



51 South San Antonio Road
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History inspires imagination,
stimulates thought and
transforms society.

The Los Altos History
Museum preserves and
shares our local history to
enrich our community and to
shape a more informed
future.

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The Los Altos History Museum's legal name
is the Association of the Los Altos Historical
Museum; i.d. number 94-2542813.

April 22, 2015

Walter Chapman, Chair & Sean Gallegos, Liaison
Los Altos Historical Commission
City of Los Altos
1 North San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022

RE: Historic Preservation Award 2015

Dear Walter and Sean:

On behalf of the Los Altos History Museum, it is a great honor to support the nomination of **Bob Grimm** for the 2015 Historic Preservation Award. No one thought Bob would go when he did – even at 88, he seemed to have more life in him than folks half his age.

But the time is right to be sure his contribution to this community is marked with an award like this. Personally, I am convinced that without the Grimms, this community would be virtually indistinguishable from any other in the valley. No parade of lights, and certainly no history museum that consistently outperforms its peers, and even some much larger museums.

Bob was a **do-er** as much as a donor to Los Altos, although he (quietly) did both on a grand scale. He built things. He led by example. He was a kind and thoughtful council-member and one of our best mayors—because he listened, considered all the angles, and then made sure the job got done, right—the first time.

Where others talk, Bob DID. Once, he left a meeting where something was being planned, came back 15 minutes later, and quietly said – “it’s done.” When Bill Hewlett was being asked to support the (now) Tech Museum, he told them: “let me know when Bob Grimm gets involved; **then I know it will happen.**” Or words to that effect.

History and nostalgia often get confused, but not for Bob. His vision was so clear. He gave me some of the best advice I’ve ever heard as a leader, and he always had the right perspective. Once, when the topic of whether or not to have more third stories in downtown was all the news, he told me that when he was on Council, the fire department was still all-volunteer. (Now it’s County.) Our fire truck would only go up two stories, so building beyond that was a bad idea.

It wasn’t “village charm,” it was logic, and what was safe. And we all said “oh, that makes a lot of sense.” Oh, and by the way, he and buddy Art Carmichael bought that old fire truck, so it could come back to Los Altos. The two of them rented a local barn, where they still have lots of old stuff. When Art & Jean built their new house recently, a gorgeous custom garage was part of the plan – housing only that shiny fire truck.

Without Bob and Marion to take the lead, our heritage would not be so well preserved, nor our Museum so successful. From the very beginnings of “History

House" in 1977 to the new Museum that opened in 2001, Marion knew what needed to be done to keep the past in good shape for the future, and Bob figured out how to make it happen.

They re-roofed the Smith House when the City couldn't afford it. They studied other museums and learned what best practices were, and then found people to make it happen. Yes, many others helped, but if they hadn't led, the projects would have faltered.

Bob and Marion Grimm were the lead funders to the \$3.5 million capital campaign to build the long-wanted new museum, along with the David & Lucile Packard Foundation and Nan and Chuck Geschke. People could **trust that the job would get done well**, because Bob was leading the way.

It wasn't just funding. Nan and Bob co-managed the building of the new museum, which included her having him outside on a ladder testing paint colors until the right shade was found. Nan chaired the exhibits program committee our first few years and came up with the theme of the "changing use of land over time" for the permanent exhibit. They got stuck on how to get the 'people stories' included... so Bob designed the Family Tree.

When he wasn't building the new museum, moving and restoring the tank house, or building our storage barn, Bob built exhibits. He served on every committee Nan chaired, including the phenomenal exhibits on Wallace Stegner, Lucile & David Packard, Josephine & Frank Duveneck, and most recently, the 100+ Los Altos/Hills residents who have been essential to creating what we call "Silicon Valley." He worked on many others, building terrific hands-on exhibits loved by kids and adults. Some of these live on today, liked *Shaped by Water*, which we gave to History San Jose and is still teaching about being water-wise.

In my ten years here as executive director, Bob and I met with folks from other communities who wanted to build a history museum like what we have here. Bob would talk community engagement, and I would talk infrastructure. I was also clear to state, "**you need a Bob Grimm of your own**, someone who knows how to get it done, gets others to the right place, and leads the funding drive." As of today, Palo Alto still struggles to get their museum developed, Cupertino has grown slowly, Mountain View's plans were shot down by neighbors, and Los Gatos is gingerly stepping into a new museum home after almost a decade getting their team in order. They don't have Bob. We did.

Bob's energy always seemed so forward-thinking, like the tech life he led. But his heart treasured the past, too, and knew it had to be protected. He was severely modest and didn't cotton to having his name put on things. He, Lou Brossard and Al Bagley were the "Miracle Construction Company" with the motto – "if it works, it's a miracle." Oddly enough, nothing I ever saw them build ever failed to perform, despite the efforts of many tiny fingers.

His is an example few can live up to... all the more reason to remark on his legacy while it is fresh in our minds. Thank you for an opportunity to share these thoughts with you about a man who will be greatly, greatly missed. He is now part of our history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura Bajuk". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Laura S. Bajuk, Executive Director
Los Altos History Museum