

Eileen Baldwin, World Adventurer

Written by **Jean Bartlett**, July, 2017

(A Pacifica Historical Society Project)



Jean Bartlett photo

PHS farewell party for Eileen & Karl ~ Pacifica Coastside Museum at the Little Brown Church, June 25, 2017.

Eileen Baldwin is seated in front of one of the large picture windows in the Pacifica home she and her husband Karl bought in 1960. Eileen and Karl have been married since July 29, 1951. They moved to Pacifica in 1957, shortly after the city incorporated on November 22 of that same year. Karl served as the City of Pacifica's First City Manager until 1967, when he took a job to work as a public administration advisor with the U.S. Agency for International Development. The job sent him to Vietnam and a year later, Eileen and their two children joined him overseas. The couple would not return to their hillside home in Pacifica's Pedro Point neighborhood until Karl retired in 1982. When they returned, Eileen knew textiles and fabrics and backstrap weaving, and she filled their home with carvings, weaves and art from their years in Southeast Asia.

Two hundred and forty feet above the Pacific Ocean, looking out to the trees that she and Karl planted – which now rise to meet the top of their two-story home – Eileen reflected on the view.

"From our windows, we've seen just about everything: whales, all kinds of birds, and Karl and our daughter Liz have seen dolphins," Eileen said. "We feed the vultures here. I've always fed the vultures. You're not really supposed to make friends with them but we don't make friends, we just give them food. We give them hot dogs. Hot dogs are cheap. The vultures don't live in our tree. They live maybe a mile away. But they smell meat because that's how they live. They know when we put the hot dogs out. We watch them from inside. If we moved towards them, they would probably fly away.

"Ravens are different. They will let you come closer. You can get within a few feet of them. We give them whole eggs occasionally. Our original ravens we could almost handfeed because they were so tame. Ravens are very interesting birds. They are not just big black birds that come and gobble up everything. They are family oriented. They have young and they bring their young here and they feed them here. I believe the ravens live above us on the hill, though I don't know where."



Jean Bartlett photo

While Eileen was being interviewed at home on July 11, 2017, an old friend perched outside the window.



Jean Bartlett photo

Whether overcast or all blue skies, this is a typical view from inside Eileen and Karl Baldwin's home on Olympian Way. Taken July 11, 2017.

As Eileen and I chat, one by one, the family cats can be seen observing us from the safety of their cat lookout points.

"Timmy was a rescue cat and we couldn't separate him from his mother Daphne, so we brought her home too. Daisy is also a rescue. I believe she originally came from Chicago.

"I grew up with cats and I have always liked cats. During the Second World War, everyone in England who could work was put to work. My mother worked in a munitions factory, a big one. When she went to work there were all these cats that were put in this factory to keep the rats down. But they were always having kittens because they were never neutered. My mother used to find the kittens and bring them home and on the weekends she would go around the neighborhood trying to find homes for kittens. She always did that and we always had cats in the house. We didn't feed them cat food like we do here. We fed them what we ate. Of course with most of her children serving in the War in some capacity, and my father mostly in London, my mother did the majority of the cat caretaking on her own.

"Oh, I've lead a pretty boring life to date," Eileen laughed.

Eileen is the daughter of Sydney Arthur Cousins and Naomi Eliza (Ball) Cousins and is one of seven children. She is also the great niece of mezzotint engraver Samuel Cousins – an eminent figure in the history of British engravers. Eileen grew up in Bexleyheath, a London borough in the historic county of Kent.

"My mother had three sets of twins. Joan and Paul were the first twins, and then my mother had Margaret. She also had a child that did not survive. My twin brother Dennis and I came along next, on October 17, 1923. The youngest were my twin brothers Peter and Tony. Peter and Tony still live in London. Of course I am still alive as well. The three of us are the last of the seven siblings."

Records show that on November 18, 1923, Eileen Rosemary Cousins and Dennis Edward James Cousins, children of Naomi and Sydney Cousins of 62 Slade Green Road, were baptized by E. B. Whalley at Crayford at St. Augustine, Slade Green, Kent, England.



Eileen Cousins was baptized at St. Augustine, Slade Green, Kent, England, on November 18, 1923.

"My father was head chef of the Carlton Club in London."

The Carlton Club is a gentleman's, members-only club. It was founded in 1832 as the original home of the Conservative Party and was located on the south side of Pall Mall and the west side of Pall Mall Court until it was bombed and destroyed in the Second World War. The Club then moved to 69 St. James's Street where it remains to this day. Club members have included: Winston Churchill, Benjamin Disraeli and Margaret Thatcher. The latter was deemed an "honorary man" so that she might join the men in the club's men-only bar.

"My father lived on the job. He came home every Wednesday and stayed the night. Then he went back to London. He cooked for a lot of people in high government and he was a very good cook. He was also frugal too, though with seven children that is not a bad way to be."

"Am I a good cook? I'm okay. I don't cook at all now."

"Yes, she's a good cook," her husband Karl stated.

"I like food from all over the world," Eileen noted. "I wasn't a vegetarian when we were travelling. But when we came back here, we took a drive, I think to Las Vegas. On the way back, where we came into California, there was this terrible, terrible smell and we had a friend with us and she knew the area. I said, 'What's that smell?' And she said, 'You'll see.' We got down the road and there was this huge compound of Black Angus cattle getting ready to be killed. It was getting dark. I looked at those poor cows and I said, 'I'm not going to do anything to hurt you.' After that I never ate another piece of beef, or chicken, or fish. I won't eat anything that has a face."

"One thing I've never given up and never plan to is tea. I do like a good cup of tea with milk. Even during wartime we always had tea."

In a recent study, it was noted that the British consume about 60 billion cups of tea a year, which averages out to about 900 cups a year for every man, woman and child. During the Second World War the benefits of tea – which included, bonding with others over a cup, hydration, and providing energy – were considered a morale necessity for both soldiers and civilians. In fact, in 1942 the British government purchased all the black tea available on the European market in an effort to help supply their troops with warmth, courage and camaraderie. During air raids, tea was often brought to individuals huddling in shelters by Air Raid Wardens and women from local auxiliaries.

"It was a terrible war," Eileen said. "We hated Hitler. We hated what was happening. We, my family, were lucky we weren't hit. We had shrapnel in the roof and we had our windows blown out but that was all. Other people lost their homes. I had friends killed in the War. Some died going to the store."

"The War was hard on the mothers. That was who it was hard on. It was hard on my mother. My father remained in London. He had to work. I think the hardest thing was sleeping in the shelter during the bad times. That was our life for a while. While the War was going on, I decided to join the RAF (Royal Air Force). I was 18. That was 1941."

"That was 10 years before we were married," Eileen's husband added, clearly still impressed with his wife's wartime service.

"Everybody wanted to do something," Eileen recalled. "My eldest brother Paul was in the Army, in the desert. My twin brother Dennis was in the Army. He was stationed in Burma. In fact he was shot in Burma, but he recovered. My youngest brother Peter got on a ship and went to Russia. I think they were bringing oil back. He was a cabin boy. He was just a kid, maybe 15. My sister Margaret got married and

she stayed at home. My oldest sister Joan also joined the RAF. Tony, Peter's twin, stayed at home. After the War, Tony did two years of service.

"I loved the Air Force. I was stationed in several places, including in London at Eisenhower's headquarters at Camp Griffiss. I was there for three months. The camp was set up at one of London's Royal Parks and it is right across from Hampton Court Palace. It was a lovely spot. One of the nice things about being stationed there was that we got American rations, which included lots of chocolate and lots of cigarettes. I didn't smoke. I gave my cigarettes away."

U.S. Camp Griffiss was at Bushy Park and it was from here that General Eisenhower planned the D-Day Landings.



The SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) Memorial Plaque in Bushy Park.

"After that I was sent to a bombers' station and that was more interesting. That was in in the middle of England in Huntingdon. It wasn't dangerous for people who did my type of work, but of course it was dangerous for our fighter pilots. We were not far from an American airbase that had fortresses. (The Flying Fortress was the nickname for the Boeing B-17, a four-engine heavy bomber.) They flew those fortresses over and did daylight raids. We used to watch them go out and come back in. I had a clerical job. It wasn't much but it was needed. I worked at a small station but our location had operational parts as well as headquarters.

"Our planes used to go out at nighttime and they were all almost all bombers, though we had a few fighter planes. I was there two or three years. It was hard emotionally at times. You got to know people, say 'Hi' and all that. Then they were gone the next day. We all knew people who didn't come back. Some came back much later. They were prisoners of war."

Eileen spent a total of seven years in the Royal Air Force.

"After the War, I posted myself overseas because I was working in overseas posting," Eileen laughed. "I decided I wanted to go to Germany or Egypt, but Egypt more so because it was warmer than Germany! I loved Egypt. I really did. I was there two and a half years, in Cairo, the best place on Earth."

Eileen was in Egypt when King Farouk was in power. Farouk was the tenth ruler of Egypt from the Muhammad Ali Dynasty. He ruled from April of 1936 to July of 1952 when he was overthrown by military coup.

"When I was in Egypt, it was no longer under British rule but it was still protected by the British. Then it got to the point that Egypt did not want to be protected by the British. We had riots while I was there. We had people trying to burn our building down. But it wasn't scary. They had one day they would demonstrate and then it was over. And we knew when they were going to demonstrate. We were told. It was very organized.

"Egypt is a beautiful country and absolutely fascinating: the pyramids, the Valley of the Kings, the ancient with the new. Our administrative jobs with the RAF were very easy. Mostly we were just there to have a presence of the British. After Cairo, I went to work in the Canal Zone, near the Suez Canal. The whole experience of Egypt was thrilling. I loved being overseas. I was in a foreign country and I like foreign countries. I never had a problem."

Eileen and Karl's daughter Liz, in from Washington State, calls upstairs to suggest her mother talk about when she was part of motorcycle racing around the pyramids. Apparently she was so tiny that she sat on the back to serve as ballast.

"Oh, it wasn't much," Eileen laughed. "Though I did weigh 112 pounds." Nor does Eileen say much, frankly anything, about when she used to hitchhike on planes, or let loose as a skilled player on the cricket field. "I'm saving that for the book I'll write one day. Though I will tell you that several RAF friends of mine and I – and we really weren't hitchhiking – decided one day we wanted a little vacation and we got one. We used our charm to jump on a plane to travel from the Suez Canal to Beirut because that was where the pilot was going and it sounded interesting. It was on an American plane, a Dakota. (Their pilot was Lt. Col. Robert C. Brown, then the military air attaché to Beirut.) After a little while in Beirut we talked him into dropping us off in Cyprus, which was his next destination. From there, after a visit, we had to talk our way onto a boat back to an RAF Camp close to an Egyptian port and from there we caught a ride on a truck back to Cairo. We were only a little late.

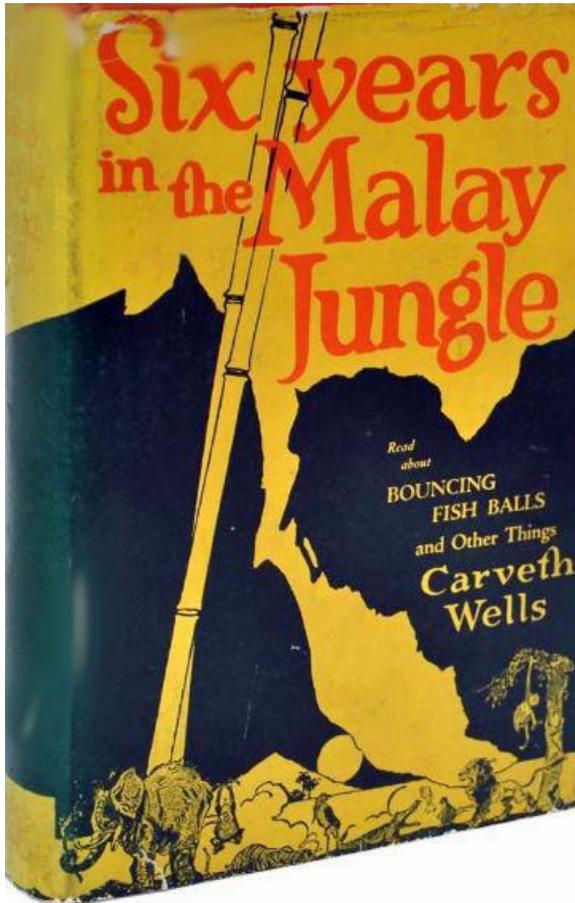
"I really liked being in the Air Force. But when I returned home from Egypt there was a different type of girl coming in. They weren't much younger than me but they didn't go in for the same reasons. By then I was a sergeant and I could have stayed in but I decided it wasn't the same. I became a civilian again."

Home a few months, Eileen decided she would like to see the wheat fields of Canada. After the War, some of Canada's industries were suffering from a labor shortage. The Federal and Ontario Governments setup information offices in London, England, to recruit young people.

"They invited 7,000 people from Britain to come over. I had a couple of girlfriends from England there and so I headed to Canada. I worked as bookkeeper. First I worked in Toronto, and then in London, Ontario. After about two and a half years, and with a friend of mine from Scotland, we decided we would go to work in Bermuda, because Bermuda was British for one thing. We found out we could get in immediately and there were jobs with oil companies and things of that nature. We got ready to go and a week or so before we were due to leave, my friend backed out. She decided she wanted to stay in Canada. I went anyway.

Eileen spent six weeks in Bermuda and early on she became friendly with an American woman who was married to an English explorer.

"Her husband was an older man, very nice. She had been married before and had grown children. They suggested that I come back with them to California because it would be a wonderful opportunity for me to see California. We got on very well but I decided I was ready to go back to England when my six weeks were up."



These friends, Eileen mentioned, were Carveth and Zetta Wells. Realizing that Eileen might understate things, I looked her friends up. Born in Cornwall, England, and related to Frederic Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, Carveth Wells, originally a London University civil engineering professor, was sent by the British Government to do exploration work in the Malay Peninsula. He spent the first two years of those six years in "the densest jungle where his only companions were Malays." The last four years he was joined by his wife and together they made a study of the people as well as the wildlife, the latter which included: birds, plants, tigers, scorpions, tarantulas, pythons, monkeys, white elephants, black panthers and apes. When the couple returned, their illustrated lectures were top ticket draws all over the U.S. and Great Britain and would eventually make for a bestseller.

Together the Wells also wrote a book about their famous talking bird Raffles – a mynah – whose mother was killed in the Malay jungle when the couple was exploring there. They brought Raffles home. Apparently in 1944, Raffles was being paid \$500 for each appearance. Zetta Wells, equally as fascinating as her husband, was a successful radio and lecture manager before she met her husband. After they fell in

love and married, she decided to part with her American creature comforts, as necessary, to travel with Carveth to the ends of the earth. There would be many more books, lectures and eventually television appearances and films.

"After my six weeks in Bermuda, they said to me, 'Eileen, are you coming with us to California or not?' And I said, 'Well, I won't see California if I go back to England.' And so I went to California."

"Good thing," her husband Karl laughed.

"First I worked in San Francisco for a trucking company. I was doing bookkeeping on a machine. I worked there a short time and a man came in one day and he threw something on my desk and said, 'You have to join the union.' And I said, 'I don't have to join the union!' And he said, 'Well, I've got your job, if you don't join.' And I said, 'Okay, you can have my job.' And I quit there and then. It was because of the way he did it. It wasn't the union. I didn't know anything about the union. It was him. Then I went to work for Joseph Magnin."

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The story of Eileen Baldwin (page 8)

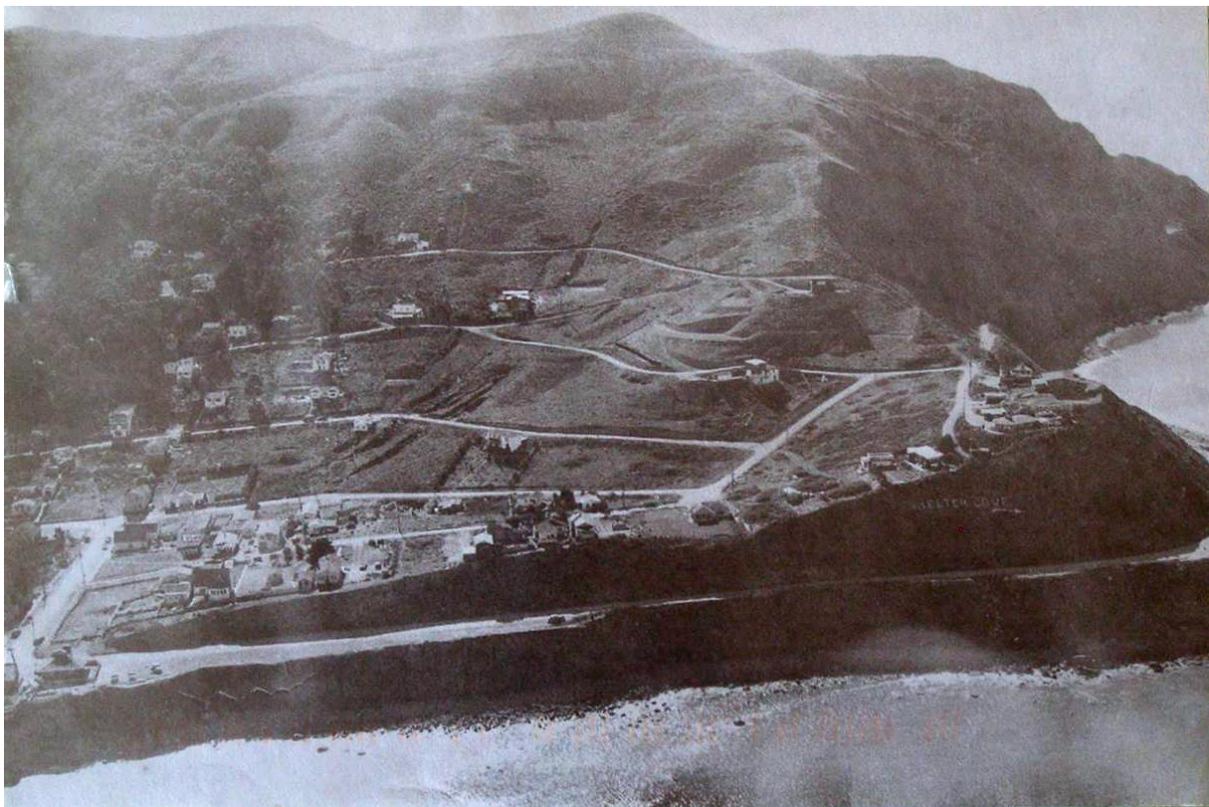
Joseph Magnin Co. was a high-end specialty department store founded in San Francisco, with branches all over California, including in San Mateo and Palo Alto. Eileen worked in a bookkeeping capacity in the office downstairs in San Mateo. At the same time, Karl was working as the assistant to San Mateo City Manager Arthur B. Sullivan.

"While I was in San Mateo, a friend of mine and went to the badminton court at the College of San Mateo. Karl was also there with a friend. My friend's husband worked with Karl and she had a dinner party and invited both of us. I didn't have any plans to meet someone. I was just traveling. In fact, I almost went back to England before I started working at Joseph Magnin. I always kept my ticket money home."

But Eileen Cousins said "yes" when Karl Baldwin asked her out on a date and six months later they married at his parents' home in Menlo Park, California.

"We lived near San Mateo Park in San Mateo while Karl worked for the city manager. Then we moved to Los Gatos when Karl was hired on as their first town manager. We stayed there until Karl was hired as Pacifica's first city manager in 1957. We lived in the Vallemar area of Pacifica first. It was a lovely neighborhood and we had very nice neighbors.

"We adopted our son Bruce out of San Francisco when we first moved to Pacifica. (Bruce was born on August 31, 1956.) Our daughter Liz came along in 1960 and we adopted her too. By then we had bought our home on Olympian Way and the kids loved it, and of course, we did too. I'll be sorry to say goodbye to our spectacular view when we move at the end of July, as well as all of the lovely people we've come to know here. Of course many of them are gone now, including most of my 'teapot' friends.



Pacifica Historical Society postcard

Olympian Way is the highest street in this photo of Pedro Point and the Baldwin home, look carefully, is at the end of that road.

"In the early days in Pacifica, there were so many English women here in Pacifica. My friend Pat started a club called The Teapots. Pat has since moved to Oregon, but at the time she wrote, I believe, the Society Column for the *Pacifica Tribune*. We were all homesick for England and the club was just a way to sit and chat over tea; maybe we had a picnic once a year. It went on for eight or nine years until Pat moved to Oregon and Karl and I took off for Southeast Asia.

"Bruce was 10 and Liz was 7 when we left to meet up with Karl in his overseas job. He went over the year before and settled in. That also gave me time to find a renter and empty the house. We arrived in 1968, though we went to Thailand rather than Vietnam where Karl was. The U.S. government did not want children in Vietnam. Although here it was the middle of the Vietnam War, you would think they would not want Karl or me either. But Karl felt that he was fairly safe, the work he was doing was interesting, and I did go over to visit him a few times in Saigon which I found to be a lovely city.

"It wasn't the first time the kids had gone on a big trip. When Karl and I married, my family did not come out from England because it was too expensive. Of course over the years, they did visit and when Karl and I and the kids were living overseas, we had to come home every two years and stay in the U.S. for 30 days. Not a problem at all. We would fly home or back by way of England and we had lovely visits with my family. However, Karl and I were married quite a few years before I went home to England. I brought Liz and Bruce along, and Liz was between 2 and 3, and Bruce was between 6 and 7. I took them on a train ride from Oakland across to New York and then we went to England by ship. We stayed in Bexleyheath long enough for me to put Bruce in school. It was so good to see my family. Poor Karl got so lonesome. "When are you coming home?"

After four months, Eileen decided it was time to head back. As she and her children were getting ready to get on the ship, one of her brother's asked, "Is Liz alright?"

"I said, 'Sure, she's alright,'" Eileen laughed. "I thought she was. I soon learned however, Liz had the measles. What do you do? We were on the ship. We went to Ireland and they sent a lighter (a flat-bottomed barge used to transfer passengers to and from a moored ship) to bring anyone who wanted to get off the ship and go into Ireland for a bit. We stayed on board. After we set sail and we couldn't turn back, I called the nurse. She confirmed what I thought. 'Your daughter has measles.' All three of us had to stay in the cabin. I was allowed out. At night, when the kids were sleeping, I would go up on deck. It was seven days. It was the worst ship ride ever. But that visit to England was wonderful. Once my family finally met Karl, well they thought he was quite alright!

Their first year overseas, the kids went to the International School in Bangkok. Eileen got to be friends with a teacher who taught English in Thailand.

"At that time, apparently there were a lot of drugs at the school in Bangkok and she recommended we put the kids in the International School in Malaysia, which we did. Karl didn't have permission to do that from the people in charge at the U.S. Agency for International Development, but they didn't say 'no' either. So we drove there. It's a beautiful drive and the only incident we had was when the people at the border in Penang decided we couldn't keep our cat because we didn't have the proper papers. Well, we were all upset but Liz was really crying and the fellow at the border said, "Oh, I think you've got the right papers after all.' And in we went to our new home."

Karl remained in Vietnam and made the two hour flight to Malaysia every five or six weeks.

"We moved from Penang up to the tea country, the Cameron Highlands. The kids went to school there. It was an American mission school and it was in an old hotel. The Cameron Highlands is really beautiful. It's all tea country. It's about 6,000 feet elevation. It's cool. It's lovely. From there we went to the Philippines and we all were together, though Karl was in the Province all the time during the week and

home for the weekend. We were in the Philippines five and a half years, first in Manila and then in Baggio."

In the Philippines, Eileen collected carvings, mostly wooden carvings, including beautiful carved elephants. When they headed to Indonesia, Eileen began collecting art. At this point Bruce was in college in the U.S. and had gotten married.

"But we're not completely in Indonesia yet," Eileen laughed. "I learned to weave in the Philippines. I went to Easter School (an Anglican-founded missionary school) and I met the wife of a Peace Corps worker. She and I learned to do backstrap weaving and learned the big weaving on the big looms. I loved it. We worked with the Igorot people, the people from the area. We were in Baguio, close to the mountains. I used to do backstrap weaving several times a week. I loved it. I learned a lot about fabrics. Most of the pieces I did I gave away. But after that, I was really interested in fabrics and weaving. When I got to Indonesia where they have really good weavers in the villages around the islands, I did more backstrap weaving. You get into a backstrap but you can't get out. You can't just keep getting up or down because you'll spoil the weaving. I had a very good friend whose husband was in Vietnam, and she and I used to go to all the craft shows and the art museums. On top of the weaving, they also did batiks; another really interesting art. I tried it, but I think it's easier to weave. I did one or two pieces. I know how it is done and I so admire it. A lot of the batiks in Indonesia are done by elderly people and they sit with a hot wax and do their design. They are really good.



Jean Bartlett photo

After returning from Southeast Asia in 1982, 111 Olympian Way, Pacifica, California, remained Karl and Eileen's home until the end of July 2017.

"I brought home a lot of pieces, not just art pieces but pieces that were made daily. I've got buckets of pieces and they are all catalogued by island. I'm not sure, however, if I am going to take them with us."

The couple is moving to Washington State, to Bellingham, to a retirement and assisted living facility run by Canadians.

"It's close to where Liz lives, 15 minutes away. We are flying in at the end of July and our cats are flying as well, we just haven't told them yet. It's beautiful country there and of course we are not getting any younger. I like to think of it as a new adventure though I will miss our Pacifica home.

The couple came back to Pacifica in 1982.

"Liz was in college then, in Northern California, and Bruce was married. With Karl retired we decided to do more traveling. We went up and down the coast of Mexico. We went to the Caribbean, Alaska a number of times, and we went to England. Our son made us grandparents. (The couple lost their son Bruce to cancer in 1995. He was 38.) We have a grandson and a granddaughter and our granddaughter is going to make us great grandparents soon. I still have a large family in England, along with my two brothers, I have lots of nieces and nephews and cousins.

"Do I have any words of wisdom? Well, if you've got a piano and you've got children, learn how to play it a little so you can sing to them when they get under the covers. But here's my biggest bit of advice. With all the traveling I have done, I should never have gone shopping. When you travel, leave everything where it is. Don't bring it back. Those are my words of wisdom."



Jean Bartlett photo

Karl and Eileen Baldwin at their Pacifica Historical Society send off in June of 2017.