

Bartlett's News Briefs



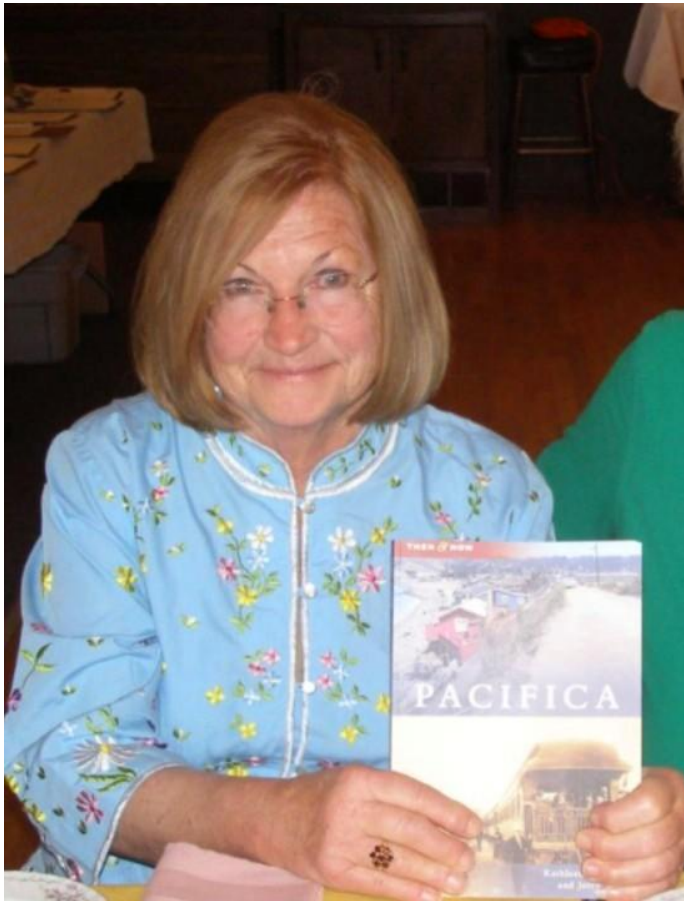
NOT JUST ANYBODY

community-sponsored stories

by Pacifican Jean Bartlett, longtime Bay Area News Group writer

KATHLEEN MANNING ~ PACIFICA'S GO-GETTER HISTORY QUEEN ~ A REMEMBRANCE

July 1, 1939 – October 11, 2026



Pacifican Kathleen Manning along with her co-author Pacifican Jerry Crow, not pictured, attended a book signing of their work, "Pacifica (Then & Now)," published by Arcadia Publishing. (Jean Bartlett 2010 photo.)

Longtime Pacifican Kathleen Manning had many titles throughout her life, with the word "proud" in front of all of them, including: daughter; sister; wife; stepmom; aunt; relative; friend; University of Detroit recipient of a bachelor's degree in history; Wayne State University recipient of a master's degree in social studies with a minor in economics; grades 7 through 12 teacher of American history, European history, economics and government; owner of Prints Old & Rare / Manning's Books (sellers of rare antique maps, prints, charts, engravings, books and ephemera, and still very much in business); author of multiple books on Pacifica and San Francisco history; a many-year President of the San Francisco History Association and a longtime member; a many-year President of the Pacifica Historical Society and a longtime member;

producer and creator of the multi-award winning community television show, "Footprints of Pacifica"; Professional Pacifica Historical Society Rummage Sale Rummager; Constant Fighter in the Ring to save the Little Brown Church (done), Pacifica Jack Cheese (done) and now the last car of the Ocean Shore Railroad, Car 1409, (which is getting done).

Kathleen had quite a fun sense of humor. On one occasion, she and I were laughing over what her official title should be, and she thought "Queen" had a nice ring to it. And so to honor all that she has truly done for this city, as well as her love of the silly, she is hence christened: Kathleen Manning, Pacifica's Go-Getter History Queen.

Kathleen died on Sunday, October 11, 2026, from complications of pneumonia. Undoubtedly she has opinions on this as her things-to-still-get-done list is quite the tome.

* * *

Kathleen Helen Manning was born in Detroit, Michigan on July 1, 1939, to Frank and Helen (Gooder) Manning. She was the fourth, and the last living, of the couple's six children: Mary, born in 1933; twins Jane and Joan, born in 1935; Kathleen, born in 1939; Frank, born in 1945; and Jay, born in 1948. Her family nickname was and remains, "Kitty." As to her lifelong love of trains, and her heroic efforts to save Car 1409, the last passenger car of the Ocean Shore Railroad, one could say that was in her DNA:

"My father was a civil engineer," Kathleen told me in a sort-of interview chat back in 2018. "He worked for the Pere Marquette, a Michigan railroad. They were merged with Chesapeake and Ohio Railway (1947). My dad, a graduate of Michigan State, was Chief Engineer of Bridges and Structures. When we were little, he would take us to see depots and ore carriers. I thought it was interesting. After the Second World War, we got a new car, a Ford, and my dad would take us about five miles to where the train went by—the Streamliner. We would wave at the engineer. The Streamliner was a fancy train with an art deco look.

"During the summertime, I rode the Streamliner. My paternal grandmother lived in Grand Rapids and I would go visit her. My parents would put me on the train and it was about a three-hour ride. As a little kid it was a big deal."

Kathleen's paternal grandfather was chief engineer of the railroad. Earlier on he had supervised the building of trains running through Oklahoma. Her Uncle Fred was chief engineer of the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad. Her Great Uncle Frank had worked as an accountant for the Grand Trunk Western Railroad.

Kathleen's mom was a nurse. She was working at the Women's Hospital in Detroit when she met Kathleen's dad.

"My mother was a very loving, nice lady," Kathleen noted. "She was religious but not overboard. She was Catholic. She always tried to teach us to be tolerant of other people. She never was prejudiced against people at all. We just weren't exposed to many different people where we grew up. Detroit was pretty segregated but my mother always went to the Detroit Round Table of Catholics, Jews and Protestants (now known as the Michigan Roundtable for Just Communities). She made things for our neighbors. For Easter she would make these lamb cakes and we would take them all around the neighborhood. She made tons of Christmas cookies and took them around." (Note: Kathleen was famous in Pacifica for delivering cookies to friends and neighbors during the holidays, or during a life difficulty.)

Kathleen said many times that she really had a wonderful childhood and of all those who influenced her during those years, her brothers and sisters were at the top of that list. She talked about them back in 2018:

"Mary and I shared a room growing up and we could sleep through anything. She taught me sound sleeping by working and typing at night! She took good care of me. She taught me to read and bought me special clothes. With her first job she took me to 'Peck & Peck' (a retailer of private label women's wear) and allowed me to get ANY dress I wanted! She was kind and thoughtful until the day she died.

"Jane was always so much fun. We laughed a lot in my family. She was very smart—she was the director at Shapiro School of Nursing, she always had lots of friends and she LOVED to party. She was generous and kind. She actually let my friend, Jean Iavelli, and me move into her home when she was a newlywed! She loved show tunes.

"Joan was quieter but also very smart and quick-witted. She always won at Scrabble. She was not afraid to strike out and do things. From 1963 through 1964, she worked as a clinical laboratory technician at Sørlandet Hospital Kristiansand in Norway. She was the first of the siblings to leave home and move to San Francisco. She welcomed me and my friends when we would descend on Union Street.

"Frank was always good looking and very bright. He was good at school, good at sports, and always fun. We loved sitting at the table in the breakfast nook making silly, rude plans. He kept his sense of adventure into adulthood, with his Asian and Mexican adventures, and he always kept his sense of humor. As time passed, the magic of 'Einstein's Theory of Relatives Birthdays' occurred and he actually became older than me! He accepted his fate with grace.

"Jay was the artist in the family. He was also very clever and fun. When Jay was in high school, he created so many funny, funny booklets and letters about my life. I used to take them to the teacher's lounge and to my friends where they were cherished! I still have them. He was always funny and outrageous. He lived life to the fullest in San Francisco."

Kathleen's love of history began in high school, sophomore year, in Sister Mary Gerald's class.

"She was a very good teacher and I think more than anybody else, she made me appreciate history. Her teaching approach was very new. She taught us history by having us participate in it by reliving it. By having your students become part of different historical events, you teach empathy. This was so smart and a real mindblower back in those days. This was long before there were any Renaissance Faires and we were totally enthralled.

"We put on a trial for King Charles I – whether he should have been beheaded or not. We went and did all this crazy research and at a Catholic high school, with 50 kids in your class, you are really not exposed to all these things. I played the prosecuting attorney. I remember a friend of mine, Theresa Rioux, was Charles I. That made me like history. It didn't necessarily make me want to be a teacher. But when I ended up teaching, I tried to do some of the things that she did. I think that is why I liked the Sam Mazza Castle tours (fundraising events for the Pacifica Historical Society), and why I came up with using members of the Pacifica Historical Society as reenactors. It all goes back to Sister Mary Gerald – how you can really like history by being empathetic and trying to put yourself in someone else's shoes. She made a permanent impact."

Kathleen met the man of her dreams, Bill Hall, in late 1967/early 1968 at Shakey's Pizza Parlor in Detroit.

"I was there with my girlfriends and one of them knew one of his friends and they invited him and his cronies to come along. Bill was a big real estate operator, not with a real estate office, but with property. He built houses. Bill had a very interesting career. When he was in his 20s, he was vice president of a U.S. airline that flew internationally.

"Bill was eight years older than me, but yes, I would say the feeling was like, 'Some Enchanted Evening,' when we first met, which is why I can't remember what kind of pizza we had! We definitely had a height difference (Bill was 6 ft. 6 and Kathleen stood at 5 ft. 3) – but we both liked the same things: history, geography, economics and travel." (Bill had a degree in economics, as well as in geography, and he became an antiquarian print expert.)

Immediately after that, the couple moved to San Francisco in 1972. In 1990, the couple moved to Pacifica.

"All these years later, we still get along like two peas in a pod," Kathleen noted in 2018.

"Early on Bill and I decided that we would like to be in the art business in some way and we both liked old prints. We wanted to do wholesale and deal with other dealers. We wanted to have freedom, and we wanted to travel. In the early part of our business we did do a lot of traveling. We have been to every state but Alaska and every city of any size in each state. Back then you could really go treasure hunting."

They also traveled many times to Europe and their clients were from all over the world.

To explain this business the couple created back in 1973, the following information was pulled from the "About" section of their website in 2018:

"Manning's Books and Prints, printsoldandrare.com, is the premier supplier of antique maps and prints in America and has one of the largest collections in the world. The owners, Bill Hall and Kathleen Manning, began collecting and selling antique maps, prints, books and ephemera nearly fifty years ago and their knowledge of map and print makers from the 1500s to the turn of the century is deep and insightful. Many institutions, museums, historical societies, universities, and many individual collectors and dealers acquire their maps or prints from Manning's Books and Prints. For example, libraries and special collections, and government institutions are regular customers, in addition to the private collector with specific interests."

One of their maps was purchased for use in the opening credits of Francis Ford Coppola's "Bram Stoker's Dracula." The map is burned as the credits roll and Kathleen never knew whether they burned the actual map or just showed it and burned something else. "But it was theirs to burn," she would say.

Kathleen's business and historical knowledge made her a popular guest. In August of 2010, and joined by Jeanette Cool, Executive Director of the Sam Mazza Foundation, Kathleen was interviewed by CBS 5 "Eye On The Bay" correspondent and host Brian Hackney for a television segment featuring the history behind the ghosts of Pacifica's Sam Mazza Castle.

In 2018, she was a featured speaker at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) La Puerta de Oro–San Francisco Chapter. She used maps, all of them original, as teaching tools. One, of Nuremberg, Germany, dates back to 1468. Another was a cartoon map of San Mateo, California, created by Ruth Taylor for the 1939/1940 San Francisco Golden Gate International Exposition.

In November of 2022, Kathleen and her shop were featured in a three-part episode of the History Channel television series, "Pawn Stars do America."

In 2025, Kathleen was interviewed by KPIX | CBS News Bay Area to report on "the Pacifica Historical Society's incredible effort to restore the historic Ocean Shore Railroad railcar."

It was in 2004 that Kathleen became involved with saving the last passenger car of the Ocean Shore Railroad. That's when Jeff Millerick, a railcar restoration expert and Preservation Chair of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Historical Society, discovered a dilapidated old railcar while walking along the former railroad right-of-way in Sebastopol, California. It was in the backyard of a private residence, between two oak trees and had recently been trimmed of its massive camouflaging overgrowth. It looked beyond repair and was slated to be destroyed in two weeks.

Jeff called in railroad historian and OSRR expert John Schmale to identify the car. Nearly a skeleton, it nevertheless revealed an old grandeur, and above the door, the numbers "1409" were faintly visible. Racing against time, John contacted Kathleen, who arranged for the car to be loaded on a flatbed truck and relocated to Pacifica—a herculean effort in itself. Since then, restoration and fundraising has been ongoing, with Kathleen and the late Shirlee Gibbs leading the massive effort on behalf of the PHS. Their dedication not only involved extensive fundraising, but it also included assembling the right team of experts to do the craftsmen work needed. Additionally, they had to tackle the mountains of city paperwork. And all of this they did to restore this once-beautiful Holman passenger car – which traveled our city so long ago – to its former glory.

Along with Kathleen's extensive involvement with the renovation of Car 1409, and the restoration of the Little Brown Church—a story unto itself, there is also her dedication to the San Francisco History Association.

"In July 1982, a group of collectors exhibiting their San Francisco history collections at the first San Francisco Fair at the Moscone Center got to talking about their shared passion and decided to form a group, originally called the San Francisco History Collectors Association," said Sandy Cavallaro, Kathleen's niece. "Kathleen was one of those founding collectors, displaying part of her collection of San Francisco maps and prints. As the group grew to include history buffs as well as collectors, it became the San Francisco History Association. Kathleen later served as the Association's president and started its grant program, which gave small awards to schools, organizations, and individuals for projects such as oral histories, exhibits, and neighborhood histories."

Finally to round out Ms. Manning's résumé, this is a short list of Kathleen's numerous published works: photo author "San Francisco, Early Prints 1848-1900," Windgate Press, 2002; co-author "San Francisco's Ocean Beach" (Images of America) with Jim Dickson, Arcadia Publishing, 2003; co-author "Half Moon Bay" (Images of America) with Jerry Crow, Arcadia Publishing, 2005; historic captions writer (San Francisco: Views of the Past & Present) with George Ross Jezek, photographer and Angela M. Alioto, introduction, published, 2007; and co-author "Pacifica (Then & Now)" with Jerry Crow, Arcadia Publishing, 2010.

There is too much to report on Kathleen's life in one article, but it is an absolute to say that Kathleen and her husband Bill, who passed on July 29, 2019, enjoyed every bit of their life together.

"Really history, and the saving of it, has played a huge role in my life," Kathleen said in 2018. "That and a wonderful husband and family – I haven't even mentioned all of my lovely nieces and nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, and great friends – just so many interesting people that I know and have known. There are so many to be thankful for."

Friends and family are invited to gather for a celebration of Kathleen's life on Thursday, October 22, 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., at the Pacifica Coastsides Museum at the Little Brown Church, 1850 Francisco Boulevard, Pacifica.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to help restore Pacifica's Ocean Shore Railroad Car 1409 on the GoFundMe page titled: "Help Restore Pacifica's Ocean Shore Railroad Car 1409."

Following this page, a few friends and family members of Kathleen's have offered some thoughts on Pacifica's beloved Go-Getter History Queen.

~ **Jean Bartlett, author**
October 15, 2026

Longtime biographer and Bay Area newsgroup writer Jean Bartlett was recognized by the Board of Supervisors, County of San Mateo, for "her writing that connects community and preserves local history." She can be contacted through her website, Bartlett's Biographies. This story was sponsored by Pacifican Sue Digre.

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A FEW COMMENTS FROM THE KATHLEEN MANNING FOREVER FAN CLUB, IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER, AND WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THERE WILL BE SO MANY MORE COMMENTS. THIS IS JUST A BEGINNING.

"Kathleen was a force. She will never, ever be forgotten. She was kind. She was intelligent and smart, and she could make a way out of no way. She was dedicated to preserving history, and we were blessed to have her in Pacifica, preserving our history. Our restoration gift to her would be to get that last car of the Ocean Shore Railroad, which she worked on for over 20 years, done!—**Maxine Hines, friend**

"Aunt Kitty took me to see my very first motion picture at the theater. We saw "Mary Poppins" with popcorn and pop, of course. Since then, even to today, she had that mischievous happy-go-lucky Mary Poppins spirit whenever we got together – never a dull moment!"—**Steve Merring, nephew**

"Kathleen was one of the very first people I met when setting up an office in the Mazza Castle. It was 2008, the centenary year of the historic building in Pacifica and I had no idea how to celebrate that. But she did. She invited me to a meeting with the Pacifica Historical Society, a most committed group of people, and the rest, as they say, is history. Closed for decades, Kathleen created the first open houses in the Castle followed by years of historic tours bringing literally thousands of people through the doors. Kathleen made things happen and she was my beautiful introduction to this town of Pacifica."—**Jeanette Cool, friend, Sam Mazza Foundation Executive Director**

"Car 1409 would not be in such an amazing state of renovation today in our town without Kathleen Manning. She herself was always the epitome of humbleness, kindness and collaboration. She herself was a unique Pacifica treasure. I'm sure Kathleen and Shirlee Gibbs will continue to energize us to continue with the same vision and energy to appreciate and preserve our local history."—**Sue Digre, friend, met through volunteer work with the PHS**

"We met because I interviewed Kathleen and Bill about their business, Prints Old & Rare, for the Pacifica Tribune in 2008 – and a forever friendship began. Kathleen was smart, exceptionally capable and interesting, very giving of her heart and her time, and so much fun to be silly with. Because of her dedication to understanding the importance of saving history, the generations that follow will have a better understanding of our world and theirs."—**Jean Bartlett, friend**

"I will always treasure the many memories I've made with Kathleen. Her strength, knowledge, perseverance and passion were something great to behold. She loved being involved as well as bringing people together to fulfill her dreams. It has been a pleasure working side by side with her all of these years. She will be truly missed."—**Melinda Lindner, friend and employee**

"Post retirement from AT&T, I had called Kathleen for a type of fresh air, outdoor task for my mother and myself—we wished to volunteer to help restore Ocean Shore Passenger Car 1409. The rest, as they say, is history."—**Deidra Crow, friend**

"I met Kathleen shortly after moving to Pacifica in 1992, when she was kind enough to give me a discount on a print I bought at her shop, Prints Old & Rare. We developed a close acquaintance over the next seven years when she followed me as Pacifica Historical Society president. She held that job for 10 years in which time she and her husband, Bill Hall, generously paid the expenses for moving the last Ocean Shore RR passenger car to Pacifica where it is an ongoing restoration project."—**Jerry Crow, friend and co-author**

"It is the end of an era with Kathleen gone, and also with her husband Bill gone. With Kathleen's passing, so many people will have to change their lives because she did that much. She was an incredibly giving person; always giving so much of herself. I will always remember her."—**Dave Alonzo, friend and employee**

"Aunt Kitty was one of a kind. She loved history and collected everything from antiques to quirky junk, usually for a laugh. She could connect with anyone from any walk of life, and she made everyone feel like family. She was the heart of ours, and I will miss laughing and working alongside her more than I can say."—**Sandy Cavallaro, niece**