Chatting over refreshments with the speaker and others who attended is perfect, but if you miss the program there is still hope. Brian George videotapes all public programs, which are shown the following month on local cable public access Wed. 8 pm, Thurs. noon, Sat. 1:00 pm. “Charles Dickens and the Woman’s Club of Palo Alto” is on Channel 30 this month. The last 4 years of PAHA monthly programs are available in DVD format at the main library history desk Tues. 6 to 9 pm and Thurs. 2 to 5 pm.
Remembering Joseph Eichler
by Peggy McKee

If anyone put his stamp on the Bay Area after the Second World War, it was Joseph Eichler, whose company, Eichler Homes, Inc., built approximately 10,000 homes in 20 years, many of them in Palo Alto.

Today, Palo Alto can boast 2,700 Eichler’s! Impressed by the modernism of Frank Lloyd Wright and new construction technologies, Eichler produced his first prototype in 1950 with the now-familiar signature attributes—“an architecture of glass walls, low-pitched roofs, concrete floors, and steel framing…”

As those of you who live in an Eichler know, the atrium played a central role in the design of the house; there, the children could play safely and enjoy relative independence in the “light-flooded” area that brought the “outdoors to indoors.” In addition, “Eichler kitchens were glorious…and remain functional after more than half a century…”

An innovator in the use of materials, Eichler broke new ground in other areas as well: he allowed no restrictions against minority buyers and employed ex-convicts as construction workers; he clustered his homes around a cul-de-sac and provided a neighborhood or community swimming pool rather than individual ones. In 1957, a prospective homeowner could purchase an Eichler for between $18,000 to $25,000! For Eichler enthusiasts, and they are legion, visit www.eichlernetwork.com.

Some of the Palo Alto Eichler homes at Green-meadow National Historic Register District near Alma Street could be affected by the proposed High Speed Rail tracks on the Caltrain right of way down the Peninsula.

(Quotations from Kevin Starr, Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963; pp. 47-8/)

A typical South Palo Alto Eichler home (Guy Miller Archives)
A Trip Like None Other

Last November, on my 58th birthday, I began a quest to visit all 58 California counties before my next birthday. As I write this in early October, I have nearly completed my goal. Only Santa Cruz County remains on my list and I have 5 weeks to go, I think I will make it. Like Don Quixote, my travels have been quite an adventure, but fortunately without any serious difficulties.

I have estimated that my wife and I have traveled nearly 4000 miles across and up and down the state, including short trips into Nevada and Oregon in order to visit every county. Early on I decided that my visits did not require me to stop and stand on the ground in order to qualify. I spent 3 days in Riverside and San Diego counties and less than 5 minutes in Sierra County as I drove on I-80 towards the Nevada state line.

While driving down Highway 99 in Fresno County, as soon as I confirmed that I had crossed into Tulare County, I took the next freeway exit, reversed my direction and headed home. My visit to Inyo County (one of the two counties I had never visited) included a Sunday morning visit to Schat’s Bakkery in Bishop before turning around and crossing over the Tioga Pass. We drove as high as 9,945 feet at Tioga Pass and below sea level alongside the Salton Sea in Imperial County.

Highlights included hiking to the bottom of the beautiful Burney Falls in Shasta County; driving up Monitor Pass (Highway 89) in Alpine and Mono counties; and having lunch with my grandchildren at Hodad’s, an Ocean Beach burger joint featured on the Food Channel’s show, Diners, Drive-ins and Dives.

We drove through an empty Lassen National Park on a Monday morning, past fields of snow in July. I was surprised to realize that Lassen Park is in Shasta County, not Lassen County. Trinity and Lake counties, I discovered, are not on the way to anywhere but themselves. Even remote Alpine County was easier to visit, I drove through it twice.

The quest, nearly complete, was a satisfying goal that constantly reminded me that our state is still full of beautiful and interesting places to visit. I would encourage all of you to include the sights of California among your future travels, even without including all 58 counties.

Voting Makes a Difference

This month, as we ponder commitments and priorities that help us decide who will represent us in government, we could also take a moment to ponder the history of voting in our nation.

One piece of that history puzzle has to do with a curious fact: 72 years after the Declaration of Independence, New Yorkers gathered in a small upstate town, Seneca Falls, and put their signatures on a Declaration of Sentiments which stated that women, too, should be voters. After that convention, it took another 72 years before the Nineteenth Amendment passed to enfranchise women nationwide.

Women probably would not have gained that right throughout the nation in 1920 without the encouraging example of the populous state of California. Women there had won full and equal voting rights on October 10, 1911, when a majority of male California voters marked ‘yes’ on their ballots to approve the proposition.

PAHA will join with other groups, communities, and colleges in the state to celebrate the Centennial of that momentous occasion.
Palo Alto History Museum

The oral and video history group is at work and beginning by recording a series of interviews with local environmentalists. Our community has been blessed by the committed efforts of many who have ensured that our parkland is dedicated for the future; who have worked tirelessly to preserve our Foothills and Baylands; who have developed products that protect our environment through a variety of means.

Our artifacts collection, along with that of the Historical Association, continues to grow, thanks to many who understand the value of keeping a physical record. Too often we have lost artifacts to landfill, garage and estate sales, and lack of care. If you have anything you suspect might be of historical interest, please contact me or Steve Staiger at the History Desk. And remember that today's artifact is tomorrow's history.

On October 24th we had a gathering at the Roth Building, future home of the Museum at 300 Homer Avenue, to express our appreciation to donors, unveil the windows to the future, and talk about project progress and next steps.

The Palo Alto History Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization.
P.O. Box 676, Palo Alto, CA 94302
650.322.3089
kholman@pahistorymuseum.org

PAHA’s Public Meetings to Come

At Lucie Stern Community Center, 2:00 PM

Coming Meetings:

December 6
Vignettes
Hosted by Karen Holman
Project Director, PA History Museum

Programs to be Announced:
January 31, March 7, April 4, May 2
June 2, Annual Dinner

The Tall Tree

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

Next Meeting:
Sunday, November 1
Lucie Stern Community Center
Refreshments will be served.