

# Diablo Honors.....

## Penny Adams

By Maryann Cella

Diablo's original character as a community of summer homes for residents of Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco lives on at Tilepile, 2043 Calle Los Callados, the beautiful French Provencal home and grounds of Penny Hearn Adams.

In the colder months, Penny resides in Berkeley, but warmer weather finds her enjoying the country life at the home she first visited at age 5 months, in the 1940's. At that time, Tilepile was owned by Penny's grandparents, Fred and Alice Thomas, who built it in 1927 from a design by Penny's great-uncle, noted Berkeley architect John Hudson Thomas. Later, the house passed to Penny's mother, Beth Thomas Hearn, and finally to Penny and her late husband, Jim Adams. Currently, Tilepile is the last Diablo home owned by the same family and Penny's intent is that it will always be thus.



*Tilepile following a rare snow in Diablo*



*Fred and Alice Thomas,  
Penny's grandparents*

Penny has many ties to the Bay Area. Born during World War Two at Letterman Hospital in San Francisco's Presidio, Penny soon moved with her family to the home where she currently resides in Berkeley. After UC Berkeley awarded Penny her education degree, she taught elementary school in Berkeley and Concord and tutored students for several years when she lived in New Hampshire.

Penny has happy memories of her idyllic childhood summers in Diablo. Back in those days fences and gates were few and far between and her neighbor Ralphie Phillips would peer in their screen door in the morning to see if Penny was ready to come out to play. Penny saved up \$26 to buy a blue Schwinn fat tire bicycle, which was fun to ride around the flats of Diablo with the gang, but she recalls laughingly that the gearless, heavy ride was not much use in getting her up the steep hill to the Club to go swimming, another favorite pastime.

In those days the kids all took swimming lessons early in the morning at the cold Club pool. Penny especially loved diving and recalls fondly the Club's annual 4<sup>th</sup> of July swimming and diving contests where she was awarded diving trophies which she donated to the Club some years ago. Sometimes Penny and her family would motor up to the Club's lake at the end of Alameda Diablo to take out a boat. As the lake was rather dark and deep (the dam was much higher then), Penny preferred boating to swimming and diving there. Jack LaLanne, the nationally-known TV exercise show host and pioneer fitness guru, was a frequent visitor to the lake. Apparently, he enjoyed displaying his toned physique to everyone there---he was quite a show-off!

On lazy summer evenings, Penny, her brother, Mike, and their friends would sometimes ride around in a hay wagon that was stored on upper Alameda Diablo. Once per summer, the Hearn's would motor up to Rock City for a picnic with several other Diablo families.

A particularly memorable event was the annual Club Easter egg hunt on the first fairway. A mother named Benjy Hendricks who resided on Clubhouse Road used to buy baby chicks and ducks and release them for the kids to catch. It was definitely quite a sight as the kids and fowl darted around the grass!



**1947 Hayride**

After scores of years experiencing all Diablo has to offer, Penny's favorite thing is being able to successfully grow fruits and vegetables on her extensive grounds of nearly three acres.

Many years ago, Penny planted 40 olive trees which now produce as much as 900 lbs. of olives---her October 2019 harvest, to which she added 50 lbs. picked from a Club olive tree. She transports the olives to Sonoma for pressing and oil bottling. Not surprisingly, achieving such a harvest requires a lot of knowledge which Penny has acquired through education and experience. She is happy to advise anyone that has olive trees or is considering them.



**Penny with a tortoise friend in the Galapagos**

Another of Penny's favorite Diablo activities is hiking. Her favorite hike is a loop from her house, through the gate at the end of Calle Los Callados to Mt. Diablo Scenic, then up to the Mt. Diablo State Park entrance and the trail immediately to the left that connects to the Dan Cook Trail, then Diablo Lakes Lane, Alameda Diablo, and back to Tilepile. Along the trail just before the bridge over Dan Cook Creek, there is a really unusual tree that Penny calls the "Alphabet Tree" because its bark actually spells out letters. Not surprising that a former elementary school teacher would notice that!

Several Diablo residents that have helped make happy Penny's lifetime in Diablo include her late husband, Jim, whom Penny married in 1986, and who was a founder and first chairperson of DMAC; Maryann Cella, with whom Penny has engaged in numerous civic betterment activities over the years; and Maryam Mehran, longtime Diablo resident whom Penny has known since Penny was a small child.

Diablo residents are incredibly fortunate to have Penny Adams as our neighbor and friend. May she have many more happy years here!