



## Interested, active and giving ~ The story of Pacifica's Lydia Azevedo

*"Involvement came naturally to my mother," said Lydia's daughter Joane Azevedo-Luesse. "She had an inborn propensity to project and to be outspoken despite being shy. Doing real good for the world was much more a priority for her than appearances. To her, it mattered what one 'did.'"*



**Lydia Dunham, teacher, Peter Lassen Junior High School, Sacramento, CA. Circa 1956.**

Written by Jean Bartlett, August, 2020  
(A Pacifica Historical Society Project)

### **AZEVEDO, LYDIA ADRIENNE DUNHAM (1929-2011)**

"I was born in the Bay Area as was my mother, 44 years before me," said Lydia Azevedo to Pacifica Historical Society member Frank Winston in 2007. (Lydia was born in San Francisco and her mother was born in Oakland.)

Frank was serving as segment host for the award-winning *Footprints of Pacifica* community television series. The half-hour episodes celebrate the lore and the lure of Pacifica. Lydia was the subject. (*Footprints of Pacifica Episode 34.*)

"However, the stock market crashed a few months after I was born and that made living in the big city quite challenging," Lydia continued. "I attended Mission High School and graduated from San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University) in the early 1950s. I was hired to teach school in the state capital (Sacramento). I had been active in the Roman Catholic Newman Club while in college and we started an alumni branch about the time I graduated." (The clubs are open to all walks of faith, and provide a spiritual and social venue in which students, attending secular universities/colleges, can experience the Catholic faith.)

After college, Lydia attended her first Newman National Convention and was elected the first president of the Newman Alumni Club in Sacramento.

"Because of that, I went to an area meeting in San Jose which is where I met my future husband (Paul Azevedo), over the Newman's Hall pool table," Lydia smiled. "He taught me to 'start' playing pool, although I never did learn to play pool!"

The couple would marry in 1960, have four children and both go on to be community doers in the city that became their home in 1963 – Pacifica, California.

Lydia Adrienne Dunham was born in San Francisco on August 13, 1929 to William Bryan Dunham and Regina "Rena" Rosario (Perez) Dunham. Born at home, she arrived in the evening. With the family doctor unwilling to come out at night, the couple's baby girl was delivered by a family friend whom they called "Aunt Lydia." The birth had problems. The umbilical cord was wrapped around their little girl's neck. Aunt Lydia got her untangled and breathing, and the grateful parents gave their daughter her name. Little Lydia was the second of the Dunham's children. She had a big sister, Cay.



Regina Dunham, May 23, 1885 – November 25, 1953.



William Dunham, January 23, 1899 – January 15, 1954.

William and Regina Dunham married when he was 27 and she was 41. Their grandchildren do not know the details, at least not now, of how they met, but definitely know it was a love story.

William was born January 23, 1899 in Uniontown, an unincorporated area of Crawford County, Arkansas, which is a little less than five miles from the Oklahoma border. Raised in McCurtain County, Oklahoma, William left home in his teens by way of riding the rails.

"He was a hobo, in that he rode the rails without paying," his granddaughter Joane said, "but otherwise, it was an honest lifestyle choice."

He and a friend rode the rails together.

"They wore good clothes under dusty clothes in order to keep them clean," Joane continued. "They got off the trains and removed the dusty clothes and did odd jobs for money or in trade for food."

On September 12, 1918, evidenced by his WWI draft registration card of the same date, William can be found living in Solar, Huerfano County, Colorado working for a mine owned by Mutual Coal Company in the Community of Walsenburg. William, at age 19, was part of the third and final draft registration. The first, held on June 5, 1917, was for men ages 21-31. The second, held on June 5, 1918, was for men who turned 21 since the first registration. After William registered in Colorado, he and his friend rode the rails out to San Diego, California with the intent to become U.S. Marines.

"For some reason his friend was not eligible," Joane noted. "So my grandfather gave his friend his clothes because he now had a job but his friend did not."

William's grandchildren don't know many of the details of their grandfather's Marine Corps service. They do know that he spent time in Australia and Hawaii. He may have served elsewhere as well. But it is when he returned to San Diego that he met his future wife, Regina Perez.

"At some point, my grandmother went to San Diego to work," Joane said. "I don't know how long they knew each other before they married. But I know she loved to dance. My mom talked about how my grandmother, 'Loved to dance so that the bobby pins flew out of her hair!' Therefore, I presume they met at a dance. When they got married, his Commanding Officer threw him out of the Marines because he did not have his permission to marry. My grandfather said, 'I wasn't marrying him!' I presume they moved to San Francisco because he was no longer a Marine." (Honorably discharged, Marine Private First Class William Bryan Dunham is buried at Golden Gate National Cemetery, San Bruno, CA, alongside his wife.)

"Throughout his life, my grandfather did every romantic job you can think of," Joane said, "coal miner, cowboy, Marine, etc."

"At some point, he and his friend that he rode the rails with, were applying for a job at a coal mine," Lydia's son Mike Azevedo said. "As they were being shown around, they were concerned about all the squealing and noise coming from the wall supports in the mine. They were told, 'Not to worry. It's only the mountain settling on the newly dug mine.' They were worried and did not return a second day. The mine collapsed within a week, killing many of the workers."

Born in Oakland, California on May 23, 1885, Lydia's mom, Regina "Rena" Rosario (Perez) Dunham, was descended from General Pedro Espejo on her mother's side.

"My mother's mother's mother's mother, Ygnacia Pavia, was married to General Pedro Espejo," Joane said. "He was a general under Emperor Maximilian and a governor at one time of Baja, and either Sinaloa or Sonora. More research is needed!"

Like her mother, Joane has continued to research this side of her mother's family, which journeys the Second French Intervention in Mexico (December 8, 1861 – June 21, 1867), her Grandfather Espejo's popularity among the people and his eventual imprisonment. Poisoned in prison, he died on November 22, 1868, leaving behind his wife and their, at least, six children. And so it was with not much more than the clothes on their backs and a very few prized possessions, that Ygnacia Pavia and her children came to the United States. (The *Pedro Espejo family papers, 1856-1898*, can be found through the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley, Online Archive of California.)

"As to my grandmother's father, Baldomero Perez," Joane added, "they did not get along and therefore we do not know a lot about him."

As it turns out, Regina wanted to be a nurse, but her father would not have it.

"My grandmother's father forced her to go to secretarial trade school instead of studying to be a nurse," Joane noted. "She ended up finishing high school when she was much older, and getting a certification of some kind as a nurse or a nursing assistant. When she was a nursing student, she went door-to-door in either San Francisco or Oakland during the 1918 pandemic. She educated people on how to keep safe by washing dishes in hot water and so on. According to my mother, her mom was praised by a doctor as 'the one who saves the patients.' I don't believe she was able to get a foothold into a career. When my mom was a kid, her mom did housecleaning. She also worked as a 'Shabbat goy.'" (JewishEncyclopedia.com defines "Shabbat goy" as "a Gentile employed in a Jewish household on the Sabbath-day to perform services which are religiously forbidden to Jews on that day.")

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In San Francisco's 1933 City Directory, the Dunham family can be found at 599 Noe Street and William is listed as a factory worker employed by C J Schmitt Co. In the 1938 City Directory, William and Regina are listed as living at 4679A 18th Street and he is working as a box maker. In the 1945 City Directory, the family's address is 18 Eagle Street and William is listed as a rigger.

"My grandfather was big on unions," Joane said, "and was a longshoreman in 1934 when the strike happened in San Francisco."

On May 9, 1934, West Coast longshoremen began the first of an 83-day strike that would shut down the major West Coast ports including: San Diego, San Pedro, San Francisco, Portland, Tacoma and Seattle. The main issues were control of hiring halls, better pay, better hours and union representation. On Tuesday, July 3, the Industrial Association moved to transport goods from the waterfront to a warehouse in San Francisco. Police formed a lane to Pier 38 and fought strikers with clubs, tear gas and guns. The strikers fought back with bricks and railroad spikes. On Wednesday, July 4, a holiday truce was called. On Thursday, July 5 (in the history books as "Bloody Thursday"), with rumors flying that the National Guard was arriving in the evening, 5,000 strikers came out and were subsequently blasted with tear gas, vomit gas, guns and clubs. More than one hundred people were injured and two strikers, Nicholas Bordoise and Howard Sperry, were killed.

"When the two men were shot dead, my grandmother insisted that my grandfather stay home with their girls while she went out to find work," Joane said. "My mother remembered clearly when he pulled out the sewing machine and made doll clothes for them at this time. My mother also loved jigsaw puzzles and one of the reasons was that during the Depression, her father worked at a jigsaw puzzle factory with a reputation for precision close register – meaning, the colors weren't offset. Her dad brought home puzzles from work and they did them as entertainment."



Lydia, left, and her sister Cay playing dress-up at a friend's birthday party in San Francisco. Circa 1941. The sisters' lifelong friends, the Donnellys, are in the background.

Lydia and her sister Cay always got along. They were friendly and did what they could to support each other throughout the years. They definitely had different traits and likes. Lydia's children note that their mom always liked horses, movies and books, and their Aunt Cay has always been very social. It wasn't until they were older that the sisters learned that while they were 'sisters of the heart,' they were cousins by blood and Cay was just six months older, as opposed to 18 months as they had previously believed.

"My aunt was not formally adopted by my grandparents," Joane noted. "What that meant was my grandfather was 'officially' only the father of one child. Being a parent of just one meant he could be drafted during WWII."

On September 16, 1940, the Selective Training and Service Act was signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It required all men between the ages of 21 and 45 to register. William Bryan Dunham, of 18 Eagle Street, filled out his second draft registration card.

"My grandfather got a job at the Tiburon Naval Net Depot so that he was considered an essential and semi-military worker and therefore, not draft-eligible."

While Lydia's family did not have much money, she definitely had a good childhood.

"The family had to move at some point because they could not afford the \$15 a month rent," Joane explained. "Their icebox consisted of wire shelves covered by tea towels, kept cool by a block of ice from the ice man, one of the few deliverymen still using a horse and cart. They had a boiler above the stove to heat water for baths.

"My mom read five books a week from the library and then of course there were the jigsaw puzzles. She also frequented the Castro Theatre, with one or both of her parents to see movies."

"The night the Orson Welles production of 'The War of the Worlds' was broadcast on October 30, 1938, my mom was watching a movie at the Castro with her mom," Mike said. "When they came home, her father was laying on his bed listening to the radio and laughing and laughing. She asked him what he was listening to that was so funny. He had heard the show from the beginning and was well aware that it was fiction. He told her about all the fools calling in, furious that they were led to believe Martians had attacked the Earth!"

The radio adaption of H.G. Wells 40-year-old novel "The War of the Worlds," was "an idea conceived," Welles later said, "to do a radio broadcast in such a manner that a crisis would actually seem to be happening and would be broadcast in such a dramatized form as to appear to be a real event taking place at that time, rather than a mere radio play." The broadcast launched Welles' name into the celebrity stratosphere, Hollywood listened and the 23-year-old went on to make the film, "Citizen Kane."

Lydia attended Most Holy Redeemer Catholic Elementary School in San Francisco.

"One of the nuns told my mother that her father was going to hell because he was a Baptist," Joane noted with a smile. "When my mom told her mother, her mother marched down there and read them the riot act!"

"Not only did Regina read the nuns the riot act," Lydia's daughter Rena Azevedo Kiehn said, "she said her husband knew the bible better than they did and could quote scriptures that would put them to shame! That just because one didn't attend church didn't mean they didn't know God and love God."

Lydia's freshman year of high school was also at a Catholic school. However, for her remaining high school years, Lydia attended Mission High School. She graduated in 1947.

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"She used to talk about that when she was in high school, she was not allowed to wear makeup," Rena said. "Her sister would back her up against a street lamp to apply lipstick on her while they were on their way to a school dance."



Lydia, 1947.

Following high school graduation, Lydia headed off to SFSU. She majored in mathematics, minored in social studies and received her teaching credential. She was also active in SFSU's Newman Club. She did not work during college.

"Her mom wanted her to focus on studying," Rena said.

"She got her first teaching job in Sacramento when she was about 23," Joane said. "She missed the bus for the interview and ended up taking a puddle jumper to make it on time. It was her first plane ride and she believed her enthusiasm, inspired by that experience, got her the job."

What was it about math that Lydia liked?

"I think because so many aspects are logical and she liked things that were logical," Joane noted. "Plus she was just very good at math and had the mind for it."

Why a teacher?

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"Back then if one studied math, you either became a scientist or a teacher," Rena said. "As it was the fifties, women were not encouraged to be scientists."

In 1953, the summer after her first teaching job, Lydia went to Mexico. While her mom had grown up in Oakland, she was raised speaking Spanish. But because her husband didn't speak Spanish, she did not speak Spanish at home.

"My grandmother would talk with a friend, then continue in Spanish with my mother and get a confused look in response," Joane said. "My mom's high school switched the kind of Spanish they taught every year. One year they taught Pan-American Spanish or Mexican Spanish, and the next year they taught Castilian Spanish. My grandmother wanted my mom to learn Pan-American exclusively, so it never really happened. My mother would take oral tests and be able to tell the teacher what they said, but she could not respond to it in Spanish. She had a lot of fun on that trip to Mexico, though."

In Sacramento, Lydia followed her Newman Club involvement on the SFSU campus with membership in the National Newman Alumni Association in Sacramento. Lydia served as Alumni President.

"When the 'Plato's Stepchildren' Star Trek (Original Series) episode came on television, Mom would always say that she'd met Michael Dunn through the National Newman Club Federation," Lydia's son Martin Azevedo said. (The late actor Michael Dunn, who played "Alexander" in that episode, served as president of the University of Miami, Florida Newman Club.)



Lydia, second from left, participates in a Newman Club gathering at San Juan Bautista mid-1950s.

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Because Lydia traveled across the country to attend Newman Club meetings, going to a meeting in San Jose was certainly not out of the way. And it was there, "over a pool table," that San Jose State advertising major and Newman Club member Paul Azevedo talked Lydia into learning pool, which, as Lydia noted in her television interview, cited on page 1, she never did learn. It was 1957.

Born in Sonoma County in 1931, Paul was about a year and a half younger than Lydia. He had served in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Germany during the Korean War.

"He was in Germany in 1952/1953, breaking Russian code for the Cold War," Joane said. "He never admitted to doing that. He would just say, 'I can't tell you!' and laugh. But my mother told us he actually did do that."

"I've always believed that my dad really was sworn to secrecy, but that he could have given us the basics of his time during the Korean War," Mike said. "But he was proud to be able to say he couldn't tell us."

The couple began dating right after they met.

"My mom, and a friend of hers, was invited by my dad, and a friend of his, to the beach," Joane laughed. "Cue one in the dozen of my dad's stories about 'the high tide suddenly came in' and he had to rescue my mom from waves crashing against a cliff. When that story was told, my mother reminded us that he saved her from the very predicament in which he got her! These stories were always told with giggles all around."

What did Lydia like so much about this young man?

"I think she liked that he was an aspiring writer," Joane said, "that he was equally interested in being involved in the world and he loved to debate. They both loved knowledge, and it was clear that he really loved her, so that helped."

They were engaged on New Year's Eve, 1959.

"Dad proposed spontaneously," Joane said. "He was living in Walnut Creek then, and she was still living and teaching in Sacramento, and he was a hopeless romantic. He was always mailing her crazy things like potato mashers and abalone shells, without boxes. He'd affix a card with wire to them, write her address on it, glue on stamps and then drop it in the mailbox."

They married on Boxing Day, December 26, 1960 at St. Timothy's Catholic Church in San Mateo, CA.

"They were married by Father John Duryea, who knew them through the Newman Club," Mike said. "By coincidence, his brother Robert ended up being their parish priest at St. Peter's in Pacifica – his brother also baptized a couple of us. Father Robert made international headlines when it was discovered he'd been secretly married and had a son. Big scandal! A few years after that, Father John fell in love and was also excommunicated for getting married."

In April of 1971, Robert Duryea was expelled from the Catholic Church after a secret marriage of seven years and a 5-year-old son became publicly known. Though in Pacifica, and by a vote of 604 to 38, the parishioners voted in support of Father Robert. He was nevertheless removed by San Francisco Archbishop Joseph T. McGucken. On January 18, 1976, John Duryea, who had served a third of a century as a Catholic priest, announced in his sermon at Saint Ann's Chapel in Palo Alto that he had fallen in love and was married. He was excommunicated shortly thereafter.



December 26, 1960, Lydia and Paul Azevedo are married in San Mateo, CA. (From a newspaper photo.)

"Mom sewed her own wedding dress," Joane noted. "I also wore it for my wedding. At the time, I worked for a diplomaed fashion designer who confessed to not having the skill my mom displayed with the princess-cut sleeves. Mom was a very talented seamstress."

When the couple first married, they lived for a year in Walnut Creek, and then the couple moved to an apartment on the corner of Frederick and Ashbury in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district.

"They talked about it being so run down that when it rained, you literally needed to use an umbrella in the bathroom," Rena laughed.

The first of Lydia's and Paul's four children, Mike, was born in January of 1963.

"They moved to Pacifica in September of 1963, when Mike was 8 months old," Joane noted with a laugh. "My father always joked, 'Just in time!' He was referring to the fact that they missed out on the hippies. It didn't really sink in that he had married one. Ha! Ha!"

"After I had taught seven years in Sacramento," Lydia said in her 2007 *Footprints of Pacifica* interview, "Paul asked me to marry him and we moved to Walnut Creek. He was working there as a newspaper advertising man. Before we had been there a year, the owner of the newspaper decided to clean house and he fired everyone, including his own son. Paul found a job with the *Daily Pacific Builder*, and he had to travel by airplane, all around California to sell ads. By then we had a baby and were living in San Francisco and we figured our little wooden back porch, with its three foot drop, was not a safe place to raise a baby." Paul wanted to wait to buy a house until the prices came down but Lydia convinced him, prices weren't going to come down. The time was now.

"We looked for a house in San Francisco and the only house we could afford on Paul's GI Bill was condemned before we got there," Lydia laughed. "We called the real estate man and he said, 'The only thing you can buy on your GI Bill is a house in Pacifica.'"

"They looked around Pacifica for a 'good house,' towing our Uncle Dan, a construction contractor, along," Mike said. "Uncle Dan stopped them from buying a house by waving his arms wildly and mouthing, 'NO!' as the realtor pressured them to sign papers. We talked to the people who eventually owned that house and it did indeed give them problems."

"They used Mom's retirement savings from her time teaching and Dad's GI Bill, and got a mortgage for \$16,000 for the house they bought," Rena said. "Dad was always very happy that Mom twisted his arm on the decision to buy when they did."

The family set down roots on Hermosa Avenue and stayed.

"Paul had started the Democratic Club in Walnut Creek," Lydia told Frank Winston. "So when we moved to Pacifica, Paul went to a Democratic convention, and he hitched a ride with Joe Fulford, who was some kind of an officer. Back in Pacifica, Paul gets a call from Bill Drake, the publisher and editor of the *Pacifica Tribune*. Bill said, 'I'd like to come by and talk to you about that convention. I apologize for calling after 9 o'clock at night but I've been selling advertising all this time.' And Paul said, 'Oh, I know what you mean. I am an advertising salesman.' And that's how Paul began working for the *Pacifica Tribune*." This would be in the summer or fall of 1966.

Not long after their arrival in Pacifica, Lydia said they got a call from Pacifica's "welcome wagon lady."

"She wanted to know if I was interested in any organizations and I said, 'yes' to the Democrats, and she also mentioned, AAUW (American Association of University Women)," Lydia said. "I had been to a couple of AAUW meetings in Sacramento when I was there teaching and they were very formal gatherings. You had to bring a date. So I didn't join. Much more relaxed here so I joined AAUW. Both Paul and I were very active in the Democrats and we both were very involved in the Pacifica Historical Society as soon as we found out about it."

Lydia had four kids in six years: Mike, Rena, Martin and Joane. She did not teach when her children were very little. When they were babies she was a member of the La Leche League. The nonprofit, established in over 80 countries, is all about education, advocacy and training related to breastfeeding. And, as mentioned, she was a member of the Pacifica Democrats and the AAUW, as well as the League of Women Voters. (She would campaign for Shirley Chisholm's presidential run in 1972. The first black woman to run for president, Shirley was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015.)

Lydia would become, along with her husband Paul who was also a member of the Pacifica Democrats, a member of the Pacifica Historical Society, the Sierra Club, and Friends of the Library. She would become a San Pedro Valley Park volunteer. She was involved with the Pacifica Co-Op Nursery School. She enrolled her children in Pacifica's Alternative Class – which later became the Alternative School and is now Ocean Shore School – at its founding, and was very active in the school's requisite parental volunteer work. She was also the campaign manager for Frances McCullough's School Board run. Somewhere in there she did some work regarding statistics for child care with Edna Holmstrom. She was also the Community Club Leader in charge of the Pacifica 4H Club. There's a story behind that last one.

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"Mike was in the Boy Scouts, Rena was in the Brownies and it was planned that Marty would join the Cub Scouts," Joane said. "But according to each program's policies, Mom needed to be a leader in every group! So, she put us all in 4H and only needed to do one job to cover it. All three of my siblings were Club Presidents, Camp Directors, and All Stars."

"She asked us if we'd be willing to make this switch," Mike said. "We all said 'yes' because I think it would have been unreasonable to say 'no!'"



Paul Azevedo took this photo of his family visiting the Oakland Zoo in 1970. (Clockwise from bottom: Martin, Mike, Lydia, Rena and Joane.)

As the kids were growing and Lydia kept a roaring pace of support activity, she did not have a lot of time to read – one of her lifetime's greatest pleasures. But she did make sure that books were a big part of her children's lives and she did still get at least "some" reading in.

"She loved mysteries: Elliott Roosevelt, Nevada Barr, Ellis Peters (one of the pen names of Edith Pargeter), Margaret Truman, etc.," Joane said. "She could knock out a pocket book in a couple of hours."

"Mom would read until two in the morning," Rena added, "because she knew that if she didn't read a book in one sitting, she was never going to have time to finish it."

It was her required volunteer time at the Alternative Class that really put her teaching skills back to work.

"I believe that this spurred her back into substitute teaching," Mike said "Essentially, we were a family of six living on a fixed income. In terms of what my mom could do to help, it seemed like a good idea was to sub."

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One of the things Lydia mentioned in her television interview was that once Paul took the job with Bill Drake and the *Pacifica Tribune*, the *Tribune* became a family affair. Along with selling advertising, over the years, Paul's jobs included: Circulation Manager, Production Manager, photographer and eventually columnist. The latter was as a volunteer columnist but his column, "The Reactor" – a well-written, full plate of its author's opinions, personal anecdotes, and collections of history – made Paul a household name in Pacifica, if not the Bay Area, for three decades.

As to the rest of the family's various assignments with the *Tribune*, Joane offered highlights.

"All four kids helped Mom with downed paper routes from the time I was a toddler. She did that, as well as 'complaints' – delivering papers when they did not show up to individual houses – until I was an adult. All four kids worked as inserters at some point. I did administrative and janitorial work there, too."



Lydia and Paul enjoy an evening out, at a volunteer event. Pacifica, CA. Circa, mid-1970s.

Lydia was someone who had and made lifelong friends. The Donnellys, mentioned in the photo caption on page 4, were three sisters Lydia and her sister Cay knew from childhood. Together they called themselves "The Five D's." Once Lydia and Paul arrived in Pacifica, their list of "wonderful friends" was considerable, which absolutely included Bill and Peggy Drake, and a number of other very famous locals, including Grace and Carl McCarthy. Particularly dear to Lydia were two Pacifica Co-Op Nursery School moms – Yvonne Lorvan and Kate Szentkuti. Now located on Carmel Avenue, when the three moms had children at the co-op, it was located in the WWII era Quonset hut in Sharp Park.

"My mom wasn't really working, so she was spending a lot of time doing volunteer work as part of this co-op, that we were all part of," Mike said. "One day, some kids were picking on the Szentkuti's older son and I am said to have stood behind him and scared the bullies away. From that point on, Kate Szentkuti, Yvonne Lorvan and my mom were fast friends. We camped together, attended the Alternative Class together and they continued their friendship with my mom until her death. The Lorvans, the Szentkutis and the Donnellys are family to us."



**Lydia Azevedo, math teacher, South San Francisco High School yearbook, 1982.**

Running into Yvonne at a local market in Pacifica, made her an easy interview for this story.

"When my husband Sid and I moved to town from San Francisco in the early 1960s, we met the Azevedo family through the Rotary Club\* and Pacifica Democrats," Yvonne said. "It was a merger of forces from the beginning.

"Our families were close with the children doing things together as each new one came along. Paul and Sid would fish for abalones when that was possible and we shared many dinners with that as the main entree. We camped together, were active in the Co-op Nursery School together, and were together at the beginning of the Alternative Class which is now Ocean Shore School.

"Paul was my go-to source of facts and wisdom for as long as he lived. He either had a book with the data or recalled at least a lecture's worth of information, always fascinating and informative. He could locate even the most impossible details, numbers, and people before the Internet.

"Lydia was one of my dearest friends. When I returned to college in 1971, she and Kate Szentkuti worked for me at the Co-op while I was at Skyline College, and I traded weekends with Azevedo and Szentkuti children in return.

"The three families remained friends and the children and now their children are part of the circle. Lydia and I were active in AAUW and worked on many projects together – including many luncheons and dinners. We really enjoyed cooking together and sharing meals. She was as close as could be to the sister I didn't have. I still miss her devotion, her energy, her humor and her ability to analyze a problem or need and outline scenario solutions."

Yvonne laughed as she recalled the "\$2 bill caper that she and Paul used to play."

"He loved that bill and so do I and he often would include one or more with his Rotary breakfast payment. I was the club treasurer and would buy them from him whenever he showed up with one. I still have those bills and think of him whenever I add another to my collection!"

\* *Rotary is an organization of business and professional persons who unite in cities and towns, and worldwide, to provide humanitarian service and encourage "high ethical standards in all vocations." In the early 1960s, the Rotary Club was a men's organization only, and as such, wives of Rotarians who wished to be involved were designated "Rotary Anns." Lydia and Yvonne were Rotary Anns. On May 4, 1987, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Rotary clubs may not exclude women from membership on the basis of gender. Lydia, completely involved with AAUW, among many other activities, did not become a member of Rotary. Yvonne joined the Rotary Club of Pacifica as a full member 20 years ago and has served many years as treasurer, in addition to one year as Club President.*

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Once Lydia began substitute teaching, she did so for many years, and for a year or so, actually took on a full-time job at South City High School as a math teacher.

"Because I was a math major, I was treasurer, at some point, in just about every organization I was a member of," Lydia recalled with a laugh in her 2007 interview with Frank Winston. "But, I guess that makes sense."

Along with her husband Paul and other members of the Pacifica Historical Society, Lydia was very active in spearheading a successful ballot measure which saved the Little Brown Church in Pacifica from being torn down, moved or encumbered.



In a 2010 *Footprints of Pacifica Episode*, Karl Baldwin, the City of Pacifica's first City Manager and a longtime member of the Historical Society, discussed the efforts of the PHS to preserve and restore the Little Brown Church.

"Way back in the early part of this century, a lady appeared before the City Council," Karl said. "Her name was Lydia Azevedo and she asked the Council, 'What are you going to do with the vacated Little Brown Church? It served for 19 years as a police department and now it is vacant and it is an old building and it deserves to be preserved.' There was no immediate answer on this but the PHS took on the challenge of making sure the LBC was preserved and would remain where it stood.

"That was a big challenge because there were plans to remove the building and to cut it in two and perhaps sell the entire site. The Historical Society went to work to get the word out. 'We have a project and it is to save and reconstruct the LBC!'"

"In any case, the Historical Society established a committee which went to work on not only financing it but also restoring it and these efforts went forward from that date," Karl went on to say. "In the process, the challenge was to have some kind of a connection between the Society and the Church, either a lease or an ownership. The necessity for having a lease became immediately apparent and we went to work on drawing a lease and establishing a relationship between the building and the Society so that it would be possible to raise funds for that purpose. It (also) became apparent that was not enough. The matter of keeping the church on the site would be of public interest and we knew it had to come to an election. We circulated the necessary papers and it was brought to an election."

Once the PHS took over the stewardship of the church in 2004, bit by bit, fundraiser by fundraiser, the church was made anew. Highlights of repairs included: new wiring, new insulation, new windows, new roof, new copper gutters and drain pipes, restored bell tower, new lathe and plaster, new floors, new chandeliers and wall sconces, new doors, a new garden, and great many more transformative restorations which included massive renovations to meet ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act – guidelines. On Saturday, August 22, 2015, the members of the PHS held the Gala Opening for the Pacifica Coastside Museum in the Little Brown Church Building, 1910.

Author: Jean Bartlett ([www.bartlettbiographies.com](http://www.bartlettbiographies.com))

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**Interested, active and giving ~ The story of Pacifica's Lydia Azevedo (page 15)**

This was not the first time that Lydia stepped up publically to make real and lasting change in Pacifica. She would be a powerful, contributing force behind making The Tom Lantos Tunnels happen. These are two 4,200-foot tunnels mined through the solid rock of Montara Mountain to replace the cliff-side stretch of road along Highway 1 – between Montara and Pacifica and known as Devil's Slide – that was long plagued by road blockages due to rockslides and slipping land. Several of those road blockages were severe, shutting down that stretch of Highway 1 for five weeks in 1980 and six months in 1995. Drivers needing to head north or south between those two points had to triple their commute time via a detour across Highway 92 in Half Moon Bay.

"I was for the tunnel," Lydia said in her 2007 interview, "and Paul was for the bypass. Paul said, 'Without business you can't function.' Paul wanted to keep businesses open and when Devil's Slide was out, it made differences for the people in Pacifica and the people in Half Moon Bay, and all the people in-between. So Paul thought the bypass was a good idea because it was a highway."



**Frank Winston interviews Lydia in 2007 on the Pacifica Historical Society's television show, *Footprints of Pacifica*.**

"The difference was, a lot of people didn't realize how far back in Linda Mar Valley the bypass was going to go," Lydia continued. "It was going to go basically from the end of Perez and it was going to be rather steep because of the height of the two mountains. In fact, they would have to cut a gorge across the top between the two mountains in order to lower it so they could keep within the highway limitations. When I looked at the map and saw that only 18 percent of the highway built on a shale mountain was going to be on solid ground, the rest of it, 82 percent between here and the crest of the mountain was going to be on fill up to two and three hundred feet – I said, 'I don't want to be up on that mountain when the shale starts shaking.'"

"My dad wrote columns for years on behalf of the bypass," Joane said. "My parents had a 'Bypass' sticker on the driver's side, and a 'Think Tunnel' sticker on the passenger side. But they respected each other enough to allow for such differences in opinion."

"My dad, as dare I suggest, all of us kids, are reliable Democratic votes," Mike said. "But when it came to Pacifica, my dad believed in stoking the fires of prosperity. He was conservative when it came to Pacifica. This was likely because he heard good arguments from everyone he talked to as to why they bypass was

needed for the local economy, and he was in touch with every possible business owner in town. A good local economy meant lots of advertising."

"I had been a Sierra Club member for a while," Lydia told Frank Winston, "and when I went to a meeting, I didn't usually speak up. But I spoke up about this issue in Pacifica and someone in the back of the room said, 'We can meet at my house in Pedro Point and someone else said they'd chair it. We came up with a name and got a ballot issue.'"

The grassroots organization was Citizens Alliance for Tunnel Solution. Measure T promoted a tunnel as the right choice environmentally to solve the issue of Devil's Slide. In November of 1996, 74 percent of San Mateo County voters voted in favor of the tunnel.

"My mother was very helpful in clearing a path to make the tunnel happen," Joane said. "She had looked at a Caltrans map, which had been used to justify not building the tunnel, and she discovered a mistake, and proved that it was wrong. They had to correct the map at the state level. That was one of her big triumphs regarding that project."

Indeed, Lydia's letter writing to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) was so significant that a number of her letters are included in the June 29, 1995 Caltrans, U.S. Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration prepared: *"The Devil's Slide, 'Final' Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement / Environmental Impact Report for the proposed project 'Route 1 from Half Moon Bay Airport to Linda Mar Boulevard, Pacifica.'"*

One of those letters from Lydia is included here:

*To the State of California Department of Transportation.*

*Comments for the Devil's Slide Supplemental EIS:*

*Please include photographs showing the Bypass as it will appear from a city of Pacifica perspective. Not one Exhibit represented the "simulation of proposed construction" as it would appear from the city of Pacifica. There should be a photograph showing the saddle cut looking directly South from Pacifica, in the same way it is shown in Exhibit 12 in the FEIS (looking directly North at Pacifica). Exhibit 18 is not satisfactory as it appears to foreshorten the Bypass (marked preferred alignment) and it shows very little of the saddle cut as it would appear from Pacifica. This picture is obviously an aerial photo taken from over the Pacific Ocean, and very few Pacificans would have to look at THIS view every day.*

*Exhibit 15 shows Shamrock Ranch and Linda Mar School, but does not show the real picture would be seen from Pacifica as it is taken from about the same spot as Exhibit 18, over the coast. It does not show the face of the deepest fill on Shamrock Ranch, only the very top edge (opposite the "original limits of work" arrow).*

*Altogether there is a very strong feeling in Pacifica that we have been ignored in the whole EIS. The effects of the Bypass on San Pedro Creek, a Steelhead breeding area, are hardly mentioned, but many pages are devoted to Martini Creek, which has no resident fish population. The effects of the noise on Pacifica residents and on Linda Mar School (less than 1,000 feet from the Bypass by Caltrans maps) has been completely ignored in the sound tests. The effect of the highway noise on animals in the Park is given major importance, but Pacificans apparently can put up with any volume of sound, whether sleeping or studying. Please correct the oversight of the Pacifica area.*

*The FEIS left out the only Draft EIS map that showed the City Limits of Pacifica. The City Limits and the proposed Bypass right of way are never shown on the same map. If this were done, it would be obvious how far inland and how close to this city the Bypass would be. The R/W even enters the Pacifica City Limits along the banks of a branch of San Pedro Creek. Please include a map showing the City Limits, McNee State Park boundary, and the proposed R/W of the Bypass in the same exhibit. The maps included in the Sound Supplement were incorrect in the location of the City Limits and the Park Boundary and the R/W outside the Park was totally ignored. The McNee State Park boundary has been corrected by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. There should be a map reflecting these various lines accurately. Please include it in the Supplementary EIS.*

*Exhibit 9 in the FEIS has the directional arrow pointed incorrectly. The picture is useless as a representation of the Bypass as there are no points of reference shown clearly enough to be identified. Is the saddle cut shown? It is the area between the two mountains, but it is not labeled. This mislabeled photo is the only Pacifica Photo in the set. (Shamrock Ranch is not within the Pacifica City Limits.)*

*Please give more consideration to How Pacifica will be affected by the building of the Devil's Slide Bypass in the supplemental EIS.*

*Sincerely,*

*Lydia A. Azevedo*



Caltrans, Google Image, Devil's Slide Tunnel, October 31, 2011.

\* \* \*

"I think what made my parents' marriage such a good marriage was they both loved knowledge, history, community involvement, exploring together and getting to know the world," Joane said.

"Why did they like living in Pacifica? Joane continued. "My mom was pretty flexible; she could love wherever she was, and put down roots. She always said that she didn't miss places, she missed people.

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**Interested, active and giving ~ The story of Pacifica's Lydia Azevedo (page 18)**

They were able to afford a house in Pacifica, so that is where they settled, and she built her life there and loved the people there. It was the people. My dad loved it for the people, and the views of the ocean, and the history just waiting for him to discover it, and so on. He moved around a lot when he was a kid, so being able to settle down and cement his roots in one place was a big deal for him."



**Just after their daughter Joane's wedding in 1997, Lydia and Paul enjoy a pint at Oktoberfest in Munich.**

In July of 1998, through his "Reactor" column, Paul asked readers to list the many organizations "who've been an important part of Pacifica over the years," "that have been cherished by their members." His goal was to include this in a comprehensive history he and several others – Bill Drake, Karl Baldwin, Helen James and Clara MacDonald – were in the process of preparing for the Pacifica Historical Society. In his column, he answered his question as well.

"As I thought of how to answer my own question," Paul wrote, "it reminded me of how important to Lydia and me, and to our kids, have been the various organizations we've been involved with over the years, starting with the Historical Society itself. Pacifica 4H was helpful to my kids, in more ways than I can count. The Pacifica Co-operative Nursery School, the Alternative Class, the American Association of University Women, Pacifica Rotary, the Pacifica Friends of the Library, the Pacifica Democrats, the late lamented Linda Mar Neighborhood Organization – all have meant a great deal to me and my family at one time or another."

On December 26, 2003, Lydia and Paul celebrated their 43rd anniversary. On May 9, 2004, Paul suffered a fatal heart attack while the couple was vacationing in Chicago. Paul was 73.

Lydia moved to Fremont the following year, where three of her children lived with their families.

"For the next five years, she lived in the historic district of Niles which she loved," her children would later write, "in part, because her mother had regaled her with stories about train rides from Oakland to Niles for picnics in the canyon." Eventually Lydia moved in with Mike and his family.

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Interested, active and giving ~ The story of Pacifica's Lydia Azevedo (page 19)

She had some difficult times. A year after Paul died, Lydia, then 75, was diagnosed with colon cancer. Major surgeries followed and a long stay in the hospital.

"Still, she recovered enough to go to Burning Man, with Martin, at the age of 79," Joane said, "and with Rena she went to Vegas and Oklahoma. She had mild cognitive decline, and a lot of medical issues, but she was able to charm just about anyone with her enthusiasm."



At Paul's funeral, May, 2004, clockwise from bottom left: Martin, Rena, Lydia, Mike and Joane.

"Martin had gone up to Burning Man ahead of time," Mike said. "My mom, always the optimist, had planned to take a bus from Fremont to San Francisco, and then transfer from the transit bus to the 'Green Tortoise,' a hippie-style bus with beds and a light atmosphere. I was a little concerned about the 'transfer' part of this plan. I had already talked to my wife about just driving my mom to San Francisco. When my mom arrived at our house, she was clearly exhausted already and it was obvious – we were going to San Francisco. So we drove her to the Green Tortoise bus terminal, I grabbed all her stuff, pinned a note to her jacket explaining who she was and who anyone could call with any issues."

"I walked with her to the bus stop," Mike continued, "and found a couple of very approachable people there, introduced my mom and said she'd be joining them for the trip. I asked them to watch out for her. Martin met her on the other end of this journey and I'm told that she essentially got a hug from everyone on the bus as she'd made friends with just about everybody."

Her children were with her in the days leading up to her death.

"I had discussed death with her years earlier and she had said, 'Just remember, I've had fun.'"

At peace, Lydia Adrienne Dunham Azevedo, mother of four, grandmother of four, left this world on June 28, 2011.

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**Interested, active and giving ~ The story of Pacifica's Lydia Azevedo (page 20)**

What might Lydia have thought of all that is going on in the world now – the pandemic, Black Lives Matter, the Me Too movement?

"Regarding the pandemic, she would have been concerned, and very angry about the current occupant of the White House," Joane said. "Regarding Black Lives Matter, she was an activist in various ways. She had concerns about the Black Panthers, but she absolutely supported them, particularly their efforts with school lunch programs and WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children.) Of course, she was not going to encourage riots, but she understood them. She saw discrimination happen right in front of her eyes when she and her friends could not get a table at a restaurant because one or more of them was African-American. Regarding the Me Too movement, she was pro-choice because she worked as a tutor for teen girls who were unable to attend school because they were pregnant due to rape and incest, and their parents were forcing them to bear their child and raise their child as their sibling. She was passionate about women's rights and equality. She would have been on the correct side of history."



**Lydia Adrienne Dunham Azevedo, August 13, 1929 ~ June 28, 2011.**



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

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