorsed the proposed pay-as-you-go financing plan as the best method. Payment will come from the City's general fund of which industry contributes more than 40%.

1957

Campaign flyer, 1957. (PAHA Archives.)

“FORLORN NO MORE”



The African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME) Zion Church was the first Black congregation formed in Palo Alto, in 1918. The cornerstone for the church was laid in 1925 at 725 Ramona, and the building was sold to the PA Medical Clinic in 1963 when the congregation moved to Middlefield Rd. For years the building stood empty and forlorn, but that is about to change. Menlo Equities has acquired the entire block and will restore not only the building but also the French Laundry on Homer while they develop the rest of the block into offices, retail space and residences. We're looking forward to the old AME Zion church being "forlorn no more." (Photo PAHA Archives.)

INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PAHA MEMBER?

Here's how... Pick up a brochure at any library or one of our general meetings. Or, send your name, address, phone number and email address to

PAHA, P.O. Box 193
Palo Alto, CA 94302

with a check for your choice of membership: Individual: \$25;
Family: \$40; Sustaining: \$60;
Business: \$100; Life: \$350.



PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Join us for the... *Annual Dinner*

For a reservation form, see
www.pahistory.org

Jay Thorwaldson, Speaker
Editor, Palo Alto Weekly

“Unraveling History’s Mysteries &
Building Community Memory”

June 7, 2006
Social hour: 6:00 p.m.
Dinner: 7:00 p.m.
Sheraton Palo Alto
625 El Camino Real, Palo Alto

The Tall Tree JUNE 2006

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

www.pahistory.org

P.O. BOX 193

PALO ALTO, CA 94302

NEXT MEETING:

PAHA *Annual Dinner*

June 7, 6:00 p.m.

For reservations, see

www.pahistory.org

