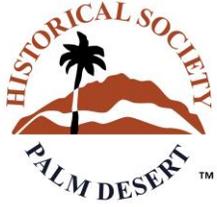


# HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PALM DESERT



## *The Hourglass*



Summer 2023

Ed. Merilee Colton

### Picnic in the Park

*Sunday, April 2<sup>nd</sup> saw the traditional Picnic in the Park celebration, and here is the get-together in pictures!*



## President's Letter

The HSPD Spring Picnic was a resounding success (as usual) with hamburgers and hot dogs and lots of good company. The Palm Desert Civic Center Park always makes for a fun and relaxing setting. (See photos on page one.)

Our annual summer party is coming up on Friday, July 14, at the Palm Desert Community Center on Portola, from 5:00 to 8:00 pm. Sandwiches and drinks will be provided and you are encouraged to bring a side dish to kick it up a notch (thanks, Emeril). We are accepting silent auction items so please, if you have items to donate, call the Firehouse at 760-346-6588 and leave a message – we will make arrangements for pickup or drop-off. The theme this year is a Birthday Party to help celebrate a very special place that is turning 50 this year.

Another party that is in the works, celebrating that same place, is coming up on Saturday, September 30th. Nerl Porras has been working very hard to promote this event on his Facebook pages. That party kicks off at 5:00 pm at the Firehouse Museum and ends up with dinner at 6:00 pm at Casuelas Café, 73-703 Highway 111 in Palm Desert. Please stay tuned on Facebook for more information as we get closer to the September date.

I hope you have a party-filled summer and if we don't see you at either of these celebrations, we will see you when we re-open in October!

**Rob Pitchford**

*Photos on previous page - clockwise from upper left and circling the center photo: Rob Pitchford, President and Head Cook; Barbara Eastes' shoes; Nerl Porras, Deputy Cook and staying cool; L-R Brett Romer and Don Folkers, past HSPD presidents; Rochelle McCune, HSPD Archivist and David Toltzmann, Vice-President, talking shop; seated L-R Erika Sharp, Jo Ellen Hughes, and Nerl Porras, Directors and Docents; Beverly James, HSPD Secretary; Dan and Carol Scanny, Docents, with Bruce Jensen, center.*

## "Know Your Board"

### Matt Gonda



While I was born and raised in Metro Detroit, Michigan, I've called the Coachella Valley home since 2007. I was drawn to the Valley for the economic opportunity (my wife had a great job lined up as a teacher in a rural east Valley school and we were fresh out of college), the weather (our first trip out here was in mid-April after another brutal Michigan winter), and the food (I had one of the best tacos of my life at a little taqueria off of Hwy 111 in Coachella on our first day in town).

I've always been interested in 'local' history. While going to college in Detroit I would give tours of the city to friends at my university, showcasing things that had historical and social impact but that most people never heard about - one of the more profound stops was the still-standing Birwood Wall, which is a nondescript, half-mile long wall built between two neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city in 1941 to separate white residents from black residents under the Redlining policies of the time. Now I enjoy learning about the history of the Valley and seeing how the names and places in those stories connect to people and places I know and pass by every day. I feel incredibly fortunate to call the desert home, and look forward to continuing to explore the complex history of this area.

*Ed. Note: this is the sixth in a series of biographies about the Board members of the HSPD.*

## Oral History Project 2023



Good news! The Historical Society of Palm Desert - Legacy Interview Project is up and running. So far there have been 20 interviews, most of which are on the HSPD You Tube Channel, at [www.youtube.com/@historicalsocietyofpalmdes3519](http://www.youtube.com/@historicalsocietyofpalmdes3519) , or go to You Tube and search on Historical Society of Palm Desert.

We are interviewing local people to help honor the 50 years since the City of Palm Desert was incorporated. Our deadline for the city's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration is coming up, so I would love to hear from you and add to the interviews already completed. Would you like to be interviewed? So many of our members have great stories to tell. Do you know someone to suggest to us? We will contact them and set up an interview. We need your help to complete this project.

Recently I interviewed Patrick Evans of the show, Eye on the Desert. It will be posted on You Tube soon, along with the others. We are interviewing local people, but there is also interest in hearing from people who have been active in the desert in any way, at any time. The interview process is informal and fun. It takes about one hour to do the filming and you get a free copy of the edited interview to keep or send to your family. To participate, you can contact me by email at [lesliedeane@usa.net](mailto:lesliedeane@usa.net) or phone 213.810.7228. I hope to hear from you soon!

***Leslie Roth, HSPD Oral Historian***

*Ed. Note: there are older interviews from a HSPD 1979-1982 oral history project on the Internet Archive Digital Library at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org), enter "Historical Society of Palm Desert" in the Search bar and listen to over 40 Palm Desert pioneers tell their stories, from 1909-forward.*

## Archivist's Corner



It's all about the Anniversary! While we in the Archives are still plodding away with our usual asset organization, digitization, preservation and finding-aid activities, this summer is ALL about research requests to prepare for the upcoming 50th Anniversary of the incorporation of the City of Palm Desert, November 18, 1973.

In addition to providing materials to our Exhibit Committee so they can refresh our exhibits for re-opening in October, we're also researching historic places so we can launch at least one new walking/driving tour this Fall, and we're assisting the Oral History team by putting together biographies of the people they have interviewed, including the folks interviewed in the 1970's-1980's who can be found on the Internet Archive. And we're not just helping with HSPD projects, we're providing source materials for the City of Palm Desert to support their Anniversary celebration.

We're also working on another 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary project, and we need help: we need writers and editors. Here's why - we are planning to launch a new website in time for the Anniversary with a lot more history articles and other content. The website project team would like to be able to post historic building profiles, point of interest profiles, Palm Desert Institutions profiles, Palm Desert "Legends" biographies, Key Moments in Palm Desert history stories and other Tales of the Desert on the new website. To do this, the archives is putting together the research on a subject and the website manager will manage formatting and uploading the articles so the writers can do what they do best - write.

If you are willing to write or edit profiles or biographies, let us know. Once you pick your subject, the archives will provide you with the research data needed. Contact us at [hspd.firehouse@gmail.com](mailto:hspd.firehouse@gmail.com) and let us know what you would be interested in writing about, or if editing is your forte. Thank you!

**Rochelle McCune, HSPD Archivist**

## IN MEMORIAM



(August 3, 1938- February 22, 2023) Donald Harry Shayler, beloved husband of Katherine Shayler, died peacefully after a long battle with cancer on February 22, 2023, in Palm Desert. He was a proud resident of the Coachella Valley - a region he helped develop into the bustling community that it is today.

Don received his degree in Civil Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley in 1962. Following in his father's footsteps, Don took over at the helm of Pacific Rim, the first civil engineering office in Palm Desert, where he dedicated his career to the development of numerous residential and commercial projects that helped transform the desert.

Though his legacy can be seen throughout the Coachella Valley, he particularly enjoyed his work at the Ironwood Country Club and the expansion of the Bermuda Dunes Airport. In addition to his professional achievements, Don was also a philanthropist, volunteering much of his time to the Palm Desert Jaycees where he worked to establish the area's first community park (now called Magnesium Falls Park) which was endorsed by Dolores Hope. He was also active in supporting the Special Olympics program. Don's many talents extended to the arts: a gifted trombonist, he played with the area's Symphonic Orchestra.

In his retirement, Don dedicated his free time to his family and his passions, including traveling the western United States and Canada, summering in Idyllwild, and exploring natural wonders. His love for the Coachella Valley knew no bounds - he was an active volunteer with the Historical Society of Palm Desert and he enjoyed helping at the Firehouse Museum and with the Mini Muster Program.

During his long battle with cancer, Don remained a beacon of fortitude and inspiration to his family. His sense of humor will not soon be forgotten. Don is survived by his wife of 40 years, his two daughters Suzan Shayler and Cynthia Haley, and three grandchildren. Memorial gifts can be made to the Historical Society of Palm Desert at [www.hspd.org](http://www.hspd.org).

### HSPD OFFICERS

Rob Pitchford, President  
David Toltzmann, Vice-President  
Beverly James, Secretary  
Susan Marie Weber, Treasurer

### DIRECTORS

Linda Holden Clode, Juleen McElgunn, Don Graybill,  
Matt Gonda, Nerl Porras, Jo Ellen Hughes, Erika  
Sharp, Darrell Cozen, Wayne O'Connor

**HSPD MISSION STATEMENT**  
**TO COLLECT, PRESERVE AND RECORD THE**  
**HISTORY OF OUR CITY AND COMMUNITIES, AND**  
**TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO THE SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES**  
**AND ARTIFACTS THROUGH EXHIBITS,**  
**PUBLICATIONS, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS**



You Are Invited to Join the Historical Society of Palm Desert's

## Midsummer "Birthday" Madness

*Let's celebrate Palm Desert turning 50!*

Friday, July 14, 2023 - 5-8 PM  
5:00-5:30 Gathering - 5:30 Dinner

Portola Community Center 45480 Portola Avenue Palm Desert



**It's a "Side Dish" Potluck this year! Please bring your favorite Side Dish to share! (Optional)**

**Sandwiches and drinks provided**

**COST: \$10 Per Person**

Members, Family & Friends are welcome!

An RSVP is requested by Monday, July 10th

760-346-6588 or email to [hspd.firehouse@gmail.com](mailto:hspd.firehouse@gmail.com)





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Fill out the information below and mail along with credit card information or a  
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