Birth of a Scholarship

Due to the success of "the book," MENLO PARK, BEYOND the GATE, by Michael Svanekvik and Shirley Burgett (over 3,000 copies sold), the Menlo Park Historical Association was fortunate to consider ways to promote the association. The idea of a scholarship to a deserving student emerged to encourage young people to have a greater respect for our history and to build stronger ties to our young people. The MPHA Board discussed and voted on a scholarship or two a year to deserving students graduating and going to a local community college in San Mateo or Santa Clara County.

The MPHA then began work with Menlo-Atherton High School and College Information Specialist, Alice Kleeman, to find deserving candidates for this award.

Candidates must have a minimum GPA of 2.75 or above, and their non-academic courses and community service would also be considered.

Finally the candidate must write a 250-500 word essay about "The Importance to the Community of an Active Historical Association."

The winner is to receive a $750 scholarship.

This award encourages young people to take a greater interest in their communities and invites them to a greater participation in their community.

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BOARD MEETING Tues., 5 Aug, 2 p.m. at History Room
First MPHA Scholarship Winner

GRADUATING Menlo-Atherton Senior, Linn M. Haddock, was the first recipient of the Menlo Park Historical Association’s First Scholarship Winner annual college scholarship. Linn far exceeded the minimum academic requirements with a California State University GPA of 3.967. Her award winning essay is included below.

Linn will be attending Foothill College in the fall and will apply for the honors program. Her academic performance in seven Advanced Placement courses at M-A attest to her qualifications for entrance into that honors program.

At Foothill Linn will be leaning toward the study of sciences, especially biology, where she hopes to decide on her major and apply to a university in the California State system.

Linn wants to thank the Historical Association for its scholarship and is especially grateful for what the award has meant to her. Yes, it will help pay for some of those college expenses on her scholastic journey, but more importantly Linn said about this award that “It gives me the advantage and confidence that I have the ability to do what I want to do.” The public recognition of her abilities gives her far greater hope for her academic dreams.

The Menlo Park Historical Association should be justifiably proud of the personal and academic merits of this outstanding Menlo-Atherton graduate. And the Menlo Park Historical Association members should be justifiably proud of the leadership of the Board, who initiated this worthwhile project, one that will bring greater attention of our past to the young who will live and create our future.

We will fondly be watching her on her journey.

A Step in the Right Direction

A STEP IN THE RIGHT direction requires the accumulation and consideration of all the steps that have come before. This idea highlights the importance of an active and detailed historical association. Only with an understanding and respect for the events of the past can a foundation be formed that allows a society to move forward in an evolving fashion.

Each decision made in an individual’s lifetime contains in it the influence of a lesson learned from an experience in the past. It, therefore, makes sense that each decision for a society, which is merely a group of individuals, stems from something learned from history. Historical events usually have certain similarities, but circumstances and environment act as the contrasting factors. The lessons learned in each past event, when applied to another situation, function to reveal the correct path to take to ensure a positive result. Without this information the same mistakes would be made continuously throughout history, causing the evolution of society, and in a broader scope, the entire race, to halt. Access to databases and records of the past is essential to making sure that society continues to grow and doesn’t forget the lessons learned from the past. Remembering and considering the past also ensures that we humans don’t take for granted the environment that we live in today. The efforts and sacrifices made in history are the reasons why humans have matured to their current state. It is important to understand why individuals are the way they are — something that can only be done by realizing their past. The way that we exist with other people, live our day-to-day lives, function in foreign affairs, simply existing as humans, are all results of the events and actions of our history.

The importance of complete records of the past as well as an understanding of the catalysts to each event and its result, is obvious through the influence these events have on society. Every decision is inherently the result of consideration and evaluation of the past. An active historical association would aid in forming a society to be proud of as well as help humans find the next step in the right direction.

—Linn Haddock
Man of the Soil — Amedeo Gado

Amedeo Gado, born in Casorza, Italy, in 1903, left his farming family at the age of 17, and with $10 in his pocket came to America to find his fortune, which he did.

In a way Amedeo was like many other immigrants, poor, ambitious, courageous, self-confident and resourceful. The irony of his success was keeping what he knew was life-giving, the soil. Throughout his life he trusted and worked the soil and for his efforts he reaped a bounty that has affected thousands.

His brief moments of employment away from the soil proved to be too confining. The first was a factory in New Haven, Conn., where he worked for passage money west to join his beckoning cousin with the promise of apricots and tomatoes in the Santa Clara Valley. The second was his short-lived venture as owner of Atherton Liquors. He did not like to work indoors, with the exception of his grocery stores that were the fruit of his hands. In fact, “If there was too much pavement around, he didn’t want to go,” mused his wife Rita, his wife of almost 65 years, who shared in almost all his business ventures and much of his civic duties.

From his early days in California, working in the Cribari vineyards, growing tomatoes with his cousin in San Jose, being a jack-of-all-trades for the wealthy Bacigalupi family of Los Gatos, he literally and symbolically found his home in Menlo Park and Atherton with employment and friendship from Leon Douglass, famous inventor, whose estate is currently Menlo School and College.

His employment as superintendent of the Douglass Estate gardens and supervision of 4-5 gardeners at a time led him to his own personal ventures with Rita, grocery stores, two stands at the San Francisco Farmer’s Market, a liquor store and various properties in the area.

He demonstrated his love of his heritage in his celebration of the Italian way of life. He sang and danced and played bocce ball with the zest that characterized his life. He lent his talents to help found the Italian-American Club in Menlo Park, and for 11 years he was Christopher Columbus at the Annual Columbus Day celebrations at Coyote Point in San Mateo. In fact, his vitality and resourcefulness allowed him at age 82 to faithfully portray a 42 year-old Christopher Columbus. “He should have been an actor,” Rita said.

The Italian-American community was not the only beneficiary of Amedeo’s generosity and sense of community service. He served as president of the Atherton Lion’s Club and was an active member of the Menlo Park Historical Association. Reminders of his gifts are the trees in Holbrook-Palmer, a gift from the Lion’s Club and Amedeo, the thriving organizations that he served and the quality of life that he spread naturally to those fortunate to be around him.

He died as he had lived. He had been previously quoted as saying, “An Italian is not happy unless he was singing.” Hours before his death, strains of Pagliacci could be heard throughout the Gado house, a testament to his happy life in his home with the redwood tree-lined entrance. Rita, who shared so much with her husband, continues to carry on his legacy with the Atherton Tree Committee and as a Board Member of the MPHA, where she has served for years as a past president and board member.

We will miss the man, but we cherish his legacy. Heaven has another voice.
Grade Separation Developments

In our last issue we reported possible ramifications of a railroad grade separation in Menlo Park. In that article we pointed out that the City of Menlo Park had to make an important decision to qualify for funds under a possible Measure A extension past 2008. If Measure A were extended, only projects submitted by June 30, 2003, would be considered.

Menlo Park qualified with its submission of its “wish list”, which included the grade separation project. The Almanac in its June 18, 2003, issue explained: “Grade separations—underpasses, overpasses, or a combination—separating the roads from the tracks at four Menlo Park streets. They could improve safety and traffic flow.”

Dan Smith, Project Manager of the Grade Separation Feasibility Study for the Transportation Department of Menlo Park, called to clarify the City’s position on the possible separation. He took exception to the wording of two parts of that article.

The first objection referred to this passage: “The railroad station that was so instrumental in the formation and growth of Menlo Park may fall victim to the evolution of the railroad and the emergence of ‘bullet trains.’”

The second objection was to the passage that read: “Progress ironically may cause our landmark to follow the path of the first railroad in California, the Sacramento to Folsom line (no longer in existence).”

Dan assured us that Menlo Park “would respect the integrity of the train station.” In other words, if the grade extensions come to pass and four tracks will be involved, the present train station would have to be moved. To some, that means that our train station would be in jeopardy. To others, that is simply the price of progress.

Dan, however, assured us that the input of the Menlo Park Historical Association will be welcome in the planning stages. Furthermore, he said that the feeling amongst the City Council and the City of Menlo Park is to respect the history of our landmark, and he assured us that there would not be a demolition.

In fairness to all concerned, Menlo Park may qualify for state and federal funds. “Bullet trains” are the trains of the future, Progress, safety and “bullet trains” demand railroad grade separations. Therefore, it is very likely that our station will move.

Frank Helfrich has been in attendance at past planning sessions and will keep us posted on developments.

Ice Cream Social

On June 22, our on-the-spot reporters (unpaid, of course), Ester Bugna, Frank Helfrich and Jackie Drew, reported that approximately 40 people enjoyed the hospitality of Lil Kavanaughs and her family and their ice cream treats.

The guests of honor, our first scholarship winner, Linn Haddock, and her college-recommending teacher, Alice Kleeman, Menlo-Atherton High School College Information Specialist, who worked with the MPHA, were both introduced by MPHA Board member, Ester Bugna.

Ester described the day as one that encouraged camaraderie and good old-fashioned fun. Thanks to the Kavanaughs, it seemed like a family day at the park. In fact, some young members of the clan armed with their trusty nets were spotted near the residuals of an empty city pond, hunting wildlife or whatever might be there.

Rita Gado and Dick Angus conducted the raffle, always a highlight of the day. And Jeanne Bone was busy snapping pictures as she has for years for this event that has her special stamp.

We once again thank the Kavanaughs for helping with this continuing tradition. The spirit of this event is contagious, thanks to the spirit of the Kavanaugh servers.

And finally, many thanks are in order for Jeanne Bone and all her work in the past that has made this event so successful. Her importance for this event was obvi-

Continued on page 5
The Sale of the Oak Grove Hotel

THE RAILROAD has been such a major force in the life of Menlo Park, and continues to be as seen in this issue about the grade separations that has sparked interest among fellow members. An article by Jerald Melum of the Daily Palo Alto Times, May 2, 1946, captures that importance and revives memories of the 1800s. The entire article follows:

“Many memories of 70 years ago in Menlo Park were brought to mind recently when the Oak Grove Hotel on Oak Grove avenue (sic) just west of the Southern Pacific tracks was sold by the Kuck sisters whose father, Martin Kuck, a German settler, built the original Menlo Park Hotel on that site in 1868.

“In those early days when Palo Alto was still a farm and Menlo Park an all-day horse and buggy ride on unpaved roads from San Francisco, the Menlo Park Hotel was the most prominent hostelry in the area.

“Wealthy San Franciscans journeyed down the peninsula to stay in one of the 40 palatial rooms for a “vacation in the country,” and sometimes rented one of the adjoining cottages for the summer season.

“At that time the railroad had only a single track running down from San Francisco. The trains would come down to Menlo Park, the end of the line, stay all night and be turned around on the local turntable for the trip north in the morning.

“The fashionable hotel was also a stopover place for the “tourists” heading south to San Jose or further down on the Pacific coast. The surreys would start out early in the morning in San Francisco and would arrive in Menlo Park in time for dinner and a pleasant evening at the stylish lodging.

“The sale recently handled by Vistor Greisser of Menlo Park was to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Derry and Mr. and Mrs. John P. Demeter for a reported price of $40,000.

“According to Mr. Demeter, the building will be converted into an office building after extensive repairs and alterations are completed. The two lean-to’s and the porch are being removed, and plans call for the gabled roof to be revamped into a flat one and the outside of the building to be stuccoed.

“Mr. Demeter would give no estimate as to when the rebuilt structure will be ready for use.

“In 1874 the town of Menlo Park was incorporated in order to make many needed improvements, and thus became the second incorporated town in San Mateo county. At that time it included all the area east of El Camino Real from the county line up to Atherton avenue (sic), extending out to the bay.

“By 1890 there were some 25 business establishments in the village, clustered about Oak Grove, and Santa Cruz avenues (sic) and County road (sic). The first store in Menlo Park was said to have been opened by Dick Kuck, brother of Martin Kuck, the proprietor of the hotel.

Tragedy struck the hotel in 1895 when a fire burned the entire structure to the ground. The town in those days seems to have made no provision for fire protection, for the fire burned three hours, during which time most of the furniture was removed to the yard. Mr. Kuck, unhindered by modern restrictions on building materials, rebuilt the hotel immediately on the same site. The building—which still stands—is considerably smaller than the original luxury hotel.

“Many of the workers who built Stanford stayed at the Menlo Park Hotel and were driven out to the campus site in a horse-drawn carryall, usually returning there for noon lunch. That was in 1890; Palo Alto was still a mushroom of the future not yet taken root.

“Mrs. Kuck, wife of Martin Kuck and mother of the two living Kuck sisters, died in 1909 and her husband followed her in 1916.

“Since then Miss Bertha Kuck, 1272 Mills street (sic), Menlo Park, and her sister Mrs. John Welsh, of the same address, have owned and operated the house—no meals have been served since Mr. Kuck’s death.

“A third sister, Miss Martha D. Kuck, a former teacher at Castilleja School, helped her sisters run the hotel until her death in 1912.”

No Board Meeting in July

Due to circumstances beyond their control, the MPFA Board decided to cancel the July meeting. The next Board Meeting will be the first Tuesday in August, the 5th, at 2:00 p.m., as noted always on the front page of our newsletter.
Deliver before July 10, 2003
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HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Do you remember...

...When we got married first, then lived together?
...When we never heard of an HMO
...When a new Chevy Coupe was $600...
but who could afford one? A pity too, because gas was 11 cents
a gallon.
...A Burial Cost $200?

Economist predict that by the year 2012 the price of Burial in the S.F. area will exceed $20,000.

Remembering All Those Born Before 1940...

We were born before television, penicillin, frozen foods and plastics. We were
born before nursing homes, credit cards, panty hose and air conditioners. We
never heard of frisbees, artificial hearts, tape decks, yogurt or a dishwasher.
And we never heard of pre-planning our own funeral......

—from a Skylawn ad