

# GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY YEAR NEWSLETTER

MAY 2023

## Author to Discuss and Illustrate the Abalone's Iconic History on May 23rd

The Pacific Palisades Historical Society will host an illustrated lecture, *Abalone: The Remarkable History of an Iconic Shellfish*, on Tuesday, May 23, at 7 p.m. in Pierson Playhouse, 941 Temescal Canyon Rd.



Ann Vileisis

Admission is free, but please RSVP to [pacpalhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:pacpalhistoricalsociety@gmail.com). This will assure a seat.

Prized for their iridescent shells and delectable meat, abalone have a long, rich cultural history in California. Now, with increased environmental stress, these unique mollusks are tragically imperiled. Join us when *Abalone's* award-winning author Ann Vileisis

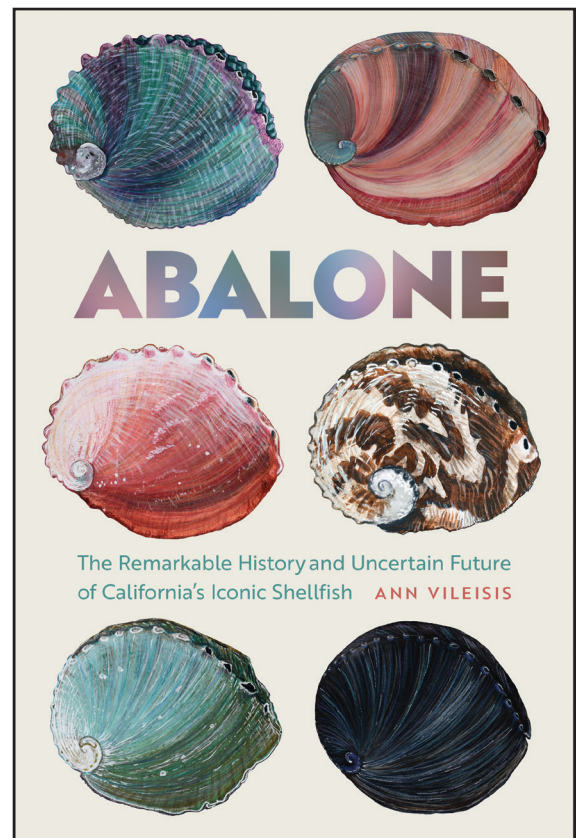
explores the environmental history of this treasured shellfish.

Vileisis will weave rare images and untold stories of indigenous artisans, bohemian writers, California cuisine, skin divers, marine biology and more into a narrative that speaks to the challenges faced by all of marine biology today.

Her presentation continues the Lorraine Oshins Lecture Series, made possible by a generous grant from the family of the late PPHS president.

Ann Vileisis is an independent scholar and award-winning author of three books that explore culture and nature through history. Her first book, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape, a History of America's Wetlands*, won two national history awards. Her second book, *Kitchen Literacy, How We Lost Knowledge of Where Food Comes from and Why We Need to Get It Back*, was recognized by Real Simple magazine as one of "50 books that will change your life." Her latest work is *Abalone*.

For more information about Ann and her books, check out: <https://www.annvileisis.com/abalone>



# Saluting the Saviors of Los Liones



Randy Young holds court during the Historical Society hike in lower Los Liones Canyon on April 1.

Photo: Cindy Kirven

By BILL BRUNS  
*Newsletter Editor*

Celebrating its 50th anniversary year, the Historical Society hosted a hike and a tribute to the volunteers who worked for years to transform lower Los Liones Canyon into a bountiful 32-acre park north of Sunset.

On April 1, in crisp, sunny weather, PPCC board members Randy Young and Shirley Haggstrom provided a history of the once-degraded canyon and led about 60 fellow hikers from the outdoor amphitheater down along the meandering trail to Fire Station 23 and back up to the Los Liones trailhead.

Everyone marveled at the lush vegetation resulting from abundant winter rainstorms, the hundreds of now-mature trees that were planted two decades ago by volunteers, and the carefully constructed streambed that carries storm runoff away from the trail.

In *"Pacific Palisades: From the Mountains to the Sea,"* the book Betty Lou Young produced with her son Randy, she wrote:

"In the mid-1960s, the lower [Los Liones] canyon was being cleared and graded for a residential development of closely packed town houses. Plans went awry when the underlying geology proved to be unstable," and the developer ran into neighborhood opponents who presented

expert research at a key public hearing.

California State Parks eventually purchased the property for a gateway entrance into the Santa Monica Mountains but failed to take any action, and the lower canyon became a free dump site for developers for nearly 30 years, Young wrote.

In 1994, after the Palisades YMCA and Kehillat Israel failed in their attempt to obtain the property and build new facilities, the State Parks and Recreation Commission reconfirmed Los Liones as a state park.

Members of the Historical Society, the Temescal Canyon Association and the Los Liones Botanical Gardens Association then joined forces, led by Randy Young and Carol Leacock, and began a multi-year campaign to clear the land of dumped debris, remove a concrete creek channel and eliminate unwanted vegetation. State Parks contributed heavy equipment and employees to contour the property and create a naturalized stream channel, and Pam Burton and Katie Spitz designed an innovative landscaping plan, in collaboration with State Parks ecologist Suzanne Goode. These efforts were supported by a \$350,000 matching grant from Caltrans.

Ultimately, volunteers eradicated invasive exotic plants (including castor beans, fennel and German ivy) and filled more than thirty 40-yard dumpsters with many tons of concrete, tile, metal, dead trees and brush.

Crucially, the Getty Trust donated pipelines for a water



*Randy Young vs. Pac-Man as the long hydraulic arm of an excavator moves boulders into place in the Los Lions catch basin just north of Sunset Boulevard in 1998.*

*Photo: Pacific Palisades Historical Society*

system that allowed a volunteer group (the “Glamazons”) to plant approximately 300 native trees (coastal oaks, sycamores, willows and black walnuts) and 500 native shrubs, and then keep them watered during long dry seasons until they were established.

Said Haggstrom, a past president of the Historical Society and the Community Council: “Getty provided the PVC watering system with hose bibs. We provided the hoses and watered the entire canyon from the fire station up to the entrance gate to the upper Los Lions trail. My section stretched from the bench above the amphitheater down past the amphitheater parking lot. I would couple three hoses together, attach one end to the hose bib, and drag the hoses along, watering every tree and shrub. Any plant that couldn’t be reached with a hose was watered with buckets of water. When our hoses were stolen from the section next to the Tramonto stop sign, buckets were used to continue watering. This went on for several years for that section and for landscaping across the street.”

On November 18, 2000, lower Los Lions Canyon was dedicated as an impressive gateway park with hardened ADA-accessible trails; shade ramadas, picnic tables and restrooms; an outdoor amphitheater constructed from local stone; and five bridges built over the stream channel. The new park also featured a 260-ft. mural, painted by Terri Bromberg, Susan Haskell and friends on a retaining wall along Los Lions Drive,

depicting the indigenous plant and animal life of the area.

State Parks spent just \$850,000 to restore Los Lions, thanks to dedicated volunteer workers, generous donations from local individuals and organizations, and various small grants. The late State Senator Tom Hayden called it “a dynamic public/private partnership.”

Looking back, who were the Glamazons and how did they get that name?

Haggstrom, a Temescal Canyon Association board member, told fellow hikers on April 1: “Randy noticed that the same group of women showed up at every workday and worked diligently—digging out and pulling non-natives, pruning, moving rocks, filling dumpsters with debris. He called us the Glamazons.”

This group included the late Maria Bane (“she moved mountains of dirt”), the late Margaret Jose (“she liked to stomp debris down in the dumpster”), Carol Leacock (“the TCA liaison partnering with State Parks”), Norma Spak (“she planted and watered little oaks and recruited her daughter, Joanna”), and the late Betty Lou Young—“our fearless leader. She taught us Pride of Purpose.”

Haggstrom added, “Even though we were and are all different, we respected each other and worked well together. We believed we could restore Los Lions Canyon to a public park for everyone to enjoy. Today I salute my fellow Glamazons wherever you are—my forever friends.”

# Los Liones, Then and Now



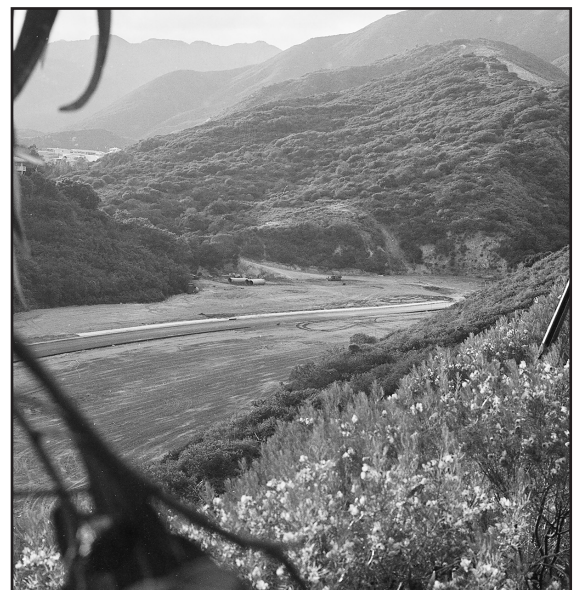
*This 1972 photo shows a degraded lower Los Liones Canyon before its transformation into a beautiful state park, bordered by Los Liones Drive (left) and Paseo Miramar. Fire Station 23 at the corner of Sunset was built in 1963.*

*Photo: Pacific Palisades Historical Society*



*Volunteers help shape the fledgling stream bed in 1998.*

*Photo: Pacific Palisades Historical Society*

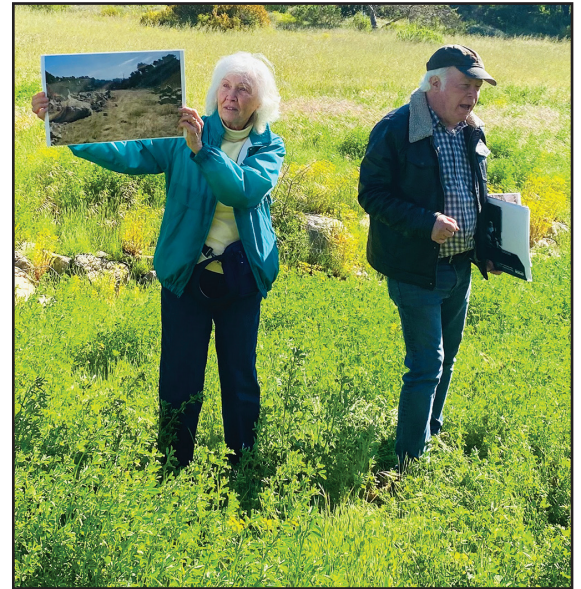


*In the mid-1960s, lower Los Liones was being cleared and graded for a residential development that failed to gain City approval.*

*Photo: Pacific Palisades Historical Society*



*In 1998, two thousand tons of Chico conglomerate from the La Tuna Canyon slide and cut (valued at \$100,000) were donated by Caltrans and delivered to lower Los Lionses by L&T Excavating. The rock was used for lining the half-mile stream channel, stabilizing canyon slopes, and decorating the facilities and walls.* Photo: Pacific Palisades Historical Society



*Historical Society secretary Shirley Haggstrom holds a “before” photo of lower Los Lionses Canyon during Randy Young’s walking tour on April 1. The once neglected landscape has been transformed into a beautiful segue to the popular trail that leads to a 180-degree view of the coast.*

*Photo: Wendy Price Anderson*



*The treasured stream in Los Lionses, lined with river stone, is the centerpiece of the park, meandering from the Topanga State Park trailhead across from the Mormon Church to the catch basin at Sunset. Local historian Betty Lou Young (front row, holding the shovel) is shown here in 1998 with other volunteer workers who spent years clearing the land and then planting and watering the new vegetation.*

*Photo: Pacific Palisades Historical Society*



*The late Gus Haggstrom looks on as fellow volunteers stuff a dumpster with cut vegetation and debris during one of many workdays in Los Lionses.*

*Photo: Pacific Palisades Historical Society*

# New Book: *Thomas Mann's Los Angeles*

By LIBBY MOTIKA  
PPHS Contributor

When the homeland becomes foreign, the foreign becomes the homeland. This sentence was the blueprint for so many of the German anti-fascists who fled Hitler's savage despotism to find refuge in the United States. These were the writers, filmmakers, musicians and philosophers who came to the U.S. without much of a plan except to try and establish a new life in a place that was so out of context with what they had known.

In the new book *Thomas Mann's Los Angeles: Stories from Exile 1940-1952* (Angel City Press), editors Nikolai Blaumer and Benno Herz focus on the famous German writer and anti-fascist and the life he made in his adopted home.

Blaumer, the former program director of the Thomas Mann House in Pacific Palisades, and Herz, the current director, have created a chronicle of Mann's time in LA: his daily routine, his family life, his coterie of fellow exiles, and the many places in LA he frequented. Inspired by stories related to them about the exiles on the Pacific Coast, the authors conceived the project. They enriched the book with essays by a number of scholars and authors who have researched the German exiles in California and the Mann family.

By the time Mann arrived in the United States as a Nobel Laureate, he was one of the most celebrated writers, but also a fiercely outspoken anti-fascist, who left little doubt about the need to crush Hitler. His prominent opposition to the Nazi regime was countered by the imminent threat of expulsion or incarceration.

While he spent his initial post-Germany years in Europe, his first visit

to the U.S., in 1936, planted the idea for his eventual emigration.

After a foray lecturing at Princeton, Mann and his wife Katia and six children moved to Los Angeles in 1940, renting a house in Brentwood. Not long after, he decided to make California their home and acquired land in the Palisades Riviera at 1550 San Remo, not far from friends and acquaintances Aldus Huxley and Bruno Frank, and the philosopher Ludwig Marcuse.

San Remo provided not only a home for the family, but also a hospitable gathering place for Mann and the many German writers, musicians and filmmakers who enjoyed intellectual and emotional familiarity.

For Mann, San Remo also provided a quiet remove from a hectic schedule of public lecturing, and to get away from "meddling sponsors." Now he could enjoy a return to fiction. During the San Remo years he wrote "Dr. Faustus."

*Thomas Mann's Los Angeles* encompasses the author's whole world not only with essays on the intellectuals and artists but also the quotidian details of his life. Literary critic and author Morton Hoi Jensen writes about Mann's association with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, whom he met in 1935. The two had assisted, behind-the-scenes, in the safe emigration of German and Jewish intellectuals, and had helped to establish the Emergency Rescue Committee, which is credited with saving between 2,000 and 4,000 Jewish refugees.

Other chapters give the reader a sort of diary of Mann's lifestyle and routines. Herz comments on the family's day trips to Will Rogers Beach, walks in the neighborhood with his poodle Niko, and visits to the Hollywood Bowl. The LA Philharmonic

conductor Bruno Walter, one of Mann's closest friends, invited him to many concerts and exclusive rehearsals. His favorite restaurants included the Brown Derby and the Hotel Miramar. Mann also enjoyed the movies, although he purposely chose to live far away from Hollywood, the studios and the glamorous film premieres. He questioned the genre in general, as antithetical to the "high arts," the theater and literature.

Mann was indeed a complicated man, at once upholding his German sensibility in art and décor while fiercely engaging in the political and humanitarian initiatives living in America afforded. The interior of his house on San Remo (replicating his home in Munich) was in contrast to its modernist exterior.

"On the outside, adaptation to the California modern; on the inside, memories of the homeland," the authors note.

In the end, however, Mann's activities looked more and more precarious. America was gripped by a hyper apprehension of the spread of Communism, and the government rounded up supposed Communist sympathizers and expelled a number of German émigrés.

When the House Un-American Activities Committee listed Mann as affiliated with various peace organizations or Communist fronts, the Mann family decided to move to the safe haven in Switzerland in 1952, ending their 12-year idyll in California. But, intensely proud of his American citizenship, Mann made it clear that he was not turning his back on America.

The Thomas Mann house is not open to the public, although it hosts a series of public events throughout the year. Visit: [thomasmannhouse@vatmh.org](mailto:thomasmannhouse@vatmh.org).

# Historical Society, Community Council And Village Green Turn 50

By BILL BRUNS  
Newsletter Editor

After launching their organizations in 1972, the Pacific Palisades Historical Society, the Pacific Palisades Community Council and the Village Green Committee were all formally incorporated in 1973. Each group continues to play a vital role in protecting our town's heritage and will be celebrating golden anniversaries this year.

A shared interest in preserving the community's past led to the formation of the Historical Society on May 30, 1972, with 16 founding members who brought different backgrounds and talents to the organization. They began meeting regularly with Katie LaHue, the reference librarian at the branch library, who arranged for speakers and exhibits.

June Blum, editor of the *Palisadian-Post* in 1972, and a co-founder, later wrote, "Our fledgling group became incorporated in a big hurry in order to take ownership of Founders Oak Island on Haverford Avenue. Local attorney Richard Collins expedited the incorporation so that the Society could own the island, donated by Townley Pierson and the late Lelah Pierson."

The Historical Society was formally incorporated as a nonprofit organization in August 1973 with Ethel Haydon as the first president under the new constitution, succeeded by Katie LaHue.

During its first year the Historical Society concentrated on locating and collecting historical materials, sharing information on local history, and providing educational programs on the historical heritage of Pacific

Palisades. Second-year activities expanded into historic preservation (caring for Founders Oak Island) and planning the landmarking of the Long Wharf. Curator Ernest Marquez started the HS's outstanding collection of exhibit pictures of Palisades historic photographs.

Looking forward to the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976, several members published books relating to the history of Pacific Palisades. Betty Lou Young and her son Randy published *Rustic Canyon and the Story of the Uplifters* in 1975; Katie LaHue and Helen Luitjens published *Sketchbook of Pacific Palisades* and Ernest Marquez published his *Port Los Angeles—A History of the Long Wharf*.

In the early 1980s, the Historical Society focused on raising money to publish a definitive history of the town in text and photographs, and in 1983 Betty Lou and Randy Young produced a treasure in *Pacific Palisades: Where the Mountains Meet the Sea*. The Youngs published four more books, and Ernie Marquez kept pace.

The Historical Society has also

collected, documented and preserved historical objects and records relating to Pacific Palisades and the environs of the original Rancho Boca de Santa Monica. Members archived and catalogued over 3,000 historical photos that are housed at the Santa Monica Public Library and are available to the public worldwide. As well, the Historical Society facilitated the transfer of the Marquez Family Photography Collection to the Huntington Library in Pasadena, and is assisting in the restoration of the Uplifters Club and the adjoining historic Eucalyptus Grove in Rustic Canyon.

This year, the PPHS has resumed hosting speakers and PowerPoint presentations at Theatre Palisades, as well as historical walking tours. Donated funds will enable the organization to continue digitizing its archives, including the Zola and Clifford Clearwater Collection, thousands of photos from *Palisadian-Post* archives and every issue of *The Palisadian* (1928-1960).

Visit: [www.pacificpalisadeshistory.org](http://www.pacificpalisadeshistory.org)

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# The Historical Society Seeks Your Support



*The evolution of Potrero Canyon in the heart of Pacific Palisades—from geologic disaster to the home of a new park. Randy Young presented this fascinating saga at the Pierson Playhouse on January 17, as the Pacific Palisades Historical Society resumed its Lorraine Oshins Lecture Series. The audience enjoyed comments by Lorraine's daughter, Thalia Anagnos, and an introduction by new board member Patrick Healy. The entire program can be viewed on YouTube by visiting the PPHS website: [pacificpalisadeshistory.org](http://pacificpalisadeshistory.org)*

*Photo: Patrick Healy*

In the spirit of celebrating its 50th Anniversary, the Pacific Palisades Historical Society will hold its 2023 Annual Meeting on May 23 in Pierson Playhouse, starting at 7 p.m. The featured speaker in the ongoing Lorraine Oshins Lecture Series will be Ann Vileisis, author of *Abalone: The Remarkable History of an Iconic Shellfish*.

You are invited to meet our Board of Directors and renew your membership, which will enable you to continue receiving our newsletters and staying abreast of our latest activities and events. At our annual meetings, PPHS members in attendance vote to elect a Board of Directors for one-year terms beginning July 1. This board then elects its officers in June.

Membership dues and contributions enable PPHS to continue community outreach by presenting free community programs, providing historic photos, awarding scholarships and archiving and researching our community history. We appreciate your support!

Current Historical Society board members include president Barbara Kohn, vice president Anthea Raymond, secretary Shirley Haggstrom, treasurer Harris Smith, president emeritus Eric Dugdale, curator Randy Young, directors at large Donna Vaccarino and Chickie Jensen, plus Bill Bruns (communications) and Patrick Healy.

RSVP: [pacpalhistoricalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:pacpalhistoricalsociety@gmail.com)



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