

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

### Hal and Judy Harbatkin: Living in the "Best Place in the World"



**TGN: Judy and Hal, tell us about your background.**

**Judy:** I was born and raised in the Bronx, N.Y., attended City College of New York (called the "Harvard of the Poor"). I met Hal in 1961 through mutual friends and we married in June 1963. I obtained BS degree in education and taught for eight years in the same public school which I had attended as a child. I left for the next eleven years to raise our two daughters, both physicians now, and returned to teaching in Paterson, NJ for the next twenty-two years..

**Hal:** Also I was born in the Bronx, N.Y. and attended City College of New York. I was the first to attend college in my family. I obtained a BS in math theory. After two years in the military (post-Korean War), I went to work for New York Life Insurance Co. located in New York City, in their electronics (computer) department as a programmer. This was early on in the computer industry, and subsequently I moved up into management. We built a home and relocated to lived in Parsippany, NJ, to raise our family.

**TGN: When did you come to California?**

**Judy:** When our daughters relocated to the West Coast (one at Menlo Medical Clinic and the other in San Francisco), we decided to follow them in 2007. Hal and I had already retired. We first moved to an apartment at Sharon Oaks on Sharon Park Drive in Menlo Park, living with our younger daughter and her husband until our grandson was born. We then found a third floor unit at Menlo Commons, Building A, liked it, moved in, and have lived here ever since. We consider we have been upgraded to a suite in a hotel - where we never have to check out.

**TGN: What occupies your time?**

**Hal:** Besides time for grandchild-sitting - our grandchildren are now ages 5 and 7 - as a Silver Life Master I play bridge at the Palo Alto Bridge Club about four times a week. I also am a jigsaw puzzle aficionado - doing puzzles of 5,000 or more pieces to occupy some of

my time. Then, I am a director of the Menlo Commons Home Owners Association, where I am now serving my second two year term. As a director, my personal goal is to try to ensure this community remains a beautiful and high quality place in which to live, and I believe that this is achievable this year.

**Judy:** For six years now, I volunteer at Ronald McDonald House, working with parents and children who have life-threatening diseases. I participate in the activities room with the children for about four hours a week. In addition, I have done some substitute teaching at Phillips Brooks School in Menlo Park. Hal and I both participate in the cultural activities that Stanford University has to offer. We are both members of the Bing Concert Hall, and attend its different types of musical and theatrical events. These truly express the diversity of the area we live in. We have attended special events such as the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of "Fiddler on the Roof", and we frequent the Anderson Art Collection on the campus next to the Cantor Arts Center where there are 60 years of art collections. We belong to the Legion of Honor and De Young Museum in San Francisco.

**Hal:** One thing at Bing I have participated in recently was the Summit Puppet Theater from London. I attended a workshop and volunteered to learn how to work with puppets. Fascinating! This puppetry involves three people - one for the puppet's face and left arm, one for the right arm and rear end, and one for the feet.

**TGN: Hal, what do you see is the next major project at Menlo Commons?**

**Hal:** I think the planter box issue will be a real challenge for our community to resolve. This has been a problem for the 7 years we have been here. I look forward to helping with a solution to this.

**TGN: Thanks for your sharing with us, Judy and Hal. Looking forward to a promising 2015 with you both.**



## Barbara Lam: "Menlo Commons - a Wonderful Group of People at a Wonderful Facility"



**TGN: Barbara, when did you arrive at Menlo Commons?**

**Barbara:** I and my husband Paul moved here last summer. We had been living in our home in West Menlo Park when we decided on moving to this community.

**TGN: Where are you originally from?**

**Barbara:** I was born at Hoover Hospital here in Palo Alto. When I was 10 years old, my parents moved to Hawaii where I lived for 40 years. I earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Hawaii after spending a year in Australia visiting family, going to school, and tramping across the country in search of great surfing beaches! I later obtained a master of science with honors from the University of Plymouth in England. I am now a retired teacher of the visual arts for grades K-12, and middle school science.

**TGN: How about Paul?**

**Barbara:** Paul was born in Warsaw, Poland, attended a Quaker school in Philadelphia, and graduated from Cornell University. He obtained his masters in sculpture at Penn State. Early in his working life, Paul taught mathematics at a boarding school and ran the farm program; later he pursued architecture and went on to design and build houses as a general contractor.

**TGN: When did you and Paul meet?**

**Barbara:** We met at a summer camp in the Adirondack Mountains in New York in the mid-1980's. I had taken my children to camp, where I worked in the pottery studios and on the waterfront. Paul was there for the same reasons. We are both clay artists: his work more sculptural and mine "wheel-thrown". Years later when the children had all grown and we were singles, Paul invited me to work with him on the development of a small art center nearby to that summer camp. We worked together as co-directors for some years and later were married.

**TGN: Tell us about your families.**

**Barbara:** I have been blessed with two daughters and a son and now with four grandchildren. Paul has a daughter, son, and a granddaughter. My children moving out West encouraged our move to California. One of my daughters is in Redwood City and the other San Francisco. Helping take care of the grandchildren is a big part of my life now - they are ages 3 to 7.

**TGN: Where is Paul right now?**

**Barbara:** We still own and manage the art center complex in New York, and we both love the mountains and seasons there. Paul spends much of his time in the studio, and I return every year for two plus months. Paul's family is largely on the east coast where his mother is thriving at age 103 and living independently, so Paul visits as much as possible

these days.

**TGN: What occupies your time now?**

**Barbara:** I now serve as a director on the Menlo Commons HOA Board. I volunteer with Chamber Music San Francisco and Music@Menlo. Both Paul and I like square and contra-dancing. And we hike, walk, cycle, and cross-country ski. I am a masters swimmer. We enjoy to travel, especially in Europe. I am an avid reader of both fiction and non-fiction. And of course, I am the "nanny" for my grandchildren.

**TGN: Tell us about your responsibilities as director of Menlo Commons.**

**Barbara:** I am honored to have been elected a director of the Board It is a difficult and complex job. I am vice-president of the Board this year. I have undertaken to set up a resource center for our residents - both physically in the Commons room, and on-line. I intend to work with the current website and/or develop a new one to make it more accessible and interactive. I see making available and accessible to all residents pertinent and current information taking place in the larger community: events, classes, train & bus routes, etc. as well as to have more efficient ways to communicate within our own community. I plan to get the project rolling by this summer after I do some further research.

**TGN: Thanks for letting us get acquainted with you, Barbara. Good luck in your future on the Board at Menlo Commons.**



**The Good Neighbor** is written and published monthly for residents of Menlo Commons by Jim Palmer, E-303, [jdpalmerjr@aol.com](mailto:jdpalmerjr@aol.com).