Memories of Moody Road

The Los Altos Hills History Committee sponsored the Lower Moody Road History walk on September 9 and 10, 2023. Bernardo Ferrari, a retired orthopedic surgeon, shared fond memories of growing up in the community and hoped that a fuller understanding of the town’s history and an appreciation of the accomplishments of the town’s early residents might inspire younger residents to become involved in their community. Ferrari reminisced, “I have lived on Moody Road almost my entire life. My siblings and I splashed in Adobe Creek, ran through the mustard in the orchards, built tree houses in the oaks, played at Adobe Creek Lodge, and explored Hidden Villa. Until the dinner bell rang, we were free. My earliest memory was at age two, standing at the bottom of our dirt driveway at 25791 Moody Road. The road had recently been paved for the first time. Before that, my father recalled the dirt road being sprayed with oil periodically to keep the dust down.”

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]
The History of Moody Road

Adobe Creek has been a great place to live for 10,000 years. It is a perfect distance between the Pacific Ocean and the southern part of San Francisco Bay so it is not cold and foggy. Black Mountain or Montebello is just low enough to allow some clouds from the coast to provide rain. The Muwekma Ohlone tribe were the first inhabitants of this area. In the 1770s the Spanish Mission system displaced or assimilated some 2,000 Ohlone with the establishment of Mission Santa Clara. The olive grove at the entrance to Hidden Villa was planted by those missionaries in 1777 and still produces olives today. Upon Mexico’s independence from Spain, the Missions were secularized and some land was granted back to Ohlones who had worked at the Missions. Ohlones Jose Gorgonio and Jose Ramon received a parcel that included one square league of Los Altos Hills, which they later sold to Juana Briones.

The Murphy Family

In 1844 the Stephens (think Stevens Creek) Townsend Murphy party migrated from Iowa to California. They brought the first four-wheeled wagon to California approximately two years before the Donner party. Martin Murphy Jr. settled near Stockton and later came to the Bay Area to purchase cattle. He liked the area so much that he bought Rancho de Pastoria and later the Juana Briones portion of Los Altos Hills. In 1863 he gave much of Los Altos Hills to his daughter, Elizabeth Yuba Murphy, on the occasion of her marriage to William Post Taaffe. The Taaffes built a ranch house on the current Foothill College property.

The Griffin Family

Willard Griffin was a shipbuilder from Maine. He moved to San Francisco as an executive for Royal Baking Powder. In 1896 the transcontinental railroad brought new opportunities. Griffin and Seeger started shipping oranges east by rail from Riverside in 1881. Seeger died in 1884 and Skelley was hired as the manager of the Riverside office. Griffin and Skelley Owl Brand packing company diversified into dried apricots, prunes, and peaches and became extremely successful with packing plants up and down the state of California. By 1901, Griffin was ready to retire and built a grand estate on the former Lake Grove site. In 1906, he took a trip to Japan and brought back craftsmen to construct the fish pond and tea house pictured in his garden. His sons Charles and Andrew Griffin continued the business as California Packing Corporation, which marketed the Del Monte label.

The Lohman Family

Next door to Griffin House, Henry and Lillie Dana built a home in 1904 near where Foothill College’s Lohman Theatre now stands. The home sat on 60 acres of apricots and prunes.
Adobe Creek flowed through the front yard. In 1908 it was purchased by Charles Holt for Grace Jeanette Holt. The Holt Manufacturing Company Charles founded with his brothers made steam traction engines and the first practical combine harvester for wheat production. The crawler-type tracks on this harvester gave it the name the caterpillar tractor. The Holt Caterpillar model 70-120 tractors were used to build the Los Angeles Aqueduct, supplying the water that would allow the development of the greater Los Angeles area. During World War I, Holt supplied 5000 caterpillar tractors to replace horses for towing large guns. To conceal the true purpose of these tractors, they were called “water carriers,” which was later shortened to “tanks.” Charles Holt’s equipment helped the Allies win the war. Since the war required bigger machinery than agriculture, afterward Holt shifted to producing road-building equipment. In 1925 Holt Caterpillar merged with CL Best Company to form the Caterpillar Tractor Company.

Horace Hill Lake, later Willow Pond

In 1915, Horace Hill established Toyon Farms along Moody Road. He raised Holstein dairy cows which were pastured on the Duvenek Windmill Pasture area. He built a large Spanish-style dairy barn as well as a lake, measuring about 290 by 60 feet, on Adobe Creek. Part of this lake lives on at Willow Pond. In 1935, William Henry Davis took over the property and converted it to Toyon Stock Farm. He and Mrs. Davis raised Thoroughbred, Appaloosa, and Palomino horses. They had an employee, Marco Borrello, who was a circus track rider and taught my cousin David Doyle how to ride. They built a large horse barn on the property. David harvested wheat with a horse-drawn harvester.

Pink Horse Ranch

In 1950, Doctor and Mrs. Cuningham bought the property with a relative and converted it into a vacation-for-a-day spot. They converted the horse barn into a restaurant and they built a swimming pool. People would come from San Francisco to picnic, bask in the sun, swim in the lake, ride a horse, or watch the Foothill Follies, which were performed in the horse barn. Thirteen-year-old David Doyle would lead trail rides. He was instructed by the Cunninghams to wash the white horses with red food coloring to go with the theme of the Pink Horse Ranch. Their son Jack ran the business but ran into several problems. In 1956 they declared bankruptcy. Wendel Roscoe, Colin Peters, and several others purchased the property at auction. Colin Peters built a home on the top of Tepa Way where he had played as a boy. Wendell Roscoe developed the lower 40 acres and moved Adobe Creek to the north of his subdivision along Moody Road. John Holt Lohman, son of Charles Holt’s daughter Grace Jeanette and her husband Ralph Lohman, moved his family to a house on Willow Pond Lane in the Pink Horse Ranch when Foothill College took over his family’s property in 1961.

Bernardo Ferrari is a long-term resident of town. Bernardo was assisted by his daughter, Maria Ferrari, a fourth-generation resident. She is a TV show producer, writer, and has worked on The Big Bang Theory (2007), Young Sheldon (2017), and United States of Al (2021).
Over the years, various bronze plaques have been placed in spots around Los Altos Hills. Some have since been removed, replaced, or just forgotten. But one in particular enjoys a second life. It was originally placed in 1968 upon the occasion of the Town’s 12th anniversary to commemorate the donation of the land and construction of the original Town Hall. Soon after, it was removed and put “in a safe place” with the intent of restoring it when Town Hall was torn down before the rebuild in 2005. Alas the good intention slipped everybody’s mind, and the plaque — and even its storage location — was quietly forgotten.

Many years later, the storage area where it had been placed was being cleaned and by happenstance, the plaque was rediscovered. The relatively small plaque was then mounted as part of a larger one and placed once more, prominently at the new Town Hall. Today it can be seen on the wall to your left, just before you enter the front door to the lobby.

ABOVE: John Fowle and Earl Dawson (among the founders and donors listed on the plaque) photographed at the unveiling ceremony for the plaque on the town’s 12th anniversary. Fowle served as the town’s first mayor.

TOP: The original Town Hall was built in 1956 at no cost to Los Altos Hills residents — the Fowle family donated the land, William Simrell, Jr. donated the architectural services, and Ina and Earl Dawson donated construction costs. Just visible on the building’s roof (between the tree branches) is the original cupola. This also survives to this day and in two forms — physically as a monument mounted in front of the current Council Chambers as well as an iconic element of the Town’s Logo.

ABOVE, RIGHT: The plaque mounted on the corner of the original Town Hall, just under the wooden sign that reads “Town Hall.”
The exhibit *A Textured Life* represents a posthumous homage to Dee Ropers (1937-2015), a departed artist with a vast collection of artistic expressions and styles, whose passion for art filled her life wholly and consummately.

Ropers lived in Los Altos, working in a broad range of jobs, including teaching, advertising, semiconductor designer, the training of CAD/CAM, car sales, and retail management. Most of all, she loved art. Her first paintings were in a realistic style. As Ropers explored her creativity in many ways — interior design, furniture and landscape design, metal sculpture — she moved to abstract art inspired by these modern influences. In the 1980’s she joined Gallery 9 in Los Altos to show her artwork.

Ropers’ travels further progressed her artistic journey. She studied art in Florence, where she explored painting in mixed media by layering text, images, gesso, and found objects with acrylic paint. Dee moved to San Miguel de Allende in Mexico to study art at Instituto de Allende, returning to stay with her family in Los Altos Hills part-time. Eventually, Ropers opened her art gallery in the charming Fabrica La Aurora, a former textile factory that was converted into an art and design center in San Miguel. She taught art workshops to visitors for many years.

Ropers’ artistic expression covers a wide range of styles, mediums, and influences: realistic oil paintings, anatomy studies in pencil, ink, and watercolor, abstract collages in acrylics, and layered mixed media paintings. In her art classes, she explained to her students that “the layers will give you texture.” Ropers had this attitude toward life and learning. You could say Dee lived a textured life.

The solo art exhibit *A Textured Life* presented in memory of artist Dee Ropers will be on display at the Los Altos Hills Town Hall from September 2023 through March 2024. An Artist’s Reception was held on October 1, 2023 at Town Hall. Attendees enjoyed viewing Ropers’ work while listening to live music and enjoying refreshments, and wine.

An art walk-and-talk tour of the exhibit will be held on Friday, January 26, 2024, at Town Hall from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Kelyn Dewar, Ropers’ daughter, will guide the guests throughout the exhibit, talking about her late mother’s artistic journey.

To learn more, please visit https://deeropersgallery.wordpress.com.
In Pursuit of the
ETHICAL LIFE

My name is Janus Tsen. I am a junior in high school. I was born and raised in Shanghai, China, and I immigrated to Southern California in the summer before 4th grade. I lived there, near my extended family of grandparents and cousins, for two and a half years before moving to Los Altos Hills, where I currently reside. None of the places I have lived in throughout the formative years of my youth have been humanities-centric — not Shanghai, not SoCal, and certainly not Silicon Valley. Neither of my parents were humanities majors (one is a lawyer, the other an entrepreneur), yet I’ve come to love philosophy as a way to learn and live. A proper life necessitates guidance and a proper moral compass above all else; without that, we would be left with no goals to work towards and no way to distinguish between right and wrong. Thus, I find that philosophy is something of value to study in the humanities.

I started reading philosophy the summer of 8th grade, when COVID began and I had nothing better to do. I spiraled from philosophical fiction to the Greek classics to postmodernist philosophy — a wild ride through different landmarks in thought. I took courses at the local Foothill College for a better picture of these philosophical landscapes, and it was through this that I fell in love with ethics. I find that ethics is the most applicable field of philosophy. In the personal picture, it is the study of “the good life,” or how to live meaningfully and purposefully. In the global picture, an increase in the number of ethical, or at least rational, individuals means fewer problems. We would not see violent conflicts break out at the rate they are happening today. Disputes would instead be solved diplomatically, with proper communication between opposing groups to reconcile conflicting opinions.

When I raised this interest to a mentor of mine, she suggested I join the Ethical Culture Society of Silicon Valley (ECSSV) to apply abstract ethical theory and ways of living to a more concrete setting. She said great things about the Philadelphia Ethical Society (another affiliate of the American Ethical Union, a national network), and consequently, I attended one of ECSSV’s evening ethics discussions for the first time this April. They delved deeply into the morality of disruptive protests.

The Organization

ECSSV is a group dedicated to promoting an ethical and humanistic way of life. Their membership consists largely of middle-aged folks and friendly seniors — anyone who is willing to dedicate a Wednesday evening or Saturday morning to talk about ethics and life. At 16 and far below their median age, I have gleaned life lessons, become more worldly, substantiated my beliefs, and formed new opinions. I find that fitting in is less about age than having an open mind. My time in this group has made me a better person, and it is a rewarding experience I could not recommend enough.

ECSSV runs two events, among many more, that
I wish to highlight. My personal favorite, which happens to be their least structured get-together, is Coffee and Conversation. These meetings run informally; there is no set conversation topic, and anyone with anything on their mind can pitch into the conversation. Most importantly, Coffee and Conversation encourages a more ancestral form of communication: talking in a circle, outdoors, with no electronics and distractions (except the occasional passing car). It is quite a peaceful experience.

Another of their enjoyable meetings is an actionable event: the Grace Shelter Support meetup. Once a month, ECSSV members get together to pack lunches and snack bags, and in the process socialize and eat lunch together. As part of their mission to better the world, they donate these lunches and supplies to a nearby homeless shelter.

**What I Have Learned**

There are two elements of my experience at their meetings that consistently draw me back: the people and the practical benefit. The members of this organization come from a variety of backgrounds (I’ve met teachers, computer engineers, social workers, nurses, and so much more). They are understanding, welcoming, and supportive, and the community they have built is a dictionary-esque definition of a “safe space.” The members respect others’ boundaries, make an effort to get to know you, and genuinely try to empathize with and understand things on your mind.

One of the special meetings they held to bring people together was a philosophical board game a few months ago. The consulting leader of this chapter, Curt Collier, with a bit of my assistance, put together a group role-playing game called Quibbles & Nibbles. It plays similarly to Dungeons & Dragons, except the “dungeon” of ethical dilemmas is traversed with teamwork and logical thinking — traits that are foundational to the ethical person. As expected, the game was a hit with the members who showed up. Loneliness is a real problem in the digital age, and small commitments to social events like these are really the only way to combat loneliness. These events provide a structured way to interact with others.

The members also tend to have different political viewpoints (as is expected with such a variety of backgrounds), though they are generally voices of reason and compassion. This complements their ethical discussions, and the facilitators do an excellent job keeping the conversation civil and flowing from one topic to another.

But, perhaps more importantly, the community helps each member build a stronger and more ethical frame of thought. Since joining, I have been exposed to a myriad of value systems. Some members value compassion, others hard work, and still others justice. It is enriching to hear other experiences and perspectives, as it allows one to develop a stronger and more applicable system of personal morality. Having a moral direction increases personal integrity, promotes mental growth, and allows us to consider both sides to a dispute. In addition, we are better able to resist groupthink along political lines and process information for ourselves. We can derive truth from a variety of sources and recognize bias. This free thinking is fundamental to the preservation of our individuality and is a tenet of democracy and a free society.

I can attest to these benefits personally. Since joining ECSSV, I have felt more connected to the Silicon Valley community. I have gotten to know more people outside my general interaction comfort zone, which has sharpened my social skills. I feel I am better able to analyze global events, as the Ethical Culture Society has taught me to sympathize with the people, not the ideologies, involved.

The Ethical Culture Society promotes soft skills that are more important today than ever. Problem-solving, communication, and rational analysis are all skills that, regardless of one’s goals, pursuits, or age, are necessary in everyday life. For more information about the Ethical Culture Society of Silicon Valley and how to join, visit ethicalsiliconvalley.org or their Meetup page at www.meetup.com/Ethical-Culture-Society-of-Silicon-Valley.

**“I’ve come to love philosophy as a way to learn and live. A proper life necessitates guidance and a proper moral compass above all else; without that, we would be left with no goals to work towards and no way to distinguish between right and wrong.”**

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**Volunteers at a Compassion Week project hosted by ECSSV decorate and fill meal-kit bags for distribution to domestic violence survivors by Next Door Solutions to Domestic Violence**
More than a half-century ago, Los Altos Hills was founded by civic-minded leaders and philanthropists. To this day, the town’s residents are involved in many philanthropic endeavors that focus on local, regional, national, and international causes. In this issue of Our Town, we focus on four residents Annie Ju, Susan Mielke, Sandy Mingia, and Dick Simko who are making impacts locally and internationally through their involvement with the Rotary Club.

Making an Impact Through Rotary

ANNIE JU

When I first moved to Los Altos Hills 12 years ago, I was focused on my career as a software engineer in high-tech, and raising my 10-year-old daughter. I fell in love with the area, especially the beautiful pathways and being able to hike on the nearby trails. I am continually enchanted by the natural beauty, strong sense of community, and the range of opportunities this area offers. I felt lucky to be living in a rural area and yet minutes away from the heart of Silicon Valley. Fast forward 10 years and I had retired and was figuring out what I wanted to do in my quasi-retirement.

A friend invited me to a Rotary meeting, where I met many friendly and accomplished people who were dedicated to helping others.

Rotary’s motto, “Service Above Self,” resonated with me deeply. I tried out different committees and settled on helping with Marketing in the annual fundraiser, Fine Art in the Park. I’m also involved in keeping the Rotary website up to date, utilizing my software background. I’ve been a proud member of the Los Altos Rotary Club for two years. What keeps me involved is the incredible sense of camaraderie and the knowledge that I am part of a group of individuals who are genuinely dedicated to making a positive impact. My favorite part of Rotary is the opportunity to collaborate with like-minded people who share a passion for service.

Locally, our club is deeply involved in initiatives that improve the lives of individuals and families in our community, such as Mentor Tutor Connection, serving students in Mountain View and surrounding towns, and the Veterans Program at Foothill College. Internationally, Rotary’s reach extends to projects that address global challenges, from eradicating polio to providing clean water.

Beyond my involvement in Rotary, I am in the town’s Technology Committee and President of the Los Altos Hills Club. I’m also a co-leader in the Neighborhood Watch Program, and a member of CERT. I’ve met many wonderful people in Rotary who are also residents of Los Altos Hills.

I have a daughter who is studying Stem Cells in graduate school, and I have had the privilege of sharing my Rotary experience with her; this has encouraged her to explore Rotaract, Rotary’s youth program, which provides young adults with an opportunity to make an impact while developing leadership skills and forming friendships.

My experience with the Los Altos Rotary Club has been incredibly rewarding and provided me with a sense of purpose, a global perspective, and lifelong friendships.

SUSAN MIElke

My husband, Neal, and I moved into Los Altos Hills in 1990. We enjoy the privacy and rural quality of our neighborhood. It was a great place to raise our kids. I volunteered for my children’s schools and enjoyed those projects for many years. A good friend had recently joined Rotary and loved it. She encouraged me to
give Rotary a try. The range and variety of Rotary projects were intriguing. The timing was right for a change!

I have been in Rotary for three years. Working on The Los Altos Bears was fun. More recently, I started working with the Veterans Resource Center at Foothill College which has been very rewarding. Rotary encouraged me to continue volunteering with underserved students in local high schools which is important to me. Los Altos Rotarians have inspiring levels of passion, energy, and commitment to making our community and the world a better place. There’s also an entrepreneurial spirit that runs through our club which you can see in the projects we create and fund. You have to work hard to keep up with this group.

Listening to Rotarians problem-solve is enjoyable – lots of creativity, disagreements, and respect. There’s something in Rotary called the 4-way test: Is it the truth? Is it fair? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial? It is satisfying to be part of an organization that promotes healthy debate and teamwork.

Last week was a good one. It started with a World Community Service meeting to introduce a friend interested in a Rotary Global Grant for a healthcare project in the Philippines. I volunteered with Rotary friends for a few hours at the Community Services Agency. The Veterans Support Committee met to get ready for the new school year, including a fundraiser in early spring 2024. The week ended with writing minutes for our weekly lunch meeting where Arts Los Altos gave a presentation, “There’s a Mural to that Story.” Los Altos Rotary is a warm, welcoming community. It is fascinating to hear how people from all over the world and country ended up in Los Altos. It’s easy to develop friendships when you’re working on the same project for months – truly delightful people. Sometimes, they even give you tomatoes from their gardens.

WHAT IS ROTARY?

Rotary is a global network of 1.3 million neighbors, friends and leaders who work to promote integrity and advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace – and have a good time doing it. As one of the 46,000 clubs around the world, Los Altos Rotary has 160 members, half of whom are women. They have an annual fundraiser and community event, Fine Art in the Park. In recent years over $500,000 in art has been sold each year. 100% of the club’s profits are distributed to worthy causes.

 Financial aid goes to U.S. and international peace scholarships, leadership development events and speech contests for high schoolers. In the last 10 years, over $1M has been raised for the Foothill College Veteran’s Resource Center, for scholarships, emergency housing, book vouchers, networking events, campus lunches and post-military re-integration counseling.

Just as Los Altos Rotary was a world leader in the 80’s to bringing AIDS into the light, they are becoming world leaders in environmental projects. One large project involves partnering with an innovative company that recycles lithium-ion batteries in the United States. Rotary’s part of the partnership is to collect “jewels in the junk drawers of America” and keep rechargeable batteries (and soon Styrofoam) out of the garbage to become useful items again. Beach and creek clean ups, tree planting are a few of the local projects the club is involved in.

Working with other Rotary clubs, they drive many international projects such as teaching sustainable farming practices in Peru and Africa. Their Peruvian Andes project has resulted in providing formerly unavailable or unaffordable nutrition to villagers and has directly contributed to an average height increase of one inch in the village children.

Another focus is to support financial independence for women around the world. On the Ivory Coast Women’s Farming Program, mothers learn how to sustainably grow, sell crops to support their daughters’ school, make a profit from crop sales and feed their families. In Africa, thousands of reusable sanitary kits are distributed so that young women can continue their educations. Rotary fills libraries, teaches reading, outfits science labs and provides clean water so that children will have opportunities their parents or culture could not provide.

Los Altos Rotary welcomes energetic, smart and creative people with the desire to make the world a better and more peaceful place. Meetings are weekly at the Shoup Garden House. For information about the club, visit the website losaltosrotary.org or email: info@losaltosrotary.org
I feel very fortunate to be part of the Los Altos Rotary community. I can see a multitude of ways to contribute locally and to global projects for many years to come. Rotary is full of excellent role models of community service. You should join Rotary if you want to make the world better and have fun while you’re doing that. Be ready to throw yourself into a variety of projects and see where they take you.

SANDY MINGIA

My husband and I moved to LAH from a Bay Area condo on a golf course. We both had intense 12+ hours a day high-tech jobs that encompassed us. After a few years in The Hills, our jobs wound down. We would go to dinner downtown and realize that we knew no one. Our only contacts were with the people on our street whom we shared an annual Holiday Party. Other than that, we were alone and rather lonely without our work communities. A neighbor invited us to a “wine and cheese” Rotary event at their home. We met delightful, fun-loving and caring people. We were looking for pleasant company, not to do good deeds, but doing anything with these people sounded like fun.

My husband was invited by this neighbor to come to a Rotary lunch meeting. There he found a lot of really accomplished people, mostly men, who were seriously involved in mentoring local underserved school kids, helping women in Nepal redirect their lives from all-day stick gathering to cooking with solar panels to earn money, and all sorts of interesting projects. They also had fascinating speakers each week, talking about technology, medical issues, the environment, sports, etc. He joined the club.

I wanted to hear the speakers and started going to the meetings. I was thrilled when I was allowed to join in with some of the local projects. They heard and appreciated my suggestions on how fellowship might be increased. They let me plan an educational trip to a local chocolate manufacturing factory. Never had I been so welcomed into a group. As I was allowed to do more and more, and met more men and women that I admired, I realized that I wanted to be a Rotarian.

Why? Because I had the opportunity to bring ideas and participate in projects that made the world smarter, healthier, and happier. I used my marketing skills to drive membership and help with consistent branding for the club and Fine Are in the Park. I got to learn about developing websites, organizing events, fundraising, installing solar panels, cooking Cioppino, mentoring Veterans on how to ace an interview, and so much more.

My new realization of the difference one person can make excited and propelled me. I took on more jobs – being encouraged and mentored by experienced people to do projects out of my comfort zone.

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My new realization of the difference one person can make excited and propelled me. I took on more jobs – being encouraged and mentored by experienced people to do projects out of my comfort zone. I was having a blast working with teams of people who kept their commitments and acted with integrity to do projects that had long-term positive effects on individuals locally and around the world.

DICK SIMKO

M y wife and I, in our early thirties, and our two-year-old daughter moved from a condo in south Los Altos to Los Altos Hills in 1982. I was an electrical engineer and co-founder of a computer chip start-up and was working long hours. My wife, a registered
diyetitian also worked nearly full time. We needed more space and were planning on our second child. We are both Ohio State alums, but we met in California. The move to LAH was motivated by the chance of a good real estate investment as well as a chance to live in a rural environment. We moved into a quiet cul de sac neighborhood where there was almost as much horse traffic as automobile traffic. We enjoyed the quiet rolling hills, grassy open lands, wonderful trees, and miles of walking paths. This rural environment was only seven minutes from the flats of Los Altos. We were welcomed by elderly neighbors. They said the people here were very nice, but we would not see them very much as they were very busy—many executives and entrepreneurs.

After decades in the Hills, I was encouraged by a neighbor, a former town mayor, to consider joining Los Altos Rotary as I might have a lot in common with the members. He sponsored me and I joined and I am happy I did.

I have been a Rotary member for six years. Most of that time I was also consulting for a laser tech company. So, I was able to make a limited time commitment to the Club. The largest club activity is the annual Fine Art in the Park fundraiser held in Lincoln Park. It has many organizational units such as Art, Marketing, Hospitality, and Finance including Operations and Site. With my hands-on engineering skills, I chose to engage in those two areas.

As an engineer and comfortable with tools, I was paired with a former rancher and heavy construction Rotarian as his understudy. The relationship worked out very well.

A unique one-time major Rotary fund-raising project was the Bears project. Artists painted fiberglass bears were displayed in downtown Los Altos—over 50 of them—and then they were auctioned off. Their size ranged from 2 feet to 8 feet. The project was very technically complicated. For example, each bear needed to be moved seven times to complete their fabrication. With the Fine Art in the Park projects and the Bears project, I developed a “Mr. Fix It” identity. A wonderful consequence is that among the people I got to know and work with were no less than three immediate neighbors and many other Rotarians as well.

The Los Altos Rotarians hail from many different states, countries, backgrounds, and cultures. It is an impressive group of people. Lots of energy, education, positivity, and friendly outlook. Currently, the Rotary Club is half men and half women. Many professionals (e.g., from education, law, medicine, engineering, finance, marketing, real estate, government, restaurateurs, etc.) fill out the membership.

One of the most enjoyable and impressive parts of the weekly Club meetings is the guest speakers who speak for half an hour—truly educational and enjoyable. Besides Fine Art in the Park, there are many special interest groups to which one can contribute time and energy. I feel very rewarded that the funds from Fine Art in the Park go to scholarships for deserving local high school students as well as to support a veteran’s program. As a veteran, I might find the time to participate in that group. There are also many projects in other countries.

Rotary has provided a social vehicle for meeting some of the local California folks who have been established here for some generations. Originally as an Ohioan who moved here in 1970, it was a challenge for me to connect with established residents.

The Los Altos Rotary Club comprises a team of wonderful people. Rotary is the largest club in the world. This team is built from a diverse group of men and women from many different backgrounds. They are positive, friendly, energetic, responsible, and reliable. It is great to be part of this team.

Dick Simko and Susie Mielke pose with fellow Rotarians in front of one of the painted bears for the Los Altos Bears project in downtown Los Altos.
Jan
1
Mon., 1:00 pm
New Year’s Day Pathways Walks
This is an annual community hike led by the Pathways Committee. You have a choice between a Leisurely, Moderate, or Strenuous route. Hiking shoes with grip are recommended. Meet at the Purissima Park baseball fields.

13
Sat., 9:00 am – Noon
Technology for Seniors
Need a tutorial on social media, email, smartphones, apps, and software? Community volunteers are joining forces to answer your questions. RSVP to Emina Steta at esteta@losaltoshills.ca.gov. Location: Town Hall.

18
Thurs., 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
Crime Prevention and Home Fire Safety

26
Fri., 1:00 – 3:00 pm
Art walk and talk tour of the exhibit
Kelyn Dewar, daughter of artist Dee Ropers, will guide the guests throughout the exhibit, talking about her late mother’s artistic journey. Free and open to the public. For more information call: 650-941-7222. Location: Town Hall.

Mar
30
Sat., 9:00 – 10:30 am
Annual Hoppin’ Hounds Biscuit Hunt
You and your dog will hunt through Byrne Preserve in search of dog-healthy biscuits. Pre-biscuit hunt, catch up with all your canine companions while enjoying a coffee bar with human treats. Registration is required in advance visit: losaltoshills.ca.gov/register.

Calendar events are also posted on town’s website: www.losaltoshills.ca.gov