

Karl Baldwin, Pacifica's First City Manager

Written by Jean Bartlett, July, 2017
(A Pacifica Historical Society Project)



On Sunday, June 25, 2017, Karl Baldwin was recognized by California Congresswoman Jackie Speier, State Assembly Member Kevin Mullin and State Senator Jerry Hill for his extraordinary achievements in leadership as the City of Pacifica's First City Manager. Karl and his wife Eileen, married 66 years, were surrounded by members of the community, which included members of the Pacifica Historical Society, and celebrated for being a part of Pacifica since its incorporation on November 22, 1957. On Tuesday, July 11, 2017, Karl was additionally recognized by the City of Pacifica. Presented with a Proclamation by Mayor Pro Tem John Keener and Councilmember Sue Digre, Karl was praised for a long list of accomplishments during his nine-year term as city manager, which included: playing a key role in establishing the city government in its earliest days; enduring the first trials and tribulations of the community as they became Pacifica; and through it all, winning the continued respect, admiration and affection of civic leaders, fellow workers and area residents. Both Karl and Eileen were recognized by the City of Pacifica, for the couple's devotion to Pacifica and to the Pacifica Historical Society through their donation of countless hours and tireless fundraising efforts towards the restoration of the Little Brown Church. Both

celebrations were, however, bittersweet. At the end of July, the couple left their longtime Pedro Point home and moved to Washington State.

Born on August 12, 1921, Karl A. Baldwin is the son of Karl B. Baldwin and Marguerite (Dunway) Baldwin. His father was from Rhode Island and his mother was from Illinois. His dad was a district manager with Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company and when he retired, after 30 years with PACTEL, he did so as Pacific Coast Assistant Vice President. Karl was born in San Francisco.

"Though at what hospital, I don't know," Karl laughed. "Other than the hospital is gone now."

Karl's younger brother, by two years, is Warren Baldwin. It was Warren's birthday the day Karl and I sat down for a chat, July 11. "My brother lives in Idaho now. I just talked to him this morning to say, 'Happy Birthday.'"

"When I was a kid, we lived for a short time in Berkeley and then my dad had a house built in Oakland, near San Leandro. We moved there about 1928. I went to elementary school in Oakland, Stonehurst

Elementary, as well as junior high school, Elmhurst Junior High. I went to San Leandro High School until we moved. Then I went to Berkeley High School where I graduated."



Contributed photo

Karl, 1939, high school graduation

Following high school, Karl went to Stockton Junior College. After he graduated, he headed to College of the Pacific in Stockton (now University of the Pacific). Initially he had planned on being a doctor, inspired by the firemen he met as a kid when the family lived across the street from a Berkeley Fire Department branch. But by the time he entered his third year of college, he had shifted his major from medical to political science. He had decided he wanted to serve in some sort of capacity in municipal administration. He also went into the Naval Reserve at the College of the Pacific and was a Lieutenant Junior Grade when he entered the Second World War in 1943.

"I served from 1943 to 1947," Karl said, "A little more than three years. I was given, along with others, a choice of several locations to serve and I chose the Naval Station in Samoa."

The assistant port director at Pago Pago, Karl also served as harbor pilot for two years. Pago Pago, the capital of American Samoa, is a port city on the island of Tutuila. During the War, Tutuila became the largest jungle training center in the South Pacific.

"It was interesting duty. As harbor pilot, when a ship is slated to come in, you go out and meet the ship, climb up the side, go to the bridge and take over the ship. It is your responsibility as pilot to give orders to the wheel and to the engines. That's true for the merchant ships. As to a Navy ship, it's up to the captain of the ship. He can retain piloting and take his own ship in if he knows the port, or he can turn it over to the harbor pilot. In Pago Pago, we had to turn all the ships around because we had typhoons and you have to be able to take ships out. When it was time for the ship to leave, you go out with the ship and then go back in the pilot's boat.

The National Park Services reports that when the Second World War began, the Samoa islands were an essential link in the chain of communications between the United States, Australia, and New Zealand. A sea lane also ran through Fiji. A Marine air-ground tax force of 5,600 officers and enlisted men arrived on January 20, 1942 to protect the island of Tutuila. This came right after a Japanese submarine shelled the Naval Station on the island unsuccessfully on January 11, 1942. There would be no more attacks on American Samoa throughout the War.

"When I came home, I headed to the University of California, Berkeley, for some post graduate work. I got all of my stuff for a master's degree out of the way, and was starting to write my thesis, when I was offered a job with an outfit called Public Administration Service. At the time they were working on an administrative study project on the eight campuses at the University. I knew this was a good opportunity because I knew it was a good way into city administration."

The work he did for the Public Administration Service included: undertaking a legislative study at the university; holding office as president of the Public Administration Association at the university; conducting a survey into metropolitan government consolidation in the Bay Area, and examining joint problems and solutions within the various cities. He also went on assignment to San Mateo, CA, to compile the annual statistic report for the city. He stayed with the PAS for two years, and in the last few

months of that time, he was appointed to the National Public Administration Service, which specialized in government analyses. As such he did survey work at UC Berkeley, for the state of Illinois, the cities of Denver and Newport News, as well as the administrative organization of the University of Texas. While Karl was conducting a survey for the City of Baltimore, he flew back to the Bay Area to interview for a job with the City of San Mateo. On August 1, 1949, Karl began his first day on the job as the assistant to San Mateo City Manager Arthur B. Sullivan. Karl stayed with the City of San Mateo until April of 1953, when he left to begin his new job as first Town Manager of Los Gatos.

"There were many interesting things I did when I worked in San Mateo, but the most interesting thing that happened in San Mateo was I met Eileen Cousins. Eileen is from Kent County in England and she was working here in California. Her plan was to go home when she was ready, and she always kept enough money for the trip home!"

The couple met on a badminton court at San Mateo Junior College, each was there playing badminton with a friend. They met again at a mutual friend's dinner party.

"Not long after, I asked her out on a date," Karl chuckled. "I guess you might say we liked each other because about six months later, on July 29, 1951, we married at my family's home in Menlo Park. My folks had built their home in Menlo Park when I was going to the University of the Pacific."

"My family did not come out for the wedding," Eileen said. "It was too expensive. They came out later and visited. My family liked Karl."

The couple lived at 709 Laurel Avenue, near San Mateo's Central Park. In 1953 they moved to Los Gatos, 227 Loma Alta Avenue.

"Los Gatos was very small back then, less than 10,000 people. Now it's a little over 30,000. Of course the town had incorporated long before I got there (1887). But I was hired to come up with budgets and provide staff support, via interviews and hirings, and so forth. While Eileen and I were living in Los Gatos, we joined Foster Parents Plan International. They gave you the name of some child in the world and you helped the family and the child with a monthly donation and the child would correspond with you. When we left Los Gatos and came to Pacifica, we were told the son we had fostered had reached the end of the eligibility period and was no long part of the program. Keep this story in mind for later in my story!"

Following Pacifica's incorporation in November of 1957, Pacifica's first city council – Mayor Jean Fassler, and Councilmen George Mason, Don Miller, Gerry Schumacher and Harold Feyge – hired a firm to find candidates to interview for the job of city manager.



PHS file photo

Pacifica's newly elected City Council: Back row, l to r: Councilmember-elect Don Miller, Councilmember-elect Gerry Schumacher, Councilmember-elect George Mason, Joe Fassler and Coastside Tribune publisher Lowell Blankfort. Front row, l to r: Marty Miller, Mayor-elect Jean Fassler, Connie Mason and Coastside Tribune co-publisher Alice Blankfort. (Not pictured Councilmember-elect Harold Feyge.)

"The firm sent Jane Hicks to work as acting city manager. She was a very nice person and very smart. I interviewed with her and interviewed with the City Council." Karl got the job. His starting salary was \$10,000 a year.

"It wasn't big money, but it was okay. It was livable. Pacifica was a poor city and paying poor wages," Karl recalled.

"In those days, our house payment was \$75 a month," Eileen said. "We could afford that."

"It was such an interesting time," Karl said of Pacifica in earliest days, "so much had to be brought together so we could function as a city. Everything was operating as districts. We had a lighting district, a fire district, a sanitation district and so forth. I had a bit of municipal experience in both San Mateo and Los Gatos, but the Council came in without municipal experience. However, they picked it up pretty quickly and Mayor Jean Fassler was exceptional at working well with others and taking charge. This new city was lucky to have her. We had about 17,000 living here at the time and I remember putting together our first city budget. It was at most seven pages, one page for each Councilmember and an extra page or two for me.

"I worked in what was then City Hall. The building was donated to the city by Ray T. Higgins. It was just a tiny little place: two rooms, a bathroom and front steps, and that was it. It was located then across the street from the back of the Pacific Manor firehouse. Now it is a private residence, 184 Paloma Avenue in

Sharp Park. My secretary Claire Rawlings and I were the only ones in the building. Besides ourselves we had a couple of desks, a typewriter, a file cabinet and a mimeograph machine, and it was crowded. It wasn't big enough to hold City Council so we held our initial meetings in Pacific Manor School.

"Those meetings were from the start, very productive, and we knew the first thing we had to do was get some money. Right off the bat, the Council adopted the Business Ordinance. That was the first source of revenue otherwise you couldn't even pay salaries. That was business license taxes. Shortly after that, other sources of revenue began to come in, property taxes and so forth. We started out from scratch with very little. And we didn't stay in that small building for very long.



PHS file photo

Karl Baldwin, Pacifica's first city manager, circa 1958.

"Less than a year later, Ray Higgins gave the City the old San Pedro School House at 170 Santa Maria Avenue in Sharp Park. The City paid nothing for it. Ray was primarily a realtor. He owned most of Sharp Park. At one point he said to me, 'When I look out over Sharp Park, I own almost all of it.' And he did. Over time, he dispensed a lot of his ownership.

"One of the first jobs I had was to get down to this new city hall with a local contractor. The place had to be nearly rebuilt so that it was workable. We did everything, including: put in new ceilings, new flooring, new windows and new lavatories. The price was \$10,000 and that was it. That's our City Hall to this day and it is largely the same.

"There was so much going on. As I came in, they had just set up the new Parks, Beaches and Recreation Commission. So we had to get a new director of PB&R. A fellow by the name of Eldred Lokker was our first director and he did a great job."

Eldred was one of 17 applicants and he was interviewed by a committee that included: Karl, Pacifica recreation commissioners Jane Vincent, Grace McCarthy and Fred Ballew, and the recreation director of the City of San Mateo, Matthew Thiltgen.

"We set up our own building department and public works department. The fire department was already organized, that was the fire district, and we simply took over the fire district. We were served by the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office for a year after incorporation because we weren't ready to take the first move. Then the City Council decided we were going to have a Police Department. I made a study at the time to assess whether it was fiscally feasible to do that and concluded that we could not only support it but we could get much more concentrated service. And we did it. To set up the department, I went to Tracy and got the Police Chief to work down here, Neil Tremaine. Tracy is an older city and he was ready to make a move.

"His salary was \$650 per month. Neil was right down the line with police services. He was very traditional and he was reliable; a straight shooter."

In April of 1959, the City of Pacifica announced it was looking to hire patrolmen in the *San Mateo Times*. More than 600 applications arrived. From those responses, Karl took 150 applicants to Junipero Serra High School in San Mateo to see if they could pass the physical. The City of Pacifica's website notes that physical agility process consisted of: "carrying a 100-pound sack of cement up and down stairs, a sprint of 140 yards, a running broad jump, pull-ups, vaulting over 3- and 5-foot high bars and swimming the length of a pool and back." There was additionally a standard state written exam. On July 17, 1959, City Council swore in nine police officers. Two dispatchers were also brought on board.

"We set the Police Department up on the second floor of the City Hall where the City Manager is now behind the counter at the far end. We had three policemen per shift and three patrol cars, 1959 Chevrolets. That started it off. I remember the night when we finally said, 'We have a police department. We'll put it in operation.' Neil Tremaine said, 'Okay at midnight on July 1, 1959, we'll have a change of the guard.' The County sheriffs all came to City Hall and our new policemen came. The policemen went out in their patrol cars and I went home and I was going home, one of the police officers had stopped a traffic violator. I was very proud that our department was in operation."

One thing for certain, Karl was a frequent read in both the local and the county papers. The following is just one of numerous clips.

San Mateo County Times, February 18, 1960

Pacifica to Try Again on Bonds

PACIFICA — City councilmen moved rapidly Monday to resubmit a bond issue to finance sewage treatment facilities, defeated by a small majority last Tuesday, to voters when they ordered immediate circulation of petitions asking a new election.

Trustees of the North Coast County Water district, in a special meeting to canvass result of last week's election, divided on whether a new water bond issue should be submitted to voters along with city bonds or should be held over until the June primary election.

Two water district trustees indicated that they felt bonds should be resubmitted to voters along with the municipal sewage bonds, while two trustees expressed the opinion that the bonds should be held up until June. Due to the recent resignation of Trustee Gene Ottonello, there are now only four members on the water board.

It was not determined by the water board whether the \$1,600,000 amount of previous bonds will have to be raised due to increased construction costs. Engineers were instructed to submit a report at the board's next regular

meeting next Tuesday, at which the date of a new bond election will be selected.

City councilmen, meanwhile, agreed the amount of sewer system improvement bonds will have to be increased 9.9 per cent to \$1,305,000 to meet increased construction costs and because the city may not be able to secure new federal aid for the project.

City Manager Karl A. Baldwin was instructed to apply for a new \$250,000 federal grant, which, if approved, would mean that the actual amount of bonds that would be sold would be lowered to \$1,055,000.

Total cost of needed improvements, Baldwin reported is \$1,385,000. The city is contributing \$60,000.

As petitions calling for a new election must be filed by March 2 if the bond election is to be placed on the ballot of the April of a special citizens' committee agreed to circulate petitions immediately. The council last night completed an agreement with the Pedro Valley Recreation association for joint financing for lights for night baseball at White Field.

By the time Pacifica's Police Department was up and running and the bond issue to finance sewage treatment facilities was decided, Karl and Eileen bought the home they still live in now, the last home on the right on Olympian Way in Pacifica's hillside neighborhood of Pedro Point.

"We had never been to Pacifica before Karl was hired," Eileen said. "It was different back then. It was just beginning. The artichoke fields were gone from Linda Mar by the time we came and there was a great deal of building going on back in the valley. We rented in Vallemar for a couple of years."

"When we found our house on Olympian it was in terrible shape," Karl said. "We decided the first go-round we didn't want it."

"The house was built in the mid-1940s and by the time we looked at it, it was really filthy and nothing worked," Eileen said. "It was horrible inside. I know I sound like I am exaggerating but we just thought, well, we like the view but we can't possibly live here. We turned it down and made plans to build down the street. But six months later we looked at it again. No one had bought it. We talked to the architect who built the bowling alley, Bob Sherman. We asked him to look at it and tell us if he could do something with it. It was really a small place – one bedroom, a porch, one bath, a kitchen and a living room. He told us it was well-built and he could do something with it and he created a plan, which took us a number of years to complete, but we moved in, in 1960, and it is the house we are living in now."

They extended the house, added a downstairs and planted trees which now rise up two stories.

"We love our view," Karl noted. "We are 240 feet above the ocean."

By the time they moved in, their son Bruce was heading towards 4. "We adopted our son Bruce. He was born in San Francisco, August of 1956," Eileen said. "And in 1960, we adopted our daughter Liz. It was very busy times in Pacifica in these early days and Karl was often at meetings. But I didn't go to any of those meetings. I didn't want to rely on caregivers and babysitters when we had kids. I think the only person who occasionally came up to watch the kids when they were little was Andrea Drake, because we knew her, and we were such good friends with her folks, Bill and Peggy Drake. "

Bill Drake was the owner, publisher and editor of the *Pacifica Tribune* from 1959 until 1989. The local paper was originally the *Coastside Chronicles*. When Bill Drake bought it, he changed the name to reflect the city it served.

"I worked with Bill a lot," Karl said. "He followed Lowell Blankfort, who was the publisher of the paper when we first moved here. The *Pacifica Tribune* was an excellent paper and Bill was a great editor and writer. He was everywhere, always with his notebook out and always good-natured. He never lost his sense of humor and he was great to work with. He was a straight shooter. He reported things as they were and that made a big difference.

"Gradually we built up our city staff and I hired Mel Davis as assistant city manager. He was excellent at his job and stayed here for five years before Sebastopol discovered him and hired him as their city manager. I believe he was city manager there for about 30 years and he was extremely well liked.

"Often people ask me what were Pacificans like back then. How did things go at City Council meetings? Pacificans have always been an interesting lot and an independent group, very outspoken and lively, just like now. They are a community that cares. And of course as to the City Manager, he or she has to do what the City Council decrees has to be done. He or she is selected, hired and fired by the Council depending on the job that person does.

"How has the City changed since we first arrived? Shortly after incorporation, the State of California brought the freeway to Pacifica and that made a huge difference. Prior to that, if you wanted to go north to San Francisco, you took the Hog Ranch Road, a horrible road along the coast. (The road twisted around ranches and coastside farms and was famous for its horrific turns often hidden by equally horrific fog.) The new, easier to maneuver highway governed a lot of what we did and were able to do."

"Pacifica wasn't well known then," Eileen said. "One day we took a friend of ours to Marin. She was looking for a place to rent. We went into a real estate office and everything was beige, including the woman who worked there. The realtor asked our friend, 'Where are you from?' And she said, 'Pacifica.' And the realtor said, 'Ah, Pacifica,' letting us know immediately that she didn't like it at all. People thought Pacifica was behind the times. But it never has been. Maybe that was just a rumor that Pacificans spread to limit the amount of people that moved here."



Jean Bartlett photo

Pacifica's first mayor Jean Fassler and first city manager Karl Baldwin meet at the newly renovated (by the Pacifica Historical Society) Pacifica Coastside Museum at the Little Brown Church, September of 2015.

"While the population has more than doubled since we first moved here – it's better than 40,000 now – one of things we did in the city's earliest days was ask, 'How big can Pacifica go?'" Karl said. "We projected if we go up on Sweeney Ridge and build wherever it is buildable, we could go up to 85,000 or 90,000 people. Now we weren't pushing for that, we just said it was possible. One of the things that happened while we were living overseas is that Pacificans said, 'We are going to limit our growth. We are not going to allow Sweeney Ridge to be developed.' What this means is that Pacifica will probably top off, at most, at 45,000. To me, this is again about the people of Pacifica, a vocal, extremely caring group of individuals willing to fight for the city they want."

In 1967, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was looking for individuals with experience in municipal local government to work as public administration advisors and Karl decided to accept a post.

The USAID was created by President John F. Kennedy on November 3, 1961 by Executive Order. Still very much in operation today, www.usaid.gov, "USAID carries out U.S. foreign policy by promoting broad-scale human progress at the same time it expands stable, free societies, creates markets and trade partners for the United States, and fosters good will abroad." For the members and representatives of the USAID, the way to achieve these goals includes: promoting broadly shared economic prosperity; strengthening democracy and good governance; advancing food security and agriculture; improving environmental sustainability; and furthering education.



"I was sent to Vietnam in 1967," Karl said. "I went to Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City now. My job was working with the Vietnamese government at different levels. I worked with provincial governors, provincial staffs, planning staffs and so forth. Vietnam was four different military zones then. I was right in the middle of it. I was in Bien Hoa and I was working with other provinces right around Saigon. We were surrounded by the war." (Bien Hoa is about 30 kilometers, close to 19 miles, northeast of Ho Chi Minh City.)

"Now, why did our government send me to Vietnam during the War? The idea was to build up village government, to make the people stronger so they could hold local elections, and to help them to strengthen their ability to build infrastructure and to be able to respond when they were under attack.

"Something truly amazing happened in Vietnam. I was in Bien Hoa, assigned to the Third Corps, when I found out that the child Eileen and I had

fostered through Foster Parents Plan International when we were living in Los Gatos, who had aged out of the program by the time we moved to Pacifica, well, he lived just eight kilometers from where I was set up. Eileen came over a couple of times for a visit and we got to know him and his family. It was a wonderful and I would have said impossible if it hadn't really happened."

Eileen and the children stayed behind in Pacifica the first year of Karl's overseas job.

"The kids went to Alma Heights Christian Elementary School here in town," Eileen said. "Before we left Pacifica, I got rid of just about everything in our house and rented our place to the San Mateo County librarian, a very nice person. Bruce was 10 when we left and Liz was 7. We did not stay with Karl in Vietnam. Children were not allowed to stay in Vietnam. Bruce, Liz and I went to Bangkok, Thailand, which wasn't too far away. We saw Karl about every five or six weeks on the weekend. I did go to Saigon a couple of times. I went shopping. Somehow that was not unusual at all. I walked around on my own. Saigon is a lovely city and it has a strong, French influence."

"I used to travel to various provinces with a government delegate," Karl said. "We went by plane, by chopper, by bus or car to get into these provinces. And of course in Vietnam, what I did was governed by what was going on. For instance, at one point the place that I lived in in Bien Hoa, the VC (Viet Cong) went through the front gates of the military compound and there was a battle going and the village surrounding us was destroyed but our residence escaped it. Why I don't know. I was living in an apartment building with a bunch of other American staff people in the Third Corps Military Zone, a mix of military and civilian. We had our own defense of the building set up if people tried to get into the building. But our building was never attacked. The Viet Cong attacked all of our provincial headquarters and it took days to get people back to where they belonged. When they started the recovery effort, I used to take carloads of people in and out of Saigon to get them out to their provinces and back to the job."

"At this point, Eileen and our kids had moved to Malaysia, which was a 2-hour plane flight from Vietnam. Their first year overseas they lived in Bangkok and the kids went to International School. But at that time, there were a lot of drugs at the International School. Eileen knew a teacher who taught English in Thailand, and she recommended an International School in Malaysia, Penang specifically. I wrote my superiors that we wanted to make this change and they were thinking it over. They didn't say 'no' but they had doubts. Finally, Eileen and I and the kids made the drive to Penang."

"It was a long drive but a nice drive," Eileen said. "I suppose if you had good legs, you could walk it! We had a cat with us and when we got to Penang, they wouldn't let us in because we didn't have the proper papers for the cat and Liz started crying. And they said, 'Oh, I think you've got the right papers after all.' And in we went."

"Once we got there, my superiors said, 'You have not been given permission but you are obviously there so you might as well stay,' Karl laughed. "So Eileen and the kids stayed and I went back to Vietnam."

"Eileen and the kids were in Malaysia for five years, though they moved from Penang up to the tea country, the Cameron Islands. Then we all went to the Philippines. When we were in the Philippines we all lived together except that I was in the province all the time during the week, but I was home every weekend. We began in Manila and then we went up into the high country, to Baguio.

"Then we went to Indonesia. That was the only place where we learned the language a little. Vietnam has a tonal language, so you not only have to have the correct word but the tone. You've got to be oriented in that direction and I am not. Indonesia was much easier, as far as I was concerned, for learning the language."

"Now all along we came home every two years and stayed in the U.S. on home leave for 30 days," Eileen noted. "That was required and of course we rather enjoyed it. We stayed with Bill and Peggy Drake in Pacifica, because our home was rented out. It was lovely staying with them."

"I retired at post, in Indonesia, and we came back to Pacifica in 1982," Karl said. "By this point in time, Bruce, who had finished up high school in the Philippines, had headed back to the States for college and had also gotten married. Liz was in college in Northern California." (The couple lost their son Bruce to cancer in 1995. He was 38.)

"The whole overseas adventure was a wonderful adventure. I stayed retired except for a brief period when I agreed to serve as the interim manager of Pacifica's North Coast County Water District. The NCCWD is a very interesting story. They were in place when I came on board as Pacifica's City Manager. (NCCWD was founded in 1944.) There was a move to merge them with city services in Pacifica's early days but the voters shot that one down. They are still independent from the city.



Jean Bartlett photo

On July 11, 2017, at his home on Pedro Point, Karl Baldwin is recognized by the City of Pacifica with a proclamation presented by Mayor Pro Tem John Keener and Councilmember Sue Digre.

"Not too many of the things I did are still here. We had a sewage treatment plant on the beach in Linda Mar and another one in Sharp Park, and they are both gone without any trace. Our streets, however, are not radically different.

"Linda Mar as a subdivision area and the back of the valley have grown a great deal since those early days, so that our population is almost 50 percent north and 50 percent south. The growth has taken place here in the south because of the intense subdivision development and there are very few undeveloped parcels here. There is more undeveloped land in the north now than in the south, so any change in population will occur in the north end."

Karl said he was very interested in seeing Palmetto Avenue promoted as Pacifica's "Main Street." The idea has been around since 1964, when he was City Manager and was recently, June of 2017, kicked off by California Congresswoman Jackie Speier, State Senator Jerry Hill, San Mateo County Supervisor Don Horsley, Pacifica Mayor Mike O'Neill and Pacifica City Councilmembers in a groundbreaking ceremony.

"Palmetto as a commercial district, I hope it comes true. Developing pedestrian traffic is tough and that's another reason for not developing a public library there. You don't put a public building in the middle of a commercial block. If you do that, it becomes a dead area. Redwood City, for instance, has had a terrible time developing their Main Street because right in the middle is their County Headquarters and that breaks everything up and they have remodeled and done everything to build up business.

"The City is considering alternative sites for City Hall, but also on Palmetto they get tangled up with it being too close to the ocean. The current City Hall site is a good bit farther away, it's much safer. Every year the Council says, 'We've got to tear it down.' I still have some ideas about the place.

"I'd like to see that site developed as the City Hall site. The City owns it already. It's in a good place where it's always been. Without affecting the Little Brown Church, the site could accommodate a City Hall and a library. They could put them both under one roof, one foundation. They could do a couple of stories: maybe a library on the first, City Hall on the second. But the City is hard to work with these days and that goes back to the Little Brown Church experience. We didn't get much support from the City. We had a real tough go.

"I joined the Pacifica Historical Society Committee to save the LBC and was on it for seven years and I ran out of steam. I couldn't hear what was going on at City Council meetings and I figured it was time for me to get out of there. I came into the Historical Society when we had just drawn up the bylaws. That would be 1990. Syd Lorvan, an attorney still working here, he drew up those bylaws. I served as treasurer for a while and was chairman for the committee. We started working on the Little Brown Church in 1990 and it wasn't until 2004 that it went on the ballot.

"Mayor Jim Vreeland wanted to knock the building down. It was a real struggle. The City Attorney came up with conditional contracts. Every contract would always have a zinger in there to stop it dead. Finally, around the fourth contract we had something we could work with.

"The thing about the library is it has been defeated twice by the voters because of the threat to the Sanchez Library. Every time they have a bond issue, the Sanchez Library will be destroyed and they can't do that. That is why it is being defeated. They need to set up a separate community service building, to make it palatable to the seniors back there, make it a very small library collection that circulates from the main library. They bring up books and tell the seniors to help themselves every week because they'll replenish it. Then also use the building for all kinds of community activities. Make it a cozy place for seniors so they come down for morning coffee. Make it warm and friendly. Make it a place for the community. It could work. It could be a win-win arrangement. Then staff it with volunteers. The valley is full of seniors back there who don't know what to do and they would like to do something. It would save the City money and satisfy the County so we don't operate two libraries. One library only, but keep the other one like a satellite. Turn the recruiting of these seniors over to the Recreation Department and you've got volunteers.

"I believe a City Hall/library combo, the Little Brown Church, and placement of the Ocean Shore Railroad Car 1409 across the street from the Church in a little park, would make for an excellent, visitor-inviting Civic Center. There are some other equally good ideas, coming out of the Pacifica Historical Society, of how to place Car 1409 in that area. I'm sure the City has ideas for the parking lot across from the Church but that does not negate these good ideas of placing the Car still right near the Museum. In the early days, the City listened because it was the smart thing to do – it still is.

"What do I love about Pacifica? The people, this is extremely important. Many of the people I have known for a long time are gone now, but there are always caring people here, people like Shirlee Gibbs and Kathleen Manning. Both have been and are very dedicated to Pacifica and the Pacifica Historical Society. They never quit. They don't let themselves be disheartened or deterred. The setting of Pacifica and the people of Pacifica, that is what makes this a very special place.



Jean Bartlett photo

Married 66 years, Karl and Eileen Baldwin were recognized by the Pacifica Historical Society on June 25, 2017.



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and a published author.

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