

UNDER THE OAKS



Published by the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum, founded 1978

Fall 2014

Local Historian Celebrates 96th Birthday

Don McDonald, the local historian who authored *Early Los Altos and Los Altos Hills* (Arcadia 2010) with the Los Altos History Museum, celebrated a birthday this summer that places him just a few years short of the century mark. "Why not wait four years?" he laughs. "Then we'll really have a story!"

He has already lived through the terms of seventeen U.S. presidents, beginning with Woodrow Wilson. When he was born in Indianapolis on July 25, 1918, former president Teddy Roosevelt was still making news and America was fighting in World War I. When McDonald's family moved to Glendale,



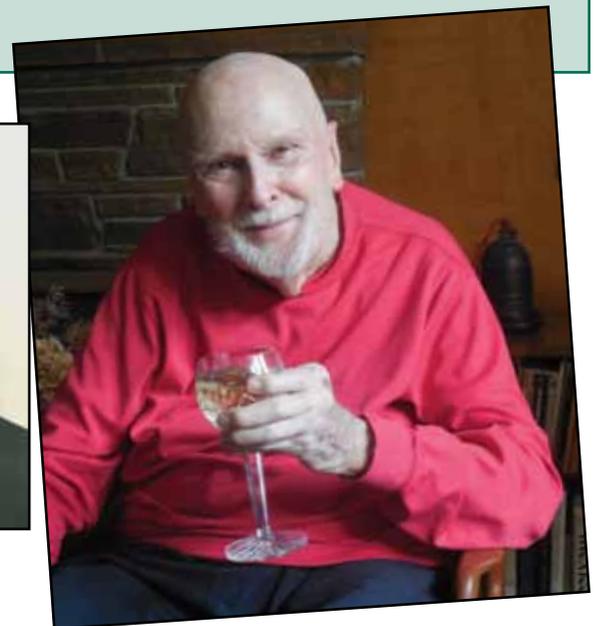
Don at 12, Glendale, California. 1930.



LTJG Don McDonald, U.S. Navy, 1943.

California, in 1929, Ventura Boulevard was a dirt road. He graduated with the UCLA class of 1940 along with history-making baseball great Jackie Robinson. A year later, America entered World War II and McDonald joined up as a naval officer, donning the uniform again in the Korean War. His life has spanned the Jazz Age, the Space Age, the Atomic Age, the Cold War, and, more recently, Silicon Valley and the iPhone. Now, at age ninety-six, he is the paternal head of a clan that includes his three children, seven grandchildren, fifteen great grandchildren, and one great great grandchild. A practical man, McDonald has already drafted his obituary.

Of all the inventions he's seen, he says the personal computer is



Good cheers to all. Don at 96, July 2014.

the handiest and you will often find him at his, writing and checking his email. His facility with technology should be no surprise: he had a long career with the highly technical NSA—an agency so secret most Americans didn't know it existed until the 1970s. McDonald was with the agency at its founding in 1952 and still says very little about his work there.

Much of his NSA career kept him in the environs of Washington D.C., but he was also assigned, over the years, to duty stations in Australia and Japan. When he lost his wife in 1969 and subsequently decided to retire, he began to spend

continued on page 2

Local Historian Celebrates 96th Birthday

continued from page 1

more time with friends in California. "I immediately felt I was returning home," he says. In Los Altos, in 1970, he renewed his acquaintance with Audrey Harper, whom he had met long before on a starlit night at the Hollywood Bowl. Audrey had married his friend Bob Harper, but by 1970, she too was widowed. Though he loved the cultural advantages of living near the nation's capital he says, "Audrey made the difference." One day, he drove his VW west and parked it in Los Altos for good. He and Audrey were quietly married and have now been together for more than four decades.

It was his walks through the remnants of the apricot orchards near their home that sparked his interest in local history. He was one of the first docents at the J. Gilbert Smith House in 1978 and there, on quiet afternoons, his curiosity led him to the newspaper files in the basement. There, he uncovered so much that the research led to a popular series of history columns he penned for the *Los Altos Town Crier*.

He is a true polymath. In addition to his code-breaking career and his writing, he has traveled the world, taught poetry, trod the boards in amateur theater, played classical piano, and studied oil painting. Among many other activities, he served as president of the Peninsula Civil War Round Table and has been an active member of a slew of other groups, from the Peninsula Astronomical Society, to the Navy Cryptologic Veterans Association, to the uniquely Californian E Clampus Vitus.

He quips that he belongs in "a rest home for the chronically inquisitive" and says he would love to enjoy many more birthdays, "As long as I can keep all my marbles." This summer, he stopped by to enjoy the annual volunteer party at the Los Altos History Museum, marking his thirty-sixth year as a member. Later, sitting in the sunlight of the Los Altos home he and Audrey still share, he asks, "Is there any place nicer than this?" Since there's no need for an answer, Don McDonald, now headed toward birthday number ninety-seven, simply smiles.

~ ROBIN CHAPMAN

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Under the Oaks 2

President's Pen

Dear Friends,

We start the 2014-15 fiscal year with an excellent Board of Directors consisting of five new and ten continuing members. Working together we will continue the fine work started last year. We will initiate and complete new goals:

- Developing a long range strategic plan
- Opening the new "Lure and Legends" exhibition and related programs
- Expanding our outreach to the community including programs for children
- Raising funds to support needed improvements such as updating the permanent exhibits
- Introducing a new museum Web site with more functionality and ease of use
- Continuing to offer fun events including the traditional Crab Feed but with some new features

We look forward to your continued support as we expand the museum's outreach to our community.

~ NOMI TRAPNELL, Board President



Board of Directors

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LOS ALTOS HISTORY MUSEUM "UNDER THE OAKS"

Gary Hedden, *Newsletter Editor*

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A publication of interest to citizens of Los Altos and neighboring communities, produced by the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum. A special thanks to the newsletter mailing team!

Silicon Valley: The Lure and the Legends

A new exhibition opens October 18 at the Los Altos History Museum.

“Silicon Valley: The Lure and the Legends,” an original exhibition at the Los Altos History Museum, will answer the question, “Why here?” What was it that led the Valley of Heart’s Delight from orchards to oscillators? And who were the visionaries and risk takers who made it happen?

The exhibit – October 18, 2014, through April 19, 2015 – is the story of the “who” and “why” behind the “what.” Displays will highlight the ingredients in the recipe for Silicon Valley: Stanford University, the role of the military and federal government, corporate culture, climate and the venture capital community.

It will focus on the local factors and folks contributing to this very special place.

The centerpiece will be a parametric structure, based on stock market fluctuations during the valley’s boom years. Enter and you’ll meet several dozen people – via iPad stories, anecdotes and photos – who helped shape the world we live in.

Among these “legends” will be John Warnock and Chuck Geschke

of Adobe Systems, Bob Noyce and Gordon Moore of Intel and Sergey Brin and Larry Page of Google.

A vignette of a workbench from the Los Altos garage where the two Steves – Jobs and Wozniak – created the first Apple computer will be part of the exhibit.

For a hands-on experience, there will be an Adobe Photoshop workstation, which will take “selfies” to a new level.

A third workbench will showcase a 3D printer with its capabilities to print objects from trinkets to medical devices. Bespoke Innovations founder Scott Summit, whose company makes customized prosthetic limbs using 3D technology, will be a featured speaker during the exhibit.

A mini-theater will be showing “The Lure and the Legends,” an original film featuring Silicon Valley luminaries, and a PBS film from “The American Experience.”

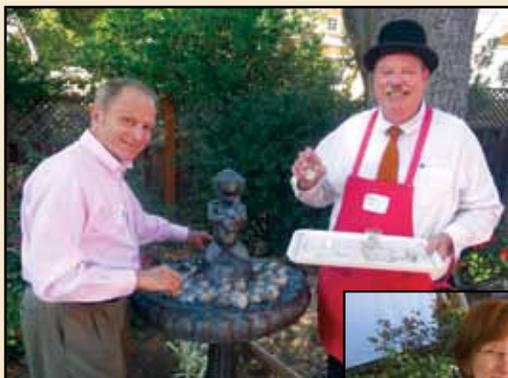


Parametric structure under construction in Los Angeles.

Related programs will feature Stanford University President John Hennessy, former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry and Silicon Valley serial entrepreneur and academician Steve Blank.

~ CAROLYN SNYDER

Photo Gallery



Oysters anyone? Jean Mordo and Doug Debs at Downton Los Altos in July.



We’ve got you covered! Nomi Trapnell and David Ricci at Downton Los Altos.



Sande Stuart and Jane Reed serving strawberry shortcake at the Antiques Show.



Fun at Downton Los Altos.

Spotlight on the Oral History Project

The Museum has an extensive collection of oral histories recorded since 1976 and each quarter we like to showcase one story. This quarter we shine a light on Helen Foerster who was interviewed in April.

The Federated Women's Club of Los Altos is a service organization that was founded in 1957 and held its first meeting at the Los Altos Country Club with 103 members in attendance. Helen Foerster was one of the Club's 32 charter members.

Helen served as the Club's second president from 1959-1960 and represented the Club at the 1960 Washington, D.C. National Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, International, where Eleanor Roosevelt spoke. Helen led the Club's first service project to raise funds for the building of the Los Altos Youth Center, dedicated in 1961. In 1962 the Club's 236 members held one of their most successful fundraisers, the Red Garter Revue, and Helen was in many skits as part of the chorus line. In addition to the Youth Center, the Club has made many significant contributions to the community, including listening tables for the Library, scholarships to Foothill College, and benches for downtown. Helen served a second time as president from 1990-1991, and has been program chair for the past 15 years.



Helen Foerster at 94, August 2014.



Red Garter Revue, 1962. Helen is third from the left.

Helen and her late husband, David, arrived in Los Altos in 1954 and bought a lot for \$1,600 that overlooked acres and acres of apricot trees. She still lives in the house they built. Helen fondly remembers all of the apricots they picked and dried. Times change and the apricots are gone. Now she is teaching her granddaughter to can tomatoes.

With almost 60 years of community service, we all benefit from the good work of remarkable people like Helen Foerster.

~ MARCIA ADAMS

We Love Our Docents

Have you ever wondered just what a docent is and what they do? A docent is the first person the museum visitor sees. The docent greets and welcomes the visitor and is trained to add depth and understanding about the current exhibition and the permanent pieces always on display.

The Smith House is a perfect opportunity. The style and design of the house is distinct from current homes, and the artifacts in the house are so different and unfamiliar. The trained docent can explain these things to greatly enrich the visitor's experience.

If you haven't been to the Smith House recently we'd love to show it to you again! Come by during normal museum hours.

~ MARILYN HENDERSON

Welcome to 33 new members, and thank you to 161 renewing members!

Sarah Adler	Meng & Lin Lee
Kevin Akers	Colleen Lukoff
Connie Bantillo	Rob & Pat Meneely
Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Bauknight	Jackie Monfort
Ava Lee & David Bellshaw	Thomas & Diane Mooney
Dr. Berry	Kristin Morris & Henri Berger
Anita Carter	Molly Paaso
Kim Citrino	Cheryl Powell
Barbara & Dick Clapp	Dina Sakahara & Ed Rowe
Donald Cohn & Claudia Woolson Cohn	Michael Schoendorf
Robert Coutts	Chandana Sinha
Linda Craig	James Springgate
Melanie & John Geleynse	Spencer Stratton
Thomas & Kipp Gutchall	Harry & Beverly Taxin
Ron Ho & Christina Lai	Denise Welsh
Jeff & Annette Knapp	David Zeitman
Vanessa Lam	

Pedal Power and Wedding Flowers: a Perfect Match

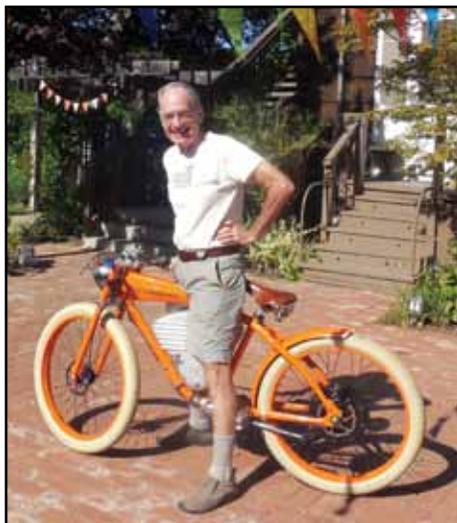
Who would think that an exhibit of wacky bicycles—one of them shaped like a number 2 pencil—would make the perfect setting for a wedding? That's the case for bride-to-be Sam Dutrow. With a fiancé who is an avid cyclist and racer, Sam was planning her wedding theme around bikes, and when she saw the display she exclaimed, "This could not be more perfect!"

Sam was already sold on the museum as a venue for her celebration when she booked it last year. It was an amazing coincidence that this particular exhibit would provide the backdrop to go along with the centerpieces she was designing from recycled bike parts.

Pedal Power: From Wacky to Workhorse, has been drawing a steady stream of visitors since its opening, April 10. Weddings are a weekly occurrence at the museum: nearly every summer weekend is booked for celebrations. But a marriage of both exhibit and nuptials has never been as perfect as this one.

"I am in total shock and awe that this is the exhibit that will be happening during our wedding," Sam told Gary Hedden, who spearheaded the display. "Things work out for a reason and we couldn't be happier!"

Receptions aren't the only draw to the current show. On June 29, over 200 people gathered in the Hillview parking lot for a Family Cycle Carnival. Cyclecide offered rides operated by pedal power and a rodeo with plenty of skits. On the same day Tom Kabat taught thirty people how to design their own two-wheeler. Electric bike rides were the attraction on July 26, an event attended by almost 300.



Gary Hedden riding a classic looking e-bike by Vintage Electric Bikes.



Bob Schneeweis with his 6-legged electric horse at the electric bike festival.

Still to come: A talk at the library on "The Making of Pedal Power," Sept. 9, an eight-mile bike tour of historical Los Altos sites, September 28, and a "Farm to Table" dinner, October 5.

Pedal Power runs through October 5, so if you haven't seen it, there's still time!

For more information, and to register for upcoming events, please visit losaltoshistory.org.

~ DIANE HOLCOMB



Tom Kabat at the Design-a-Bike Workshop



Sam and Todd with their bicycle parts centerpieces.



A bike rider "bull" at the Family Cycle Carnival.

History in the News

The Los Altos Historical Commission and the Los Altos Library are working on a very important project.

It's 1914 and the first branch library in Santa Clara County is opened by C. Miner, land agent with the Altos Land Company. "We like to read," Miner may have said. "Send me some books and I'll open a small lending library in my office at First and Main." The hours will be all day, every day... if I'm in. The cost to the county, \$5 per month.

Miner started with 100 books and the two most popular books in the U.S. at the time were *The Rosary* by Florence Barclay and *A Modern Chronicle* by Winston Churchill, an American novelist, not the much more famous British statesman of the same name.

The library moved across the street to the Copeland Building in 1917, the first of many moves. Trivia question: how many times did it move? You may be surprised.



Carol Tefft, new head librarian, 1963.

One hundred years later, the library has 307,000 books in the permanent collection and a whole lot more – CDs, DVDs, books on tape, electronic books and even a 3-D printer. To mark the centennial there will be a Gala Celebration with a proclamation by the mayor, a tribute to Carol Tefft, music, historic cars and bikes, lots of activities for the kids and a map. Yes, the map will answer the trivia question. Carefully researched by Bob Mabe (Historical Commission) and library volunteers Judie Suelzle and Bob Simon, the map will show all library locations along with photos and fun facts.

The celebration is October 11, 10-4 pm with the official start at 10:30 am.

~ GARY HEDDEN

The Historical Commission opened the Museum in 1977 and continues to work closely with the Museum Association.

West Meets East

Weddings are a big part of the History Museum's activities and this June we had a first as groom Anupam Pathak rode a white mare, Dora, in a wedding procession to start the ceremony. This blend of Western and Indian cultures reflects the multicultural diversity of Silicon Valley, but it did require some careful negotiation. A Los Altos ordinance prohibits riding large animals on city property, so the city council had to grant an exception.

Saroj Pathak, the groom's mother, says, "Indian weddings are a 5000 year old tradition and part of it is the groom traveling to the bride's village on horseback, or even elephant. It signifies the importance of the event, for both the bride and the groom." Saroj further explains, "Indian weddings are a lot of fun with music, colorful outfits and games like 'hide the groom's shoes.' It's a great ice-breaker for the families as they negotiate a price for the shoes' safe return." Indian wedding often last three or four days, allowing the families to form a good bond.

Anupam grew up in Los Altos Hills, but he wanted his wedding to reflect his Indian ancestry. His bride, Theresa Bruketta, a Concord native, designed her wedding gown to blend the two cultures. Custom made in Bombay, it is white (West) with a slit of red (East).

Sweet-natured Dora patiently took it all in with quiet dignity; wearing ornate blankets and a mask of red, gold and silver, it was her third wedding of the weekend!

We at the History Museum wish them all the very best – bride, groom and sweet Dora.

~ GARY HEDDEN



Anupam celebrating with his parents.



Dora with her handlers.

Director's Corner

Summer's long hot days belie the buzz of activity in our Museum offices. We're adding a full-time Collections & Exhibitions Manager to oversee two critical areas of our mission. In the past, **Lisa Robinson** managed our collections part time, with the help of **Jane Reed**, who managed our exhibitions as a volunteer—for more than a decade. We've interviewed candidates from all over the country and the talent pool is amazing!

Interns are another resource we sometimes add to our corps. This summer, we're lucky to welcome two motivated students who have volunteered in exchange for course credit. In August, history major **Adron Mason** worked in the collections department. A Los Altos for whom the Museum was a favorite childhood experience, he is contemplating advanced degrees in public history or museum studies. In September, we will co-host a biochemist from Kenya, **Serah Kahui**, who believes museums can break the cycle of poverty by removing the mystery around science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Together with the Computer History Museum and other colleagues, we will help her see how a museum operates; inspiring her to change her own community based on what she learns here. Later in the summer we will welcome Morgan Hill resident **Kathy Devine**, who will be finishing her master's in Museum Studies with a possible Murphy-Taaffe history exhibit.

Part of the very first wagon train to arrive Santa Clara Valley, the Murphys' extensive holdings were originally Spanish land grants. I'm exploring co-curating an exhibition on the rancho period with a few larger history museums; we could share expertise and expenses. The resulting exhibit might even travel across the state, as no rental exhibit currently exists on this important subject. Los Altos could lead the way on an exhibit that is unique to California. How exciting is that?

~ LAURA BAJUK, E.D.



POPs artists enjoying their work at the Library. The Peninsula Outdoor Painters painted scenes of the Heritage Apricot Orchard near the History Museum early this year.

Photo Gallery



Don McDonald and Robin Chapman at the volunteer reception.



Ellen Katz speaks at the volunteer reception in June.



Luke H, age 11, and Grace Perry at the volunteer reception. Luke is amazing. He received a junior volunteer award at age 6 for his help with train exhibits.

ON THE CALENDAR

Moon Festival, story-telling, food-tasting, crafts, lantern-making & entertainment, Sunday, September 7, 10 am-1 pm

The Making of *Pedal Power*, a behind the scenes look at the making of an exhibition, Los Altos Library, Tuesday, September 9, 7-8 pm

Train Days! Saturday & Sunday, September 20-21, 10 am-4 pm

Historic Bike Tour, Sunday, September 28, 9:30 am-12:30 pm, register with Event Brite

Ohlone Day 2, Saturday, October 4, 10 am-noon

Pedal Power: from Wacky to Workhorse, Closing Day, Sunday, October 5, 12-4:00 pm

Silicon Valley: The Lure & Legends, Opening Reception, Sunday, October 19, 2-4 pm

Military & Defense Talk--"Hidden History of Silicon Valley," LAHS Eagle Theater, Wednesday, November 5, 7 pm

Catch the Spirit! Wednesday, November 19, 11 am-4 pm

Scott Summit of Bespoke, Los Altos Stage Co., Tuesday, December 2, 7 pm, History Museum open 5:30-9 pm

The Stanford Connection, Wednesday, January 21, 2015, 7 pm

More events are in the works – watch for your monthly member email updates!



Train Days!

Heading your way.

Always a community favorite, so mark your calendars!

Saturday and Sunday, September 20-21, 10 am-4 pm



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51 So. San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022

www.losaltoshistory.org

Museum and Store Hours

Thursday to Sunday, Noon-4 pm

We are closed New Year's Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day.

General Inquiries

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(650) 948-9427 x11

Event Rentals

(650) 948-9427 x12

Mission Statement

History inspires imagination, stimulates thought and transforms society. The Los Altos History Museum preserves and shares our local history to enrich our community and to shape a more informed future.

Address Correction Requested