



The Tall Tree Newsletter

of the PALO ALTO
HISTORICAL
ASSOCIATION

Since 1913

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The Palo Alto Historical Association presents



THE *Valley* OF HEART'S DELIGHT

True Tales from Around the Bay

Please join us on November 6 with our returning local author, Robin Chapman. Her newest book, "The Valley of Heart's Delight: True Tales from Around the Bay" completes her trilogy of books about the region.

In her talk, Chapman will share glimpses of the intriguing true stories she has been researching since she returned to California. Did you know director

Alfred Hitchcock once had an estate here, a residence that impacted his script for his classic film "The Birds"? That crooner Bing Crosby helped start a local youth center? That the Santa Clara Valley was once home to an extensive electric rail system used by early 20th century commuters? These are some of the tantalizing tales she will be sharing in her upcoming program.

Sunday, November 6, 2022 2:00 – 4:00 pm

In-person at Mitchell Park Community Center, in the spacious El Palo Alto Room
3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto - Free refreshments following the program!

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Paly Heroes Compilation Project

By Palo Alto High School senior and PAHA volunteer, Harvey Vostrejs

Palo Alto High School (Paly) is well over one hundred years old. On this ancient campus, right off the main quad, is a small plaque. It's slightly obscured by bushes, almost hidden. When I first saw it, the plaque was covered in dirt, dust, and spider webs. It looked abandoned. Forgotten. And, for the most part, it was. I myself had walked past it for years without giving it a second thought. I don't know what caused



Veterans Memorial Plaque at Paly

me to stop that day. I had never noticed it there, yet on this day, I was drawn to it. Staring at this sheet of metal covered in grime, I saw that it was a memorial to Paly students who died in war. As I traced the names engraved in the metal, I was overcome with grief in that moment. No one deserves to be forgotten, especially not those who gave their lives trying to do good. Motivated to learn more about who the people listed on the plaque were, I went to the school library and asked to go into the school archives on the second floor. Never having been up there before, I was enchanted by all the old books, newspapers, and yearbooks. I began searching through the yearbooks for photos of the people on the plaque. There was something powerful about being able to put a face to their names. I then went on to look at what they did in high school. Some were sports stars, some were actors, some were artists. It was incredible.

The more research I did, the more real these people became. I learned about who they were beyond their name. Virginia Mayer decided to be a nurse like her mother was in World War I. Buck Kingman was a football star and an all around good guy. Arthur Kimber always loved planes, even before he became a pilot. So many stories came to life such that I could picture these veterans in the quad, on the field, hanging out with friends, or performing in the Haymarket Theater. I became determined to make sure these people wouldn't be forgotten. In

my search to learn more, I discovered the city's Guy Miller Archives, managed by PAHA, and began spending hours after school there looking through files and cabinets of information. I began to piece together all my research from the school archive, PAHA Archives, and research from online. Friends and family members of these heroes contacted me, and I had the privilege to speak to several veterans

about their experiences. I learned so many incredible things about the names on the plaque. They became like friends to me, accompanying me on my journey into the past.

I spent countless hours at the PAHA Archives. I had no idea that it had existed before this project. I loved, and still love, working there. There's so much incredible history contained in that small room. Without the Archives, this project could never have been completed. But the Archives did more than that. It helped me discover a new passion. It inspired me to pursue archival research in college after I graduate from Paly this year. I now intern at the Archives, and it's been an absolutely wonderful experience. The PAHA Archives deserves much more recognition. It's an incredibly important place that has an incredibly important purpose.

Overall, this passion project became a compilation of profiles amounting to almost 300 pages. I donated copies to both the Palo Alto High School library and to PAHA, and I plan to update the online version as new information is discovered. Hopefully, people will be inspired to look at these stories and keep these people alive in memory. These heroes deserve to be remembered as more than names on a plaque, but as people with hopes and dreams who walked the halls of Paly.

The online version of this compilation can be found at: www.tinyurl.com/dc74wavh

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, Phone (650) 329-2353.

PAHA Board meetings are held at 5pm on the first Wednesday of each month (except August) at the Guy Miller Archives.

Public programs are held at 2pm on the first Sunday of each month (October-December and February-May) at various locations in Palo Alto. Programs include speakers. The final program of the year is held in June and includes a dinner and a program. The public is welcome at all programs.

Serendipity and a Treasure Hunt: PAHA and its Digitized Clues

By Robin Chapman, our speaker for the November 6th program

I was looking for a picture of HP founder Dave Packard. My search led me to uncover the image I needed and an entirely different story about a Stanford athlete who got to meet the late HRH Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain. The digitized archives of the Palo Alto Historical Association helped make all this possible.

In February, I was getting ready to submit the completed manuscript of my new book about the Santa Clara Valley to The History Press, when I discovered that the photograph I had planned to use of HP founder Dave Packard (for a section about his friendship with Sunnyvale's Charlie Olson) was not publication quality. I searched the online archives of the PAHA and there I found a number of images of Packard. The ones I liked best showed him escorting Queen Elizabeth II through an HP facility during a 1983 visit. And



Garin Veris meets Queen Elizabeth II at Stanford University, 1983

even though my story had nothing to do with the queen, I know the queen is always good copy.

I chose a photo and contacted PAHA's volunteer Brian George, whom I know from many such adventures. I captioned the photo by saying Dave Packard "had lots of famous friends including orchardist Charles J. Olson of Sunnyvale and HRH Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain."

After I submitted the manuscript and images to the publisher, I got to thinking I could get a double use of my research by writing up the story of Packard and the queen for a column I contribute to the Los Altos Town Crier. To do that, I realized I should read about the queen's March 3, 1983, visit and to do that I sought out the archives of the Peninsula Times Tribune. That archive isn't digitized, but a reference librarian at the City of Palo Alto Library was able to find the articles I needed on microfilm and send me digital copies. At least half a dozen people who were present that day were quoted in the paper and I knew my story would be better if I could find one or two of them to get new quotes.

Dave Packard died in 1996 and I didn't have the queen's phone number, so those two were out. I couldn't locate the two reporters who had filed the stories back then, either. But, on Facebook, I did find the names of two Stanford students who lunched with the queen on her visit. One was in San Francisco and I messaged her but did not get a reply. I got lucky on the second one, a former Stanford football player named Garin Veris.

Veris is an Ohio native who turned out to be a reporter's dream. He wrote me that meeting the queen that day was a "highlight of his life." He told me how much trouble he had, in those days before internet shopping, finding a new pair of dress shoes in his size for the occasion. He stands 6' 5" and wears a size 15 shoe. In the end, he could only find a new pair of cowboy boots that fit and though, as he put it "I had never before worn

cowboy boots" he wore them that day to meet her majesty. He also recalled, as he put it, "my big hand shaking her tiny hand."

Then I got even luckier. I searched PAHA's online digital archives one more time and found a photo of Garin Veris shaking hands with the queen. Bingo.

The story, which I imagined would be an easy re-use of an image ended up being much more than I expected. It required a bit more research and turned out to be a better story. Poor Dave Packard pretty much vanished in the telling. But that's the joy of journalism and history. You begin with an idea, and the story takes you where it will.

I am in debt to PAHA's digitized archives for making this little gem possible. The only bad news is that I uncovered the story too late to put it into my new book.

Robin Chapman is a local writer and will be speaking about her new book at our November 6th PAHA program (see page 1). You can read her story about Garin Veris on the web site of the Los Altos Town Crier where she has a history column.

November Jaunts

The **Winchester Mystery House** celebrates its centennial year. For Halloween, it is featuring “Unhinged: Nightshade’s Curse.” Tours take visitors “... through the mansion as guests of ‘Madam Nightshade,’ ...self-proclaimed investigator of paranormal phenomena.” For more information on this special event, other tours and Covid protocols, call 408-247-2000 or visit their website at winchestermysteryhouse.com 525 Winchester Blvd, San Jose.



Image courtesy of Winchester Mystery House

As California continues to cope with a historic drought, you might want to gain inspiration from **Stanford University’s Arizona Garden**. This unique and somewhat hidden treasure comprises rare species of cactus, succulents, yucca, and agave in a 17,000 sq ft garden designed originally in the 1880s by landscape architect Rudolph Ulrich. His design incorporated formal symmetrical plantings of exotic imports with densely planted ground covers, mid-size specimens, and centrally placed monumental plants. Although the garden fell into disrepair in the 1920s, dedicated volunteers lovingly recreated it in the late 1990s.”



The challenge is to find the garden! It is located on the south side of the Stanford Family Mausoleum off Quarry Road between Campus Drive and Arboretum Road. There is a parking lot at Welch and Quarry Roads. The path directly opposite Welch Road leads to the garden. For more information on the Arizona Garden, visit <https://visit.stanford.edu/tours/virtual/gardens/details.html> and scroll down to “Arizona Garden”.

Palo Alto’s own **Museum of American Heritage** offers both exhibits and extraordinary gardens—the Williams Gardens and The Ruth Bell Lane Memorial Garden—the latter thanks to a generous gift from the Mel and Bill Lane families in honor of their mother. Enthusiastic volunteers and the Garden Club of Palo Alto have helped to develop and maintain these gardens, which include a 1942-era Victory garden, an early American cutting garden, medicinal and culinary herb beds, and a water-wise California Mediterranean garden.



Inside the historic Williams House, the special exhibit, “Ring Ring! Talk Telephones: The Evolution of Communication,” showcases the evolution of the telephone from the early 19th century. MOAH is free and open to the public, Fri – Sun, 11am-4pm at 351 Homer Avenue in Palo Alto. For information, call 650-321-1004 or visit www.moah.org.

Upcoming Programs

Dec 4: *Celebrating Nature: Four Environmental Groups Reach Milestones*, emceed by Karen Holman
Jan 22: TBD

Unless otherwise noted, programs are held in person on the first Sunday of the month. Check our website at www.pahistory.org for program information

Previous PAHA Programs

If you missed the October 2nd program, *Palo Alto Clinic: Stories from the Physicians*, you can find it and other recent PAHA program videos on Vimeo by following this link:
<https://vimeo.com/758023138>

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.



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