

NOVEMBER 2009  
VOLUME 33, NUMBER 2

# The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING, FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
Sunday, November 1 at 2:00 PM at the  
Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

## THIS OLD HOUSE



**SPEAKER:**  
**CAROL BLITZER**  
Associate Editor,  
Palo Alto Weekly

THE NOVEMBER PROGRAM PROMISES TO BE ONE OF INTEREST TO PALO ALTO RESIDENTS. We look forward to Carol Blitzer's presentation on the trials and tribulations of her thirty year saga renovating her 1907 home, located at 618 Fulton. She and her husband bought the house in 1980 and researched its history with help from Steve Staiger, who gave them helpful hints on how to proceed with their investigations. The Blitzers have spent the intervening years both restoring and renovating their home. You might be interested in delving more deeply into their story by visiting the website that describes their efforts (see below.)

Carol Blitzer came to the Bay

Area from southern California in the 1970s and, like many of us, made this her permanent home. She, again like many of us in PAHA, is fascinated with Palo Alto history. Long interested in journalism, she is presently an associate editor of the Palo Alto Weekly and edits the "Home & Garden Design" section.



Website resource about the Blitzer house is located at: [http://www.paloaltoonline.com/weekly/morguepdf/2008/2008\\_10\\_31.paw.section2.pdf](http://www.paloaltoonline.com/weekly/morguepdf/2008/2008_10_31.paw.section2.pdf)



*This Old House (Photos on this page are courtesy of Carol Blitzer)*

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.

*The Tall Tree* is published eight times a year by the

**PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

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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.

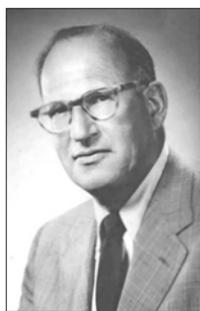
The Guy Miller Archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association are stored at the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road.

Board meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 pm. Schedule of public meetings on p. 4.

# 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.



*Joseph Eichler in 1958  
(Guy Miller Archives)*

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.eichlernet.com](http://www.eichlernet.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.



*Photograph of the light filled interior of an Eichler home, 1950s (Guy Miller Archives)*

(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)*



## BECOME A MEMBER OF PAHA

- Individual \$25
- Family \$49
- Sustaining \$60
- Business/Sponsor \$100
- Life \$350

Make check payable to PAHA and mail to:

PAHA Box 193  
Palo Alto, CA 94302

Or you can join at

[www.pahistory.org](http://www.pahistory.org).

Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee.

# A Trip Like None Other

LAST NOVEMBER, ON MY 58TH BIRTHDAY, I BEGAN A QUEST TO VISIT ALL 58



FROM THE  
DESK OF THE  
HISTORIAN  
Steve Staiger

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 Bakery 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.

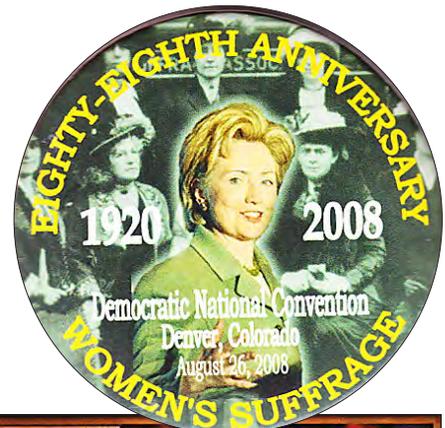
## WELCOME AND THANKS TO NEW MEMBERS

Ruth Anne Gray  
David Woodbury  
*New Life Member*  
Margaret Chai Maloney  
*Special Purpose Donation*  
from Susan Winn  
to honor Brian George and  
all he has done for PAHA

## IN MEMORIAM

### WARREN THOITS

Mr. Thoits died last month at age 87. His family roots went back more than a century in Palo Alto. He graduated from Stanford Law School, founded a local law firm, and managed the family-owned firm of Thoits Bros. Inc., which was a longtime business contributor to PAHA.



# 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 943020

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



*Roth Building, future home of the Palo Alto History Museum*

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**NEXT MEETING:**

Sunday, November 1

Lucie Stern Community Center

Refreshments will be served.

