Julie Rose is retiring this year after 21 years as head of the Los Altos Chamber of Commerce and she kindly shared a few of her favorite memories.

**My welcome to Los Altos:** I moved to Los Altos with my family in 1975. Soon, someone knocked on the front door. It was Bob Grimm. He was running for City Council and needed help with his campaign. That afternoon, Marion Grimm called to sign me up. I still remember Marion’s card files with handwritten notes full of voter information. Only the most trusted volunteers could touch those files!

**Early Days at History House:** I was an early docent at the History House, as it was called in 1977. We sat in the downstairs library—upstairs was off-limits because boarders were living there. The telephone was in the library closet, and since we had few visitors in those days, we spent a lot of time talking on the telephone.

**The Tech:** In 1990, I was recruited to work at the Tech as Volunteer Services Director. As always, Bob Grimm was at the center of the action. Bob loved the Tech and volunteered full-time to create “the Garage,” an education center that opened eight years before the new Tech Museum was completed in 2002.

**Los Altos Chamber of Commerce:** I became the Executive Director in 1996. The office had a Mac that sat in the corner and was only used for bookkeeping. Coming from the Tech, I was determined to bring the Chamber into the modern era. In 1996, email was new, websites were new, and Fax machines were magical. We launched one of the first electronic newsletters and we connected local businesses using Facebook.

One highlight for me was the Chamber Birthday Party for Board chairs from the past 50 years. The black tie dinner dance at the then Cabana Hotel featured a full 17-piece dance band. Remember those days?

**Museum Capital Campaign:** Ginny Lear chaired the Capital Campaign with Marion Grimm, and I was the Marketing Director. Bob Grimm and Nan Geschke worked hard with Goody Steinberg and Donald Sibbett on all aspects of the design and construction. Interesting trivia, Goody Steinberg designed the Chamber of Commerce building in 1961—for $1.

**House Tours and Premier Nights:** I worked with Nan Geschke and Pinky Whelan to develop a series of historic house tours from 2003-2007. We enjoyed securing the houses, coordinating the volunteers, and working with local merchants to design beautiful table settings and floral designs. The first Premier Night was held at the Shumate House, followed by Nights at a series of elegant and architecturally interesting historic homes including the residences of John and Marva Warnock, Steve Finn, and Kathy and Donald Imwalle.

**Board President:** I served as Museum Board President in 2005-2006 and still treasure the framed watercolor of the Smith House that I received when I turned in my gavel.

Now, with a little more time on her hands, we are all thrilled that Julie is returning to the Museum Board.

Welcome back.

~ Eleanor Watanabe
President’s Pen

This year the Board has two Presidents, and the plan is twice the fun and half the work. The 40th Anniversary Party July 23 was an example of that fun. Museum members and friends enjoyed appetizers and drinks under the oaks, viewed a Memory Wall, stopped by the photo booth, played Trivia, and enjoyed the folk music of MaCaJo. Dinner was catered by Karen Bevels Custom Catering and served by members of the MVLA Service League of Boys and the Los Altos High School’s Rotary Interact Club. It was a wonderful way to celebrate the Museum’s anniversary, officially coming up December 1.

We welcome four new members to the History Museum’s Board of Directors—John Beman, Robin Chapman, Gary Hedden, and Julie Rose. We are delighted to welcome these talented and dedicated individuals to our Board! Our thanks and appreciation to five members who have completed their terms—Dan Haley, Kathy Lera, Karen Purtich, Ginger Summit, and Ed Taft. We are so grateful for their contributions and efforts on behalf of the Museum. Thank you one and all!

Eleanor Watanabe and I are excited to be working with Elisabeth Ward, Executive Director, and Heather Farquhar, Deputy Director, as we help move our Museum to the next level. We hope to offer unique, new exhibits, expanded programs geared to all members of our community, especially young families and families new to the area, and distinctive special events and galas.

The opportunities are limitless and your involvement and support will help. Soon we will conduct a member survey to solicit your ideas about programs, exhibits, and special events. We hope you will take a moment to complete the survey, your input is important to us!

Thank you for supporting our Museum!

~ Linda Eckols and Eleanor Watanabe, Co-Presidents

I Want the Wide American Earth

The Smithsonian traveling exhibition, I Want the Wide American Earth: An Asian Pacific American Story, will open Oct. 19 with a grand opening event Oct. 22. This exhibition tells the rich and complex stories of the first Asian laborers arriving along the Gulf and Eastern American seaboards. From there, it tells stories of Asian immigrants finding homes and participating in key moments of US history. Asian immigrants were miners and business people during the California Gold Rush, hammered the ties in the Transcontinental Railroad, fought on both sides of the Civil War and helped build our nation’s agricultural system as they farmed plantations in Hawaii and California. Artifacts and photographs from the Museum collection and loans from community members will add a local focus to this national touring exhibit.

The exhibition has been generously underwritten by a grant from the Los Altos Community Foundation. Joe Eyre, Executive Director of LACF observed, “The Los Altos Community Foundation is proud to support this exhibit, which will foster local awareness of the historical contributions of Asian Pacific Americans in building our community and the role the Asian Heritage of many of our neighbors and friends plays in making our community such a wonderful and vibrant place to live.”

~ Eleanor Watanabe

Staff

Elisabeth Ida Ward, Executive Director
Heather Farquhar, Deputy Director and Head of Collections
Mary Flynn, Outreach Coordinator
Mark Perry, Facility & Rentals Manager
Faustino Carrillo, Gardener

Ben Furuichi in his paratrooper uniform, ca. 1944. The Furuichi family arrived in 1906 shortly after the earthquake and bought 5 acres in Los Altos in 1918. Ben’s Uncle George served in Europe during WWII, while the rest of the family was being held at an internment camp in Wyoming. LAHM collection 1989.025.002

Los Altos History Museum
“Under the Oaks”
Gary Hedden, Editor
Judi Eichler, Graphic Design

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

The Los Altos History Museum began in 1977 when the J. Gilbert Smith House became the History House, and in 2001 we took the next big step with the opening of the newly constructed History Museum. Los Altos Mayor King Lear was a keynote speaker in 2001, and he remarked, “Isn’t it a glorious day?” He was referring to the weather, but it applied equally well to the new building. Los Altos Hills Mayor Steve Finn aptly noted, “This is a community undertaking.”

The three-level 8,200 square foot facility, in the making for more than 10 years, was a creation of a determined group of residents. They raised money, led by Lear’s wife Ginny, hired famed architect Goodwin Steinberg, and helped build the exhibits. Chuck and Nan Geschke and Bob and Marion Grimm were major players in the $3.3 million fundraising effort.

Bob Grimm commented in 1996, “You want to create a big palette where people can use the building for other purposes 25 years from now.” Bob’s wish has certainly come true! Our Museum has created exhibitions on individuals such as Wallace Stegner, David and Lucille Packard, and Hau Beiren, as well as contemporary topics with Shaped by Water and Pedal Power. We have hosted fashion shows, Historic Home and Garden tours, antique fairs, Train Days, Catch the Spirit, and Sheryl-Sandberg-inspired Lean In Circles. We also have weddings, special events and parties under the oaks and on our beautiful patio. Yes, Bob, we have been using our building for many other purposes for more than 25 years!

Now, with our new Executive Director, Elisabeth Ward, the Board of Directors is ready to expand our concept of a local history museum into a true “community museum.” One that brings families, teens, and elders back again and again to participate in exhibits and activities. Let’s follow Bob Grimm’s lead and make our History Museum even better for the next 25 years!

~ Linda Eckols

Our Hidden Gems

We have many items tucked away at the Museum that don’t get much attention. That won’t be the case for a recent arrival, a sewing machine that dates back to 1906. Manufactured by the White Sewing Machine Company, this machine was so lovingly cared for that it still works! Donated by local resident Connie Chronis in honor of her mother, who was a teacher, the sewing machine will be used to teach visitors about sewing and it is a perfect fit with the Smith House.

White was a well-known sewing machine company, second only to Singer. Thomas White first began producing sewing machines in Massachusetts in 1858, and sold them for just $10. The company didn’t offer many different models, and our machine, the White Family Rotary, was the most popular. The company was well known for having high quality cabinets whose wood came from forests and cabinet factories owned by the company.

White was the main supplier of sewing machines to Sears Roebuck & Company from the mid-1920s through the 1950s, sold under brand names like Minnesota, Franklin and Kenmore. During WWII the company ceased producing sewing machines to manufacture items for the war effort. After the war there was a shortage of sewing machines and the company stepped up production to fill the gap. That effort was short lived as they ceased U.S. manufacturing due to an influx of foreign made sewing machines, ironically from Japan. Most American sewing machine manufacturers were either absorbed or bankrupt by 1960.

The sewing machine donated by Connie Chronis and her family, still in its original wooden cabinet and in working condition, will allow us to tell this story, and we are grateful. Perhaps sewing circles will make a come back!

~ Heather Farquhar
Don McDonald, My Friend

As many of you know, Don McDonald passed away recently. Don was a good friend of the Museum and my friend, and we shared many stories during his final two weeks. He was born July 25, 1918, in Indianapolis, grew up in Ohio and California, and graduated from UCLA in 1940. He joined the military and was called to active duty in 1942. He told me he worked in an office tracking messages, that it involved lots of typing and he was a good typist. He and 24 fellow “clerk/typists” were soon loaded on a train to Washington, D.C., a “boxcar” really, according to Don. He spent the remainder of WWII there, as a cryptanalyst working on Japanese Navy codes. “We didn’t break the code,” he said, “but we knew enough of the pieces to know that Midway was the target.” Don readily admitted that luck played a part in the epic Battle of Midway in that we just happened to attack the Japanese fleet in the midst of refueling and thus most vulnerable. Don could remember such details. In 1946 he returned to civilian life but was called back to active duty during the Korean Conflict, and then as a civil servant in the National Security Agency. One of his foreign duty postings was as Chief of NSA’s overseas facility at Fuchinobe, Japan, from 1961-65. He was in charge of operations in the Philippines and Korea and recalled flying over Tokyo in a two-seater helicopter. “We had to,” he said, “Even then traffic was bad in Tokyo.” I took a chance and asked if after all these years he could share a few secrets. “Gary, if I told you, we would have to kill you.” I think he was joking. He retired from the NSA in 1970.

“So Don, what brought you to Los Altos?” “It was Audrey.” Don and his friend Bob Harper ushered at the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles in 1938 and they met Audrey. She was a “program girl,” selling programs. Bob and Audrey married and had two daughters, Karen and Kathleen. Don had three children, Lynne, Valerie, and Donald Jr. With the passing of time and spouses, Don, knowing Audrey was in Los Altos, moved here to rekindle their relationship and their mutual love of symphonic music and opera. They married and with a twinkle in his eye, Don enjoyed telling the story, “Audrey didn’t know it, but she met both of her husbands at the same time in 1938.”

Don’s return in 1970 was our good fortune. He wanted to learn more about the early days of the city so he volunteered at the History Museum as a docent and a member of the Education & Oral History Committees, wrote for the newsletter and curated Los Altos as Homefront in World War II. He didn’t mention it to me, but in celebration of his 90th birthday, the City Council proclaimed July 25, 2008 as Don McDonald Day, and in 2010 he was Los Altan of the Year.

I met Don when he helped me plan the first Historic Los Altos Bike Tour. He drove me around town, introduced me to the owners of historic properties and made sure I got my stories straight. That was 2012 and the start of our friendship.

Friday morning, June 23, I was at the hospital when Audrey visited. She and Don held hands, whispered “I love you” and shared a kiss. Don passed away that evening.

Peace my friend,
~ Gary Hedden

Newsflash

Mary Flynn joined the Museum in June as Outreach Coordinator and is responsible for communication with our members and constituents. Born and raised in Georgia, she attended the University of Georgia, receiving a degree in Communications with a minor in Linguistics. She previously worked with the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria, and now volunteers for JVR Shelter Strategies, working to improve the quality of animal shelters across the country. Her interests range from oil painting to white water kayaking, and she recently began studying the Gaelic language, as she is a dual Irish citizen!

New Members

Welcome to our new members:

Maria Bautista Barb Scanlon
Amy Cody Debbie Shepherd

And thank you to all 782 active members!
Modern by Design

Joe Eichler was a visionary. I bought my Eichler 20 years ago and loved it immediately. I loved the compact, modern functionality, the design simplicity inspired by the “less is more” Bauhaus concept. And the abundant daylight!

I didn’t know the Eichler story. I didn’t know that Joe cared about social issues and sustainability, that he wanted to provide the American dream to vets returning from WWII who needed affordability, and that he wanted a home for the masses. He also expected great design, and he achieved it by working with architects like Claude Oakland and A. Quincy Jones who shared his vision.

Now there is a resurgence of interest in Eichler homes. Only 11,000 were built, many locally, and the modern look of the 1950s still appeals. I like the clutter-free aspect, the healthy air quality provided by clean radiant heating and the connection to nature through the glazing and atriums.

I also have an interest in making my home as green as possible. My clients look for this as well, but what does it mean? It is energy efficient appliances, low-VOC paint, recycled materials and more. An excellent resource for both do-it-yourselfers and professionals is the U.S. Green Building Council’s website www.greenhomeguide.com launched in 2016. It offers in-depth articles on everything you need to know, including the cost.

Did I remodel my Eichler? Yes—I updated it in the Eichler spirit and now I am even more in love with it and couldn’t be happier.

~ Lucile Glessner

Director’s Corner

As I write this, I’m sitting in a coffee shop in Winnipeg, Canada. This is my summer vacation of choice for historical reasons related to my Icelandic heritage. In the 1870s, thousands of Icelanders moved to the shores of Lake Winnipeg, to a settlement they called New Iceland and known back home as West Iceland. It retains its Icelandic ethnic identity, with some fourth-generation families still speaking Icelandic at home.

They say a person should do one thing every day that scares them, and I imagine that adage was particularly true for migrants like those Icelanders, uprooting their entire lives to go to a country where the climate, landscape, and people were so different. And it applies to the exhibition opening October 19, I Want the Wide American Earth, on the Asian immigration experience in America.

It puts my challenges into perspective. Starting work in Los Altos when my Bay Area “home” has always been the East Bay—Berkeley, Lafayette, Moraga, Walnut Creek—hardly counts as a migration in our modern world! I’m now working hard to notice the subtle things that make Los Altos and Los Altos Hills unique—why El Monte angles off in a new direction, the proper pronunciation of Shoup—and I hope that will make me a better Executive Director.

I have a personal goal to try something new every day. At the Celebration Dinner July 23, I definitely did something “scary new” by announcing the launch of the new Grimm Family Legacy. I have done fundraising before, but spearheading a bold initiative like this one is very new to me.

It is new for the Museum too. Fundraising for specific projects or exhibits is different than encouraging people to contribute towards the museum’s long-term success. I am inspired by the Grimm Family and their 20 year commitment and I hope others will be inspired as well. To advance the Museum and develop new programs, we need to be able to move forward with confidence. Please join me in this new venture—investing in the Museum’s next 40 years.

My door is always open.

~ Elisabeth Ward, Executive Director

Lucile Glessner spoke in May on ‘Sustainable Solutions and Materials for the Built Environment’ as part of ‘Eichler Homes: Modernism for the Masses.’ The exhibition closes Oct. 8, don’t miss it!
The sock monkey volunteers have 40 years of history, just like the Museum. Starting in 1977 with a call to take part in some “monkey business,” the group meets at the Hillview Senior Center to make sock monkeys for young patients at the Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital. Pictured, from the left, are Lily Hioki, Delroba Parsi and Chodi McReynolds.

Vickie Breslin will open a new restaurant, The Post, giving a fresh look to the old Copeland Building at First and Main. The fourth structure built in Los Altos, circa. 1910, it began life as a Post Office, drug store and candy store. It has now been cleared down to the studs. Breslin said she had no choice, her design team needed to know the condition of the building. Fortunately there were no surprises!

Lynne Farrell, one of nine volunteers at the Museum’s ‘Blow-Out Sale’ in July, speaking with Nina Bell. According to event organizer Vicki Holman, the Museum cleared over $500 as well as some much needed shelf space.

Linda Eckols with summer school students viewing the student art exhibit, ‘Our Community Through the Eyes of Children.’

The Civic Center Apricot Orchard is important to the agricultural heritage of Los Altos. It is also a working orchard and needs four or five good soakings a year according to our hard-working farmer Phil Doetsch, shown here handling the irrigation pipes.

Edna and her son Matt Pear at the July 23 Celebration Dinner. The Pear family kindly donated the very popular 1930s Allis Chalmers tractor to the Museum in 1997, as well as an old orchard sprayer.
Photo Gallery – July 23 Celebration Dinner

Honored guests Mary Prochnow, Mayor of Los Altos and Joe Eyre, Executive Director of the Los Altos Community Foundation, with his wife Teri.

Long time Museum supporter Jim Morgan with Paul and Liz Nyberg

A toast to Pinky Whelan for her 40 year commitment to the Museum.

Ginger Cafe, one of the event caterers, brought their really tasty ‘Piggy Buns.’

Sue and Patty listening in appreciation to the tribute to their father, Bob Grimm.

Elisabeth Ward announcing the Grimm Family Legacy Launch.
Museum and Store Hours
Thursday to Sunday, Noon–4 pm
We are closed New Year’s Day, Easter, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

General Inquiries
(650) 948-9427 x14 or hello@losaltoshistory.org

Collections/Research
(650) 948-9427 x11 research@losaltoshistory.org

Event Rentals
(650) 948-9427 x12 mperry@losaltoshistory.org

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

On The Calendar

Eichler Homes: Modernism For The Masses, an exhibition on the iconic homes of Joe Eichler, closes October 8.

Train Days! Saturday & Sunday, September 16 & 17, 10 am-4 pm.

Don McDonald Memorial Service, Sunday, September 24, 4 pm at the Museum.

I Want the Wide American Earth: An Asian Pacific American Story, Sunday, October 22, opening reception 1-4 pm.

The Asian Pacific American Story, Speaker Series, kick-off with Connie Young Yu, Thursday, October 26, 7 pm.

Catch the Spirit! Wednesday, November 15, noon-4 pm, holiday boutique, local authors, CSA toy drive, and historic house tours.

J. Gilbert Smith House Museum, 40th Anniversary, Friday, December 1, open house and cookies.

Crab Feed and Auction, save the date, Saturday, February 3, 2018.

Board Meetings, First Wednesday each month, 4 pm, everyone welcome
Smith House Tours, Every Sunday, 2 pm