

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 6  
MARCH 2007  
www.pahistory.org

# The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, April 1 at 2:00 p.m.  
Lucie Stern Community Center  
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Free & open to the public  
Cookies & coffee

## What Did You Say? Oral History 101



*Photo by Craig Merrill, Alameda*

**SPEAKER:**  
**Leah McGarrigle**  
**Historian**  
**Instructor of Oral History**

social and professional connections and the larger community. Interviews create community for individuals today, and have the unknown potential to bring people together in the future.

Our speaker, Leah McGarrigle, conducted oral history interviews for the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley from 1994 to 2005, where she also taught introductory and advanced workshops for the university and the greater community. She taught oral history at Vista Community College in 1993. She currently conducts interviews and teaches oral history workshops locally. Leah has a B.A. in History from UC Santa Cruz, a J.D. from Hastings College of the Law, and is a member of the California State Bar. She and her family reside in Palo Alto.

There is a searching need among all of us to find inspiration for our times. Preserving the experiences of those who have come before us fills a void in the limited access to role models who can share their experiences and values with us as well as with future generations.

Our April program provides an introduction to oral history focusing on the art of interviewing. We hope it will stimulate your interest in conducting individual, family, and group interviews whether they be for personal, academic or professional projects.\*

When oral histories put us in dialogue with each other, they illuminate the relationships between the narrators and other individuals. They serve to help us understand historical events in the context of

\*A handout, "Hints on How to Conduct an Oral History," will be available at the meeting.

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**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 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 (Oct.-Dec., Feb.-May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 p.m. The final meeting of the year, held in June, includes a dinner and program. The public is welcome.

**PAHA HERITAGE PROGRAMS**

≡ CHANNEL 30 ≡

**MARCH: CHILDRENS THEATRE'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY**

**APRIL: SEEN ANY GOOD MOVIES LATELY?**

**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

# PAHA Collects Oral Histories

A remarkable woman named Betty Rogaway started the Palo Alto History Association on the path to collecting oral histories in the early '80s. Just before she retired from her long and distinguished career with the Palo Alto Unified School District, Betty applied for, and received, a small grant from PAUSD to collect oral histories from some of the district's pioneers and leading lights. Her subjects ranged from Ben Allen who was born in Palo Alto in 1912, went to PA schools and, later, drove a school bus, to Fremont Zschokke, grandson of Anna Zschokke who was one of the first settlers here and helped found the PA school system.

Over time Betty was joined by others like Judy Leahy. John Behars, Robert Vanderlip and Carolyn Caddes who expanded the field of interviewees to include civic leaders such as Birge Clark, arguably Palo Alto's premier architect, and Dr. Hewlett Lee, son of Russell Lee, the founder of the Palo Alto Medical Clinic. Ruth Lacey added a further dimension to the later interviews by videotaping them for us to see as well as hear. Fascinating stories all, each portrays a unique piece of our heritage.

You, too, can access the collection of more than sixty recordings and hear such notables as "Bea" Elkins Crady, Stanford grad who arrived here in 1916 with her mother, a suffragette, and who describes life in boarding houses during WW II... or Fred Eyerly, Owner-Manager of Eyerly's Hardware who was also a City Council member, 1975 - 1983 and Mayor, 1982... or Betty Rogaway, that remarkable woman who started it all.

Recordings can be checked out from the Main Library's History Desk during Historian's hours: Tuesday evenings and Thursday afternoons.



As fill-in editor this month, I have the bully pulpit and intend to use it! PAHA is blessed to have a number of hard working committee members. They serve in very important but seldom heralded jobs with titles like

## PAHA NEWS

JOE SHAKES

PROGRAM CHAIR

Accessions/Archives, Computer/Photo Catalog, Landmarks and Streets, Membership, Oral Histories, Nominating, Programs, Publications, Publicity, Videotaping, Palo Alto History Museum liaison and Hospitality. Without their dedicated effort, PAHA would simply not exist. We thank them for all they do.

But none of these jobs is more important than editor of our newsletter, *Tall Tree*, PAHA's voice to our membership and the general public.

Fortunately we have had stars in the editor role in recent years. Susan Bright Winn set new standards for the publication and the organization. Beginning this year, Ruth Lacey moved from being PAHA's videographer to become its *Tall Tree* editor, and she made a good thing even better. I'm sorry to report that Ruth recently suffered a mild stroke and may sit out a few issues (just as she was hitting her stride). Those of you who know Ruth appreciate her intelligence and get-it-done attitude. A get well card addressed to her in care of PAHA (P.O. Box 193, PA 94302) would be appreciated, I'm sure. Ruth, your friends at PAHA miss you.



*Antiques Appraisal*

at the

*Palo Alto Woman's Club*  
475 Homer Avenue

*Saturday, May 19*  
11 - 3

*\$45 entrance fee per person*  
*includes 3 items appraised*  
*Drinks and hors d'oeuvres*

# PALO ALTO'S OLDEST HOME SOON TO DISAPPEAR

FROM THE  
DESK OF THE  
HISTORIAN

STEVE STAIGER

I was saddened to learn that the oldest home in Palo Alto soon will disappear. Undoubtedly it will be replaced by a new residence perhaps built in a style that imitates the original home only much larger.

The Juana Briones home on Old Adobe

Road was originally constructed in the 1840s when California was still part of Mexico. Although altered over the years, it remains Palo Alto's sole example of a much earlier time in California's history.

Juana Briones was born more than 200 years ago in what today is Santa Cruz County, when California was a distant territory of Spain. Much of her adult life was spent as an early Californio entrepreneur in what is now San Francisco. She amassed enough wealth to buy a rancho here and retired with her family in the years before gold was discovered and California changed forever.

For several generations the Briones home was owned by a family that treasured its existence. In exchange for favorable property tax benefits they maintained the house and on occasion opened it to tours by the public. The 1989 earthquake caused serious damage to the structure that would have required a large investment of time and money to repair. Several changes in ownership since then and a lack of significant repairs have resulted in a building in poor condition. The present owners desired to demolish the historic house and replace it with a more modern residence on the large parcel of land.

A group of neighbors and members of the community interested in saving the Juana Briones home formed an organization to preserve it. They tried to purchase the property. When that proved unworkable, they sought to have the City of Palo Alto prohibit its demolition through the courts. (The City had some legal interest through the granting of a Mills Act for the property many years ago.) For various reasons these efforts were not successful, and now the group has stopped their battle to preserve the oldest house in Palo Alto.

While Palo Alto is losing its oldest building, the fight to preserve historic buildings in nearby communities continues. Foothill College is now looking to preserve the Griffin House. And Steve Jobs is no closer in his attempt to demolish the grand old Jackling house in Woodside since the community has stepped in to oppose its demolition. Yet these two homes, while fine examples of their time and place, pale in comparison to the rich history of the Juana Briones home. Millions of dollars have been spent and will continue to be spent to preserve California's missions and the replicas of the lost missions. Meanwhile, Palo Alto's only link with that era is going to disappear. And that is why I am so sad.



*A 1988 photo of the Juana Briones home, courtesy of the PAHA archives.*



*Juana Briones, a painting by Anne Fritz, courtesy of the PAHA Archives.*

*For further information about Juana Briones and her home, see the Juana Briones Heritage Foundation website: <http://www.brioneshouse.org/>.*



## IN MEMORIAM

Ruthe Lundy, educator and  
long-time PAHA member,  
1922 - 2007.



## Stanford Historic House Tour

"Restoration and Renovation" is the theme for the Stanford Historic House Tour on Sunday, April 29, 1 - 4. The tour opens five vintage campus houses and their gardens and benefits the work of the Stanford Historical Society.



*A Bakewell & Brown designed home on the Stanford Historic House Tour, April 29.*

To obtain tickets mail a check (payable to Stanford Historical Society) to: Stanford Historical Society, c/o Sweeney, P.O. Box 19290, Stanford, CA 94309. Tickets purchased by April 20 cost \$20 per person. A ticket and book can be pre-ordered for \$35. Tickets can be purchased at the door for \$25 and books for \$25. All tickets will be available the day of the tour at 612 Alvarado Row.

Parking will be available at the Tresidder Union lot and shuttle service will leave from the front of the nearby Stanford Faculty Club. For more information, contact: Marian Adams, 650-324-0200, e-mail [adams@cdr.stanford.edu](mailto:adams@cdr.stanford.edu), or see <http://histsoc.stanford.edu/2007/SHSHGtour2007.htm>.

## Williams House Exhibit

The Museum of American heritage celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Williams House, located at 351 Homer Avenue in Palo Alto, with an exhibit that highlights the family's life, 1907 - 1932. The exhibit runs February 9 through June 3, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 - 4. Admission is free. See [www.moah.org](http://www.moah.org) for more information.

### WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Polly Phares Armstrong  
Diane Wolfsohn  
Mark Hancock  
Ellen Fletcher  
Muriel Herhold

### 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.

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