

# The Echo

Volume 86

Number 1

Spring/Summer 2015

## Altadena Democratic Club Helped Change California in the 1950s

Jane and Tom Apostol Donate Club Papers to AHS Archives

**B**ack in the 1940s and 1950s, a turbulent time politically and socially in California and the nation, California's state government and federal representatives were overwhelmingly Grand Old Party Republicans.

These were dark times of the Cold War and the Red Scare, loyalty oaths, House Committee on Un-American Activities hearings asking "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?", and burgeoning Civil Rights demands from African-Americans still facing widespread segregation in education, housing and public accommodations.

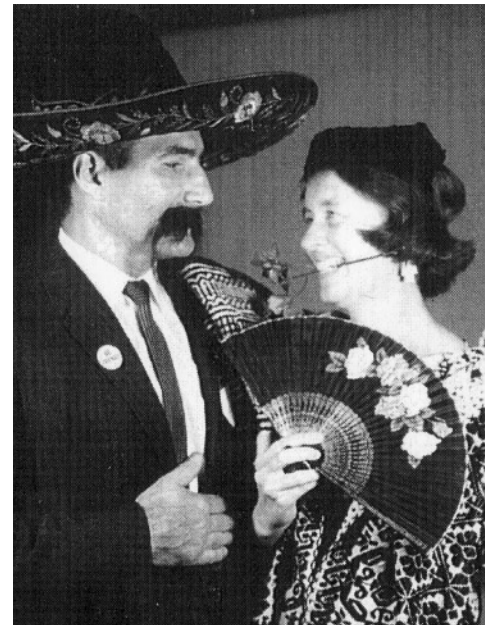
A group of liberal Altadenans didn't like the

status quo, and organized to change things.

Through the Adlai Stevenson Democratic

Club of Altadena (they dropped Stevenson from the name after the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960), they worked toward the almost complete political reversal that is seen today in California's representatives in Washington and in Sacramento.

Longtime residents Jane and



**Tom and Jane Apostol at an Altadena Democratic Club fundraiser.**

### What's Inside:

*President's Message*

*What's Up at AHS?*

*Altadena Stories:*

- Don McLain
- Duke of Mongolia
- George Feinstein

*Altadenablog*

*April Program & Ongoing Events*



Tom Apostol, Democratic Club stalwarts, recently donated to Altadena Historical Society several boxes of club records, newsletters, fliers, newspaper clippings and political memorabilia—a fascinating look at how grassroots campaigns can have momentous results.

"This is an amazing treasure trove, a veritable time capsule, of activist Altadena from about 1954 to 1964, and

*continued on page 4*

# President's Letter *by Jane Brackman, Ph.D.*



**T**his issue focuses on some of the independent thinkers and interesting folks who have called Altadena home: academics and community activists, an accomplished mountaineer and topographer, a trekker to foreign places, an inspiring PCC professor, plus a look at the contributions of one dedicated Altadena journalist.

## **Memberships**

This year, as we prepared our annual membership mailing, we included a brief survey on the back of the membership form. Here's a summary of what you have told us so far:

- Many of you want our newsletter on-line, many prefer a printed version, and some of you would like both versions.
- A number of you are willing to help us by volunteering your time and talents.
- You'd like us to focus on people's stories, work with schools, put more documents and pictures on-line, communicate more effectively and broaden our emphasis to include Altadena as a whole.
- And you have given us several ideas for future programs.

To those of you who have sent in your 2015 renewal, many thanks, both for your membership and your ideas. If you have not yet renewed your membership, please know that we depend on your generosity to fund our mission (\$\$\$ on your label is your reminder to renew).

More than 95% of your dues and donations goes directly to support the programs and services we provide. Because we are a 501 (c) 3 organization your donations are fully deductible.

## **Outreach**

In response to requests from local organizations we've been busy telling Altadena's story at off-site locations, including the Altadena Town and Country Club, Altadena Kiwanis and the Solheim Lutheran Home in Eagle Rock, where several former Scripps Home residents reside. Topics included "The Ten Most Asked Questions About Altadena" and "The Millionaires Who Invented Altadena."

We are happy to make these programs and others available to any community or educational organization at no charge. For more information, please call us at 626-797-8016, or send an e-mail to [altadenahistorical.society@yahoo.com](mailto:altadenahistorical.society@yahoo.com).

## **Board of Directors**

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# What's Up at AHS?

**A**ltadena Historical Society's archives serve as a place for visitors to learn about Altadena's past, a research facility, a repository for all things Altadena, an office and work space for our volunteers and, soon, a museum – all in only 800 square feet.

It is quite a challenge to accommodate all these functions in such a small space. So, when you visit, you will notice that we are busy reconfiguring our office to maximize both storage and workflow, while creating a welcoming space for visitors. The walls are

bare; archival boxes and incoming donations are stacked, waiting for a final destination. But in the next six to nine months, you will see many changes.

Thanks to the generosity of our members and donors, we are well on our way to creating our exhibit space. We will soon begin work on the main and temporary walls that delineate the space.



**Pat Reedy, the watchman at the Dawn Mine. Photo donated by Nancy Warner.**

## Donations

One new donation to our archives will feature prominently in our revamped space. The Altadena Library District has given us a substantial collection of books on Altadena and California history. We expect these books to be a valuable resource for researchers in the days ahead, as will Tim Rutt's entire archive of the Altadenablog and Altadena Point (see page 10).

In addition to the Democratic Club papers discussed in our cover article, we've received some wonderful photographs from Nancy Warner, daughter of mapmaker Don McLain, who named many of the trails in the San Gabriels (For more on McLain, see page 6). We've received scrapbooks and drawings from Theatre Americana's active past; a 1907 letter to the editor about Mount Lowe donated by John Zoraster; an

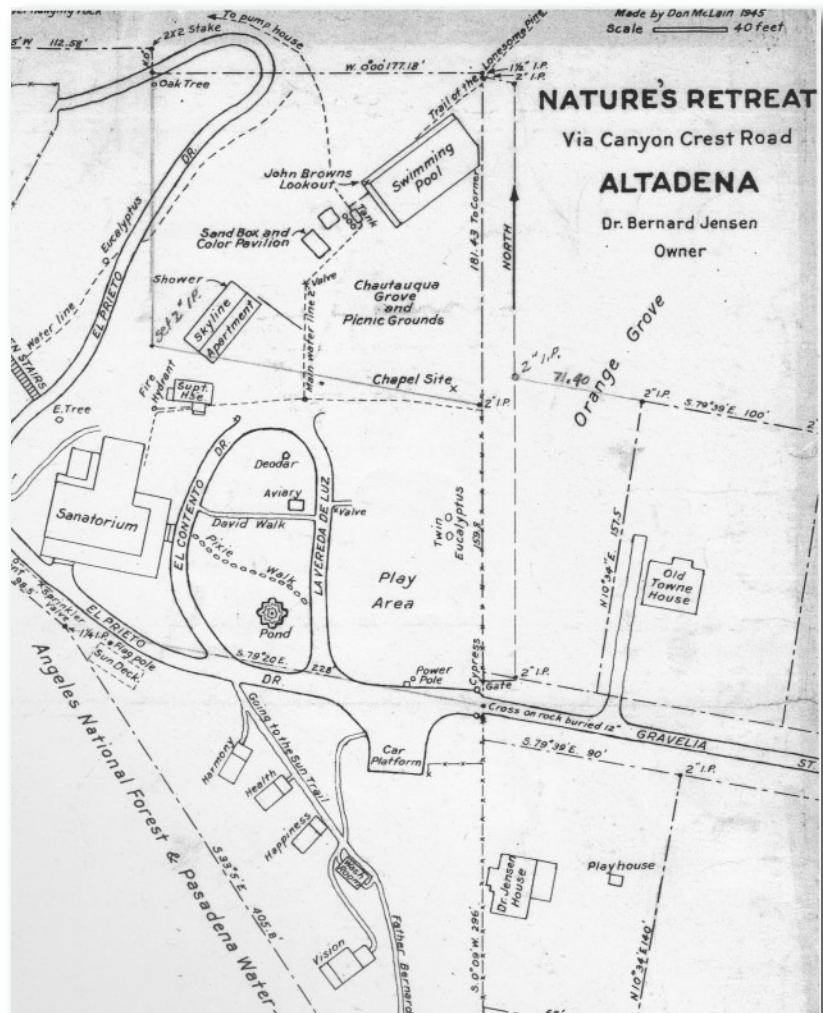
original photo of the Chambliss house; and columnist Patricia Bunin's clippings from her days at the Scripps Home.

## Volunteers

We've received a number of responses to our survey question on volunteer opportunities. We're grateful for your interest. If you have not already heard from us, you can expect a call soon. The history of our community is made available to the public thanks to the efforts of people like you.

**And one more thing...**Our website is receiving a makeover, thanks to web designer Paula Johnson. Our current website is outdated and hard to navigate. We think you'll find our new version much easier to use. The URL address will remain the same:

[www.altadenahistoricalociety.org](http://www.altadenahistoricalociety.org). — Jean Phillips



**1945 Map by Don McLain of Dr. Jensen's Sanatorium and property in what is now The Meadows in NW Altadena.**



continued from page 1

we are delighted to have it," said AHS President Jane Brackman.

"We are enormously grateful to the Apostols for their awareness of its value and for thinking of AHS as its repository," Brackman said.

Now residents of Pasadena, the Apostols lived in Altadena for many decades on a private road off Chaney Trail, near Nuccio's Nurseries. Tom, a native of Utah, earned his Ph.D. in mathematics from U.C. Berkeley in 1948 and joined the faculty of California Institute of Technology in Pasadena in 1950, where he is now an emeritus professor.

He is internationally known for his mathematics textbooks, which have been translated into seven languages, has written 102 research papers, and been elected to several elite academic societies.

Jane Apostol, a Maryland native and Goucher College graduate, was a volunteer docent at The Huntington Library for nearly 50 years and a prolific contributor to the *Southern California Quarterly*, the scholarly publication of the Historical Society of Southern California.

In addition, she wrote 16 books, including the centennial history of South Pasadena. A doorstep volume of her collected works was assembled by Tom as a surprise gift for her

90th birthday, and is available at the Altadena Library and at AHS.

For their first joint writing project, the Apostols co-authored an extensive article recounting the history of the Altadena Democratic Club for the Fall 2014 issue of



**One of the National Convention tickets now in the AHS collection.**

*Southern California Quarterly*, based on the papers they have donated to AHS.

Suggesting a reason for the club's successes, the Apostols cite Altadena's long history as home to painters and sculptors, writers, intellectuals, musicians, scientists and free-thinkers. The community's feisty refusals to annex to (then) fusty, conservative Pasadena are additional examples of its independent spirit.

"There were lots of Caltech faculty in Altadena," Tom recalled in an interview. "It was rather a bedroom community for Pasadena, unincorporated and with no industry, and not as conservative as Pasadena."

In the post-World War II years, California's state government and federal elected officials were overwhelmingly Republican, in what the Apostols called a "stranglehold." This, they say, was despite the state having "almost a million more registered Democrats than Republicans in 1952."

The major barrier to Democratic victories in those years was the state's law since 1913 permitting cross-filings, which allowed Republican candidates to appear on Democratic ballots (and vice versa)



**Tom and Jane Apostol at the Grand Opening of the Humphrey-Muskie Headquarters in Pasadena, 1968.**

without stating their party affiliation—with entrenched officials listed in first place as “Incumbent.”

“Many newly enfranchised Democrats in ignorance helped re-elect Republicans who were listed first on their ballot and listed only as ‘Incumbent,’” the Apostols recounted in their “Quarterly” article.

Republican victories at state and

Ruth Bryan Owen Rhode, had been a congresswoman from Florida and been appointed the nation’s first female envoy, being named by President Franklin Roosevelt as minister to Denmark in 1933.

Rudd was declared the Congressional winner on Nov. 5, 1958, over incumbent Rep. Edgar W. Hiestand by 2,600 votes. Campaign workers held a jubilant celebratory victory party. A member of Hiestand’s D.C. staff, here for the election, scurried to Altadena to ask Rudd to reappoint him to his job in Washington.

But next morning a La Cañada Press reporter woke Rudd at her home to tell her of a big counting error that reversed the results. The reporter asked for comment.

“‘I’m disappointed, naturally,’ said Rudd with a yawn,” the Apostols recount in their “Quarterly” article. “‘But I knew [a miscount] was possible, even last night. I know there can always be an error.’”

When the reporter pressed, suggesting she was being “quite philosophical” about the news, “Rudd responded with a laugh: ‘For heaven’s sakes, somebody wins and somebody loses.’”

The club sponsored monthly meetings featuring guest speakers (young Jerry Brown was one) and debates of current topics such as proposals that Altadena incorporate or annex to Pasadena, and local school board/education issues.

But they had fun too: buffet dinners, fund-raising costume parties, dances with live music, rummage sales and raffles provided not only good times but funds for the club’s treasury.

However, Tom recalls, strong differences of opinions on the Vietnam war in the 1970s caused “bitter internal disputes” within the club and, apparently, its eventual demise.

The Apostols, who for several decades had saved club newsletters and papers, ended their collection, but, fortunately, didn’t discard it.

— Rob Hallwachs



**Tom and Jane Apostol — September 2014**

national levels in 1952 energized California Democrats and led to the founding, or rebirth, of local, grassroots Democratic clubs throughout the state, including Altadena. Altadena’s club had “more than 100 members and lots of non-dues-paying supporters,” Tom recalled.

Tom Apostol said members focused on finding and registering new Democratic voters —“We called it ‘bird-dogging’”— and door-to-door canvassing that could end in “rebukes” when they knocked at a Republican household.

Twice the club helped to nominate and ardently backed the candidacy of Rudd Brown for Congress from the then-21st Congressional District.

One of the Altadena Democratic Club’s founders, Rudd, was the granddaughter of Williams Jennings Bryan and her mother,

# Meet Don McLain

Meet Don McLain (1887-1982), a notable Altadenan who is responsible for naming your favorite spot in the Angeles National Forest. Mt. Lukens, Kratka Ridge, Chaney Trail, Charlton Flats and Little Jimmy Springs all were named by McLain who wanted every trail, peak or campsite named to draw attention to the people, history and folklore of the area. He felt that names should honor the people who treasured the wilderness. McLain himself is honored with a peak named for him near Death Valley.

In 1903, self-trained, McLain combined his artistic eye as a landscape painter with his ability to recognize section markers (a scored rock, cairn, a blazed tree) to draw his first maps. Carrying over 80 pounds of equipment, McLain trekked over California and the Western states creating

maps for the National Forest Service and the National Geological Service.

Hired by the Security National Bank, McLain created maps for many local communities. Nancy Lane in La Cañada is named after his daughter.

Recently, his daughter Nancy McLain Warner and her husband George from Klamath Falls, Ore., stopped by the Altadena Historical Society to share pictures and anecdotes. Nancy described her father as a dreamer who never cared about making money and went on mapping treks for long periods of

time. The family's consistent financial support came from her mother's teaching position.



**McLain in Alaska Territory**

In 1939, her father built a home at 160 W. Laurel St. in Altadena to resemble a National Forest Service building. An innovative feature of the house was a solar water heating system. In 1942, concerned over the possibility of enemy air raid attacks on Los Angeles, her father

sold the house at a loss, moving the family to Big Bear for safety, leaving their furniture behind on the neighbor's front yard.

According to Nancy, her father had a photographic memory and could remember every place he had been and all of the streets. When he met someone, he would always ask "... and where are you from?" McLain could easily make a connection with people through the places he knew so well. Nancy's family papers include the meticulous hand-drawn maps her father used to challenge a Pasadena traffic ticket and the letter from Evelle Younger, who in 1948 was Pasadena's City Prosecutor, dismissing the citation.

AHS files contain a handwritten statement by



**Built in 1939, McLain's Altadena home on W. Laurel St. resembled a National Forest Service building and included early solar panels.**



Don McLain summarizing his thoughts:

"Now from the summit of my years at 70, I look back at my topographic works in the Western states and Alaska on timberlands and geological structures and feel that coming back to the old San Gabriel Timberland Reserve as the Angeles Forest was then called was like coming home.....and so after a half century of rambling off and on over the San Gabriel, San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains I give thanks for the



**McLain with topography aid.**

health and contentment they have brought to me and many others.....All I want out of the endeavor when I die is a simple wooden headboard inscribed, "Here lies Old Donald McLain, he who knew only the wilderness."

AHS celebrates Don McLain, the topographer of our mountains, as one of the many Altadenans who give our community its unique character.

—by Mary Lou Langedyke

## Larson, Duke of Mongolia



**Frans August Larson in Altadena**

In the early 1950s, my grandfather lived with us here in Altadena for part of each year. He was an elderly man who loved to sit in the sun each day and read Zane Grey novels that my mother brought him from the Altadena Library. In Swedish-accented English he would tell me that someday I would be the Rose Queen (that never happened). As I grew older I became interested in his life story. What an amazing life he led!

Frans August Larson was born in 1870 to a poor crofter family on the Hallby estate in the Swedish province of Vastmanland. He was orphaned at the age of nine. While working as a stable boy on the estate, he developed a passionate interest in horses.

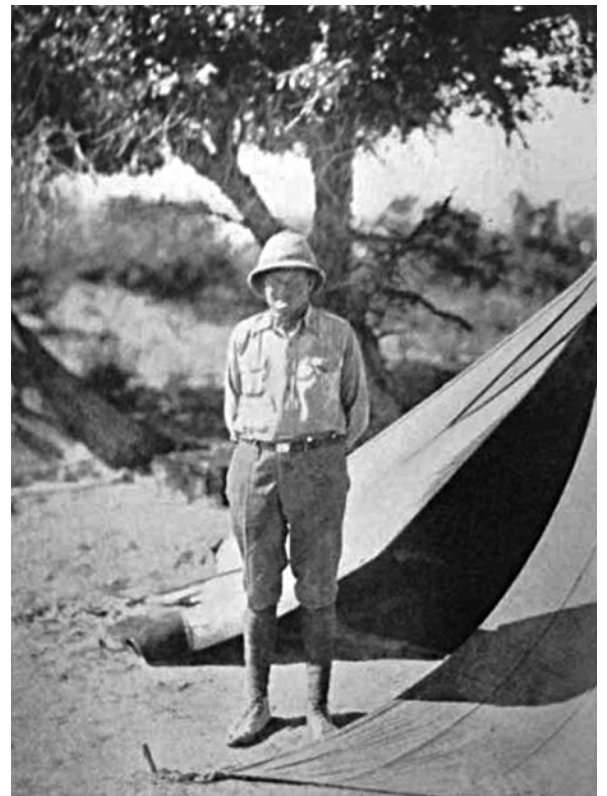
At age 17 he joined his sister in Stockholm where he learned to be a carpenter. By the time he was 21 he had developed a great thirst for adventure that eventually led him to the American Missionary

Society and a placement in China and Mongolia. His missionary zeal was tempered by his love of the Mongol people and their horses. He spent the next 46 years in northern China and Mongolia.

During his missionary training in Peking, he met and married an American missionary from Albany, New York named Mary

Rodgers. At the time he spoke little English. They settled in Kalgan, North China (now Zhangjiakou). Gifted in languages he was soon fluent in Chinese and Mongolian as well as English.

When the Boxer Rebellion broke out in 1900, Larson saved the lives of his family, including his two daughters aged 2 and 6 months, and a group of Swedish



**Larson in Mongolia circa 1930**



**Larson with Mongolian Giant  
late 1920s**

missionaries by leading their escape from Kalgan across the Gobi desert to Urga (now Ulaan Baator) the capital of Mongolia. The Boxers killed 800 westerners including 56 Swedish missionaries.

From his home base in Kalgan, Larson organized expeditions across the Gobi for Roy Chapman Andrews (whose life was the basis for the character "Indiana Jones") and famed Swedish explorer Sven Hedin. One of the Andrews expeditions was famous for the discovery of dinosaur eggs.

He established a company that traded in horses for Chinese

racetracks, sheep, wool and furs. He also dealt in Chinese and Mongolian art and antiques. Because of his language skills and knowledge of the cultures, Larson served as a diplomat forging peace between China and Mongolia in a 1911 conflict.

Mary Larson came to live in California with five of her six children to access educational

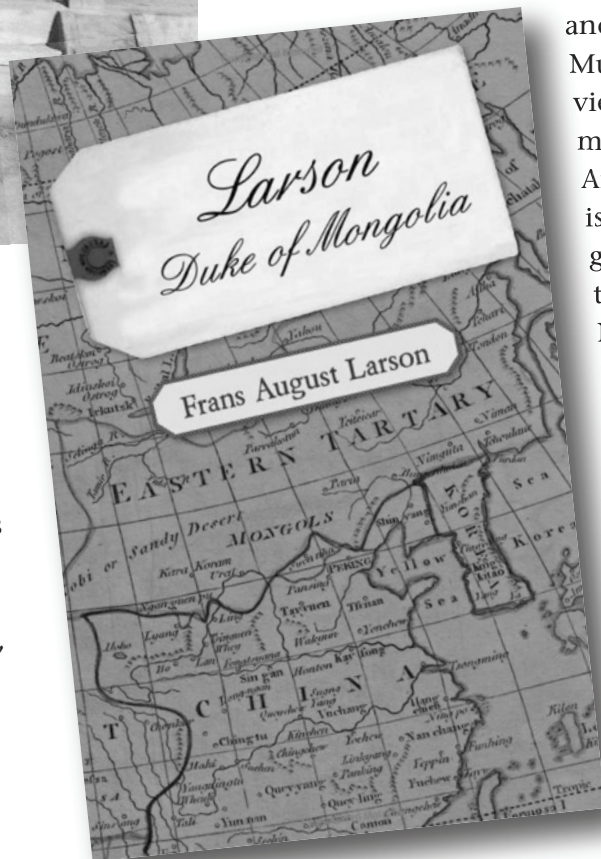
of the children graduated from college in California. All married Americans and five settled in California.

Larson left China in the mid 1930s to join his family. Losses during the upheaval of war made him nearly as poor as when he was born. He spent the rest of his life residing with his children in Altadena. His book, "Larson, Duke of Mongolia," is available on Amazon and at AHS.

My grandfather died in 1957 while staying with his daughter in Vista, Calif. He is buried next to his wife at Mountain View Cemetery here in Altadena.

Several years ago my brother and I visited the Ethnographic Museum in Stockholm and viewed some of the things from my grandfather's collection. Among them was a document issued by Mongolian royalty granting our grandfather the title Larson, Duke of Mongolia.

—Kathy Larson Hoskins



opportunities for them. Her aunt lived in Pasadena, so they settled in the area, buying a home in Altadena on Brooklyn Avenue (now Morada Place). All

## **Additional Reading:**

*Duke Larson; Adventurer, Missionary*, by Explorer Axel Odelburg (in Swedish)

*Larson, Duke of Mongolia*, by Frans August Larson

*Frans August Larson*, Wikipedia article by Axel Odelburg (in English)



# George W. Feinstein

**G**eorge W. Feinstein, long-time resident of Altadena, PCC English Professor Emeritus, writer, and humorist died in 2013, just months before reaching age 100.

The son of immigrant grocers, at age five, he ventured out onto often-icy North Dakota streets selling newspapers to help pay bills.



**George Feinstein wins marathon at age 83 in the age 80-98 category - 1997**

He received his B.A. and M.A. from University of North Dakota. His dissertation on humor in Mark Twain's work earned him a Ph.D. in English from University of Iowa in 1945.

Moving to sunnier California, he taught humanities at John Muir College (now John Muir High School) in Pasadena (1948-54). From 1954 to 1979 he taught English at PCC. Basking under year-round Altadena sun, he read students' essays while his

transistor radio blared out Vin Scully's commentary on the Dodgers.

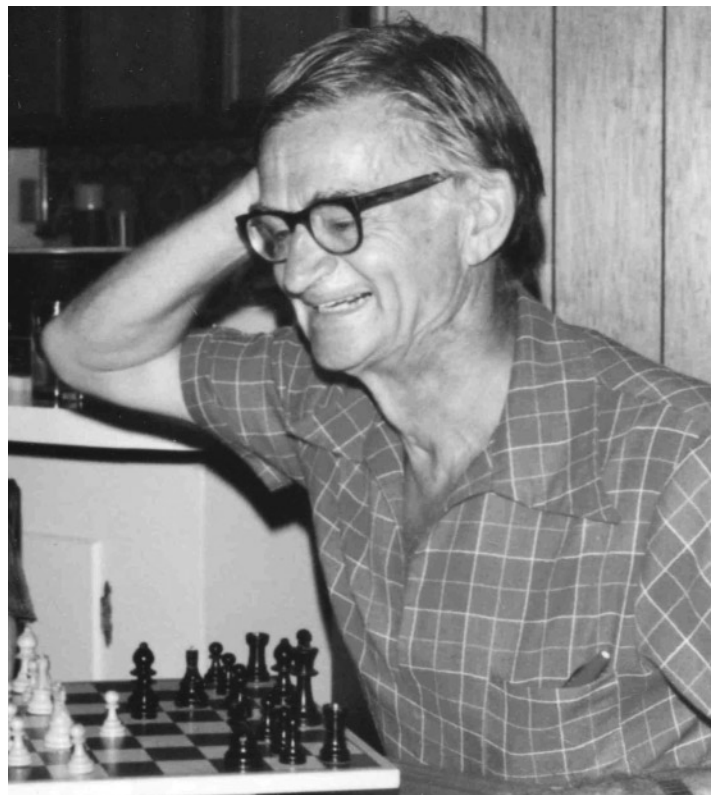
Dad tried to make everyone smile. His monthly credit union newsletter for Pasadena City Schools employees was punctuated with corny jokes. Years later, my friend remarked that he had never regarded *Moby Dick* as a comedy until he took Dad's American Lit class at PCC.

Long before computer modules, Dad wrote programed textbooks: Programed College Vocabulary 3600, 1969; Programed Spelling Demons, 1973; and Programed Writing Skills, 1976. Many locals remember his book reviews in the Star-News and his humorous letters-to-the-editor.

He had always loved chess. Remarkably, at age 99, Dad spent long afternoons across a chessboard from his caregiver, a former chess champion from the Philippines.

Peering at the majestic mountains through thick, geeky glasses, Dad ran five miles daily. He participated in countless races supporting various charities, competing in the LA Marathon until age 88 and the Senior Olympics in his late 90's. The Star-News reporter grinned as Dad explained, "If you're over 95, and you can velcro your own shoes, you're guaranteed a medal." He boasted that his strategy was to outlive the competition.

*—Margo Connolly, daughter*



**Enjoying a game of chess, one of his favorite pastimes.**

# Altadenablog to Reside at AHS

For over seven and a half years, the altadenablog and its successor, AltadenaPoint, have documented the news and views of Altadena and its residents. The days when our community had its own newspaper were long past, when editor/publisher Tim Rutt's on-line journalism filled a void. So the announcement that Altadena Point was closing in mid April filled us all with regret.

Altadenablog began in 2007, when Rutt, whose career highlights include performer, journalist, copywriter, speechwriter, divinity student, and full-time dad for two special needs children, saw a need for one central place for people to find out what was happening in Altadena.

"You could check the Star-News, get the handouts at the

library and senior center, read the marquee at Bryan's Cleaners, look at the flyers in the Coffee Gallery...and who's going to do all that?" he told Colleen Dunn Bates of Hometown Pasadena. "Altadena needed a 'bucket' where you can find everything, and that's what I've been striving to be."

The blog really came into its own during the Station Fire of 2009. "The broadcast media failed utterly," Rutt said. "Altadenablog became the only place you could find real-time information." All of Altadena, it seemed, followed his reports.



**Tim Rutt, right, receives 2011 Altadena Business of the Year award. \***

years away, and it has been evident for a while that there are other opportunities we can pursue that are more likely to make a greater contribution to our family's long-term well-being," he stated as he announced the end.

While we will miss his daily posts, there is a silver lining. Rutt has donated both altadenablog and AltadenaPoint to AHS, where researchers can access the history of Altadena from 2007 to 2015. We expect both blogs to be available in the very near future. We are honored to be the recipients of this important documentation of 21st century Altadena.

Thanks, Tim! Additional thanks go to the Altadena Community Chest, a non-profit organization that collects voluntary donations from production companies that film in Altadena to fund Altadena charitable organizations, and to Elliot and Shirley Gold. Their generous support will help us properly preserve Tim's work.

*\*photos from altadenablog*



**Station Fire coverage put altadenablog on the map, August 2009. \***

Readership increased in subsequent years, and, by 2012, the altadenablog was named "Business of the Year" by Altadena's Chamber of Commerce. But lack of advertising revenue and family needs eventually caused Rutt to re-examine his commitment to the blog.

"Retirement is only a few



**FREE**

## "An Altadena Boyhood"

**Richard Bale Recalls Altadena In The 1940s**

**7:30 P.M. Monday, April 27, Altadena Community Center**

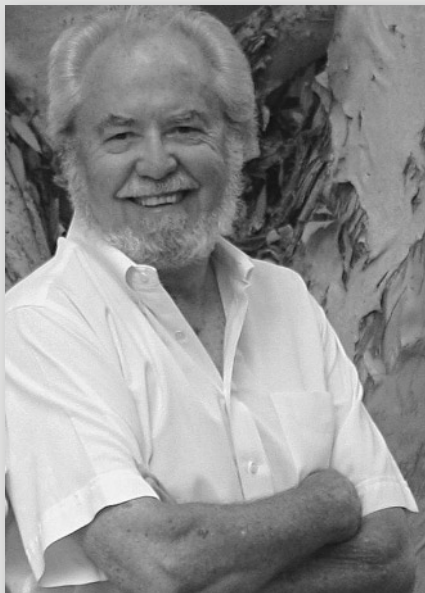
### AHS Spring Program:

**R**ichard Bale moved to Altadena in 1937 at age seven and left when he was drafted into the Korean War. He remembers a sleepy, bucolic community with humor and fondness in *Growing Up in Altadena in the 1940s*, an excerpt from his memoirs, *Life in the Past Lane*.

"Today, the border between Altadena and the neighborhoods of northern Pasadena is virtually invisible," he said, "but that wasn't always the case.

"When I was growing up in the 1940s, Altadena, especially west of Lake Avenue, seemed much more rural than its sophisticated neighbor to the south.

"Woodbury Road was not only the actual border, but the traffic speeding along that east-west thoroughfare seemed to define the



differences between the artistic streetlights, concrete curbs, and sidewalks of bustling Pasadena, and the quieter, relaxed rural ways of Altadena.

"West of Lake, many streets in Altadena lacked sidewalks. Streetlights were few and far between, mail boxes were mounted on posts near the street, open storm-drains were spanned with quaint little bridges leading to private driveways—some of which were unpaved dirt.

"Chickens were a common sight in Altadena, and we had a dozen

or so in our backyard on Highview. Large acreages of orange groves still thrived, and many people raised rabbits and goats, as well as chickens. Horses, mules and cows were corralled in Altadena pastures into the early 1950s."

Hear and see more about Altadena in the '40s presented by the Altadena Historical Society.  
Altadena Community Center  
730 E. Altadena Drive, Altadena, CA

### Ongoing Exhibits

*Continuing through July, 2015...*

#### Altadena Then and Now

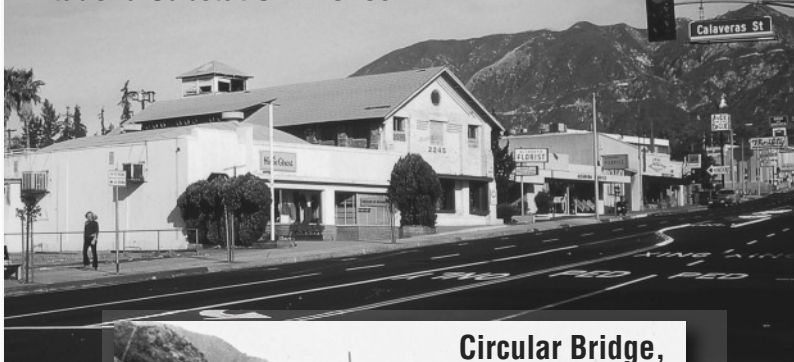
Leon Ricks' photos of Altadena in the '60s and '70s side by side with views of the same places today.  
Webster's Family Pharmacy back hall gallery.

#### Mount Lowe in Postcards

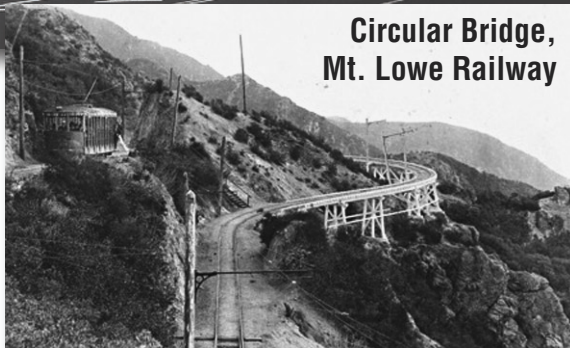
Iconic views of the famous railway from postcards of the time.

Altadena Community Center Lobby  
730 E. Altadena Drive

**Altadena Substation - 1970s**



**Circular Bridge,  
Mt. Lowe Railway**







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## The Echo

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VISIT OUR NEW BLOG!  
altadenahistoricalsociety.blogspot.com

Altadena Historical Society (AHS), a non-profit organization, was founded to gather, preserve, and make available information about the people, places and events that have shaped the community in the past. The Altadena Historical Society is proud of its history. Founded in 1935, we are one of the oldest volunteer organizations in the community.

**Please join or renew today!**

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Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Premium Membership (includes poppy seeds and  
vintage postcard of Altadena poppy fields)

You can now join online <http://www.altadenahistoricalsociety.org/membership.htm>