

Remembering Loma Prieta

On October 17, 2019—the 30th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake—the Museum will open a new exhibit on emergency preparedness in partnership with the City of Los Altos. *Our Community Prepares: Acts of Nature, Then and Now* reflects on how natural disasters have shaken our lives and how resilient communities come together to rebuild. The exhibit and related programming will also teach visitors how to prepare for the next natural disaster, providing important information on how to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

In researching for this exhibit, I reached out to members of the community to learn more about their experiences during Loma Prieta. People had incredible stories and vivid memories of where they were when disaster struck, how they reacted, and how it changed their lives.

For some people, the earthquake was not just a harrowing experience, but also an isolating one. Several families



St. Joseph's Seminary suffered extensive damage. Courtesy St. Joseph's College.

felt like it was “every man for himself,” remembering how difficult it was to relate to neighbors who sustained only minor damages. While luckier community members were always sympathetic and offered initial assistance, they were ultimately able to move on with their lives sooner than those who experienced drawn-out battles with insurance companies or waited years for their homes to be rebuilt. For those hit hardest, the earthquake destroyed belongings both practical and precious, disrupted family traditions, and shattered any sense of security. As one Los Altos Hills resident put it, “It didn’t go away. It was your life.”

For many, though, living through the earthquake increased their connection to the community, bringing them closer to their neighbors. Don Carroll, then on the Board of Directors for St. Joseph’s Seminary, which sustained the most significant damage in Santa Clara County, recalled the camaraderie he built with neighbors on the night of the earthquake. He helped others turn off their gas, shared food and beverage, and gathered around a battery-powered television to watch the news with others on his cul-de-sac. For Carroll, the earthquake forged bonds between neighbors, who now shared a “common interest born out of having experienced that event.”

In Los Altos Hills, Mara Bronstone and Bridget Morgan had a similar experience. In 1989, they were living down the street from each other but did not know each other well. After the earthquake struck, neighbors flooded out of their



Cooks Junction in downtown Los Altos after the earthquake. LAHM Collection.

President's Pen

Hello History Museum Members and Friends,

When my husband and I moved to Los Altos in November of 2011, we were charmed by the town and the numerous community activities. The Museum's exhibits, events, and programs were a huge part of that welcome.



There have been many changes since then in the town and at the Museum. We've changed our logo, our mission statement, and created a new strategic plan to guide us through the coming decade. Something that hasn't changed is the importance of community to the Museum and we want our exhibits and programs to reflect that.

Our current exhibit, *Silicon Valley Eats*, celebrates the diversity of meal traditions in our community. You still have a chance to see it and participate in events associated with it. And you won't want to miss *Gadgets Galore* now at the Smith House. You definitely want to check out the toaster.

Where were you on October 17, 1989? It's hard to believe that it's been 30 years since the Bay Area's "big one." The next exhibit, *Our Community Prepares: Acts of Nature, Then and Now*, will stir your memories as well as remind us to be prepared.

Please come by to see the exhibits, shop at the store, and attend our events. I'm delighted to serve as President of the Board this year and look forward to seeing you at the Museum!

~ Julia Lovin

Thanks to those who donate to the Museum at the end of the year. You will find this year's appeal as an insert in the Town Crier coming soon to your mailbox!

Staff

Dr. Elisabeth Ward, *Executive Director*

Dr. Amy Noel Ellison, *Exhibition Curator*

Diane Holcomb, *Outreach Coordinator*

Deepti Devanagondi, *Bookkeeper*

Mark Perry, *Facility & Rentals Manager*

Faustino Carrillo, *Gardener*

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!

Remembering Loma Prieta

continued from page 1

damaged homes to make sure everyone was safe and gas valves turned off. It was almost like a block party, Bronstone remembered, and a comfort to know they weren't alone. Over the next couple

years, Bronstone and Morgan grew closer as they went through the same ordeal of rebuilding their homes

and navigating building permits, geological investigations, and structural engineering reports. Today, they remain close and credit Loma Prieta for their 30 year friendship.

Others reached beyond their immediate neighborhood to offer assistance to strangers. Dave Green was visiting from New Zealand when the earthquake hit. He volunteered the next three days of his vacation to helping downtown store owners clean up their shops. In the wake of this tragedy, strangers became new friends as Los Altos banded together to rebuild.

People experienced the earthquake in different ways, and they recovered in different ways, too. For some, the healing process began with documenting the rebuilding process. John and Stevie Day, for example, filled three large photo albums showing damage done to the Shoup House and the lengthy rebuilding process. Others, like Bridget Morgan, learned everything they could about geology in order to make sense of the unlikely event. Still others found a creative outlet, like Marge Shively, who made commemorative plates with the date, time, and a seismograph recording. We all have different ways of dealing with tragedy and grief, different ways we make sense of the day the world turned upside down.

As we look back at Loma Prieta, it's clear that while we do not have much control over natural disasters, we do have a choice in how well we prepare for it and how well we respond to it. We do not get to decide when or where disaster will hit, or how hard, but we can decide to make a home emergency kit, to plan an evacuation route with our families, and to get trained as a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) member. We also have a choice in how well we help our neighbors, especially those hit hardest and faced with a longer recovery time. When it comes to natural disasters, we must both prepare and rebuild as a community.

~ Dr. Amy Noel Ellison



Stevie Day with daughters Betsy, left, and Cindy, right, and Cindy's husband Peter Sabin on the one-year anniversary of the earthquake, Oct. 1990. The rebuilding was still far from complete! LAHM Collection.

History in the News

Historic changes are on the way. Here at the Museum, the Spagnoli Tank House restoration will finally get started. The tarp will come off the roof as soon as ‘wedding season’ is over, the leaks will be fixed and the exterior restored to the original 1915 look. Downtown, a restoration at 170 State Street by Los Altos Community Investments (LACI) will create new space and a food hall, taking advantage of the dramatic interior designed by Wendell Roscoe in the early 50s for a local grocery chain, *Purity Stores*. Sidewalk seating will add some welcome life to that end of State Street. *Bumble*, the small but popular restaurant at 145 First Street is getting an expansion while keeping the charm of the original cottage built in 1915 for George and Ada Brooks. Ada served as one of the first if not the first librarian when the County Library opened. Finally, keeping a keen eye on historic homes, the property at 725 University Avenue was recently sold. Built in 1911, the two-story shingled Craftsman bungalow has retained its original look, while inside it is an up-to-date home. According to Carolyn Snyder with the *Town Crier*, Marcella and Ralph Heintz bought the property in 1950 and owned it for over 50 years. Marcella had a shop in Los Altos, the *Antiquarian*, and Ralph was an electrical engineer with SRI International. Their daughter Linda and husband Dennis Ronberg started *Linden Tree Books* on State Street in 1983. The current owners are moving on, and we hope the new owners will appreciate our local history as much as the rest of us.

~ Gary Hedden



Robert Hindman with Los Altos Community Investments enjoying the recently revealed interior of 170 State Street.

Teen Docents

The Teen Docent Program started out as all great projects do, with a dream. Dr. Amy Ellison and Dr. Elisabeth Ward recognized a community need to get teens more involved with the Museum—a need that aligned with the Museum’s objective of encouraging intergenerational interaction. My role as a Foothill College Humanities Mellon Scholar was to assist in creating this new program from the ground up. Under the guidance of Dr. Ward and Dr. Ellison, I began outreach to local high schools, both public and private, trying to attract curious, passionate students looking to deepen their community involvement, historical knowledge, and leadership skills. The number of applications we received exceeded our limit, a good marker that this program was viewed as beneficial to local students.

Even before we met our fifteen prospective Teen Docents in person, we were amazed by the depth, passion, and knowledge they revealed in their applications. Dr. Ellison took charge of designing a week-long educational training curriculum meant to prepare the teens for their year-long volunteer commitment at the Museum. On the first day, the students received in-depth tours of the Museum, and then they picked one object or historical figure and crafted their own personalized tours around that topic. As the week progressed they researched their specialization, learned about the day-to-day operations of the Museum from the staff and learned from exciting guest speakers. In particular, the Winchester Mystery House Historian and Tour Manager



Jocelyn Lambert, left, and Amy Ellison, right, with the teen docents.

spoke on giving compelling tours and interacting with visitors.

We absolutely could not have had a more wonderful group of teens for our pilot program—it was amazing to watch them get involved and flourish as a group. In September they begin their time as official Teen Docents, and I can’t wait to see what they bring to the Museum. The success of this program means that it most certainly will continue—we are already getting interest from future Teen Docents!

It has truly been an honor to work on this wonderful project, and as a graduate of Los Altos High School myself, I know the program will be of real benefit to the community.

~ Jocelyn Lambert

Spotlight on the Oral History Project

Many Los Altos know that Art Carmichael was on the City Council and became Mayor in 1978, after Mayor Roy Lave and before Mayor Bob Grimm. Few know that these three friends, known as “The Three Mayors,” purchased Los Altos’ very first fire engine. In preparation for the History Museum’s exhibit Our Community Prepares, we have looked through our oral histories and found this delightful story.

As Art describes it in his oral history, “The firemen loved the first pumper that Los Altos ever had, a 1947 ... very strong thousand-gallon per minute pumper. And they just didn’t want to let it go because it was the engine that put out the only big fire we’ve ever had in town” ... the 1966 fire at Whitecliff Market, now Draeger’s. “That engine had its own pump nozzle and it poured all the water on it even before Mountain View and Palo Alto came on mutual aid. That engine had pretty much doused the fire by the time they got there.” However, eventually it had to be sold because “it didn’t have Syncromesh and you had to double-clutch it. And nobody but the old firefighters [and Art!] knew how to drive it.” When the fire engine went to be auctioned, Art recalls, “Grimm got all excited. And so the three of us went over there. I’ll never forget it. Roy was wearing a suede coat and tie of course. And every time these brokers...would bid,



Art Carmichael driving the first Los Altos “pumper.”

Roy would bid them higher by a hundred bucks. ... And finally ... they realized they weren’t going to get that engine. ... So, we ended up buying the engine and bringing it back so the firemen could use it for their rallies.”

Before starting his distinguished career in the commercial insurance brokerage business, Art worked during his college summers as a commercial truck driver for the Richmond-Chase Company (canning and dried fruit business), and as an ambulance driver/ medic for the San Jose Ambulance Company. These skills led him to become a volunteer fireman in Corte Madera from 1964-66 and a volunteer Los Altos Police Officer from 1969-1973. Given Art’s talent for emergency work, it is not surprising to learn that his grandfather was San Jose’s Police and Fire Commissioner in 1906—when the earthquake hit!

Art became President of the Los Altos Kiwanis in 1972 and President of the Chamber of Commerce in 1974. He secured Kiwanis support for Ye Olde Towne Band in the Pet Parade, and he still drives the old fire engine in the parade. We thank Art for being a Los Altos leader and supporter since 1968.

~ Marcia Adams

Membership

Welcome to our new members:

Barbara Beebe	Michael Lampert and Kari Burge
Nandini Bhat	Stephen Le and Sarah Moline
Onn Brandman and Laura Thomas	Phil and Patti Micciche
Catherine Cheney and Clint May	Suruchi Mohan
Tara DeNuccio	Sara Moynihan
Adela Di Canio	Aneesha Narra and Aaron Selig
Sara Fikes	David Nguyen and Aliza Supnet
David Fork and Lynne Connors	Francis A. Niccoli
Susan and William Grindley	Vikram and Surabhi Paranjpe
Bradley Hawkes and Arijana Rakich	Andrew and Pritika Pasion
Steve Hayashi	Jamie Lee Pereyda
Jessica Hewins and Timothy Daubert	Deborah Preston and Frank Rumore
Mike Hon and Lena Park	Jill Reimann
Yonaton Klein and Patricia Garced	Stanley So
	Andrew Tran and Tiffany Chen
	Aileen Yang

Business Members

We have two new members - Kiwanis Club of Los Altos and Erika Ameri, Compass Realty.

Corporate Sponsorship

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Pinky Whelan, Chair of the Garden Gala Committee, Ed Taft, Abby Ahrens and Dennis Duffy at the Garden Party Evening in June. Photo credit Margaret Abe.

Our Hidden Gems

The Smith House exhibition *Gadgets Galore! Transforming the American Household* is full of clever gadgets, and there is a lot of interesting history in how we got them. Before the cell phone we had hand crank phones, before the Hoover vacuum cleaner we had the Puffing Billy, a unit so massive it was hauled around by a horse, and before electric lights we had gas lights.

The teen docents took an interest in our gadgets. Five of them made it the focus of their research and will now be able to offer interesting details for our visitors this coming year. One looked at the old radio in the Smith House parlor, one the hand crank phone in the entrance, and Isabelle Fejes liked what she saw in the kitchen. She especially like the old toaster. Toasting bread was once done over an open flame. In 1893, the electric toaster was invented. The toaster in the Smith House is newer than that and has a clever way of flipping the bread to toast the second side.

It was great to see these young people appreciating the ingenuity and history of gadgets. What's your favorite gadget? I like the dishwasher. Dirty dishes go in, sparkly clean dishes come out. What could be better than that!

~ Gary Hedden



Isabelle Fejes telling the teen docents all she has learned about kitchen gadgets.



Departing Board members John Ralston and Brandon Smith. Thank you for your years of dedicated service.

Director's Corner

"In the Neighborhood"

The Los Altos History Museum is fortunate to have a strong relationship with the City of Los Altos, which is important since we are more than just neighbors. The History Museum actually is city property, which means not only the land but also the building and the collections



belong to the people of Los Altos. I couldn't be more delighted to be part of a civic institution serving the needs of the community. The Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum, our charitable organization tasked with operating the Museum, is in good hands, thanks to the responsiveness of the city's maintenance division. Heather Farquhar, former Deputy Director here, did a great job communicating with them and I'll miss her help.

This is an exciting time to be on the grounds of the Civic Center, and I am working closely with the city on a range of projects. We have completed phase 1 of the outdoor signage around the orchard and agricultural exhibition. And Phase 2 will include more signage in the orchard commons and is planned for next year. Recently, I've also been brought into the conversations with the Friends of the Library as they make plans to relocate with the closing of Hillview Community Center. It is amazing how many organizations share the Civic Center space, and how important it is that we all communicate with one another. It has been fun getting to know many of the Friends of the Library, and learning about their complex operation. With their temporary sheds going in between the Tank House and the Police Station, they are our new neighbors! We hope the renovations of the Tank House, scheduled for this October and November, won't impede their work.

But of course the big news around the Civic Center "neighborhood" is the go-ahead to construct the beautiful new Community Center designed by Noll and Tam Architects. This will affect the Museum in a number of ways, both immediately and long into the future. Immediately, the parking lot to the south of the Museum will be closed, so everyone coming to see us will have to enter from San Antonio Road. Then there will be noise and dust, of course. But we trust the contractors to be good neighbors! And thankfully, I'm invited to the weekly briefings, so we will be kept in the loop as things develop. Face-to-face communication is alive and well in our Civic Center neighborhood, I'm happy to report!

~ Dr. Elisabeth Ward

Photo Gallery



Jeannette Arnold with Eco City Cycles giving Gary and Pat Hedden a ride to the Spring Gala in June. Photo courtesy Eco City Cycles.



Jung Yoon and Warren Yang, our gracious hosts for the Spring Gala, with their three kids and the prize basket they won; honestly, it was not a fix. Photo credit Margaret Abe.



Hand's on learning with the Explorabox team at the STEM Fair in June.



Learning the science behind "Barcode of Life" at the STEM Fair.



Elisabeth Ward and Janet Klinke addressing the teen docents in July.



Los Altos Mayor Lynette Lee Eng signed the Anne Frank Declaration created by Dame Gillian Walnes Perry committing Los Altos to be a city vigilant against the "dangers of intolerance, anti-semitism, racism and discrimination" during a ceremony at the Museum.

Photo Gallery



Chef Sharon Barkoff teaching salsa-making to Allison at one of the sold-out and popular kid's cooking classes as part of "Silicon Valley Eats."



Amy Ellison with Blair Thompson, Hillie Salo, Peter Ruddock, Ann Duave, Britt Bensen and Kim Marinucci Acker, panelists and organizers for the discussion in August, "Eating Your Values." Their message was simple and natural food equals healthy people, communities, and planet.



Volunteers recognized for exceptional service at this year's Volunteer Appreciation Party in May.



Jane Packard with a "thumbs up" for the new Historic Orchard sign, with Frank Nicolli, Phil Doetsch and Viji Sridhar. Frank and Viji are with the Foothill College Horticulture Department.



Carole Flores serving cookies at the Member's Barbeque in July. Photo credit Lexi Crilley.



Attendees at the Member's Barbeque. Photo credit Pilar Parducci.



UNDER THE OAKS

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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,
Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

General Inquiries

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Mission Statement *The Los Altos History Museum gathers and presents compelling stories and artifacts that bridge the past and the present by fostering the creative energy of staff and volunteers to challenge established narratives and produce engaging educational programs and exhibits for the community.*

On The Calendar

Joint Board Meeting with the Historical Commission, everyone welcome, Monday, Sept. 23, 6-7pm, at the Museum, wine and snacks.

Apricot Pruning and Marshmallow Roast, with Phil Doetsch, orchardist and Frank Nicolli, horticulturalist, Saturday, Sept. 28, 6-8pm, at the Museum.

Silicon Valley Eats: A Taste for Innovation, closes Oct. 6.

If Cars Could Talk, Saturday, Oct. 12, 6-9pm, at Auto Vino, Menlo Park, a fundraising event, \$125.

Our Community Prepares: Act of Nature, Then and Now, opens Thursday, Oct. 17, opening reception, Sunday, Oct. 20, 12-4pm.

Water Safety and Reliability Workshop, Wednesday, Oct. 23, 7-8:30pm, at the Museum.

Heritage Orchard Walks, with Robin Chapman, author, Saturdays, Oct. 19 and 26, meet at back of the library, 11am-noon, lemonade and cookies at the J. Gilbert Smith House, noon-1pm.

Patron Night, Wednesday, Oct. 30, 6:30-8pm, at the Museum.

Pet Preparedness Workshop, Saturday, Nov. 2, 9am-noon, at the Museum.

Catch the Spirit, Wednesday, Nov. 20, 12-4pm, enjoy cookies, music and shopping at the Museum and the J. Gilbert Smith House.

Holiday Safety Workshop, Wednesday, Dec. 11, 7-8:30pm, at the Museum.



Heather Farquhar is heading north to the Mt. Shasta History Museum. Visitors always welcome!

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

Board Meetings, First Wednesday each month, 4 pm, everyone welcome

Teen Docent Tours, Saturday and Sunday, 2pm