

## MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

### Lee Strauss: "I Took One Look at This Place and Bought It"



**TGN:** Lee, when did you move to Menlo Commons?

**Lee:** I took one look at this place in March 2012 and bought it. In July 2012 I moved in. I had been living in Petaluma. Two of my three children live in this area which motivated me to make the move. I am so glad I did!

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

**Lee:** I was born and raised in the Bronx, New York City, during the Depression. In those days as a child it was a special treat to have two pennies with which to buy candy. I received my college education at Hunter College in New York City. It was an all-woman college at first. Later that year they began to enroll returning vets from World War II. That's where I met my husband "to be". He was a classmate studying pre-medicine. He went on to Bellevue Medical School in New York. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in education at Hunter College and then an M.S. degree in Nutrition at NYU. We married the day after graduation and moved to San Francisco where I was hired as head dietitian at Mary's Help Hospital. I was also assigned to teach nutrition to Skidmore College students in their senior year. Two years later my husband was hired at Gorgas Hospital in the Panama Canal Zone. While there, I was hired as a teacher for the armed forces children and local Panamanian children. As a doctor's wife, we were privileged to be invited by the captain of the USS Coral Sea to tour his ship. One year later we moved back to San Francisco where my husband received his second year of residency at SF General Hospital. As a result of my husband serving in Panama, he was invited to enroll at the London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene. We made wonderful friends there. At the end of that year we returned to California and my husband started his private practice in Mill Valley. We and our three children lived in San Rafael.

**TGN:** Then what did you do?

**Lee:** Back in Marin County I started a series of volunteer jobs. I became president of the women's auxiliary at Marin General Hospital.

I helped raise \$50,000 to purchase a small linear accelerator for the hospital. I chaired the committee and worked on fund raising. That's where I met Sally Stanford, an unusual lady who helped attract some money. The final fund raising dinner featured Edgar Bergen, Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd appearing as M.C. I started working with the Red Cross as a volunteer and ultimately became assistant director in San Rafael. Then I was recruited for the Grand Jury and served as chair of the health and welfare committee. Subsequently I established the Marin County Emergency Medical Department. I then moved to the political arena and served as campaign manager for a candidate running for county supervisor against Barbara Boxer. Barbara won after a tough campaign - it was the beginning of her political career. During this period we took up bicycling in Europe. We traveled seven times by bicycle in France, Germany, Switzerland, etc. - and we took our bicycles with us on the plane. We traveled usually before Memorial Day or after Labor Day.

**TGN:** After that, did you work?

**Lee:** Yes, I was hired as a telemarketing supervisor in San Francisco for "The Sharper Image". The 57 employees handled the phone marketing for the expensive electronic gadgets and "big boy toys". In the later part of the 80's, with a partner, we established the San Rafael Brewing Company. I handled the business and government relations end while my partner did the smoozing. I was simultaneously a realtor, which was my ideal working environment. The real estate career lasted 34 years. I was the only beer baroness west of the Rockies. That was very successful. We sold beer in large quantities to Costco. I went to beer festivals to market the product. That lasted for 10 years before I sold out. I also ventured into the nonprofit world with Rebuilding Together. I did fund raising for them.

**TGN:** What caused you to move here?

**Lee:** My children encouraged me to move closer to them.. I have one daughter in Palo Alto who is a physical therapist. She has two children. My only son lives in Santa Clara with his family and is a software engineer with Roku. He and his wife have two children. My youngest daughter lives in Boulder, Colorado. She is self-employed in her own home-schooling for challenged children. When I first moved to Palo Alto I rented an apartment in midtown. I looked around and found Menlo Commons. I fell in love with it and began the purchase the minute I saw it. I share my condo with my 21 year old best friend, "J-J", who in his youth was a certified therapy dog. My life now revolves around volunteerism. I volunteer one day a week at Stanford Hospital in the Oncology Department, being a friend to patients there - helping them through the difficulties of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. I do anything I can to make them happy and to laugh. I own and run my own business "Floral Fantasies". I create floral designs using dried flowers for picture or other artistic displays.

**TGN:** Thanks, Lee, for sharing with us about your remarkable life.



# Anne Bergman: "I Think This is a Lovely Place"



**TGN: Anne, what is your occupation?**

**Anne:** I have a doctorate in public health. I am presently in private practice as a social worker, helping people with psychiatric problems. I specialize in working with child custody issues, helping parents make good custody plans for their children. Previously, for 10 years I was Director of Social Work at the Children's Hospital at Stanford. After that I worked in the behavioral medicine unit at Stanford Hospital for a couple years - that combined the medical and psychiatric aspects of my practice. I earned my masters degree in public health at the University of Illinois, and my doctorate at UC Berkeley.

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

**Anne:** I was born in New York state. My father had immigrated to the U.S. from Austria, and was a college professor. I have a twin sister, who now lives in Santa Cruz, and an older sister who lives in Maine. We are very close and try to get together often. I was married and have two sons. One is a physicist who works with the Department of Energy and is now detailed to the White House. He has recently taken me on a tour there. The other is an economist at the University of Columbia. I don't have any grandchildren yet. I think what I do with my children is visit them, and clean their houses. I also have a niece with her son - my great-nephew. He is 1 1/2 years old and comes here to swim. They live in the College Terrace area.

**TGN: When did you come to Menlo Commons?**

**Anne:** I had lived in my Menlo Park residence since my divorce in 1996. One day I received an offer to sell it at a price I couldn't refuse. I knew someone who lived at Menlo Commons. When I saw it I liked it, and moved here in 2013. I think it is a lovely place. I particularly love the grounds.

**TGN: What do you do for fun?**

**Anne:** I hike and walk a lot. I enjoy hiking in Wunderlich Park, Arastradero Park, and am planning to go to Yosemite soon. I also love to cook, and was crushed to find that Menlo Commons doesn't have gas stoves! I bike, swim, climb, and do a lot of reading. I like both fiction and nonfiction, including biographies. I have occasionally

I thought that it would nice to have a book club here at the Commons. I have done reviews of books for the Palo Alto Weekly, particularly cook books. I also like to travel - to Hawaii and to Europe and Asia, where I can visit friends. However, Menlo Commons is a great place to come home to - we are blessed!

**TGN: Tell us some things you would like to do.**

**Anne:** I would like to retire soon, so I can devote more time to things such as traveling and hiking and my kids. I have gone trekking in Nepal, and am very sad to hear about the recent earthquake. It is a very poor county with no good infrastructure and an ineffective government. I am speaking with friends to find a good charity to which to contribute for Nepal.

**TGN: What improvements would you like to see at Menlo Commons?**

**Anne:** I think Menlo Commons should be made ADA compliant - to help people with disabilities, there should be ramps in addition to stairs and elevators. I also would like to see the back staircase in Building E where I live extended to the garage so I do not have to walk all the way down the hall from my unit to the elevator and then all the way to the other side of the garage to get in my car. I realize it is probably grandfathered in as far as the ADA law is concerned, since it was built in the 1970s. Nevertheless, with elderly and disabled people living here that should be given attention. I understand that it would cost a significant amount of money, and there may be other needs to be addressed. I have not lived in a communal setting since college, and am still working, so I am looking forward to when I have the time to meet more people

**TGN: Thank you Anne, for spending time with us.**

Encased in a red binder, all back issues of **The Good Neighbor** are now available for you to read in the Menlo Commons Room.

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