

# The Tall Tree

MARCH 2012  
VOLUME 35, Nº 5

NEWSLETTER of the PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING \* FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC \* REFRESHMENTS SERVED

*Speakers: Henry and Rochelle Ford*

Sunday, March 4 at 2:00 PM

Lucie Stern Community Center, Palo Alto

## *Life in* **Black and White**



**HENRY AND ROCHELLE FORD** WILL provide PAHA members and guests an opportunity to hear their fascinating story—his, hers, theirs: Henry Ford was a professional football player for the Cleveland Browns and Pittsburgh Steelers; he was a private businessman in Palo Alto. Rochelle was—and is—a successful metal sculptor who has wielded her “acetylene torch to fuse metals and other discarded materials into bold objects of strength and beauty.”

Together, they have enjoyed a fifty-two year inter-racial marriage, much of it at their home on Waverley Street in Palo Alto. His career was cut short when Steeler authorities ordered him to “stop dating white girls” if he wanted to play pro football. She became a full time metal sculptor. Together they raised two sons, Michael and Mark, who benefited from being part of their two worlds. Come and hear their story!

*Henry and Rochelle Ford in the sculpture garden outside their home in Palo Alto.*

## Oral Histories

Oral histories are an invaluable method to preserve local history. To volunteer, help record, or give an oral history yourself, contact Carol Mitchell, [carolcmitchell@sbcglobal.net](mailto:carolcmitchell@sbcglobal.net).

### WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

Andrew and Eleanor Doty  
Jonathan D. Glidden  
Patricia Briggs

### IN MEMORIAM

Betty Britton  
1936–2011  
Mary B. Kennedy  
1909–2012  
Vera Oy Leung  
1919–2011

**Note to Readers:** as the editors of the Tall Tree become more “green,” we offer you the option of receiving your Tall Tree digitally. If you’re interested, please email your request (include your preferred email address) to PAHA Secretary Bardy Wallace, [bdgw@pacbell.net](mailto:bdgw@pacbell.net).

## Heritage Program on Channel 30

The TV cable program, *Heritage*, on Channel 30 in March, is “Sea Scouts” from the January 15 meeting. It will be broadcast on Thursdays at 10:30 AM. DVDs of previous programs may be borrowed at the History Desk at the Palo Alto Main Library, Tuesday, 4–8 PM and Thursday, 1–5 PM.

## PAHA on Facebook

PAHA’s Facebook site is up and running! On Facebook, search for Palo Alto Historical Association. There you will find the latest news on upcoming programs, speakers, and publications, as well as photo images from the Guy Miller Archives. Click if you “like” what you see and to receive updates in your Facebook Newsfeed. For more information, contact Matt Bowling <[mtb324@gmail.com](mailto:mtb324@gmail.com)>.

## The Challenger Challenge

HOW MANY PEOPLE IN PALO ALTO KNOW, EVEN IN THIS AUGUST BODY, about the Challenger Grove at Peers Park? In July, 1985, the Space Shuttle Challenger



Spacelab 2 logo (Wikipedia)

STS-51-F, sometimes referred to as Spacelab 2, launched successfully from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Of course, the intent of the mission was scientific, to enhance knowledge in such arcana as astrophysics, solar physics, and atmospheric physics, to name just three areas of study. However, in a marketing experiment, the payload included “Carbonated Beverage Dispenser Evaluation,” according to which the astronauts studied the impact of space travel on Pepsi Cola and Coca Cola. What is less well known, and didn’t make the Wikipedia arti-



Jacob McDonnell pointing to plaque. (Courtesy Jeanne McDonnell)

cle, is that seeds from our own El Palo Alto also orbited the earth on Spacelab 2. Today, people can visit the Challenger Grove at Peers Park (1899 Park Boulevard) to see for themselves how those seeds have developed. This small grove of redwood trees is behind the tennis courts, and is quite hard to find. Even though the grove is commemorated by an historic marker, the plaque is cracked with a barely legible inscription. Perhaps PAHA or some PAHA members could see to the plaque’s preservation?

## El Polin Spring

### The Childhood Home of Juana Briones in the Presidio of San Francisco

On February 4, long-time supporters of preservation of the Juana Briones House, now demolished, and participants in acquiring and installing a state historic plaque on the former Briones ranch on Old Adobe Road, were invited by archaeologist Kari Jones for a special tour of the childhood home of Juana Briones, El Polin Spring at the Presidio of San Francisco. Major restoration at the site has



Archeologist Kari Jones talks with Juana Briones supporters at El Polin Spring (Courtesy of Clark Akatiff).

made it a very welcoming historic site for visitors to the Presidio. You can visit the YouTube site, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=hO2oiyyvovE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hO2oiyyvovE), or consult the biography, *Juana Briones of 19th Century California* by Jeanne McDonnell for information on the life of this very important early California businesswoman, rancher, humanitarian, and healer.

# President's Viewpoint: Strategically Speaking

Board Retreat, Saturday, January 28, 2012



**DOUG GRAHAM**  
President, PAHA

PAHA IS EXPERIENCING A REBIRTH OF ACTIVITY, WITH several major initiatives on the table. The Board met for an all-day strategic planning retreat on Saturday, January 28, in the Scout House at Lucie Stern Community Center, guests of the Boy Scouts of America. We discussed PAHA's mission (what we want to accomplish), envisioned what PAHA might be like in ten years, and identified the values we hold as important to our mission.

We considered the strengths, weaknesses, and issues facing PAHA. We analyzed the roles and impacts of PAHA, and of the other history organizations, in Palo Alto, especially the Palo Alto History Museum-to-be and Palo Alto-Stanford Heritage (PAST). We developed strategies to achieve our goals and decided on an action plan to reach them. A Strategic Planning Committee is editing this effort into a succinct document.

## Major New Initiatives

A new group of Board Members joined the long-term Directors to launch three major initiatives:

### Books to be Published

- *Palo Alto Remembered: Stories from a City's Past*, a new 200-page book of collected stories from Palo Alto's recent past by Matt Bowling, is illustrated with more than 265 photographs, most of which are from the PAHA archives (many never before published.) The book launch celebration is set for our public program on May 6, 2012.
- *Lucie Stern, Palo Alto's Fairy Godmother*, a second edition of this favorite, with an Addendum about Lucie and the Boy Scouts. It will be the topic of the fall program, October 7, 2012. This book will be PAHA's first print-on-demand publication.
- *Mayfield: 1850-1925*, a revised and expanded second edition. Another "best seller," it is planned for launch in early 2013, as a print-on-demand book.
- *PAHA Resource Guide* for bringing new works to publication: it will include checklists, sample author and out-source work contracts, and guidelines for image requirements.

### Oral History Archive

Our Oral History group has conducted two workshops on how to take oral histories. Several extensive oral histories were added to our growing archive in 2011, and the group plans to continue its work in 2012, by interviewing Pat Briggs and Patty McEwan on the Children's Theatre, Nan Blackledge, and Walter Hays (grandson of the man for whom the school was named.)

### Information Technology:

PAHA's Information Technology (IT) group is developing a new website to operate independently from the City's server. We hope to migrate the existing website to its new location, expand its content, add new functions, and update it continuously. We hope to open for business in April.

### We Would Like to Hear From You

We would like to hear from PAHA members about topics that you would like to see discussed in Tall Tree or presented in our monthly program. Send your thoughts to the PAHA Board, the Historian, or Tall Tree Editors.

# BOOK LAUNCH MAY 6!

## *Palo Alto Remembered: Stories from a City's Past*

by Matt Bowling

Do you remember when the...

... Circus came to town?

... Beattles stayed at the Cabaña?

... Oregon Avenue was widened?

... Yacht Harbor was closed?

Matt Bowling brings a fresh view to not-so-long-ago Palo Alto through a collection of 43 short stories and rarely seen photos!

Mark your calendar for PAHA's  
**MAY 6 PROGRAM**...Come to  
the Book Launch Celebration!



*Our mission is to collect, preserve and make available to the public information about the history of Palo Alto.*

## History Jaunts

**Los Altos Historic Walking Tours.** A Self-Guided Tour of Downtown Los Altos. Pick up a flyer at the Los Altos History Museum, 51 S. San Antonio Rd., Los Altos, and take yourself on a 28 stop walking tour of past and present Los Altos.

**Playing Grown-Up: Toys from the Harry P. Costa Collection**  
an exhibit opening on February 14 at the San Mateo County History Museum, 2200 Broadway, Redwood City, [www.historysmc.org](http://www.historysmc.org). Admission to the museum is for \$5.00 Adults; \$3.00 Seniors/Students, and free for children 5 and under. Henry Costa has collected antique toys for many years, with this exhibition focusing on American toys, 1920-1950. Recently featured as part of a display at San Francisco International Airport, this exhibition makes a nice partner to MOAH's exhibit, Antique Toys, 1870-1930.

**Canopy Tree Walks**  
Canopy offers free arborist-led neighborhood tree walks in Palo Alto on the second Saturday of every month, from 10 AM to Noon. The participants tour of some of the most interesting tree specimens in Palo Alto. A certified arborist guide presents information ranging from historical context to identification, as well as tree selection and care advice. The next Tree Walk is scheduled for March 10, at Mitchell Park, in celebration of Arbor Day. For more information, visit [www.canopy.org/pages/about-trees/canopy-tree-walks.php](http://www.canopy.org/pages/about-trees/canopy-tree-walks.php)

**Magnes Collection of Jewish Art and Life**  
2121 Allston Way, Berkeley. The collection of Seymour and Rebecca Fromer includes a broad spectrum of artifacts from all over the world, now housed in a new building. *New York Times* critic, Edward Rothstein, gave the exhibit rave reviews. For a sneak preview, [www.magnes.org](http://www.magnes.org)

## Become a Member of PAHA

We invite you to become a member of the Association and join those who care about Palo Alto and enjoy learning about its history. Your dues support the preservation of our archives, assistance to researchers and dissemination of Palo Alto historical information through our publications. Join today!

Individual \$25      Family \$40  
Sustaining \$60      Business/Sponsor \$100      Life \$350

Make check payable to PAHA and mail to: PAHA Box 193, Palo Alto, CA 94302. Or join online at [pahistory.org](http://pahistory.org). Let us know if you wish to volunteer for a PAHA committee. (Note: current members will receive renewal notices in July.)

## PAHA's Public Meetings

Sundays at the  
Lucie Stern Community Center  
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

**MARCH 4 AT 2:00:**  
"LIFE IN BLACK AND WHITE"  
Speakers: Henry and Rochelle Ford



Save these dates in 2012

APRIL 1  
TBA

MAY 6  
"PALO ALTO REMEMBERED"  
Book Launch Celebration  
JUNE 6: ANNUAL DINNER  
at Ming's

### PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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