



# OUR TOWN

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS

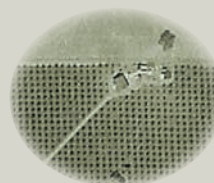
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**NANCY COUPERUS**  
1942-2025



Nancy as little girl with her  
older brother and father



First apartment for  
married couple in  
The Hague, Netherlands



Church in The Hague  
where Jitze & Nancy  
were married



Formal wedding picture,  
September 2, 1967



## The Legacy of Nancy Couperus

Some individuals leave an imprint on a town so lasting that it becomes part of its character. Nancy Couperus was one of those people. Through decades of dedicated volunteer service, she helped shape Los Altos Hills into a community defined by preserved open space, shared purpose, and compassion. Although Nancy passed away in late 2025 after a long illness, her legacy continues to enrich the lives of residents and inspire others to give back. Nancy believed deeply in stewardship — of land, community resources, and one another. In December, she and her husband, Jitze Couperus, were awarded the Legacy of Service Award posthumously, honoring a lifetime of meaningful and lasting impact on Los Altos Hills. [CONTINUED ON PAGE 2.]



*Page 1: Nancy and Jitze, two expatriates from different parts of the world met each other in The Hague, Netherlands. Left: Jitze & Nancy lived in a tiny apartment in The Hague. Bottom, left: Nancy as a recently graduated newly-minted school teacher in Fremont, California. Below: Nancy with Reno, a 19-year-old Mustang from Nevada who was captured, trained in a prisoner rehab program and eventually purchased for the WRI program at Westwind. Reno and Nancy had a strong bond and Nancy said that Reno helped keep her going.*

### A Life Rooted in Service

Nancy Couperus's commitment to community service was shaped long before she became a familiar presence in Los Altos Hills civic life. Raised in San Mateo, California, she earned her degree and teaching credential from UC Berkeley in the early 1960s and began her career as an elementary school teacher. Her years teaching internationally in Europe broadened her worldview and deepened her belief that strong communities depend on inclusion, stewardship, and active participation. When she and her husband, Jitze Couperus, settled permanently in Los Altos Hills in the early 1970s, Nancy brought with her a readiness to engage — not as an observer, but as a contributor.

### Discovering Los Altos Hills — and Its Potential

When Nancy arrived in Los Altos Hills around 1972, the town was still evolving from its agricultural roots into a residential community. Drawn by the openness of the land and the

rural spacing of homes, she quickly recognized both the beauty of the area and its vulnerability. In the mid-1970s, a neighbor encouraged Nancy to attend a town council meeting addressing a proposed development that threatened to eliminate potential public pathways through undeveloped land.

Nancy spoke with clarity and conviction about the importance of preserving access, trails, and open space. Her comments resonated with council members, one of whom invited her to assist with similar land-use challenges facing the town. That meeting proved to be a turning point, marking the beginning of Nancy's decades-long involvement in town governance and land preservation.

### Preserving Open Space for Future Generations

In the 1970s, Nancy left her teaching career to become a homemaker and raise her two daughters, while also taking up the cause of open-space preservation. Over the late 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, she emerged as one of Los Altos Hills' most trusted and influential advocates for preserving open space. She served on town committees, worked closely with landowners, and collaborated with fellow volunteers to protect hundreds of acres of natural land. Her efforts were instrumental in preserving areas such as Byrne Preserve, ensuring that development pressures did not erode the town's defining natural character.

Nancy understood that preserving open space required patience and persistence. She navigated complex negotiations with landowners, balanced competing interests, and helped build public consensus around long-term stewardship. Members of the Open Space Committee

later acknowledged that her work resulted in the permanent protection of significant natural resources and helped establish a culture of conservation that continues to guide town policy today.

### Saving and Shaping Westwind Community Barn

One of Nancy's most consequential contributions began in 1975, when Westwind Community Barn was donated to the Town of Los Altos Hills by Countess Margit Besseney. At the time, many residents viewed the donation as an unwanted financial burden and argued that selling the property would be a more practical choice. Nancy saw something else entirely: an irreplaceable opportunity to create a shared community asset.



Partnering with Irma Goldsmith, a founding figure in the town's incorporation, Nancy represented Los Altos Hills in negotiations with the property's representatives. Their work led to the successful acquisition of the barn and surrounding land, completed by 1978, securing Westwind's future as public space. Nancy also made good on assurances that the barn would serve a broad and meaningful purpose for the community.

### Riding Toward Healing and Opportunity

That purpose took shape in 1978, when Nancy co-founded Westwind 4-H Riding for the Handicapped (now called Westwind Riding Institute). Inspired by early therapeutic riding programs





*Above: Westwind Riding Institute for children with disabilities - Participants (riders, volunteers and horses) on a trail ride to the top of Byrne Preserve.*

elsewhere in California, she helped launch the first classes that same year. The program offered children with physical and developmental challenges a chance to experience connection, confidence, and independence through riding.

By 1979, donated horses — including a Shetland pony named Domino — expanded the program, and a dedicated group of volunteers began to form. Over the decades that followed, hundreds of riders benefited not only from the physical aspects of riding, but from the emotional and social growth it fostered. The program eventually evolved into what is now known as the Westwind Riding Institute, which continues to thrive nearly 50 years later.

An unexpected legacy emerged as well. Beginning in the 1980s, high school students volunteered in large numbers, many initially motivated by the desire to report service hours on college applications. Exposure to therapeutic riding and hands-on caregiving inspired many of these young volunteers to pursue careers in medicine, nursing, physical therapy, and special education — an unanticipated but profound extension of Nancy’s vision.

### A Community Gathering Place

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Westwind Community Barn grew into a central gathering place for Los Altos Hills. The barn hosted annual Earth Day celebrations, hoedowns, holiday events, and the beloved barn lighting, bringing residents together across generations. Nancy remained closely involved, helping ensure that Westwind remained welcoming, inclusive, and aligned with its mission as a community resource.

Volunteers recall that she was always present — organizing, problem-solving, and quietly ensuring that things ran smoothly, regardless of the time or effort required. Her steady leadership helped the barn weather challenges and adapt over time without losing its core purpose.

### Standing Firm When It Mattered Most

Around 2000, Westwind once again faced uncertainty when proposals surfaced within town leadership to sell town-owned land, including the barn, to generate revenue. Nancy responded decisively. Working with friends and fellow advocates, she helped launch a ballot initiative requiring voter approval before large parcels of town-owned land could be sold or their designated use changed.

The initiative passed, creating a lasting safeguard for Los Altos Hills’ open spaces and community assets. It ensured that decisions affecting shared land would remain in the hands of residents and

protected the town’s long-term values against short-term pressures.

### An Enduring Example

In June 2016, Westwind 4-H volunteers honored Nancy as “Outstanding Volunteer Since 1978,” presenting her with letters and photographs from riders and volunteers whose lives had been touched by her work. The tribute reflected nearly four decades of continuous service.

Longtime resident Duffy Price reflected on Nancy’s extraordinary contributions to the town: “All of us will forever be indebted to Nancy for her many years and efforts to preserve and enhance Los Altos Hills — the community that we all love. Typical of Nancy, she wanted no special memorial, but we will definitely acknowledge her many contributions for preservation of Open Space, Westwind Riding Institute that she and many colleagues initiated and sustained over the years.”

Following her passing in late 2025, the Town of Los Altos Hills awarded Nancy and her husband, Jitze Couperus, the Legacy of Service Award in December, “in recognition of a remarkable impact on Los Altos Hills, made possible through decades of dedicated and loyal volunteer service.”

Today, Nancy Couperus’s legacy lives on in preserved hillsides, thriving programs, and inspired volunteers. Her life demonstrates how sustained commitment and quiet leadership can shape a town’s future — and invites others to step forward and continue the work she so faithfully began.



*Certificate awarded to Jitze and Nancy Couperus by Town of Los Altos Hills.*

# CELEBRATING LIVES *of* SERVICE

Each year, the Town of Los Altos Hills honors residents whose sustained commitment, leadership, and volunteer service have made a lasting difference in the community through its Lifetime Volunteer Award. In rare circumstances, the Town also recognizes exceptional service that continues long after such an honor has been bestowed. In 2025, this recognition took the form of a special, one-time Legacy of Service Award. Presented on December 18, 2025, these honors celebrate residents whose efforts have helped preserve the rural character of Los Altos Hills while strengthening the quality of life for current and future generations.

## **Sue Welch**

The Town recognized Sue Welch for her decades of dedicated service and steadfast advocacy for conservation and environmental stewardship. A long-time resident, Sue served extensively on the Open Space Committee and the Pathways Committee, where she brought institutional knowledge, consistency, and a collaborative spirit. As Secretary of the Open Space Committee, she provided steady leadership and unwavering commitment, never missing a meeting. Her passion for preserving native landscapes, wildlife, and open space left a lasting impact on the Town's natural character.



safe, well-maintained pathway connections for equestrians and pedestrians and helped support community-building events, including the Town Picnic. Her thoughtful input and commitment enriched recreational opportunities throughout Los Altos Hills.

## **Patty Radlo**

The Town recognized Patty Radlo for her foundational leadership and decades of service that helped shape the Town's civic and recreational programs. As a co-founder of the Parks and



Recreation Department, Patty played a central role in establishing programs and events that brought residents together. Her work on the Joint Community Volunteer Awards Committee strengthened how volunteer service was recognized. A past award recipient herself, she consistently used her experience to support and uplift others.

## **Roddy Sloss**

The Town recognized Roddy Sloss for his exceptional leadership and commitment to fiscal responsibility and good governance. Drawing on more than 40 years of professional experience in finance and auditing, Roddy served on the Finance and Investment Committee, including as Chair. He played a key role in strengthening the Town's financial oversight by helping develop recommendations that improved internal controls, transparency, and reporting practices. His diligence and professionalism significantly enhanced the Town's financial stewardship.



## **Jitze and Nancy Couperus**

The Town recognized Jitze Couperus and the late Nancy Couperus with the Legacy of Service Award for more than five decades of extraordinary service and vision. Residents since 1972, they made



enduring contributions to open space preservation, equestrian programs, and civic life. Their advocacy helped secure the Westwind Barn as a permanent community asset and led to the creation of the Westwind Riding for the Handicapped program. Through their leadership in

land stewardship, governance, and historical preservation, they permanently shaped the character and future of Los Altos Hills.

## **Valerie Metcalfe**

The Town recognized Valerie Metcalfe for her long-standing volunteer service and dedication to enhancing community life. An engaged resident for more than two decades, Valerie served on the Pathways Committee and as a founding member and past Chair of the Parks and Recreation Committee. She advocated for



# Oh Deer!

If you drive along the beautiful, bucolic streets or hike the scenic paths that meander through Los Altos Hills, you may be greeted by a quietly magical sight: a family of deer grazing in the dappled light, pausing to rest among oak trees and open meadows, perfectly at home in the gentle rhythm of the hills.

The deer most commonly seen in Los Altos Hills are Columbian black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus columbianus*), a coastal subspecies of the mule deer native to Northern California. Slightly smaller and darker than their inland relatives, black-tailed deer are well adapted to the Bay Area's oak woodlands, chaparral, and rolling grasslands. Their large ears, strong legs, and keen senses help them navigate both natural terrain and the increasingly shared spaces of rural communities.

Deer are social animals and are frequently observed traveling in family groups, usually led by a doe and accompanied by her offspring. This behavior provides protection and stability, allowing younger deer to learn safe routes, feeding areas, and shelter from their mothers. Bucks tend to be more solitary, except during the fall breeding season, after which they retreat to recover and feed.

Seeing deer together in January, California's late winter, is especially common. Fawns born the previous spring typically stay with their mothers through

their first winter, growing stronger before the next birthing season begins. By this time of year, the landscape still offers enough forage to support these family groups, and the mild climate allows deer to remain active.

Black-tailed deer are browsers, meaning they feed on leaves, twigs, and shrubs rather than grazing primarily on grass. Their diet includes acorns, oak leaves, native grasses, poison oak, blackberry vines, and seasonal plants. Their grazing patterns often follow the availability of fresh growth, which is why

they are sometimes drawn to gardens, road edges, and open clearings.

Most does give birth to one or two fawns, with twins being common when food is abundant. Fawns are born with spotted coats that provide natural camouflage and spend their early weeks hidden in tall grass or brush while their mothers forage nearby.

Deer are typically crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk. However, in quieter rural settings like Los Altos Hills, they are frequently seen during daylight hours, moving calmly through neighborhoods or resting in shaded areas.

When encountering deer, it's best to admire them from a distance. Approaching can cause stress or provoke protective parents to charge, and deer often carry ticks and fleas. Giving them space keeps both people and wildlife safe.

Living in a rural town offers rare opportunities to witness wildlife up close. Co-existing with deer reminds us that Los Altos Hills is not just a place we inhabit, but one we share with landscape — one where patience, respect, and appreciation allow both people and wildlife to thrive together.



# The History of Snell Lane

1930

**B**y the time you've turned onto Snell Lane from West Fremont Avenue, you're already standing on nearly a century of Los Altos Hills history.

Residents of Los Altos Hills enjoy walking its winding roads and quiet lanes, but have you ever paused to wonder how those streets came to be named — or what stories lie beneath their asphalt and oak canopies? One such street is one you have probably passed hundreds of times: Snell Lane, located just a few hundred yards from Town Hall, branching quietly off West Fremont Avenue. Its gentle curves and mature landscaping conceal a history that mirrors the evolution of Los Altos Hills itself—from open land, to orchard, to the Silicon Valley suburb we know today.

## The Orchard Era: 1925–1930

The story begins in 1925, when Jack Snell purchased 35 acres of open land in what was then unincorporated Santa Clara County. He planted bare-root apricot trees across the property and built a home among them. His daughter, Evelyn, was born the same year. Two years later, in 1927, the family moved from San Francisco to the orchard, and Evelyn would spend the rest of her life on that land.

Evelyn remembered the early years vividly. Her parents had lived in San Francisco's Marina District, and her father had worked in the newspaper business. But once the orchard took root, he committed himself fully to the land. The trees were

planted carefully, their trunks painted white at the base, and the property was bordered by few neighbors. Evelyn and her older brother Jack were essentially the only children in the area.

A 1930 aerial photograph — the earliest available — shows the orchard in its early form. The land appears as a dark swath of orderly tree rows. Three narrow driveways enter the orchard from West Fremont Avenue. The southernmost of these is roughly where Snell Lane sits today. The road is straight, simple, and utilitarian, like much of the area at the time.

This was also an era before Los Altos Hills existed as a town. The future site of Town Hall belonged to Arthur Fowle, whose land would later be donated to the community when Los Altos Hills incorporated in January 1956. At the time of the 1930 photo, the area was still largely rural, made up of orchards, open fields, and a few large estates.

## Growing Up on the Orchard: 1930s–1940s

Evelyn grew up surrounded by apricot trees and seasonal labor. The orchard was a full-time operation, with a cutting shed and drying fields where apricots were laid out to dry in the sun. The harvest was a communal effort: workers camped on the property, many of them Mexican laborers who returned each year. Evelyn recalled the harvest season as both exhausting and lively, a time when kids from Los Altos

would join in and the orchard became a temporary village.

The Great Depression of the 1930s brought economic hardship to many farms, and the Snells adapted. Jack Snell installed 2,000 laying hens, and the family took eggs to San Francisco every Thursday. Evelyn remembered the work as relentless, yet also formative: “We all worked,” she recalled. Her childhood was not one of leisure, but of purpose.

School was a daily connection to the wider community. Evelyn attended Los Altos Grammar School, the only school in the area, located near what is now the Los Altos Library. She and her brother rode bicycles to school, and as she grew older, she and her friends began to explore the

*In 1977 The City Council decided to name a ball-field after Stan Troedsen, the primary organizer of The Hills Little League. Here a commemorative certificate is presented to Evelyn Troedsen by then Mayor Lucille Hillestad.*



*In 1930 the whole area around Snell Lane consisted of orchards dotted with the occasional farm house.*

small towns of Los Altos and Palo Alto. Evelyn noted that the downtown area of Los Altos already felt familiar, with its small main street and local shops, even as the surrounding hills remained largely unchanged.

### **The War Years and the Postwar Shift: 1940–1960**

World War II and its aftermath marked a turning point for the region. Evelyn's teenage years and young adulthood fell during a period of intense national transformation. After the war, Silicon Valley began to emerge as a hub of technology and industry. The orchards that once defined the landscape began to give way to new suburban patterns.

Evelyn attended the College of Notre Dame in Belmont for two years and then worked in San Francisco. She commuted daily — sometimes by train, sometimes by car — showing how transportation improvements were already reshaping daily life. She later married Stan Troedson, and they raised five children while continuing to live on the family orchard.

The postwar boom is visible in the aerial photographs taken in later decades. By the 1960s, the region had become a premier destination for families seeking spacious homes on large lots. The 1968 aerial photo shows a landscape in transition: the apricot orchard is still visible, but the trees are now scattered across individual backyards. Roads have been expanded and reconfigured, and new cul-de-sacs appear where open fields once stood.

This growth was fueled by the booming technology economy. Los Altos Hills — incorporated in 1956 with a one-acre minimum lot size — became a highly desirable enclave for those seeking privacy, natural beauty, and proximity to the emerging Silicon Valley. The land that once held orchards became the setting for large single-family homes, and Snell Lane evolved accordingly.

### **Snell Lane's Transformation: 1960s–1970s**

The original driveway into the Snell property — once a straight line through the orchard — began to curve and expand. As the land was subdivided, the road grew longer and more complex, with new branches leading to newly built homes. The three early driveways that appeared in the 1930 aerial photo disappeared, replaced by a road network designed for modern residential living.

Evelyn remembered that her father resisted change in some ways but also

recognized its inevitability. He supported incorporation, believing it would preserve the character of the area through zoning and one-acre minimum lots. Yet he also sold parts of the property in stages, allowing development to proceed while maintaining the family's connection to the land.

In the early 1970s, the orchard was subdivided and the family sold portions of the property. Evelyn's home remained, but the surrounding landscape transformed into the neighborhood we know today. By the end of the decade, Snell Lane was fully established as a residential street, with a new generation of families moving in.

### **A Lifetime on Snell Lane: 1970s–2017**

Evelyn raised her five children on the same land she had grown up on. She saw the neighborhood fill with families, and she watched her children form friendships with kids who lived nearby — something she had not experienced as a child. Her husband Stan became well known for his work with Little League fields in Los Altos Hills; after his death in 1977, one field was named in his honor.

Evelyn remained deeply connected to the land and the community. She enjoyed gardening, reading, and hosting family gatherings. She also maintained lifelong friendships formed in school and beyond. Even as the landscape around her changed, she continued to find comfort in the quiet beauty of the hills.

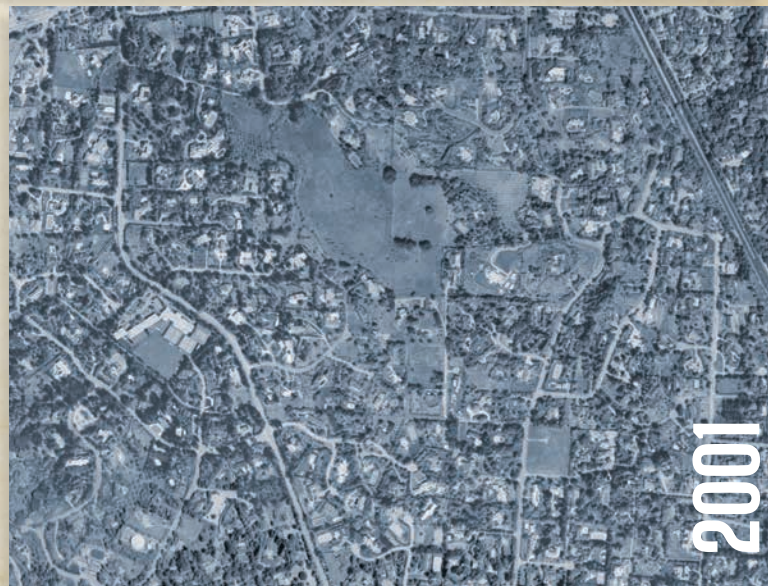
In 2017, Evelyn passed away, marking the end of an era. Her home was eventually sold and replaced, but her family's legacy remains embedded in the land. Snell Lane still bears the name of the family who first carved a path through the orchard — an enduring reminder of the town's agricultural roots.

### **A Street That Holds a Century**

Today, Snell Lane may appear as just another quiet residential street, but the

aerial maps tell a deeper story. From the orchard rows of 1930, to the postwar expansion of the 1960s, to the fully developed neighborhood of 2001, the road has tracked the history of Los Altos Hills and the rise of Silicon Valley. What began as a simple driveway has become a living thread connecting past and present.

So the next time you turn onto Snell Lane, remember: you're not just entering a neighborhood. You're traveling through



*These two aerial photos show how in the 30 years leading up to the millennium, the growth of Silicon Valley finished transforming the area from orchards into semi-rural suburbia.*

nearly a century of history — through the story of an orchard, a family, and a town that grew into one of Silicon Valley's most cherished communities.

*Patty Woolsey, Jitze Couperus (maps), and Ginger Summit (oral history).*



**TOWN OF LOS ALTOS HILLS**  
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**Town Newsletter Statement of Purpose**

*Our Town* continues a tradition that began with the town's founding in 1956: a newsletter by and for its residents. The newsletter's mission is to foster a cohesive sense of belonging and ownership of the town by its residents. The town's identity and character are reflected in articles that highlight its common cultural assets, including history, habitat, wildlife, and its people. The newsletter is published quarterly.

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[www.losaltoshills.ca.gov](http://www.losaltoshills.ca.gov)

**Our Town**

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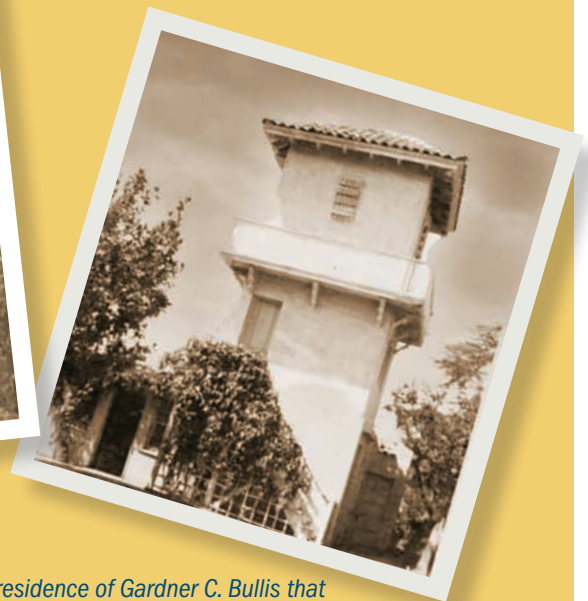
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**Acting City Manager**

Cody Einfalt

FLASHBACK



**The Home of Gardner Bullis**

*Located in the town's archives are photographs of the former residence of Gardner C. Bullis that features a water tower. A prominent attorney, Bullis was a leading proponent of incorporating the Foothills of Los Altos Hills in the mid-1950s and, following incorporation, became the town's first City Attorney. Born in 1887 and active in law well into his 90s, Bullis was recognized as one of California's oldest practicing attorneys and maintained regular office hours at the Rancho Shopping Center. He and his wife, Helen, moved to Los Altos Hills in 1947. That same year, the Town purchased a property on Fremont Road for \$64,371, where an elementary school was later built and named Gardner-Purissima Elementary School in honor of Bullis's contributions to the community. The house and its associated water tower are still standing in the neighborhood of the school named after him.*