

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 5  
FEBRUARY 2007  
www.pahistory.org

# The Tall Tree

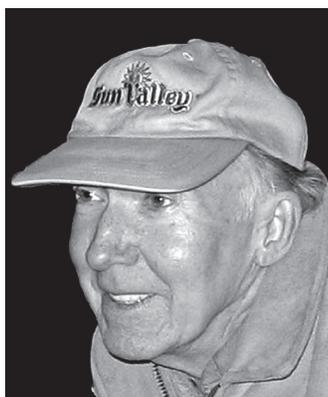
PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

## GENERAL MEETING

Sunday, March 4 at 2:00 p.m.  
Lucie Stern Community Center  
1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Free & open to the public  
Cookies & coffee

## Seen Any Good Movies Lately?



**SPEAKER:**  
**Brian George**  
**Videographer and**  
**Board Member of the Palo**  
**Alto Historical Association**

Movies have played an important role in our lives for over 100 years. Whether Hollywood epics or home movies of family and friends, they can be watched and enjoyed over and over. However, what happens when those films are lost, destroyed or allowed to decay? Then there are fewer "Good Movies" that we can share and use to remember our past.

This month's program highlights the value of local movies, videos, photos and other records of Palo Alto area history. Preservation of those records is vital to our need to see and understand the past as well as save current images and sounds for future generations. Featured films and videos from the Guy Miller Archives of the Palo Alto Historical

Association as well as other interesting and rarely seen images will be shown. They range from unique color movies of the 1941 Palo Alto celebration of the University Avenue underpass opening, including a parade led by Governor Olson, to a 1926 home movie of the Williams family's trip around the world. Also on the program are films of the opening of Jordan Junior High School, May Fete parades, City Hall openings, and home movies.

Brian George and Steve Staiger will introduce the films and discuss the ins and outs of preserving personal media, whether it is a home movie/video, a photo album, post cards, audio tapes or Cds/DVDs. Printed guidelines will be available for the audience.

Brian George, PAHA Board member, produces the monthly Heritage program for cable and provides video documents of local history events. Steve Staiger, Palo Alto Historian, writes regularly for this publication.

The Tall Tree is published eight times a year by the

**PALO ALTO HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

P.O. Box 193 • Palo Alto, CA 94302  
650.326.3355 • www.pahistory.org

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The Palo Alto Historical Association, a 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 the Main Library, 1213 Newell Road.

Board meetings are held the first Wednesday of each month (except for August) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 4 p.m.

General meetings are held the first Sunday of each month (Oct.–Dec., Feb.–May) at the Lucie Stern Community Center at 2 p.m. The final meeting of the year, held in June, includes a dinner and program. The public is welcome.

**PAHA HERITAGE PROGRAMS**

≡CHANNEL 30≡

**FEBRUARY: 75 YEARS OF  
CHILDREN'S THEATRE**

**MARCH: SEEN ANY GOOD  
MOVIES LATELY?**

**SCHEDULE**

Wednesdays 8:00 p.m.  
Thursdays Noon  
Saturdays 1:00 p.m.

Videos of past PAHA meetings can be checked out from the Main Library's History Desk during historian's hours:

Tuesday evenings  
Thursday afternoons

# From the PAHA Archives

Here are four reminiscences from Palo Altans who "remember when".

## VOICES OF PALO ALTANS

"When I recall my growing-up days in Palo Alto, certain things stand out in my memory. In winter, the town's mud streets with deep wagon ruts were large stretches of slush in places, which one couldn't cross even on planks provided at the corners. The boards sank in the slush, and there you were, sunk, too. Sometimes a horse or a buggy skidded almost throwing the driver out in the mud. A wagon might get stuck.... Then the driver, usually angry and cursing, would have to get out in the mud to get help. Once it was pulled out, it left a big hole in the street." —Marguerite Weichselfelder

"The mission bells were placed in Palo Alto in 1909. At the time they were erected, John Greer led the parade of the townfolk. When everyone was assembled for the ceremony, Mrs. Ayer of Atherton had her chauffeur drive her up to the standard. She graciously stepped out of her car, walked up to the bell, and whacked it with her cane. The copper rang with a true tone, and Mrs. Ayer returned to her car." —Georgiana Kjerulff

"The best day of the year was in April when the Barnum and Bailey Circus came to town, their train rolling silently onto the side track around one or two in the morning to unload and set up tents where the Town and Country Shopping Center is now. My brothers would set an alarm and sneak out of the house in the dark to be among the first to arrive to get jobs taking water or hay to the elephants and cleaning up after them. (They would earn almost nothing but they were given free tickets to bad seats for the matinee which was always on a school day.)" —Nancy Gonzalez

## FROM THE DESK OF THE HISTORIAN STEVE STAIGER

When Palo Altans came out on Saturday March 8, 1941 to celebrate the grand opening of the University Avenue underpass and the new Southern Pacific train station, it was the biggest celebration in Palo Alto's history.

The major event of Dedication Day was the parade up University Avenue. California's Governor Culbert Olson came to cut the ribbon. Photographs in our Archives document many of the people and organizations that marched. The parade's theme was the history of transportation, thus every old piece of equipment was cleaned up and driven down University avenue. The Fire Department's old hook and ladder wagon, Number One, was pulled by a group of elderly men who were former members of the volunteer fire department.

Our first historian, Guy Miller, marched with period costumed women while wearing a top hat. In one of the most interesting photographs in our collection (078-068), a group of young costumed children can be seen marching behind a sign proclaiming the "Japanese Association of Palo Alto" with a banner announcing the office of the "Committee to defend America by aiding the Allies" Nine months later the world and Palo Alto would change.

In addition to the parade and speeches, the Southern Pacific brought two trains to Palo Alto for the public to tour. One locomotive was the most modern of steam locomotives, and the other was a vintage engine representing the earliest railroad transportation in the West.

What amazes me was that with all the parade's many participants and Palo Alto's relatively small population of 16,000-plus residents, that there was still a huge crowd to watch the parade. Our program this month features two home movies of the 1941 parade, be sure to come by and see for yourself what it was like on March 8, 1941.

# PALO ALTO FILM FESTIVAL



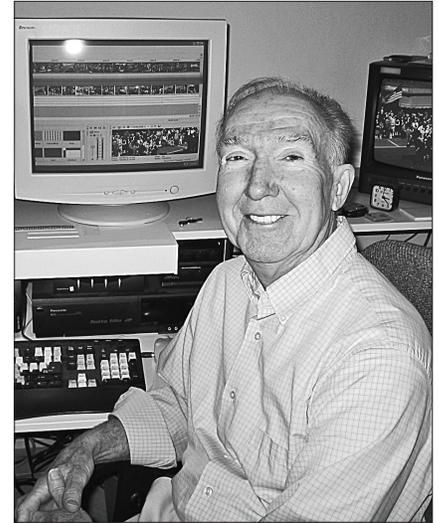
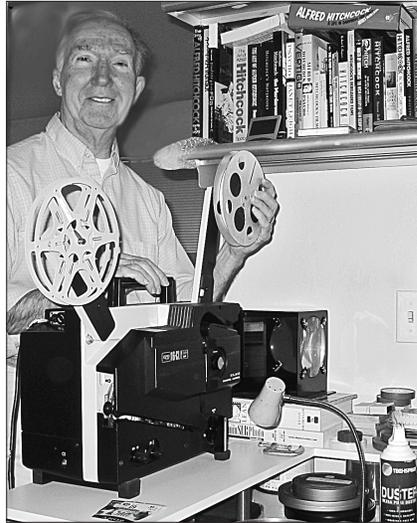
Palo Alto had its own “Sundance” many years ago when the yearly Palo Alto Film Festival was alive and well. The festival was a project of the Palo Alto Filmmakers’ Guild, a group of amateur film buffs that made 8mm films and wanted to share them with

others. Brian and Carolyn George founded the Guild in the early 1970’s and started the festival a few years later. The first program was a 2-hour presentation in the Auditorium of the Cultural Center (now the Art Center). It was a success so over the next 14 years the festival grew to become a respected Northern California event for Independent filmmakers.

The venues changed from the Cultural Center to the Children’s Theatre to the Varsity Theater. The Varsity turned out to be the perfect place since it was locally owned and programmed by creative people. At that time, the atmosphere in Palo Alto towards the arts was adventurous with CAPA (Council for the Arts Palo Alto) supporting many visual and performing arts startups. The festival was enthusiastically supported by both CAPA and the City of Palo Alto. With that backing and a strong festival committee, the yearly film festival attracted many important independent filmmakers from Northern California.

The festival was a judged event with cash awards to the selected winners. MacArthur Park restaurant sponsored both an awards reception and an award for Best of Festival. The winner’s name was added to a plaque hung in the restaurant. A number of filmmakers went on to receive nominations for Academy awards. Many others achieved recognition in commercial films and ran their own film/video companies.

The festival represented a time when film was still a popular medium for people to express their ideas and share them in a movie theater. After 14 years, the Palo Alto Festival came to a close when the Varsity Theater was sold and became Border’s Books. Video was replacing film and the unknown future turned out to be streaming video on the Internet with YouTube!



*Brian George pictured above in his studio, has a wide range of interests including restoring and transferring film and video, collecting oral histories and ice skating. Brian and his wife, Carolyn, founded the Palo Alto Film Festival, a popular event for independent film makers during the 1970/80 period.*



*The University Avenue underpass, 1941, viewed from Stanford looking east towards downtown (Guy Miller Archives online).*



*A Palo Alto fire truck goes by during the 1941 Dedication Day parade (Guy Miller Archives online).*

# History Goes Online

By now, members of the historical association with access to computers have entered our website ([www.pahistory.org](http://www.pahistory.org)) to look at over 2,000 digitized photos from our archives. We are just one of many organizations bringing historical information to people through the Internet.

In January 2006, the Library of Congress ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)) announced "Materials Documenting History of Western Music Now Online." A selection of documents from the Moldenhauer Archives includes music genres from medieval chant to the "moderns." It is one of the greatest collections of primary source music materials in the world.

Another online source is Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)). Since its creation in 2001, it has become a well-known and much-used website available in 200 language versions. What's unusual about Wikipedia is its openness. With just a few exceptions, the viewer may add new information and correct misinformation by clicking on the tab "Edit this page." Of course, Wikipedia has set up editing standards such as the expectation of civility and neutrality, and the addition of only factual information instead of personal opinions.

In late 2006, the Atlantic Monthly writer and former Harvard professor, Marshall Poe, proposed that his history students create a Russian history data base online. Their creation ([www.memorywikipedia.org](http://www.memorywikipedia.org)) became Memory Wiki, now known as Memory Archive. It contains far more historical memories than the Soviet Union on subjects from the assassination of JFK to a girl's first kiss. Even the city of Cleveland joined in to preserve "all things Cleveland." Poe would like to see Memory Wiki go international with 200 language versions like its parent, Wikipedia.

## WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

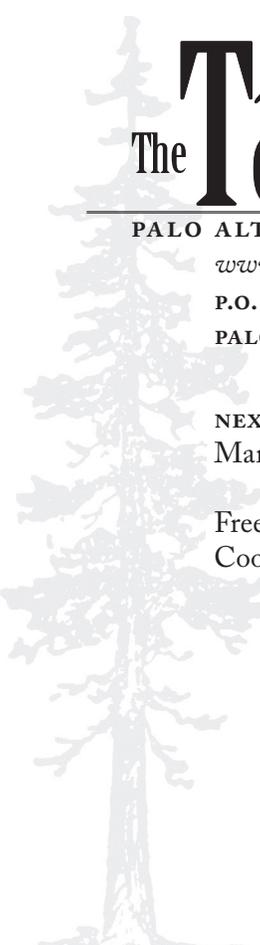
Marilyn M. McDonald  
Marianne Mueller  
Nancy Clark Sharp

## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A PAHA MEMBER?

*Here's how...* Pick up a brochure at any library or one of our general meetings. Or, send your name, address, phone number and email address to

PAHA, P.O. Box 193  
Palo Alto, CA 94302

with a check for your choice of membership: Individual: \$25; Family: \$40; Sustaining: \$60; Business: \$100; Life: \$350.



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March 4, 2:00 p.m.

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