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NUMBER 2

The Tall Tree

PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, November 2 at 2:00 p.m.
Free & open to the public

Lucie Stern Community Center
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

A Century of Humane Caring



Carole Hyde,
Speaker:
Executive Director,
Palo Alto
Humane Society

What role did citizen outrage play? Who were the recipients of honorary memberships in the founding years? Why was the relationship between PAHS and Stanford University sometimes rocky? What is the prognosis for another 100 years of service?

Much of what we know about the history of the Palo Alto Humane Society comes from PAHS and Palo Alto Historical Association archives, but we welcome your anecdotes, photographs, or other materials relating to PAHS and its century of service. Please feel free to bring these to the talk, or contact Carole Hyde at PAHS (650-424-1901).

HOW MANY INSTITUTIONS DO YOU KNOW of that were part of Palo Alto life 100 years ago? The Palo Alto Humane Society was founded in 1908. Its origins in the humane movement date even earlier—to the turn of the century. How do civic organizations survive a century of change?

Carole Hyde will talk about the rich history and significant accomplishments of the organization and will highlight its sometimes colorful and controversial past. What part did Mrs. Jane

Stanford have in Palo Alto's humane movement?



The first animal shelter, 1926, top; and a rescued dog at the early shelter, bottom. (Photos courtesy of PAHS.)

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PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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The board meets first Wednesdays (except August) at Lucie Stern Community Center at 4:00.

IN MEMORIAM

BETTY MELTZER

Longtime Palo Alto resident,
PAHA member, and
community activist

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW
MEMBER**

Patricia Briggs



**PAHA
Programs**

on Channel 30

IN NOVEMBER, SEE "JUANA BRIONES, A LIFE ACROSS ERAS, OR, A BIOGRAPHER'S DILEMMA," the October talk at PAHA's public program by Jeanne Farr McDonnell, author of a biography of Briones published this year by the University of Arizona Press.

The replay is on television Wednesdays at 8:00 PM, Thursdays at noon, and Saturdays at 1:00 PM.

Towers Grab the Attention

FOR YEARS I HAVE BEEN OFFERING PEOPLE a chance at fame (but not fortune) if they could solve the mystery of why Peter Coutts built his tower out on Old Page Mill Road. The mystery still remains, as does the offer of fame. But there is another tower in Palo Alto that has had its own mystery, that associated with Dinah's Shack and Dinah's Garden Hotel, a lingering question recently solved by a San Jose man.

**FROM THE
DESK OF THE
HISTORIAN
STEVE STAIGER**

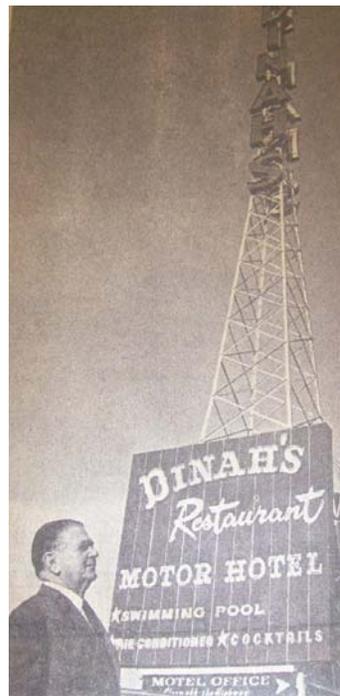
Years ago Jerry Matters, the general manager of Dinah's Garden Hotel came to the History Desk in search of answers relating to the large metal tower situated on El Camino Real in front of his hotel. The Archives had little information on the tower, but we were able to spark interest with Marc Iglar of the Palo Alto Weekly, and in 1999 he wrote a column about the "tower of mystery" filled with

few known facts and a lot of speculation. Marc invited readers to come forward with any information or idea on the subject.

Tom Spargo of San Jose contacted me several times in the past few years and he developed a list of people as resources, including Rickey family members and others who had worked in the area. Tom learned that John Rickey purchased a short wave tower that previously had been located near the Dumbarton Bridge in the early 1950s, as he was developing his restaurant and hotel empire on El Camino Real. After its relocation to El Camino Real, the tower was used as an advertising sign for Dinah's Shack.

Tom located several aerial photographs of south Palo Alto taken in the 1950s. A photo taken in September 1950 did not reveal the presence of the tower, but a photo taken in June 1955 clearly shows the tower alongside El Camino Real.

There had been speculation that the tower had been in its present location for many years prior to the 1950s, and had been used to guide aircraft flying over Palo Alto on their way to San Francisco, using either a light or radio beacon. Like some of the theories regarding the origins of the Frenchman's Tower, the fantasies of speculation are often more exciting than the reality of the facts. The tower was re-located on El Camino Real by John Rickey to attract attention, a beacon to guide customers to his restaurant.



John Rickey looking at his tower, (from Matt Bowling's blog at www.paloaltohistory.com/dinahs.html).



Radio tower formerly at Dinah's Shack, (courtesy of Tom Spargo).

THE CUBBERLEY CLOSING

By Matt Bowling

IN 1979, THE PALO ALTO SCHOOL BOARD HAD TO CHOOSE a high school to close, as well as several grade schools. Proposition 13 had diminished tax revenues and the District enrollment had dropped by nearly a thousand in the previous six years. For Superintendent Newman Walker, the obvious choice was Cubberley, mainly because Palo Alto Senior High School and Henry M. Gunn were both on land that would revert to Stanford for the original purchase price, \$358,000 for Gunn and \$26,000 for Paly.

Many argued with his logic. Money from a sale of Cubberley could only be put into the district's general fund if a non-profit or public agency bought it, otherwise the money could be used only for capital expenditures. Another possibility that was suggested was that Stanford might not want to purchase the Gunn land if that school closed.

Numerous arguments came out to support closing Gunn—Cubberley had a larger cafeteria, classes for the acoustically handicapped and educable mentally disabled. Supporters of both schools argued that theirs were close to the homes of more high school students. Local citizens even went to court, but eventually the California Court of Appeals maintained that school board decisions were administrative not legislative, and therefore a voter referendum would be inappropriate.

In succeeding years, the Cubberley Community Center, leased by the district to the city for more than \$2.7 million annually, was home to community classes and functions, such as Foothill Community College, kung fu classes, private artist studios, L'Ecole de Danse, Palo Alto Chamber Orchestra, and many more.

This article summarizes one by Matt that can be accessed at www.paloaltohistory.com.

“Prof. and Mrs. Nichols Touched”

SOMETIMES IT IS SAD TO READ HISTORY. The November 1979 issue of the newsletter, named *Tall Tree* as it remains to this day, had on its front page information about the November public program at Lucie Stern Community Center, Sundays at 2:00, same as now. The title of the program was “The Lafayette Escadrille,” and here is what a headline said, and a description of that coming event.

Palo Alto Pilot Shot to Death in French Air Fight

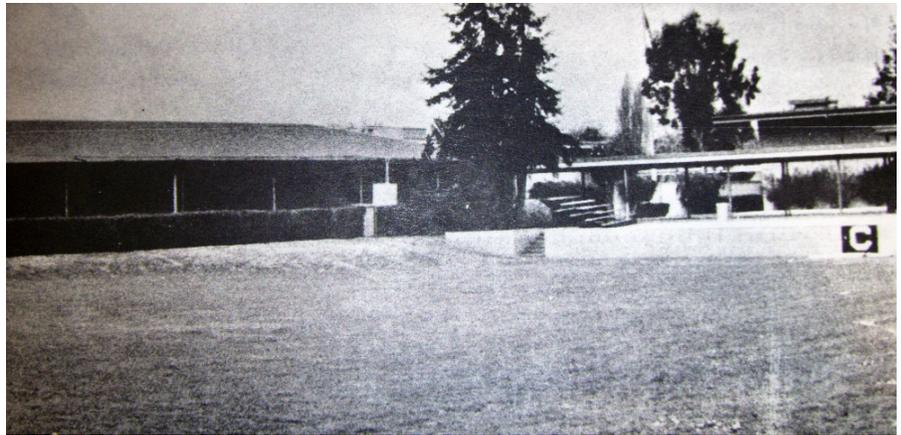
Letters from Alan Nichols, a “chasse pilot” killed in action in 1918 will be read.

Alex Perez, Michael Pease, and Pete Jacobson will present dramatic readings of correspondence mailed home by the young pilot. Director Pat Briggs of the Children's Theater has coached the young adults.

Dorothy Nichols will pay tribute to her brother and make a few comments about the World War I era.



Cubberley HS student body officers, 1969–70; from left, Debbie Hill, Jerry Macklin, Pam Sawyer, Chris Fleming (PAHA archives).



Cubberley campus in 1975 (from the Palo Alto History Project, www.paloaltohistory.com/cubberley.html, with appreciation to Matt Bowling).



MEMBERSHIP

Your tax-deductible membership helps pay for preserving information about the history of Palo Alto and informing the public about that history. Annual membership dues are: Individual \$25, Family \$40, Sustaining \$60, Business/Sponsor \$100 and Life Member \$350. Members receive this newsletter in the mail and a renewal notice in July.

You can join by mail or online. Make checks payable to Palo Alto Historical Association, mail to PAHA Membership, P. O. Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302-0193. Let us know if you require a receipt.

Or go to our web site www.pahistory.org. Click on MEMBERSHIP, then on Network for Good. Once on that site, press Donate Now, and put “membership” in the designation field. Give us your name and address. For gift memberships, also e-mail us at PAHistoricalAssn@aol.com with the name, address, and e-mail address of the recipient.

FYI

PAHA Historian

Steve Staiger gives talks about Palo Alto history at no charge for organizations and classes. Contact him by email at steve.staiger@cityofpaloalto.org or by his direct phone line, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 617-3100 ext. 3211.

County Archives

The Santa Clara County Archives of government documents is now open for research without an appointment Monday, 10-4, and Wednesday, 9-1, and with appointment, Monday through Friday. The new hours are part of added service made possible by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) grant received in 2007. Contact Archives at 408-792-1895 or archives@rec.sccgov.org.

Preservation Palo Alto

The Heritage Preservation Committee of Los Californianos, an organization of descendants of original Hispanic settlers and historians of that founding period, has on its list of projects the Briones House in Palo Alto.

Museum of American Heritage

Musical Instruments in the Home, Band, and Orchestra, on exhibit until January 18. Admission free, 351 Homer Avenue, 11 to 4:00 Friday, Saturday, Sunday.



PAHA's Public Meetings 2008-2009

Most of our public meetings are on the first Sunday from October through May and the Annual Dinner is in June. Exceptions will be noted here and in newspaper items.

NOVEMBER 2

Centennial of the Palo Alto Humane Society
Speaker: Exec. Director Carole Hyde

DECEMBER 7

Community Vignettes, Stories by Long-time Residents. Hosted by Karen Holman

JANUARY 25, 2009

Ben Hatfield and Barry Anderson,
Authors of *Over Time: Palo Alto 1947-1980*

MARCH 1

Geology of the Bay Area. Speaker: Bonnie Murchey, U.S. Geological Survey

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NEXT MEETING:

November 2 at 2:00 p.m.

Followed by a social hour
and refreshments

