



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Since 1913

June 2022 Volume 45, No 8

The Palo Alto Historical Association present via Zoom Webinar

PARKEY SHARKEY: **TALES OF PALO ALTO'S ONCE NOTORIOUS CAB DRIVER**

Sunday, June 5, 2022 2:00 – 3:00 pm

Webinar link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84640740741>

Please join us via Zoom as speaker, Jon Kinyon—author and historian—presents the story of notorious Palo Alto cab driver, Parkey Sharkey.

We have all met outlandish characters who leave a lasting impression. Parkey Sharkey was one of those characters. His one-man taxi company serviced all of the bars on the outskirts of Palo Alto, a notoriously dry college town during the 1950s and 1960s. Parkey was a hard drinking cab driver that advertised: “Going any place, from Palo Alto to Tokyo, via the great northern circle route. We also give bodyguard service, foot rubs for the ladies, as well as standard pick-up and delivery service. And if you have had one too many we can get you home in one piece.”

Parkey was also known as a one-time prize-fighter, almost-movie actor, writer of letters to newspaper columnists, frequent guest star on radio and TV shows, and the author of “Whiskey Road”, a self-published book wherein he tells of his adventures as a cabbie. The book was an instant classic in dingy saloons and cocktail lounges from San Francisco to Los Angeles.



Jon Kinyon is a professional film and television editor and freelance writer currently residing in Southern California. He grew up in Palo Alto where his family dates back 5 generations. His interest in Parkey Sharkey began at a young age when he inherited a copy of Sharkey’s book. In 2021, Kinyon republished “Whiskey Road” with the addition of letters from Parkey Sharkey to newspaper columnists.



Details on how to login to the Zoom webinar can be found on our website, www.pahistory.org. You will also find information on how to become a PAHA member, how to receive our newsletters and learn more about future PAHA programs! And don't forget to explore our photograph collection.

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The Palo Alto Historical Association, a 501(c)(3) charitable 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 Cubberley Community Center, K-7. PAHA continues to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic and no appointments are needed during public hours. To contact the Archive or to make an appointment to visit, email steve.staiger@cityofpaloalto.org or call (650) 329-2353.

Until further notice, PAHA board meetings are held via Zoom Meeting at 8pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). Public programs are held via Zoom Webinar at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month (October-December, February-May). Program information and webinar links are available in the Tall Tree newsletters and on our website, www.paha-history.org. The public is welcome to join all programs.

The One and Only: Tom “Sarge” Casey

by PAHA Board member Leslie Mills

If you lived in Palo Alto during the 1950s and 1960s and ventured downtown or to a local ballgame, you probably knew Tom “Sarge” Casey. He routinely walked the downtown area, visiting friends at each business while passing out flowers to them and passers-by. He had a sharp wit, loved to sing and was known for his quips. He was a fixture at the El Camino Ball park where he was in charge. Easily recognizable in his Stanford jacket with his short gray hair and round pale Irish face, he was one of the best known and beloved characters among the locals, especially those involved in local baseball or Stanford sports.



Casey at the bat teaching kids the game of baseball

Born in 1895 in San Francisco, his mother was a school teacher and his father, a police officer. Per a Palo Alto Times article, Casey's father was shot and killed by a drug user in 1908. He and his mother moved to Portland. He attended the University of Oregon from 1915 until he was called to active duty in 1917 and sent to France where he served 16 months as a signal corps dispatch rider and obtained the rank of sergeant. He returned to Portland after the war and went to work for the recreation department. Casey specialized in baseball and organized citywide sport rallies for kids in Portland. He married Gertrude Bernard in 1919 but tragically lost her 2 years later in a car accident. He never remarried. He played semi-pro baseball in Portland from 1917 to 1923 when the onset of arthritis ended his career.

In 1928 Casey sought treatment for his arthritic condition at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Menlo Park.

He stayed there 18 months and decided to never “leave the good climate.”

Casey then moved to Palo Alto where he resumed his love of baseball, working again with local youths. He brought softball from Rinconada to El Camino Park in the 1930s. The park was his baby. He was also the announcer for the games and would sing an unforgettable rendition of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” during the seventh inning stretch. He was the unofficial baseball coach to thousands of kids. Casey was eventually hired by the City of Palo Alto as Custodian at the El Camino Ball Park from 1943 to 1952 making \$303 per month. In 1953, he took over the grounds of the Palo Alto Military Academy (later renamed The Harker School).

Casey was a huge Stanford fan and an honorary member of the Zeta Psi fraternity. He became a legend at Stanford for his annual appearance at Big Game rallies where he was invited to lead the rooters in his own “Give ‘em the Ax-ee-ay” yell. He knew all the Stanford athletes in football, baseball, basketball and more—and they knew him. Most of Stanford's football legends who went on to play professionally counted Casey as a friend including 49er's John Brodie, Frank Albert, Norm Standlee and former 49er head coach Buck Shaw, to name a few. San Francisco's baseball great, Lefty O'Doul, and Stanford basketball great, Hank Luisetti, were on a first name basis with Casey as well.



Ted Kennedy, Casey, and Red Fay at 1965 fundraiser for Kennedy Library

Paul “Red” Fay met Casey in 1940 while Fay was an undergraduate student at Stanford. Fay later served with John F. Kennedy (continued on page 3)

John Greer Descendents

by PAHA Board member Bo Crane

During the April 3rd PAHA webinar program, *The Greer Family: Their Land Was Our Land*, a question was asked regarding any current descendants of John Greer remaining in the area. What follows is a follow up to that question.

John Greer and his wife, Louisa Soto, had five children. Of the five, three never married and the only one to have children was the youngest, Joseph Francis Greer. Joseph married Mary Catherine Haley, and had five children: Esther Louise, John William, Ellen known as "Nellie," Joseph Haley and Mercedes Mary. They were the only grandchildren of John Greer.



Old Greer home on Embarcadero Road and El Camino Real, 1940

Greer's granddaughter Esther Louise married John Vincent Braga at the age of 32. They had one daughter who became a nun. Ellen married late in life and had no children. Joseph married in 1952, at age 52 and the couple had no children. Mercedes never married and died in 1954 at the age 52.

The only grandson of John Greer to have children was John William. John married Katherine Margaret Gerlough and they had three children: John Lucas, William J., and Roberta J.

At the time of their mother Katherine's death in 2005, John Lucas Greer lived in Edmonds, Washington, William J. Greer lived in Arizona, and Roberta J. Greer, was deceased, although she had married Amir Nasser Moslehpour in 1964, a pharmacist from Tehran, Iran.

At this point the lineage was difficult to trace. Greer is fairly common surname and both John and William are common first names making it more difficult.

I have not pursued tracing them further other than by name and their 2005 location without success.

If you missed the April 3rd webinar, you can find it on Vimeo at <https://vimeo.com/696315022>.



(continued from page 2) during WWII and became the Undersecretary of the Navy under Kennedy. Fay recalls introducing Casey to Kennedy in 1945 when Kennedy

Irish Ambassador. Casey's last contact with Kennedy was one week before the assassination when Kennedy sent him an autographed photo.



Casey honored at Palo Club: (Left to Right) Red Fay, Casey, Former Stanford Pitcher Cootie Thompson, and Palo Alto Times sports editor Walt Gamage

In 1965, the Palo Club held a celebration to honor Casey. Various sports greats, as well as Red Fay attended to honor him.

Casey passed away in 1970 at the age of 74. After his passing several people petitioned the city to rename the new Baylands Athletic Center in his memory. The result was a large sign posted on the fence naming the field after him. So if you're ever out at the park and see the sign: Tom "Sarge" Casey Field, you'll know his story.

was in San Francisco on the business of forming the United Nations. Kennedy took an instant liking to Casey and would later invite him to his wedding in 1953. Kennedy even stopped by to visit Casey while on his honeymoon.

In 1961, Casey was given an honorary position in the President's national physical fitness program. He was said to reminisce about when Fay and Kennedy dressed him up in tails and told everyone he was the



Casey Field at Baylands Athletic Center

June Jaunts

I'll wager you didn't know that Wyatt Earp and his wife Josephine are buried in the Jewish cemetery in Colma, **Hills of Eternity Memorial Park**. As their tombstone inscription reads, "That nothing's so sacred as honor, and nothing so loyal as love," their wish was to be interred together. The grave—Plot D, Section 2, Lot 12, Grave 2—is the most visited site in the cemetery, which is also the resting place of Levi Strauss. The cemetery is located at 1301 El Camino Real in Colma, and is open Mon.-Fri., 8:30-4. For more information and directions to the gravesite, visit www.jcemfsf.org/wyatt-earp-gravesite



Image courtesy of Hills of Eternity Memorial Park

Welcome New PAHA Member
Alan Cooper

Upcoming Programs

- Palo Alto Clinic: Stories from the Physicians
 - Valley of Hearts Delight: True Tales from Around the Bay
(Programs are the first Sunday of the month beginning Oct. 2nd, 2022)
- Check our website at www.pahistory.org for program information

Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the May 1st program, *PAST Centennial Plaque and Historic Preservations Awards*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link:
<https://vimeo.com/706317067>

The Heritage Program

You can also watch the most recent PAHA program on local TV. Visit <https://midpenmedia.org/local-tv/> and enter the word "Heritage" in the search box to find the broadcast schedule for PAHA programs.

In Memoriam
W.G. McElhinney

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Image of "Ms Blue" courtesy of Seymour Marine Discovery Center

The Seymour Marine Discovery Center is a charming aquarium offering a rewarding, marine-wildlife experience, complete with starfish, jellyfish, eels, octopus, and even a pet swell shark. At the entry is an immense skeleton of "Ms Blue," at one time a live, blue whale. Outside the Center, walking paths allow for self-guided exploration along the beach. The Center is located at 100

McAllister Way in Santa Cruz, and is open Wed.-Sun., 10-4. For information on tickets and pandemic protocols, call 831-459-3800 or visit <https://seymourcenter.ucsc.edu/>

Presidio Tunnel Tops is a new outdoor space coming to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area this summer. It is scheduled to open Sunday, July 7, 2022, and will kick off a season of free, family-friendly events and activities through October. Replicating the concept behind New York City's High Line, Tunnel Tops is constructed over 2 freeway tunnels leading to the Golden Gate Bridge. The 14-acre site offers green space in an urban setting and a panoramic view of the Bay. Entering Tunnel Tops through the Visitor's Center, tourists and San Francisco residents can follow ADA-conforming pathways to a playground, picnic tables, grassy fields, a campfire circle, and hands-on exhibits. Presidio Trust spokesperson Lisa Petrie commented, "You'll be able to walk from the Presidio down to the waterfront. You haven't been able to do that since 1936." For more information and updates on this exciting new Bay Area attraction, visit <https://www.presidiotunneltops.gov/>

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