



# Foreword

The Newsletter of Friends of the Palo Alto Library

Fall 2020

## George I. Lythcott II

On Saturday, June 27th, when I was the only volunteer working in the Main Room, I made a wonderful discovery and had no one to share my excitement. I often get photo albums in my Curious Books section and since they never sell anymore, I send them to H-2. This time, I got four large albums which had only blank pages as usual. But something led me to flip through the otherwise empty pages to the middle of one album where I found two pages of black and white photos. Some of them were dated 1939 and seemed to be of a college graduation. When I looked more closely at the tiny handwriting, I noticed a name, George I. Lythcott II and a place, Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. All the people pictured were African Americans; it seemed surprising to me

*(Continued on page 2)*

## President's Message

What a year! As soon as the COVID order for closing non-essential businesses was issued, FOPAL closed its doors to volunteers, donors and customers. As a result the Book Sale Committee and the Board began planning for how to function in a pandemic. Safety plans have been initiated and are constantly updated by monitoring CDC and other COVID sites. Tentative plans for sales were cancelled one after another.

Some of this time was used by a few volunteers for some upgrades. New computers were installed by Frank McConnell to the sorting room for researching prices. Ed Walker installed new locks in the Main Room that are accessed by individual fobs and the high value area behind the Children's

*(Continued on page 5)*

### FOPAL BOARD ELECTION

#### Proposed for re-election to the Board for a two-year term

Tina Kass, Suzanne Brown Little, Gerry Masteller, Young-Jeh Oh, Melinda Parry, Steve Staiger, Jim Sutherland

#### Continuing Board Members

Nancy Cohen, Karen DalColletto, Bill Jones, Nigel Jones, Karen Neier, Nancy Tillman

#### Proposed FOPAL Officers

President: Nancy Cohen  
Vice-President: Nancy Tillman  
Secretary: Melinda Parry  
Treasurer: Nicole Ly  
Assistant Treasurer: Susan Light

### MEMBERS' ANNUAL MEETING

Date: Wednesday, October 14, 2020

Time: 10:30 am

Place: Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5757119431>

Meeting ID: 575 711 9431, password 230836

One tap mobile:

+16699006833,,5757119431# US (San Jose)

+13462487799,,5757119431# US (Houston)

Dial by your location:

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 575 711 9431

Find your local number:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcdo8VQWVc>

Agenda: Election of Board members and Officers, annual financial summary, other business from the members.

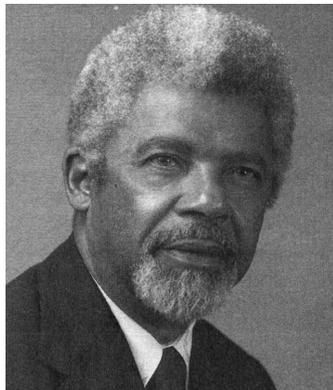
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# Lythcott

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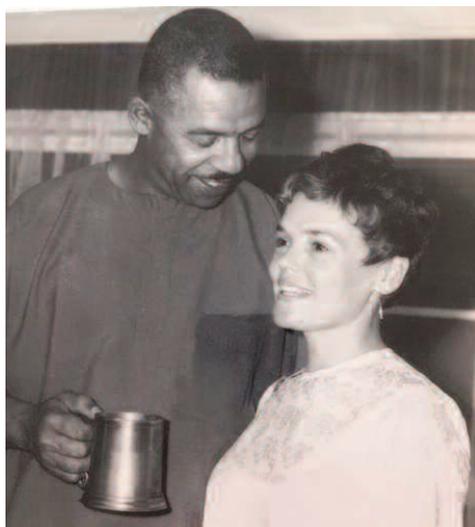
that Bates would have any African American students in 1939.



George I. Lythcott II

I was curious to learn more. I remembered how Karen DalColletto discovered an album with Joan Baez' baby pictures, so I decided to see if I could locate some relatives of George Lythcott. I didn't think I would have much luck unless they happened to live in Palo Alto and shared his name. It never occurred to me to Google him since I had no thought that he might be

famous. If I had done so, I might have gotten there a bit quicker. But, as it turned out, when I searched in the Palo Alto phone book (fortunately, I still keep hard copies), I



Christmas in 1966, almost a year after  
George and Jean got married

discovered two people with that last name. When I called the first one, Jean Lythcott, and explained the story, she got very excited. She told me that George was her husband who had died in 1995. He had been 20 years older than her; they met in Ghana where

he was doing medical research and she was teaching science. They married there in 1966.

I invited her to my house to pick up the photos and we spent almost two hours talking. I learned a great deal about

George, a fascinating person, but also about Jean who was equally fascinating. They had different but intersecting careers. While he was at Bates College, George was asked to be one of four sprinters who paced Jesse Owens as he trained for the 1936 Olympics. George was a physician who practiced as a pediatrician in NYC. After working in West Africa for the WHO, he returned to NY as an associate Dean at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. In 1973, he led a team to The People's Republic of China to study urban health care and the surgical use of acupuncture. In 1978, he returned there with a team to study rural health care. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter appointed him as the head of the Health Services Administration and as assistant Surgeon General.

Jean went back to school and received a PhD from the University of Wisconsin in 1987. She became a professor at Columbia University Teachers College. From 1988-1994, she spent every summer giving seminars in science education to Peace Corps volunteers in four countries in Africa, Nepal, Fiji and Tonga. After her husband died, she moved to Palo Alto to be with her daughter and family where she later taught at Stanford University.

During our long conversation, Jean and I discovered that some intriguing overlaps between George's career and that of my father, Dr. Sidney Blumenthal. While George was a practicing pediatrician in NYC, my father was doing the same work there. When George was a dean at Columbia University P&S, my father was teaching there, too. And when President Carter appointed George to head up the Health and Human Services Administration, my father was director of the Heart Division at the National Institutes of Health. It is when he was in that position that Jean told me she recognized his name. Although China is a very large country, George might have met my sister, Peggy Blumenthal, in 1973 when they were among the first Americans allowed into China. Peggy led a tour of the U.S. Track and Field Team and George was with a group of American physicians. Such strange coincidences.

This experience made me realize how exciting it can be to be a FOPAL volunteer.

By Pat Blumenthal  
Curious Books manager

(Photos credit: <https://madeintoamerica.org/jean-lythcott/>)

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# Bell's Books and FOPAL: 1935 to 2020

Eighty-five years have passed since my father started Bell's Books, but, instead of the anticipated glorious anniversary celebration, we had to visit upon the volumes, the shelves, the aisles, and the furniture a massive upheaval in aid of COVID-19 safety precautions. My colleagues all worked like mad for two solid months. We are very clean now. We are very organized. We have our beautiful antique oak library tables showcasing tastefully arranged face-front displays of fresh titles. Our glass cases are all showing rare and lovely volumes. We have built-in sneeze shields surrounding the sales areas, and hands-free sanitizer for all. We have Persian carpets and polished floors. We are very elegant. But, (dare I say it?) I miss the clutter. I miss the heaps of books in disarray, awaiting a good rummage in hopes of unearthing gold. But if I voice any such notion to my staff, they raise a collective eyebrow at me, saying not to worry, it will all be back very soon. They know my ways, and the warehouse waits.

But the upside is that all this reorganizing has revealed some of the wonderful treasures we had squirreled away: signed copies of Robert Frost's *Collected Poems*; charming little hand colored books of world costume; full sets of John Muir's works; Shakespeare in gilt Moroccan leather; Mrs. Paul Robeson's signed copy of *Porgy and Bess*; works of mathematics from the 1700's; first editions of Steinbeck, Hemingway, and Faulkner; a signed Richard Brautigan; the Duveneck family collection of Emerson's *Works*, with a manuscript page in Emerson's hand; and for me, decidedly the most precious, a collection of the letters my father, Herbert Bell, sent to his closest friend all through his sojourn as a journalist in Paris, and throughout his first years of creating the bookstore. His friend went on to become head librarian at the Huntington, and their dialogue on limited finances, persnickety suppliers, the coveting of fine printing, appeasing wives and babies and difficult clients, and, above all, the endless curiosity and opinionated discourse on writers, musical recordings, and literature, could be reenacted verbatim at Bell's today.

In the cleanup, we relinquished 130 boxes of books to the Friends of the Palo Alto Library (founded in 1938), who, bless their souls (which appear to be equally acquisitive to my

own), accepted them. Most of the books which went to them, though perhaps dated, seemed fascinating to me, and I still don't understand why they hadn't found a new home in the years they were with us. Why hadn't anyone wanted to read about Gorgas and his fight to end malaria in Panama during the building of the Canal? What about Kilvert, the nineteenth century parson, whose frustrations with his falling-down swimming trunks are revealed, along with other niceties, to the ladies of his favorite beach, and to us, one hundred and fifty years later, through his diary? And why, in thirty years, had we not sold all our copies of beloved local garden expert Albert Wilson (of *Dig it with Albert* fame). He was one of the first African Americans to have his own radio and television shows here, and designed the gardens at Allied Arts. His memories of growing up in an orphanage in San Francisco, where the 1906 earthquake tossed him out the window onto the sand dunes below, are priceless. And of course, there are those shabby volumes of Bulwer-Lytton, ("It was a dark and stormy night"): For whom else is there a contest with a prize for composing the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novels?

I wish those volumes all appreciative new homes, with someone who piles as many of them next to her side of the bed as I do: At last look, there were six stacks, two feet high, but who's counting?

As I write this, we have two evacuated families sheltering with us. Their homes are threatened by the fires in the redwoods. One is that of a staff member, the other is that of a store manager from University Avenue. For one breath-stopping evening we all were warned with a pre-evacuation notice to be ready to leave our collective housing. At that moment I realized what they had just gone through in selecting which of their books they really couldn't live without. But as we nervously joked about packing our sleeping bags and foam mattresses, we rejoiced in having a place to go, for Bell's Books has sheltered hundreds of thousands of booklovers over the years, and we knew that, if we had to shelter there, at least we would not be lacking in material for bedtime reading.

*By Faith Bell*

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# Swan's Oysters

We own a cabin in Washington State, 18 miles from Olympia that we spend time at several times a year. It is located on Puget Sound (the ocean) with a lovely view of Mt Rainer. In Washington state 73% of tidelands, the beach in front of any home, are privately owned and can be used to



cultivate shellfish like oysters, clams and geoducks for personal use. People can walk over the tideland in front of your home but not dig on it, picnic on it or use it to launch a boat. You own your tideland in front of your house.

We grow oysters on the tideland in front of our cabin. Nearby Taylor Shell Farms sells oysters as well as clams, mussels and geoducks that can grow on the beach. Oysters types include Pacific, Triploid & Diploid, Kumamoto, Olympia. We buy a bag of 300-400 Triploid oyster seeds.

The tiny seeds are placed in a heavy plastic mesh bag about 20"x33" which is closed at both ends with zip ties but allows water to flow through it. Tides here are 16 feet high so there



is plenty of beach where one can put the oysters to grow. The bags are put on the beach about 2 feet above mean tide so that when the tide is low one can access the mesh bags and take out as many oysters as one wants and then secure the bag with zip ties. If the bags aren't closed tightly you can find crab and starfish growing inside. Much of the day the bags are under water.

The bags on the beach can be secured to the sand in different ways but we use a metal stake pounded into the sand and then secure the bag to the stake with a rope or zip ties. When you buy the seed the owner information can be put in the bag and if the bag floats away it can be returned to the owner. All seeds sold reference the owner's property.

The oysters take about one year to grow to a size that we like to eat. If left for many years on the beach they get very large.

There are lots of ways to eat oysters. Since we do not care for raw oysters we barbecue them and make a butter garlic sauce for a dip. When the oysters are cooked they open up as you can see below. In Olympia we eat the oysters out on the deck and throw the shells back on the beach. Returning

the shells to the tidelands is a must so the shells will recycle.

Since the type of oysters we buy do not reproduce each year we buy oysters in the summer to eat for the next year. When we return to Palo Alto in the fall we bring all the year-old oysters with us in a cooler to share with family and friends.



*By Cathy Swan, Mysteries Section Manager*

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## President *(Continued from page 1)*

Room now have locks with individual codes. After being assured we could keep all of the Bargain Room space, the storage areas received a big revamping with shelving for the hard-to-store vinyls that await a time when we can have another vinyl sale.

We received a Paycheck Protection Plan loan and are in the process of the forgiveness application process. When businesses were allowed partial opening, we filed our opening plan with the County and contacted all volunteers regarding their availability after explaining the safety precautions we had implemented. We also asked if they felt comfortable returning to FOPAL rooms, all of which have limitations on the number of people working at any one time, and where face coverings are required at all times.

After many months limited donations were accepted until all of our rooms were overflowing and we were forced to suspend receiving donations again. Recently we began a personal sales program – Friends and Families of FOPAL. Customers may sign up for a visit to buy as many items as they wish accompanied by a volunteer to any of our rooms by contacting Janette Herceg at [jherceg@fopal.org](mailto:jherceg@fopal.org). This has been very successful and has brought us much needed income and moved books off our shelves to allow for a new influx.

A group of our dedicated high value listing volunteers brought boxes of books and media home to list for sale online through our Amazon and eBay stores. In August we had over 4,000 items listed online, selling over 400, and achieving record high income from that area. We are seeing a great deal of interest in DVDs, science, technology, art, crafts, history and vintage children's books. Our highest selling price was for a book on the Oral Traditions of Ngai Tahu, a Maori tribe from New Zealand, going for \$425, and in all sixteen books selling for over \$100. This has given a substantial boost to our monthly sales figures during a long period without retail in-person sales. There is no shortage of materials to list and we constantly seek volunteers to list and ship books. If you want to join our high value team please contact Janette Herceg at [jherceg@fopal.org](mailto:jherceg@fopal.org).

We have a detailed plan for reopening for limited sales when the COVID conditions permit. This involves signing up for a limited buying time in a sales room through Slottr.

Dave Cortesi did all the research and programming of the Slottr sign-up system. Right now we do not know the timing of the next sale.

For updates on the status of donations and sales please check our website: [www.fopal.org](http://www.fopal.org)

Thanks to everyone for their patience and assistance during this difficult period.

We hope that you and your families are safe and healthy.

*Nancy Cohen, President*

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## FOPAL at work

*(See pages 6 and 7 for more information.)*



*Donations awaiting the end of their quarantine period.*

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# VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES DURING SOCIAL DISTANCING

**Volunteers were asked early in the pandemic what they were doing with their time at home. Here are a few answers.**

**SUSAN STRAIN:** Boredom drove me to start picking up trash on my walks around my part of Sunnyvale. So far I've been thanked by three pedestrians and a passing bus driver. I've started exercising to YouTube videos, and I got my old bike fixed up and have bicycled to Palo Alto several times. This is practice in case I ever have to stop driving.

I've been buying books from Leigh's Favorite Books in Sunnyvale, because they do curbside pickup.

**CAROLYN DAVIDSON:** For me, the hardest part of this—not being able to hug my children and grands. My daughter and her boys (6 and 9) bike over to our house and set up shop on the opposite side of the street while I sit in our driveway, and we chat, play Battleship with chalk (it's tricky but can be done), and catch up with the news. I haven't seen my son or his twins (7) since early February, except virtually. Thank goodness for technology!

Now that all the kids are at home, there's lots of reading going on. I used to be their supplier, from the FOPAL shelves; now that's unavailable, so the twins use Kindle and I'm keeping Books Inc. in business for the local boys.

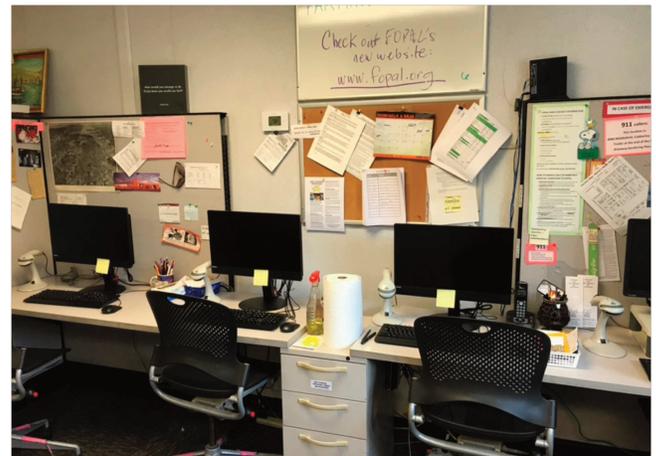
I particularly miss our Children's Room crew, but we have an almost-weekly round-robin email to keep up with each other, supplemented by Nancy Olsen's jokes (emailed) and Jolene Welch's photos of her garden. Jolene says there's not a weed left on her property. Winnie McGannon has taken up playing the piano again (with windows closed so as not to bother the neighbors). Pat Worthington has been making photo books from years and years of her travels. Miriam Landesman combs the NYTimes online and various other sources and sends us links to fascinating articles and videos.

Ginny Ross has her almost-life-size stuffed gorilla (a Fopal find) "compose" emails to us—he's such a good writer that I wonder if he'll author a book about his pandemic life. Deanna Walston has what sounds like a victory garden, and has by now finished all 800 pages of *Outlander*. Helen Beevers, our British volunteer, is getting to know Palo Alto better than us natives by taking daily walks all over town, and has instituted Take-Out Thursdays to sample the local ethnic restaurants' cuisines. It's a busy group of volunteers.

**LINDA SUZUKI:** I am getting a lot done, cleaner, better organized house. Sorted out 50+ years of photographs. Also gardening, walks. An occasional nap.

I attended a 21st century family wedding via Facebook and zoom. The bride and groom are in Arlington VA. Everyone else is scattered.

I am missing my literature and comrade fix at FOPAL.



*A sale on computers and absence of people in the sorting room prompted replacement of old hand-me-downs that worked when they felt like it.*



*The Bargain Room is bursting with materials.*

# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

## FOPAL HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### The World of High Value Books

Want to learn how to research and price High Value books?

Help keep our online sales strong, support your city libraries, and give our online customers great books at great prices!

We have immediate openings for:

- Listing books on Amazon
- Shipping books to Amazon
- Listing and shipping items on eBay.

We have detailed instruction manuals for all our online processes and new volunteers will get one-on-one training by our resident experts. You will handle both vintage and recently published books, it's fascinating to see what comes in and what your listings sell for.

All Amazon listing can be done either at FOPAL or at home.

Join our High Value team and help FOPAL increase its fastest growing business

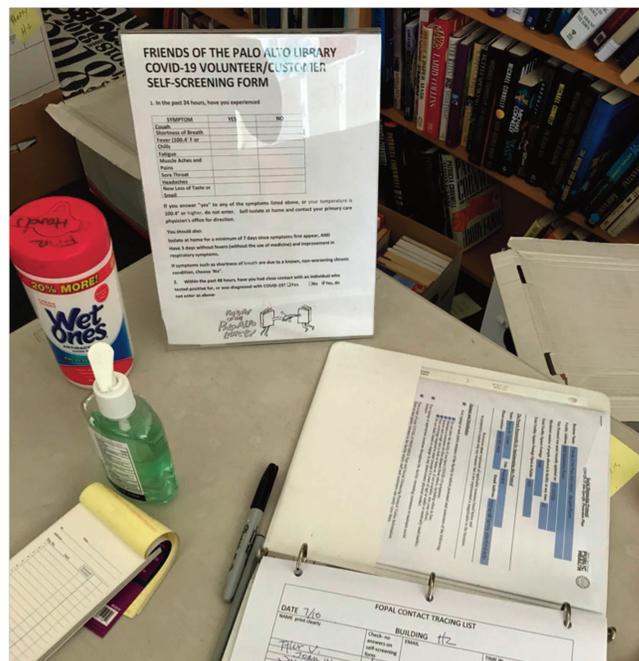
### Main Room Sorters and Section Managers

#### We have immediate openings for:

**Sorters:** Join our sorting teams and be the first to see all our incoming books and sort them by categories.

**Manage a section:** Become a specialist in one of our category areas. You will research and price books and select which you want to sell at our regular monthly books sales. You will also decide which books go to High Value.

Contact Janette, our Director of Volunteers at [Jherceg@FOPAL.org](mailto:Jherceg@FOPAL.org) about any of these opportunities.



*Check-in process for volunteers and customers in FOPAL rooms.*

### Welcoming new volunteers!

- Anika Manjesh - Student sorter
- Claire Degrenand - Student sorter
- Monica Yee - Donation Monitor
- David Young - Section Manager
- Emily Sheng - Section Manager
- Emily Wang - Section Manager
- Katherine Kudriavtsev - Donation Monitor
- Olivia Gee - Section Manager
- Sarah Emberling - Student Sorter
- Shweta Palekar - Web-designer
- Soleil Repple - Donation Monitor
- Varun Varang - Student Sorter
- Victoria Olsen - H2 Children's Room manager
- Valerie Chu - Student Sorter
- Virginia Martin - HV-Lister



Friends of the Palo Alto Library  
PO BOX 41  
Palo Alto, CA 94302-0041

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### Friends of the Palo Alto Library Membership Form

“The Friends of the Palo Alto Library is a tax-exempt organization under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Your donation is tax deductible.”

Join / Renew	1 Year	2 Years
_____ Student/Senior	\$10	\$18
_____ Individual	\$20	\$35
_____ Family	\$30	\$50
_____ Sponsor	\$100	\$175
_____ Lifetime	\$500	
_____ Corporate	\$1000	

\_\_\_\_\_ Name

\_\_\_\_\_ Address

\_\_\_\_\_ City / State / Zip

\_\_\_\_\_ Phone

\_\_\_\_\_ Email

**Matching Funds:** Many of our members and donors can increase their donation to FOPAL if their employers have a Matching Funds program for registered charities. Please contact [info@fopal.org](mailto:info@fopal.org) for more information.

*Make checks payable to:*

Friends of the Palo Alto Library

*Return form to:*

Friends of the Palo Alto Library

P.O. Box 41 Palo Alto, CA 94302

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