

The Tall Tree

DECEMBER 2012
VOLUME 36, Nº 3

NEWSLETTER of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING * FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC * REFRESHMENTS SERVED

Sunday, December 2 at 2:00 – 4:00 PM
Lucie Stern Community Center, Palo Alto
1305 Middlefield Road

Host: Karen Holman, City Council Member

PALO ALTO *Vignettes*



KAREN HOLMAN
CITY COUNCIL MEMBER
Host of "Vignettes," PAHA's
annual December program

TREES HAVE, SINCE THE EARLIEST TIMES, PLAYED an important role in what is now Palo Alto. Before there was even a thought of Stanford University or University Avenue, El Palo Alto stood as a marker to travelers. Trees became a focal point when automobiles threatened to take their place in and along our streets. There is a less known story of a grouping of trees that stands tall to represent individuals' sacrifices and accomplishments. The story of the Olympic Grove deserves to be honored and will be at the December program.

One could argue that aside from our trees, perhaps no other has had a more significant influence on our community than Lucie Stern. We will be treated to personal stories by someone who knew her as a family friend. The Historical Association is fortunate to have the opportunity to share with you these personal recollections about the woman who became known as Palo Alto's Godmother.

These and other stories will be presented in vignette form to entertain, inform and even inspire us as we enter the heart of the holiday season and the time of year when we reflect on our blessings and mourn our losses. Even in our losses, we can cherish the memories and the gratitude of having had the time to share.

It is our privilege to offer this annual opportunity to the public to come together to honor both.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Mark Weiss

THE PERFECT GIFT! NEW PAHA BOOKS...

PALO ALTO REMEMBERED

by Matt Bowling

PAHA's new history of our town told in Matt's engaging style! \$25 To sample a chapter, see paloaltoremembered.com



LUCIE STERN, PALO ALTO'S FAIRY GODMOTHER by Michael Litfin

A new edition of an old favorite is here! Just in time to make a delightful small gift for a local history buff. \$10

Books are available directly from PAHA at our December 2 meeting. And—if you miss the meeting—you can pick them up at Bell's Books, Books Inc. and the Village Stationer in Palo Alto and at Kepler's in Menlo Park.

IN MEMORIAM

Betty Britton
Gary Fazzino
Jessie Gaspar
Alice Wilder Hall

Without Apologies to Herb Caen



FROM THE PAHA PRESIDENT
John Hackmann

(since I always use four) June 19, 1947: A Palo Alto drives up a car to Beverly Hills house.... lets some one out.... drives away.... within 24 hours Bugey Siegel is shot dead at that house. SO, who WAS that Palo Alto, and why did he drive to Bugey's house that night? Interested minds may want to know.... email me with the answers!....

What does \$0.25 buy today? Well, it buys teaching photographs of making and building with Adobe bricks.... and OFF THE WALL! A Guide to Greg Brown's Murals in Palo Alto with 14 full color mural stickers! What fun from the Art Center.... and American Rooms in Miniature, this book owned! by the Art Institute of Chicago, home to many happy college afternoons for me.

The closest 'miniature room reconstructed' is the Soberanes House in Monterey? Have you been there?.... maybe our new museum will have room for some reconstructed miniatures, the size of small paintings.... of course in St Louis, the Art Museum has a dozen full size rooms....

Maybe PAHA will gain a few rooms.... I am inviting someone to donate an entire house furnishings and all to PAHA so we may freeze in time . . I really wish I had done this with one house I can recall...., wouldn't that be a great resource?.... There is such a house in St Louis, from that newspaper man who is credited with the origin of "the column" such as this one.... he also had the greatest collection in the world I am told of mechanical small toys.... those cars that work with tires and steering wheels.... looked a lot like my parents basement.... in miniature.... almost all was lost in a fire.... are our archives in fire proof containers yet?.... Let me know.... Anyone recall that name of the first columnist?.... He wrote about whatever he liked....

HIPPIE was the license plate on the bus or van at Peet's last week . . was that yours, PAHA member?.... I can think of one or two who would be proud with that moniker.... no, not THAT "moniker".... So all these names of street, named after real kids.... where are they now?.... Ruined or lifted up by a life of near local celebrity?.... How do you build on that.... let me hear from Palo Alto's "street kids"....

A New Edition of a PAHA Favorite—Lucie Stern

THE HOLIDAYS ARE HERE, AND MANY OF OUR MEMBERS may be searching for just the perfect gift for a friend, colleague or family member who has memories of or wants to know more about our good city. Consider giving PAHA books! Our PAHA Publications and Marketing Committees have published two books this year—a new title, *Palo Alto Remembered* by Matt Bowling—and a new edition of a beloved older title, *Lucie Stern, Palo Alto's Fairy Godmother*, by Michael Litfin.

Who was Lucie Stern? Palo Alto has been immeasurably enriched by the generosity of this remarkable woman. Her first project was the Community Center that bears her name. Then followed the Children's Theatre, the Boy Scout House and the Children's Library, and much more. In his book, *Lucie Stern*, Michael Litfin traces the life story of this remarkable woman and her gifts to Palo Alto. This new edition also includes an memoir about the author, Michael Litfin, by Pat Briggs, and an addendum about Lucie as benefactress to the local Boy Scouts by Larry Christenson. Join us December 2 as we welcome our new book with a personal recollection of Lucie Stern during our "Vignettes" program.

California Native—the Buckeye Tree

CALIFORNIA'S NATIVE TREES ARE CELEBRATED AS the biggest, tallest, oldest trees in the world: The Bristlecone Pine is the oldest tree; the Giant Sequoia of the Sierra is the largest; and the Coast Redwood is the tallest; our local specimen, El Palo Alto, is considerably shorter than the 350 feet reached by the giants found in the forests of Humboldt County.

Another native tree that has adapted superbly to the California environment is the California Buckeye (*Aesculus californica*); it is commonly found on slopes and canyons near streams throughout the Coast Range and the Sierra Nevada foothills. It also grows along Junipero Serra and Alpine Road. As I write this column, the fruits hang on the bare limbs like Christmas ornaments on a Charlie Brown Christmas tree. Soon, after some more rain, the fruit husk will split and drop the glossy brown seeds, often the size of a golf ball.



FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
Steve Staiger

The California Buckeye can be found among the oaks and bay laurel. It is often a multi-trunked tree or large shrub, seldom growing taller than 30 feet. It remains one of my favorite trees because it is a true Californian, so attuned to the California seasons that it is the first tree to leaf out in the

spring, and I mean our spring, February or even late January. In the heat of summer, when it has not rained for several months, the leaves turn brown and drop. Visitors comment, incorrectly, on the number of dying trees found alongside Alpine Road in August and September. Our California Buckeye is not dead!

Buckeye seeds are poisonous, though they can be eaten if the poison is leached out, much like the acorn. Native people used the ground-up seeds to catch fish in the local streams. As a boy growing up in Marin County, we played “war” in the local creek beds using the buckeye seeds as weapons. Our aim and arm strength were poor enough that no one was seriously harmed. The danger from unseen poison oak posed a much greater threat.

Today we collect Buckeye seeds to use as paperweights at the History Desk. I continue to be amazed by the number of visitors who are mystified by the seeds. Although the seeds can be found in and around Palo Alto, very few people seem familiar with the California Buckeye fruit. Some people are familiar with the buckeyes of Ohio, but they are surprised by the huge size of the California variety.

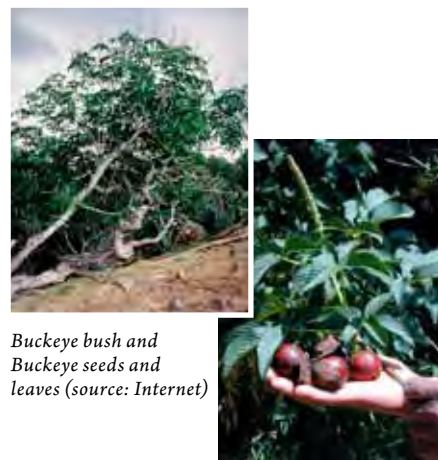
Title IX Passed 40 Years Ago

MAKING SPORTS AVAILABLE TO GIRLS AND WOMEN in schools and colleges gave Stanford the opportunity to acquire a notable record: 709 wins to 149 losses in the 27 years that Tara VanDerveer has coached women's basketball there. VanDerveer graduated from Indiana University in 1975, and while there, she held the starting guard position on the college team. As the Stanford coach, she now is recognized as one of the top coaches in collegiate and international women's basketball. She is the author of the book, *Shooting from the Outside*, about the 1996 Olympic and National Team experience. Games at Stanford are now in process, with schedule and location information available online.

Heritage Program on Channel 30 The December television program will feature Bob Moss, who spoke at the Palo Alto Historical Association's monthly public program in November. Bob Moss discussed his activism over the almost forty years that he has attended City Council meetings. The broadcast schedule is Wednesdays at 8 PM, Thursdays at 10:30 AM, and Saturdays at 1 PM.



El Palo Alto shown on a 1904 postcard (PAHA, Guy Miller Archives)



Buckeye bush and Buckeye seeds and leaves (source: Internet)

Note to Readers: as the editors of the Tall Tree become more “green,” we offer you the option of receiving your Tall Tree digitally. If you are interested, please send your request (include your preferred email address) to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace, at bdgw@pacbell.net.

Oral Histories: are an invaluable method to preserve local history. To volunteer, help record, or give an oral history yourself, contact: Carol Mitchell at carolcmitchell@sbcglobal.net.

Our mission is to collect, preserve and make available to the public information about the history of Palo Alto.

History Jaunts

Palo Alto Art Center and Canopy: The current exhibit at the newly renovated Art Center includes the work of Angelo Buenning Filo, a local photographer who incorporates tree photos from the community. She said that her Palo Alto Forest exhibit was inspired by Canopy.

Visiting the Palo Alto Art Center and participating in Canopy's monthly tree walks, beginning January 12 in Southgate, will make our community more conscious of the importance of trees to our environment. Check both organizations by phone or email for more information.

Music at Stanford: The annual Christmas concert at the Memorial Church will be on Tuesday, December 11 at 8:00 PM, featuring the choral group Chanticleer.

On January 12, Bing Concert Hall will celebrate its inaugural season with two free main stage presentations, at 1:00 and at 3:00, featuring Youth Singers, Ragazzi boys chorus, Stanford Talisman, Gunn High School Jazz band, and others. The Hall will be open from 12:30 to 5:00 PM to acquaint the community with the new facility. Call 650.725.2787 for information.

Palo Alto Stanford Heritage's 25th Annual Holiday House Tour Sunday, Dec. 9, 1-4 pm. Tickets for this Crescent Park tour are \$30 per person. For more information, go to www.pastheritage.org.

Popular Annual LEGO Holiday Display: Museum of American Heritage. The LEGO creations that feature train layouts and Bay Area landmarks will be open from December 7 through January 13 from 11:00 – 3:30 Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Admission is \$2 per person, free to MOAH members. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. 351 Homer Avenue, Palo Alto.

For more information go to www.moah.org.

Become a Member of PAHA

We invite you to become a member of the Association and join those who care about Palo Alto and enjoy learning about its history. Your dues support the preservation of our archives, assistance to researchers and dissemination of Palo Alto historical information through our publications. Join today!

Individual \$25 Family \$40
Sustaining \$60 Business/Sponsor \$100 Life \$350

Make check payable to PAHA and mail to: PAHA Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302. Or join online at pahistory.org. Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee. (Note: current members will receive renewal notices in July.)

PAHA's Public Meetings

Meetings, free and open to the public, are held on Sundays at the Lucie Stern Community Center 1305 Middlefield Road.

The next meeting is:

DECEMBER 2

"Vignettes," Stories from Long Time Palo Alto Residents

Hosted by: Karen Holman



Save these dates for 2013

JANUARY 27

Music in Palo Alto: 1910-1920

Speaker: Paul Price

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

John Hackmann, *President*
Gwen Barry, *First Vice President*
Joyce McClure, *Second Vice President*
Bardy Wallace, *Secretary*
Chris Botsford, *Treasurer*
Steve Staiger, *Historian*
Matt Bowling Larry Christenson
Brian George Betty Gerard
George Gleim Douglas Graham
Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre
Marilyn McDonald
Jeanne McDonnell Leah McGarrigle
Carol Clifford Mitchell Diane Rolfe
Harriette Shakes Kent Stormer
Jerry Tinney Tom Wyman

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Jeanne McDonnell, Peggy McKee,
Mary Beth Cebedo Lefebvre
Editors

Harriette Shakes, *Design*
Omega Printing, *Printing*