

### Rusticity, Nature Study and Recreation at Searsville Lake

The themes of rusticity, nature study and recreation are all connected to and overlap each other in the history of Searsville and Searsville Lake. Rustication, the act of removing oneself from the city to the countryside in the latter half of the nineteenth century, allowed one to recuperate from the stresses of the Industrial Revolution and its resultant urban lifestyle.<sup>1</sup> People living in the polluted environs of the city had the opportunity to breathe fresh air, drink pure water, eat wholesome food raised in the vicinity and relax by communing with nature, whether walking, hiking, riding, driving a buggy, sketching, picnicking, hunting or fishing. Nature study, a phenomenon that arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century due to the second Industrial Revolution, had two purposes: to study truths found in nature in order to expand human knowledge and to develop within the student a sympathetic relationship with nature that would enhance everyday living.<sup>2</sup> A corollary was that this discovery of truth and greater happiness in daily life would prompt children to understand and support the new, progressive values of conservation as they matured into adulthood.<sup>3</sup> Recreation, the regeneration of one's physical and mental outlook from toil with play, has been present throughout the world since pre-classical times, but took on a new meaning in the mid- and late-nineteenth century America when the work week gradually shortened from eighty-four to forty hours per week, allowing more leisure time.<sup>4</sup> Despite this marked increase in free time, life was perceived to be increasingly filled with ever greater pressures and tensions.

Rusticating in the vicinity of the town of Searsville began during the 1850s and expanded on a greater scale from the 1870s until the 1890s. Nature study was an active part of the curriculum at Stanford University, beginning with the opening of the university in 1891, and much of the field work took place in the vicinity of the former town of Searsville and Searsville Lake. Nature study, under the more modern auspices of ecological and environmental study, still takes place today at the former site of the town of Searsville and Searsville Lake, now part of Stanford University's Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. Recreation, which occurred in one form or another in the area beginning with the presence of the Costanoan Indians through the Spanish, Mexican and American eras was developed formally at Searsville Lake in 1922 with the creation of Searsville Lake Park and continued until the park was closed in 1976.

### Rusticity

Logging created the village of The Red Woods in 1851 but lumber prices plummeted in 1855 when a San Francisco economic crisis began on February 23<sup>rd</sup> of that year.<sup>5</sup> Known as the Great Crash, by December more than half of the men in San Francisco were unemployed. The Red Woods was also deeply affected

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<sup>1</sup> The Industrial Revolution originated in Great Britain in the late eighteenth century before spreading to Western Europe and North America. It was associated with iron, steam technologies and textile production. The second Industrial Revolution dated from the 1860s and was associated with steel, mass production and the production line, in addition to railroads, electricity and chemicals.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin C. Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement: The Forgotten Populizer of America's Conservation Ethic* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2009), 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Wayne R. Williams, *Recreation Places* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958), 11, 26.

<sup>5</sup> The area was first known as "the Pulgas Red Woods," then "The Red Woods" (sometimes spelled "the Redwoods") until 1858, when the first post office was presumably stationed at the Sears Hotel. At that point, the area was dubbed Searsville by a *Daily Alta California* reporter. Ironically, the Sears family moved to nearby La Honda in 1861 but the name Searsville stuck.

since over 800 men were working in the area cutting and milling timber.<sup>6</sup> By the early 1860s most of the timber in the area had been depleted and the bulk of the logging efforts had moved westward over the summit of the Coast Range. Some of the early American settlers, realizing that they had to adjust to the new economic climate, began to tout Searsville as a resort area, based on both its natural beauty and plentiful bounty of game and fish. Enticing customers to come and spend their time and money in the area was not a totally new idea; these same pioneers had been doing so since the early 1850s by drawing in the loggers living in the nearby hills and valleys on Sundays. The loggers played as hard as they worked and they flocked to the local hotels and saloons to drink, gamble at the poker tables, eat a hot meal, catch up on their sleep and gamble some more on local horse races and foot races.

Dennis Martin, along with his parents and brothers, moved to The Red Woods in 1845. Martin was so impressed with the area he purchased a large section of the Rancho Canada de Raymundo from John Coppinger in spring 1846, some 3,000 acres for \$1500.00.<sup>7</sup> There, along the north bank of San Franciscuito Creek, Martin and his family built a house and corrals which he filled with horses and cattle. Martin initially raised hay and grain, and planted about five acres worth of apple trees. His brother John opened a hotel on what is now Sand Hill Road in 1851 and organized horse races on Sundays as entertainment for the loggers.

Insert detail of map showing location of Martin/Snively Hotel, also site of Lanson Tuttle farm

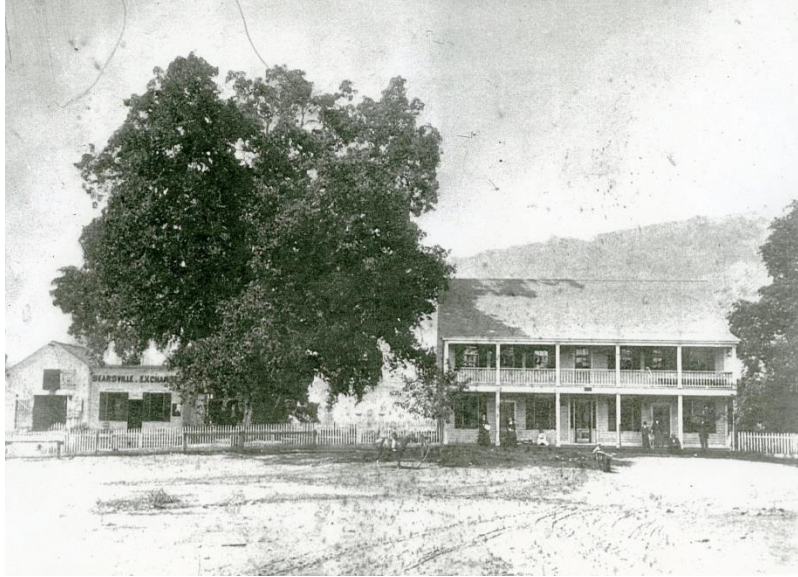
August and Lena Eikerenkotter came to California in 1850 in search of gold. By the fall of that year they had abandoned their efforts and moved to San Francisco where they ran the Paradise Hotel. Relocating to The Red Woods allowed them the opportunity of establishing their own business. They purchased 135 acres from Dennis Martin and in July of 1852 they built a two-story hotel and saloon that stood at the juncture of Mountain Home Road, Portola Road and Sand Hill Road. The Eikerenkotter Hotel succeeded in no small part due to the combination of Lena's excellent cooking, the presence of liquor and the inevitable attendant poker games. It was also known for its scenic location and the large oak and pine trees that grew around it. One of the pines was used for target practice from the front porch and was so full of lead shot that it was impossible to cut it up for firewood once it was chopped down.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Nancy Lund and Pamela Gullard, *Life on the San Andreas Fault: A History of Portola Valley* (San Francisco: Scottwall Associates, 2003), 3.

<sup>7</sup> Most historical accounts repeat the mistaken figure of 1,500 acres but historian Anthony Kirk translated the original documents of sale and found they revealed a much larger number of acres.

<sup>8</sup> Dorothy Regnery, *The History of Jasper Ridge: From Searsville Pioneers to Stanford Scientists* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Historical Society, 1991), 39-40.



The two-story hotel (*right*) and one-story store were dwarfed by magnificent oak trees.

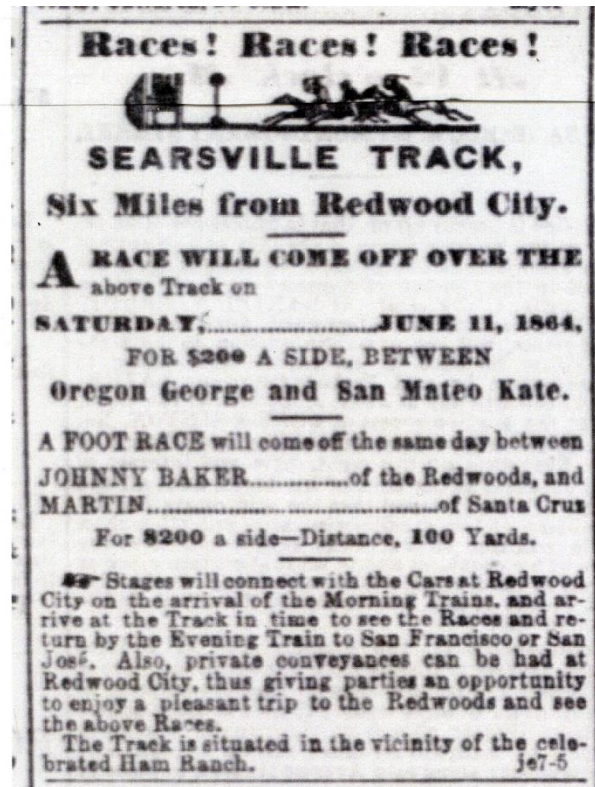
In 1851, Pennsylvanian John Sears also arrived in California searching for gold. After two years, he sent for his wife and young son and settled in The Red Woods. They built and opened the Sears House in 1853 and he also operated a blacksmith shop. However, by 1859 the Sears family had hit financial difficulties and sold the hotel. The new owners, Moses Davis and William Maxfield, advertised in the local newspaper:

The proprietors of the Searsville Hotel would call the attention of the public, and especially persons visiting the Redwoods, to their excellent facilities for their accommodations. Their larder is always supplied with the best to be found in the mark, and their Bar continually furnished with good Liquors, Wines and Spirits. Boarding by the Day or Week, On very moderate terms. Good STABLING for HORSES.<sup>9</sup>

In 1859 this publicity was focused on the locally-hunted food and the plentiful liquor with the advertising confined to a newspaper published in San Mateo County. By 1864, however, another advertisement was placed in one of the numerous San Francisco newspapers that would reach a much larger audience. This ad was placed by either John Sears or one of the successive owners of his hotel and racetrack, and the emphasis is still on recreation in terms of both horse racing and foot racing with a mention of a “pleasant trip to the Redwoods” buried at the bottom of the ad. There is no specific mention of gambling or liquor but it is a given that plenty of both would be integral components of attending the races!

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<sup>9</sup> Lund and Gullard, *Life on the San Andreas Fault*, 58.



Ad placed in 1864 by local hotel owner. Source: California Digital Newspaper Collection.

Just two years later, in 1866, in the San Mateo County *Times Gazette*, Searsville was described as a destination for “those who like to sniff the pure mountain air, and drink of the crystal water as it gushes from the spring.”<sup>10</sup> These bucolic references were reiterated in a description of a day trip to Searsville where the author noted how green the area was in contrast to the yellowed surrounding areas. He concluded:

Searsville is a very pretty place for a sojourn of a few weeks in summer, and it is accessible by a stage that runs every morning to connect with the train from San Francisco. The big oak, near the Searsville Hotel, is one of the largest and finest trees of its kind in the State.<sup>11</sup>

In 1868 an article appeared in the *Daily Alta California* that compared numerous places to visit in the California countryside during the spring before summer had a chance to turn green hillsides into golden brown. Searsville was “growing in favor with families who desire to spend a few months quietly.” Much was also made of Yosemite as a destination, with the valley still in sore need of a good wagon road to facilitate a less rugged travel experience. The 1864 Yosemite Grant was only four years old but Yosemite already “carried, in the eyes of its promoters, intrinsic coded messages about society, power, God and

<sup>10</sup> It seems likely the reporter was confusing the much more impressive Eikerenkotter Hotel, with its large surrounding oak trees, with the Sears Hotel, later called the Searsville Hotel. Lund and Gullard, *Life on the San Andreas Fault*, 67.

<sup>11</sup> “A Trip to Searsville,” *Daily Alta California* (29 June 1866): 1. California Digital Newspaper Collection, <http://veridian> (accessed 5 June 2013).



morality that only needed to be ‘revealed’ or clarified to audiences.”<sup>12</sup> In the latter half of nineteenth-century California there existed a notion about sublime landscapes, “that such landscapes were sites of divine redemption and antidotes to the problems and stresses of modernization,” whether they were located at a small village like Searsville or at one of the most famous valleys in the United States.<sup>13</sup>

Mentions of Searsville as a destination resort continued to appear in the San Mateo County *Times Gazette* throughout the 1870s, with an emphasis on the beautiful scenery, “pure mountain water conducted in pipes from the Alambique Creek to this place,” and the successful production of fruit, specifically plums and pears.<sup>14</sup> The *Pacific Rural Press*, a publication that focused on California agriculture and rural living, routinely included Searsville as one of the favored spots for beautiful scenery, fruit production and dairy farming in the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1884, the editor noted:

At Searsville we found mine host Eikerenkotter of the hotel enjoying the shade of his ample porch which commands a fine view of the thoroughly rural scenes which are on every hand. We can commend Searsville for those who are seeking rest and retirement in a thoroughly rural place. The place lies on the stage route from Redwood to Pescadero and is therefore very accessible.<sup>15</sup>

In just twenty years, Searsville was transformed from a raucous village that catered to the hard-living loggers to a sporting area that was set up to accommodate gentlemen wishing to fish and hunt to a quiet country resort where families could come and enjoy the beautiful scenery. In 1885, the Eikerenkotter Hotel, by this time under the management of Eikerenkotter’s two grown sons, added “a fine new hall” for public dances that were to be “offered every other month at Searsville and on the alternate months at Woodside.”<sup>16</sup> By this time, the residents of Searsville were well aware of the Spring Valley Water Company’s plan to build a dam in the area (a public notice had gone up in 1878) and those selling their property were generally moving to acreage still within the Searsville precinct, La Honda, Woodside, Redwood City, Menlo Park or Mayfield. Meanwhile, throughout the late 1880s, Searsville continued to be included in the “Hotel Arrivals” and “Arrivals at Summer Resorts” columns that appeared in the San Francisco newspapers.

Even in 1892, a year after the Searsville Dam was completed and the former village was empty of all useful buildings (with the exception of the local school), the Redwood City *Democrat* ran an article about the Hotel Ysola, standing on a 50-acre tract that overlooked the newly formed lake. The lake had instantly assumed the mantle of a recreation site, despite the fact that it was on private property belonging to the Spring Valley Water Company:

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<sup>12</sup> The Yosemite Grant (1864-1906) was the first time in America Congress ceded property to a state as a scenic preserve. The property was returned to the federal government and made a national park in 1906, largely due to California’s failure to supply enough funding for maintenance. Hank Johnston, *The Yosemite Grant, 1864-1906: A Pictorial History* (Yosemite, CA: Yosemite Association, 1995), viii, 239-244, and Jen A. Huntley, *The Making of Yosemite: James Mason Hutchings and the Origin of America’s Most Popular National Park* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

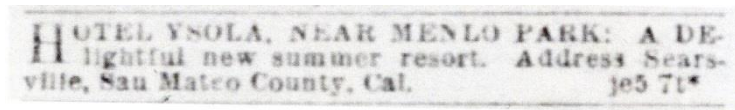
<sup>14</sup> Lund and Gullard, *Life on the San Andreas Fault*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> “A Day’s Ride in San Mateo County,” *Pacific Rural Press* (28 June 1884), 634. CDNC, <http://veridian> (accessed 5 June 2013).

<sup>16</sup> San Mateo County *Times Gazette* (17 October 1885), Schellens Collection, Redwood City Public Library.

...[The lake is] a body of water varying in depth from forty to five feet, and covers an area of many acres, overlooked by rocky cliffs, groves of redwood, live oak, laurel and less attractive trees....The hotel [owned and established by Mrs. Annie Vredanburgh] is surmounted by an observatory, commanding a magnificent view of the adjacent country with virgin forests, the lake and innumerable vine-clad hills....A naptha launch will be kept for boating parties....Wine from the proprietor's vineyard will be stored from year to year for daily use at meals....There will be musicales every Wednesday evening and invitation hops Saturday nights.<sup>17</sup>

The lake was not only being used by the patrons of the Hotel Ysola and the remaining denizens who still lived in the outlying Searsville area, it was also being visited by the students and faculty of the nearby Leland Stanford Junior University, which had opened its doors 1 October 1891, just three weeks before the completion of the dam. The lake and environs were to become both a recreational area and a site for scientific discovery while observing the natural world first-hand for the Stanford community members.



An ad for the new Hotel Ysola in the 6 June 1892 issue of the San Francisco *Call*. The venture was short-lived; the advertisements stopped appearing after June 1892.

The early 1890s were the final hurrah for Searsville as a destination site in terms of rusticity. However, locals living in the area continued to visit the lake for swimming, fishing and picnicking for many years to come. Nick Skrabo, whose family lived in nearby Portola Valley, recalled that his school picnic was held at Searsville Lake in 1917.<sup>18</sup> The older children walked from Portola Valley to the lake while the younger children were driven there; a total of thirty-five children attended classes during the 1917 school year. The children were delighted to find about a thousand soldiers camped out at the lake that day, a large detachment of the thirty thousand soldiers then based at Camp Fremont in Menlo Park during the last years of WWI. Nick remembered:

At the lake that day we had great fun. Some of the boys and girls went swimming. We had sandwiches and soda. Some of us went above the lake to visit the caves and mines that an old prospector dug. Some of the soldiers played with us and taught us a game called 'three deep.' They liked talking to the teachers mostly.<sup>19</sup>

### Nature Study

Stanford University's first president was David Starr Jordan, a renowned ichthyologist in a time when naturalists held prominent places in society. California, in comparison to the eastern part of the United States, was still considered the Wild West with scarce resources in terms of libraries, specimen collections and laboratories. In California in general, and at Stanford University specifically, the faculty

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<sup>17</sup> "A Lovely Drive, Redwood to Portola," Redwood City *Democrat* (28 April 1892) Schellens Collection, Redwood City Public Library.

<sup>18</sup> Nick Skrabo wrote some of his memories down in longhand on lined paper torn from a tablet. He died in 1979. Nick Skrabo, undated oral history, Portola Valley Archives.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

and students turned to the “vast, sparsely populated, and easily accessible countryside,” where they practiced observation over experimentation and tended to keep their focus regional.<sup>20</sup>

Jordan had been a student of Louis Agassiz, a Harvard professor of zoology and geology who believed that natural phenomena must be observed first-hand rather than from reading textbooks. Agassiz had set up the first American biological field station on Penikese Island off the shore of Massachusetts in 1873. His goal was less about advancing scientific investigation and more about training teachers—he insisted that women as well as men be included as his students—to utilize the best methods of natural history instruction. Nature study was grounded in the idea that it was easier to educate and influence children as opposed to adults, and that these children, as a result of their exposure to nature, would develop “a love of learning and the spiritual and moral resources needed to buffer the intensely materialistic values of American society.”<sup>21</sup> Despite this rejection of textbook instruction, proponents of nature study were committed to the application of science and the scientific method to nature; they applied critical observation, thought and deduction while maintaining intimate contact with the natural world found in the Searsville area.

The students at Stanford University were well aware of Searsville Lake and the surrounding countryside. The 12 October 1892 issue of the student magazine *The Sequoia* noted:

We are now well up in the mountains and the surrounding hills are covered with white-oak, madrone and redwood, forming the most desirable place for picnicking and a nice quiet time in the woods. Here the merry brooklets are no longer hushed in summer, but rush pell-mell from fall to fall throughout the year. Here the wary trout has often fooled the angler, who with rod and fly went forth full of hopes but returned with only a keen appetite. The chaparral abounds with quail and rabbits, and on the high ridges deer are often seen just at the peep of day.<sup>22</sup>

Clearly the recreational aspects of fishing, hunting, hiking and picnicking, as well as the more spiritual act of spending a “nice quiet time in the woods,” were chief components of the attractions of Searsville, but Jordan and the other faculty at the university wasted no time sending their students out into the field to observe and collect specimens.<sup>23</sup> A master’s degree with a thesis focused on the genus *Archostaphylos* was awarded in 1896 and a PhD dissertation covering the reptiles of California and Oregon was completed in 1897.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Peter S. Alagona, *After the Grizzly: Endangered Species and the Politics of Place in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 36.

<sup>21</sup> Armitage, *Nature Study*, 15, 21.

<sup>22</sup> E.R. Zion, “The Searsville Lake,” *The Sequoia* (12 October 1892), 65.

<sup>23</sup> The faculty also conducted their own studies out in the field. For example, Professor William Dudley (botany) wrote a thirteen-page paper describing the trees and shrubs growing at “Searsville Ridge,” and later wrote a definitive book on the flora of Santa Cruz County. William Dudley, “Distribution of Trees and Shrubs on Searsville Ridge,” SC0558, William Russel Dudley Papers, Stanford University Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Between 1900 and 1920, twenty advanced degrees were awarded to Stanford students whose work originated at or near what was by then known as Jasper Ridge, with subjects that included winter-blooming plants, spiders and the chemical components found in the water of San Francisquito Creek. Between the 1920s and the 1960s, another fifty-two advanced degrees in biology, geology or engineering were awarded to Stanford students who were using Jasper Ridge as a natural laboratory. Susan Wels (editor), *Jasper Ridge: A Stanford Sanctuary* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Alumni Association, 1999), 8-10.

Jordan had taught natural history in the early years of his career before coming to Stanford University as its first president in 1891. In 1892 he became one of the founding members of the Sierra Club, a San Francisco-based group led by John Muir to protect the Sierra Nevada.<sup>25</sup> An ardent conservationist, Jordan (along with other Stanford faculty that included Professors William Dudley, Charles Marx, Charles Wing and Trustee John Stillman) would also become deeply involved in the creation of a state park set at the Big Basin area of Santa Cruz in an effort to save some portion of the native redwood forest from logging.<sup>26</sup>

The Zoology Club was formed by Zoology Department faculty in 1892; membership was intended for anyone interested in California wildlife. Stanford student and club member Edith Mirrielees recalled:

Its meetings were held, when possible, out of doors, with picnic suppers of robust California style—steaks broiled over coals, potatoes raked out from hot ashes, coffee in a five-gallon converted kerosene can. Occasionally, an overnight camping expedition, a wagon hired to carry the bedrolls, and Heath and Price and Starks and Snyder sitting circled by students around the fire, and sometimes the President [David Starr Jordan] coming in late for a night under the redwoods, and talk going on so long as to make bedrolls all but unnecessary.<sup>27</sup>

In 1916, third university president Ray Lyman Wilbur approved the money needed for a field station for the use of the Zoology Department, “with a suitable reserve area as an animal preserve in the canyon near the foot of the Searsville reservoir.”<sup>28</sup> The field station, known as the Zoology cabin, was sited along San Franciscuito Creek in a stand of redwood trees, with a nearby bridge of redwood logs that spanned the creek. The cabin was built by the faculty and students of the department and was intended as shelter for overnight stays, since the six-mile trip between the campus and Searsville Lake was still generally made by foot or on horseback. The simple wood structure was built of redwood posts and planks, with an unfinished interior and no glass—just sliding wood panels-- in the unframed window openings. A brick fireplace was placed in the center of the back wall of the cabin and a covered porch flanked the front of the building. The first overnight camping expedition of the Zoology Club at the new field station took place on the evening of 8 September 1916, with twenty students taking part.<sup>29</sup> The cabin was used by several campus groups, in addition to the Zoology Department, and they lost control of the building by 1921. In 1925, Zoology Club members discussed trying to take the cabin back for their own use but to no avail, despite twenty-four students successfully spending Halloween evening at the cabin, and inadvertently burning poison oak in their campfire due to gathering wood in the darkness.<sup>30</sup> The cabin was finally torn down by the university in either 1926 or 1927.

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<sup>25</sup> The San Francisco and Palo Alto members of the Sierra Club visited Searsville in 1915. They walked from the Main Quad on campus out to Searsville and back on a day hike that included visiting the dam, lake and caves. Palo Alto *Times* (26 March 1915), clipping file, Palo Alto Library.

<sup>26</sup> “Professor Thomas Tells History of Big Basin’s Big Trees,” *Stanford Historical Society Newsletter* (Fall 1983), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Edith Mirrielees, *Stanford: The Story of a University* (1960), 67-68.

<sup>28</sup> Ray Lyman Wilbur, *The Memoirs of Ray Lyman Wilbur* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960), 213.

<sup>29</sup> Zoology Club Minutes (undated), photocopy in Regnery’s notes; PULL ORIGINAL MINUTES TO CITE.

<sup>30</sup> Zoology Club Minutes (undated), photocopy in Regnery’s notes; and Regnery, *Jasper Ridge*, 142.



The Zoology Cabin in 1925.

Insert 1928 map showing Botanic Reserve (from Nona); DOES ANIMAL PRESERVE DIFFER FROM BOTANICAL RESERVE? Check with Nona, Wilbur's papers, B of T Special Docs, etc.

**Insert Stanford Geologic Survey history here but Searsville Lake/Jasper Ridge were never specifically surveyed. There is only one map that mentions Searsville and it does not include the study area. Still include this info? Check with Laura.**

Academic interest focused on the resources of Jasper Ridge was not confined to zoology, biology, botany or geology.<sup>31</sup> In 1922 the Mining and Metallurgy Department at the university became interested in the old mining shafts and test pits attributed to Domenico "Domingo" Grosso, an affable man dubbed the "Old Hermit" by the numerous Stanford students who visited his remote cabin at Jasper Ridge on a regular basis. Originally from Italy and fluent in Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese and English, the one-time soldier had immigrated to San Francisco in the 1860s.

Sources disagree about his early history, in no small part because he was averse to talking about his past. However, they do agree that once he was living in the area he spent time rambling about the hills and doing some prospecting. In 1875 he claimed that he had discovered silver on Dennis Martin's property in the hills. Grosso reported his find to his employer, San Francisco banker Henri Charles Barroilhet.

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<sup>31</sup> In December 1891, three months after the completion of Searsville Dam, the university arranged for several Civil Engineering students to gain hands-on experience: Professor Charles Marx "has been authorized by Attorney Lathrop to have a route for a conduit surveyed from Searsville to the University buildings. Professor Marx has placed the work in the hands of the six C.E.'s of the class of '94. They will begin to the task as soon as they finish measuring their base-line; this will probably be in about two weeks. The conduit will supply all the University buildings with mountain spring water. Success to the '94's." The conduit worked perfectly but the quality of the water was so poor that it was ultimately reserved for irrigation and fire control. *The Sequoia*, (16 December 1891), 74-75.



Barroilhet then purchased the mineral rights from a cash-strapped Dennis Martin for \$200 through his friend and Martin's neighbor, Nicola Larco. Larco promptly established N. Larco and Company, a mining venture financed by ten local men who each put in \$2,000 of capital. One of these men was purported to have been Grosso investing his life savings. Two shafts were dug, one at seventy-five feet (the "Ormondale Shaft," located on Barroilhet's ranch), and the other at 200 feet (the "Portola Shaft," located on Dennis Martin's ranch). Three or four tons of ore with a low content of gold and silver were removed from this second shaft but it continually filled with water, despite repeated efforts to drain it.<sup>32</sup> Larco was accidentally killed in an assassination attempt aimed at another man in San Francisco in 1878 and Barroilhet subsequently gave Grosso a handwritten release to the mineral rights. Grosso continued to work for Barroilhet as his ranch foreman until the latter's death in 1891. Grosso had already moved to the site of his mineral rights, west of the deep Portola shaft, in 1890. Although he did not own the land, he was legally entitled to live there as long as he continued to "work" the holdings covered by his mining claim.<sup>33</sup>

Grosso built a cabin that consisted of a small bedroom and kitchen, along with a henhouse, a stable and a kennel for his dog, Dick. He captured water from a swiftly moving brook by sinking a barrel into it which he surrounded with a decorative wall of rocks and sea shells. He also terraced the hillside his cabin perched on. Grosso planted a vineyard and an orchard of peach and pear trees, in addition to one lone prune tree. He pressed his grapes into wine and stored it in a cellar underneath his bedroom. A rail fence encircled the neatly kept property and his cabin was kept scrupulously clean and ready for visitors.<sup>34</sup>



Domingo Grosso (the "Old Hermit") and welcome visitors standing in front of his cabin.

These visitors included neighbors and students from the university. Grosso was known for his hospitality and always served his guests wine and food, refusing any offerings of payment. He was not averse,

<sup>32</sup> Merle M. Repass, "The Hermit Mine," *Stanford Illustrated Review* (May 1923): 405.

<sup>33</sup> Leland and Jane Stanford had purchased the land from Dennis Martin's son-in-law, James Dixon, in 1882. "The Most Picturesque Hermit in California," *San Francisco Chronicle* (10 February 1901), 31; and Regnery, *Jasper Ridge*, 75.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*



however, to anyone wanting to put up \$200,000 to develop his mine, money he promised to accept with a “guarantee to pay it back.”<sup>35</sup> No investors were forthcoming but Grosso was more than content to live a life of solitude tempered throughout the years by his continual stream of visitors.

Grosso lived comfortably until around 1914 or 1915. When he hadn’t been seen in a while friends investigated and found him ill and close to starvation.<sup>36</sup> He was quickly supplied with food and ongoing care but his condition only worsened. A friend, Mrs. Frank Brecisco of Menlo Park, finally took him to the San Mateo County Hospital where he died a few days later on 18 April 1915.<sup>37</sup> Mrs. Brecisco planned on paying for his funeral herself but generous donations were made by people living in both San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.<sup>38</sup> Grosso’s cabin was ransacked shortly after his death by someone looking for any gold or silver he might have found and hoarded. The university soon afterward tore his cabin and other buildings down.

In 1922 the Mining and Metallurgy Department decided to turn the late Grosso’s Portola Shaft into a practice mine for students. In December of that year the shaft was re-opened and un-watered, Twenty feet down the students discovered a log jam and had to re-timber the twenty feet from that point up to the opening. Once that was accomplished a head frame was built and water was pumped out using a forty horsepower gasoline engine. At 108 feet winter rains set in and all work stopped. The students resumed in February 1923 and within a week the bottom was reached at 187 feet. The results were disappointing, with zinc being the most prevalent metal found in the mined ore. The shaft refilled with water at the rate of seventeen feet per day when it was not actively worked and future plans were made for students to continue prospecting elsewhere in the area.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> “Old Hermit Is Far from Well,” *Daily Palo Alto* (10 March 1915).

<sup>37</sup> “Old Hermit Goes to Last Resting Place,” Unidentified clipping (20 April 1915) clipping file, Palo Alto Library Archives.

<sup>38</sup> “Donations for Hermit’s Burial,” *Palo Alto Times* (20 April 1915).

<sup>39</sup> Repass, “The Hermit Mine,” 430-431.



Stanford students at the Portola Mine Shaft.

Recreation and Sports: Searsville Lake Park

The Brandsten Years (1922-1955)



Ernst and Greta Brandsten posing for their 1922 passport photograph.

1922 also saw interest in the lake area from two other members of the Stanford University community, Ernst and Greta Brandsten. Ernst was the swimming and diving coach for the male students and Greta acted in the same capacity for the female students. They had just returned from visiting England, France, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Norway and their own native country, Sweden. The president of the American Amateur Athletic Union had tasked Brandsten with speaking to the swimming and athletic authorities of each country in an effort to adopt uniform diving rules and regulations for future Olympic competitions.<sup>40</sup> Returning to the university in September, the Brandstens intended to purchase ten acres of property from the Spring Valley Water Company where they would build their own home. Married in 1917, they had been living with Felix Brandsten, Ernst's older brother, in a house he owned on Waverley Street in Palo Alto.<sup>41</sup> Ever the entrepreneur, Ernst Brandsten wanted to lease acreage near Searsville Lake to develop a swimming and boating resort.<sup>42</sup> The university's business manager, Almon Roth, recommended to the Board of Trustees that they agree to a lease as "the University cannot possibly make any use of this land, a large portion of which is flooded at certain times of the year,"<sup>43</sup> An additional advantage: "Mr. Brandsten will undertake to protect the University's property at Searsville Dam, and this would be a distinct advantage" since "much mischief is done by trespassers who frequent the lake on week-ends."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The 1920 Olympics were held in Antwerp, Belgium, and there had been difficulties with the swimming and diving competitions because each country followed a different set of rules and regulations. Brandsten was an eyewitness to the problems when he coached the Stanford competitors at Antwerp. "Coach Brandsten to Depart for Europe," unidentified newspaper clipping, Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook, 72, International Swimmer's Hall of Fame.

<sup>41</sup> Felix was also working for Stanford University as a swimming instructor. *United States Federal Census* (1920), Ancestry.com, <http://ancestry.com> (accessed 6 September 2012).

<sup>42</sup> A.E. Roth to Finance Committee of the Board of Trustees (23 October 1922), SC1010, Stanford University Board of Trustees, Meeting Records, 1898-2013, Stanford University Archives.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.



Searsville Lake was photographed for the 1918 *Stanford Quad*, several years before it became the site of a resort.

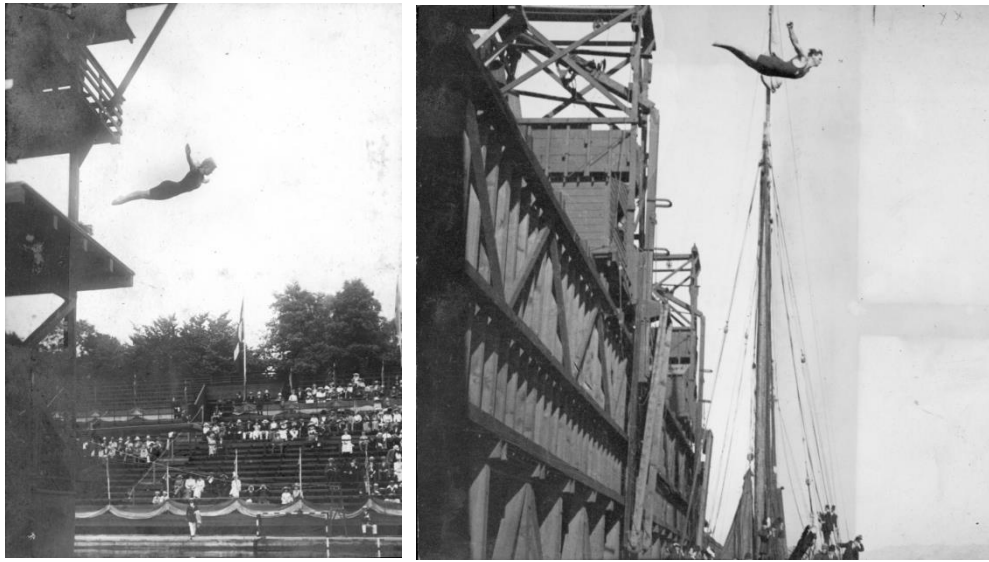
The Board of Trustees agreed to a short-term lease, a decision that may have also been influenced by their high level of regard for Brandsten and his unprecedented successful efforts in creating numerous Stanford champions in swimming, diving and water polo. Brandsten had first come to Stanford University as an Instructor in Physical Training at Encina Gymnasium in 1915.<sup>45</sup> In a few short years he had transformed the so-called minor sport of swimming (which also included diving and water polo) into one of Stanford's powerhouse sports, with Stanford students routinely dominating intercollegiate, local, state, national and Olympic honors. Greta Brandsten had also greatly strengthened the women's swimming program. She came to Stanford in the fall of 1916 and was made director of the newly-built Roble Pool. By 1921 she had "developed consistent team work and individual swimmers among the women" and "created a spirit of keen interest in various interclass and intercollegiate meets."<sup>46</sup> The Brandstens were successful because they had both been champions themselves—he had been the Swedish National Diving Champion in 1912 and she won a gold Olympic medal at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics for plain diving—and because both

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<sup>45</sup> Brandsten was made full-time Associate Director of Encina Gymnasium in 1922 and this position went to part-time in 1927, likely due to Brandsten's Olympic coaching obligations. "Stanford Attracts Swimming Mentor," unidentified newspaper clippings (25 August 1915 and 16 January 1923), Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook, 2, International Swimmer's Hall of Fame; and Board of Athletic Control salary letters to Ernst Brandsten (1918-1927), Jan Johanson's private collection.

<sup>46</sup> "Women's Swimming Has Developed Successfully Under Greta Brandsten," *Daily Palo Alto* (6 June 1921), Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook, 122, ISHOF.

were committed and effective teachers.<sup>47</sup> They were also known for their engaging personalities and students responded in kind to the care and support the Brandstens consistently brought to their respective pupils and training programs.<sup>48</sup>



Greta Johanson making her gold-medal dive at the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, Sweden (*left*). Ernst Brandsten making a ninety-four-foot dive off of a crane into San Francisco Bay in 1913 (*right*). Brandsten was known for his daredevil exploits as well as his sanctioned competitive wins.

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<sup>47</sup> The 1912 Stockholm Olympics were the first in which women were allowed to compete in swimming and tennis. The Swedish officials, who were adamantly against women participating, bowed to pressure from the International Olympic Committee and the Organizing Committee. A total of fifty-three women competed in the two aforementioned sports while 2,327 men competed in thirteen sports. Greta Johanson was seventeen-years-old when she competed at Stockholm. In addition to her gold medal for plain diving, she was awarded an additional silver commemorative medal bestowed by the Swedish king, Gustav V. She was also won the sole challenge trophy available to a female competitor, the Countess de Casa Miranda cup. Ernst Brandsten did not place in the 1912 Stockholm Olympics but shortly thereafter beat all of his Swedish teammates at the Swedish National Diving Championship. Lief Yttergren and Hans Bolling (eds.), *The 1912 Stockholm Olympics: Essays on the Competitions, the People, the City* (Jefferson, NC and London, McFarland and Company, Inc., 2012), 116, 117120-122,4, 131, 272-273.

<sup>48</sup> The Brandstens had decided to not have any children in reaction to surviving the horrors of WWI, believing the world was no longer a fit place in which to raise innocents. They poured their respective parental instincts into their relationships with their students, many of whom became lifelong friends. Interview with Jan Johanson, niece by marriage to Greta Brandsten's nephew, Eric Johanson. (June 2013).





Greta Johanson and Ernst Brandsten diving off the Berkeley pier in 1914, three years before their marriage. Both were working for UC-Berkeley at the time, before transferring to Stanford University in 1915 and 1916 respectively.



The Brandstens ordered postcards featuring scenes of Camp Searsville. Mrs. Brandsten mailed this postcard of the dam, dated 24 May 1923, to her father in Sweden. Note the diving tower had not yet been built.

While the Brandstens had a strong background in aquatic sports they were new to the field of recreation. Mrs. Brandsten would say two decades later: “When we started running the lake we were naïve, young and dumb. But we have done our best and we have grown up with the place—I hope. It is not very fancy



but it is nice.”<sup>49</sup> In fact, the Brandstens chose the Searsville Lake area because “the Stanford property was the most beautiful they had seen.”<sup>50</sup> They were not able purchase that ten-acre site they wanted at the time but instead moved into “a very makeshift place near the lake” without “phone, electricity or water.”<sup>51</sup> They began making improvements on the property that included cutting trails and bridle paths, and placed floating docks in a cove on the east side of the lake with additional floats, one of which had a diving board, out in the lake.<sup>52</sup>



The east-side cove and beach at Camp Searsville, 1923.

Recreation in the United States had been on the rise since the early 1850s with the creation of Central Park in New York City in 1853 and the Young Men’s Christian Association in 1854. Playgrounds, parks and campgrounds slowly began to be established across the country on the premise that children needed to play, an activity conducive to their mental health, their creativity, and their education.<sup>53</sup> By 1910, as the recreation movement continued to grow, the Boy Scouts of America, the American Camping Association and the Camp Fire Girls were established, with the Girl Scouts of America following in 1912. These groups recognized that children could be taught good citizenship through play and camping, where they experienced nature first-hand by living outdoors in a primitive shelter, sleeping under the stars, and nurtured by the warmth and glow of a campfire.<sup>54</sup> Like nature study, camping provided “refreshment of soul, sorely needed in these days of artificial living.”<sup>55</sup> Play took place in a wide variety of pleasurable activities, depending on the season, and included hiking, swimming, boating, horseback riding, fishing, climbing, dancing, playing and listening to music, putting on plays and taking part in numerous

<sup>49</sup> “Sweden to Searsville for Mrs. Ernst Brandsten,” *Daily Palo Alto Times* (6 July 1954), 7, newspaper clipping, SC1136, Stanford University Biographical Files Collection, SUA.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> “What is Searsville?” *Stanford Illustrated Review* (June 1924), 460-461.

<sup>53</sup> Nash, *Recreation*, 30-31.

<sup>54</sup> J.C. Elsom, *Community Recreation* (New York and London: The Century Co., 1929), 129.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

supervised games. The benefits of such play were the repair of the body, an eagerness to partake in fun physical exercise, competition, leadership, laughter, and fostering joyful attitudes marked by “hopefulness, courage, good will, assurance and determination.”<sup>56</sup>

The Brandstens included swimming, boating, canoeing, picnicking, horseback riding, hiking, climbing and dancing among the various activities found at what was initially known as Camp Searsville and later Searsville Lake Park.<sup>57</sup> The use of the facility was seasonal, usually between April and September, with the holiday weekends of Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day drawing tremendous crowds. Activities were initially focused on the east side of the lake:

It is not only the facilities for water sports which bring visitors to Searsville in large numbers. The place itself has great natural beauty, little appreciated before because there were no roads or walks along the eastern side [of the lake] and about all anyone ever saw there was what could be seen from the drive through the Spring Valley property bordering the west bank. Now there are trails all along the lake side and winding up the hills, with many delightful places for picnic parties. And on weekends hundreds of people spend the day there. On the days of the swimming meets the attendance mounted up to thousands. It is probably the only lake available for boating and swimming by the public within easy distance of San Francisco.<sup>58</sup>

The resort was spread out over approximately 150 acres.<sup>59</sup> Visitors arrived at the Whiskey Hill gate where they paid admission to Mrs. Brandsten, situated in a small admissions tent. Drivers proceeded straight down the dirt road and turned right before crossing over a bridge, then parking below the dam. A foot trail skirted the east side of the lake and led to a large bathhouse directly situated above the beach, a fifteen-minute walk from the site of the dam.<sup>60</sup>

### Early Focus on Aquatic Sports

The swim meets referred to came about from Ernst Brandsten using his prestigious reputation as the most successful dive coach on the West Coast as a drawing card. He built a three-tier diving tower right on the crest of the dam and on 2 September 1923, near the end of the first season of the resort, the National High Diving Championships were held at Searsville Lake.<sup>61</sup> Two of his swimmers, Clarence Pinkston ('23) and

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 14-20.

<sup>57</sup> “A Memory and a Vision,” *Palo Alto Times* (25 August 1923), clipping file, Palo Alto Library; and Regnery, *Jasper Ridge*, 136.

<sup>58</sup> “What is Searsville?,” *Stanford Illustrated Review* (June 1924), 460-461.

<sup>59</sup> Any copies of the original Brandsten lease have disappeared over the years. A property map shows Lot 96 is on the east side of the lake but it is approximately 100 acres in size so they must have leased an additional fifty acres, assuming the “What is Searsville?” author’s estimate of 150 acres was accurate. “What is Searsville?,” 461.

<sup>60</sup> Regnery, *Jasper Ridge*, 136.

<sup>61</sup> Brandsten had already built a high-dive tower near the Lake Lagunita men’s boathouse, designed by himself and champion student swimmer Clarence Pinkston, in December 1921, only to see it demolished by storm winds shortly after completion. He immediately set to work on another tower with the top springboard at 27 feet. Lagunita was dredged down to 12 feet in front of the tower so that high diving could safely take place when the lake was full. “Work is Begun on High Diving Tower in Lake Lagunita,” *Stanford Daily* (6 December 1921); CDNC, <http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?a=p&p=home&e=-----en-20--1--txt-IN-----> (accessed 26 December 2012); and “Lake Lagunita is Being Deepened for High Divers,” *Stanford Daily* (11 January 1922). CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?a=p&p=home&e=-----en-20--1--txt-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012); and “High-Diving Tower on Boathouse Now Ready to Be

Al White ('24), took first and second place respectively. At the end of that first successful resort season, in October 1923, plans were afoot for continual improvements:

When the Camp opens in April there will be a store on the east side of the lake where barbecue lunches will be served, and three large stretches of beach will be adequately covered with the finest sand available. A large supply of rowboats and floats will also be available.<sup>62</sup>

In December 1923, Brandsten was officially announced as the diving coach for the United States Olympic team that would compete in Paris in the summer of 1924. It was anticipated that he would also coach the water polo team.<sup>63</sup> Already busy with his coaching responsibilities at the university, the additional task of coaching the American team for the Olympics put most of the burden of running Camp Searsville on a day-to-day basis on Mrs. Brandsten's capable shoulders. This was a pattern that continued throughout the next two decades as Brandsten would ultimately coach in one capacity or another at the 1924, 1928, 1932 and 1936 Olympic competitions. His streak ended when the Olympics were put on indefinite hold during World War II.

In April 1924, the makings of a drought year were already in motion, with the lake three and a half feet below the normal level. The situation was dire enough that no Searsville water would be used for campus irrigation that year.<sup>64</sup> Despite the lower water level, the Pacific Athletic Association High Diving Championship was held at Searsville Lake with Stanford student Al White taking first place. Typical of the Brandstens' generosity, they put up Swedish swimming champion Arne Borg at their "makeshift place" at Searsville when he came to California to train in anticipation of the 1924 Paris Olympics.<sup>65</sup> Brandsten also arranged for six Hawaiian competitors to fly into San Francisco to stay at the University Hotel and train with Borg at both the Encina Pool and at Searsville Lake. One of the Hawaiian team members was Sam Kahanamoku, one of several younger brothers of the legendary Duke Kahanamoku, who had successfully competed against Brandsten at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics.<sup>66</sup>

The National American Athletic Union High Diving Contest and the Far West Olympic Games swimming and diving trials followed shortly thereafter at Searsville Lake. At the AAU meet, the first three places went to Clarence Pinkston, Al White and Dave Fall, all Brandsten students. At the Olympic tryouts, the same three men took top honors again, and Stanford freshman Clarita Hunsberger placed first

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Used," *Stanford Daily* (13 February 1922). CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>62</sup> "Camp Searsville Proves Popular in Summer Season," *Stanford Daily* (5 October 1923), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>63</sup> "Brandsten to Coach U.S. Diving Team for Olympic Games," *Stanford Daily* (4 December 1923), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>64</sup> "Canoes, Swimming Suits, Doomed to Discard-Lake Lagunita Remains Empty," *Stanford Daily* (1 April 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>65</sup> "Arne Borg Trains for Olympics Here," *Stanford Daily* (30 April 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>66</sup> "Hawaiian Swimming Team to Practice at Stanford," *Stanford Daily* (12 May 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

in plain high diving for women. She was the sole entrant in her class but “showed herself a performer of the first rank.”<sup>67</sup> Hunsberger later recalled: “They [the Brandstens] were really gung-ho on having a woman who would be a diver. And so then came the day that Ernst Brandsten said to me, ‘You know, today we’re going to take you up to Searsville Lake.’”<sup>68</sup>

According to Hunsberger, women didn’t typically drive cars in the early 1920s, so she either got a ride with one of the men or she walked six miles out and six miles back between the campus and the lake. She remembers diving from the high wood platform (she preferred platform diving over springboard) into the cold and murky lake water below, “which sometimes was at one height and sometimes was at another height.”<sup>69</sup> The two higher platforms were set at sixteen and thirty-two feet in height (five and ten meters). A straight ladder led up with the next-to-the-top rung missing. Hunsberger stated that after eight or ten dives, combined with swimming to the ladder on the dam and climbing that before climbing the second ladder back up to the top of the platform, “you had quite a workout.” If either of the Brandstens were not available for coaching, she said that Al White and Dave Fall were more than happy to provide assistance, as were members of the Hawaiian swim team, including the Kahaleanu and Kahanamoku brothers.<sup>70</sup>

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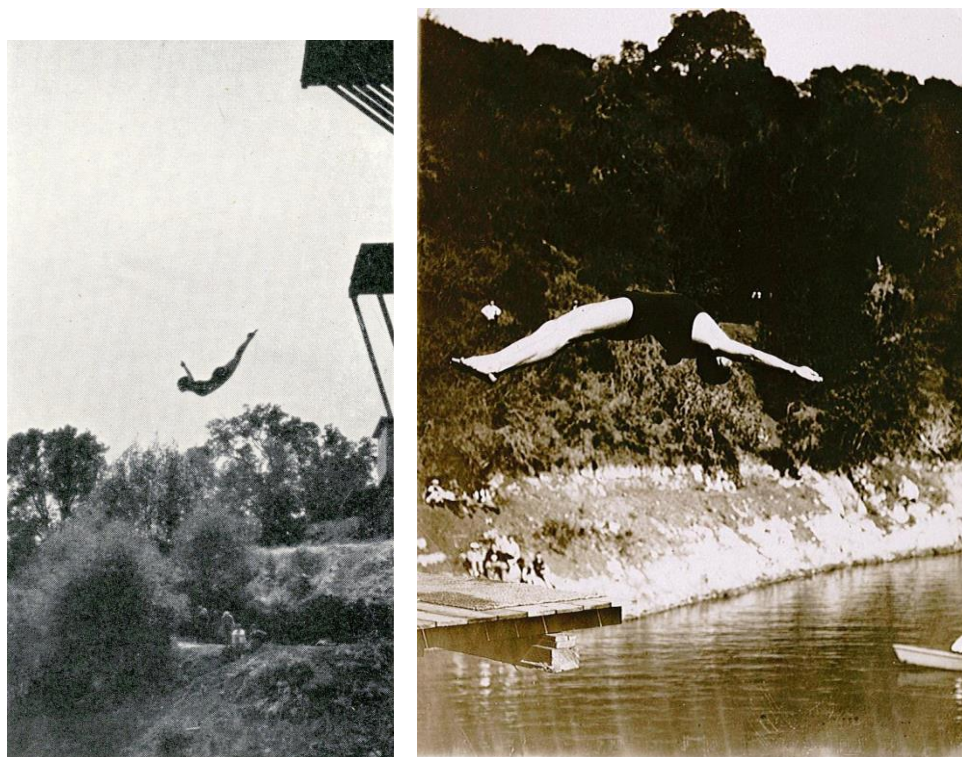
<sup>67</sup> Hunsberger had been swimming competitively since childhood and began diving while in high school. A member of the prestigious Los Angeles Athletic Club before her entry into Stanford, she had won first place in the Southern California Championship for low springboard diving and second in the Junior National meet for ten-foot springboard diving. “Clarita Hunsberger Will Enter PAA Olympic Meet,” *Stanford Daily* (20 May 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012); and “Two New Times Set in Olympic Aquatic Trials,” *Stanford Daily* (26 May 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>68</sup> Clarita Hunsberger Neher, 1924 and 1928 Olympic Games, Diving,” Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles, <http://www.la84foundation.org> (accessed 9 August 2012).

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.



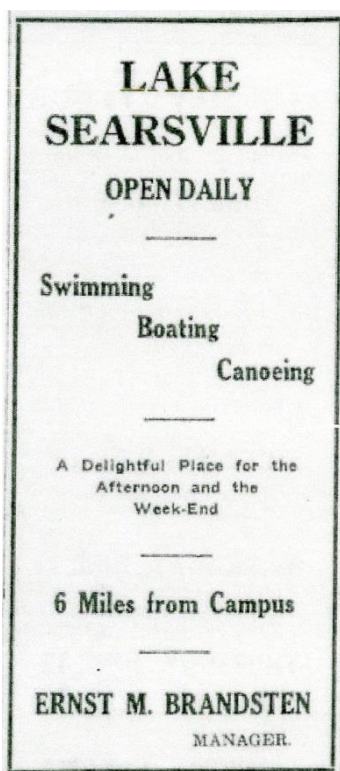


Clarita Hunsberger and Al White diving at Searsville Lake, 1924.



Clarence Pinkston diving at Searsville Lake, 1924.

Ernst Brandsten left for Indianapolis “to take up his duties as diving mentor for the American Olympic team.”<sup>71</sup> Mrs. Brandsten remained behind to run Camp Searsville. She had just resigned her position from Stanford for this express purpose; one of her final duties was to set up class swim meets in preparation for Women’s Field Day. Clarita Hunsberger had won the twenty-five-yard freestyle, the seventy-five-yard free style and diving meets of her class.<sup>72</sup> Now Hunsberger was on her way to New York where she would compete for a berth on the women’s Olympic team. Stanford’s two male entrants, Wally O’Connell and Al White, were two of the two hundred sectional winners competing for a men’s Olympic team slot at Indianapolis.



Stanford *Daily* advertisement placed by the Brandstens in June 1924.

At the 1924 Paris Olympics, former and current Stanford students swept gold, silver and bronze medals in the three meter and ten meter platform events: Al White, Pete Desjardins and Clarence Pinkston in the former and White, Dave Fall and Pinkston again in the latter. Clarita Hunsberger did not medal. Brandsten also coached the American water polo team to an impressive bronze finish; three Stanford players, Arthur Austin, Elmer Collett and Wally O’Connor, were members of the team.<sup>73</sup> The *Quad* took

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<sup>71</sup> “Brandsten Leaves for Indianapolis,” *Stanford Daily* ((2 June 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>72</sup> “Women Hold Swimming Meets Preparing for May 31,” *Stanford Daily* (26 May 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>73</sup> “Stanford at the Olympic Games,” *Stanford Quad* (1925), 213.



great pride in announcing: “This is the first time in the history of such international contests that one university has placed the first three men in any event.”<sup>74</sup>

Another pivotal event that took place at the Paris Olympics was the French and American teams disagreeing over the fulcrum setting on the springboard being set to favor the lighter French divers. The story has it that Al White’s “fans” readjusted the fulcrum to “make an average for all divers” the night before the competition and chained it into place. Brandsten, fully aware of the potential fallout from such actions, was motivated to develop an adjustable fulcrum, which was later used on springboards he designed. The diving boards, ultimately made of “Oregon straight-grained pine,” were soon “in universal use on the Pacific Coast and has now been adopted by the Intercollegiate Swimming Association.”<sup>75</sup>

Once the excitement of the Olympics had passed, Mrs. Brandsten was free to attend a campus party at the Beta Theta Pi House given by students in her honor.<sup>76</sup> Although she had officially resigned her position in June, she ended up returning in the fall of 1924 to teach a few advanced swimming and diving classes at Roble Pool.<sup>77</sup>

The drought had continued relentlessly throughout the summer with the lake ultimately drying up completely. Despite the current dry conditions, Brandsten still considered Lake Searsville to be an asset for the swim team, in addition to its recreational purpose: “At present, besides the Encina pool, we have two lakes, Lagunita and Searsville. While they are both dry this season for the first time in thirty-five years, every facility for competitive swimming meets is provided in each.”<sup>78</sup> In November 1924 he applied to the American Athletic Union to hold the Junior National Championship swimming events at Lake Searsville, potentially to be scheduled for early April 1925, in conjunction with National Senior events scheduled at Fleischacker Memorial Pool in San Francisco in the latter part of the month.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> John Bruce, “A Secret Told,” *San Francisco Call Bulletin* (11 May 1932); George Lineer, “Fifty-Year Reunion for Olympians,” undated *San Francisco Chronicle* clipping; “Two Former Champions Are Coaching Leland Stanford,” unidentified clipping ca. 1924, Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook, 51, 122, 100), ISHOF.

<sup>76</sup> “Mrs. Ernst Brandsten Is Feted By Student Friends,” *Stanford Daily* (31 July 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012) .

<sup>77</sup> She continued to coach throughout the fall of 1924 and spring of 1925 In May 1928 she was given a silver tea set by “ the WAA society in appreciation of her service”. “Mrs. Greta Brandsten to Give Courses in Swimming,” *Stanford Daily* (27 October 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012); and “Mrs. Brandsten to Return as Swimming Instructor,” *Stanford Daily* (9 February 1925), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012) ; and one of the Quads: check 24, 25, 26 and 27, and “Awards Presented to Field Day Winners, Team Members,” *Stanford Daily* (1 June 1928), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012) .

<sup>78</sup> “Coach Brandsten Outlines Work of Cardinal Mermen,” *Stanford Daily* (20 October 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012) .

<sup>79</sup> “Searsville Given AAU Swim Events,” *Stanford Daily* (21 November 1924), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

Additional plans were made for Brandsten to host the PAA High Plain Diving and the PAA High Fancy Diving meets on May 30 and 31 at Searsville Lake.<sup>80</sup>



The Brandstens on the Stanford campus ca. 1925.

### Fishing

Although Brandsten was largely focused on his coaching career as it pertained to both Stanford University and to the Olympics, he was still mindful of developing the recreational aspects of Searsville that would suit the general public. In April 1925, in anticipation of the newly opened resort season, he worked with Professor J.O. Snyder to restock Searsville Lake for fishing purposes. All of the fish had perished in the late summer and fall of 1924 when the lake had dried up completely. Brandsten and Snyder went to nearby Felt Lake and netted 100 bass of different sizes, placing them in large cans to transport them to Searsville Lake. Brandsten also planned on contacting the Fish and Game Commission to seek their help “in restocking the waters with a variety of fishes.”<sup>81</sup>

### Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls

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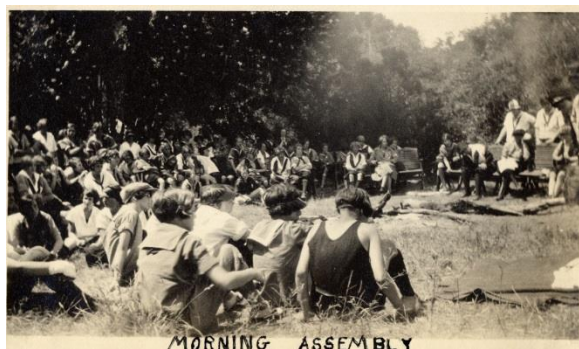
<sup>80</sup> In October 1926 Stanford swimmer Carl Stevenson was using Searsville Lake for distance swimming while training to swim across the Golden Gate, a feat Ernst Brandsten had accomplished in 1911 while working at UC-Berkeley as a coach. Brandsten was a daredevil in his younger days; he also dove 93 feet off of a crane into San Francisco Bay, setting a new high diving record for the Pacific Coast. He claimed there “was nothing higher in the vicinity from which to dive” and hoped one day to dive from New York’s Brooklyn Bridge. “Cardinal Mermen Enter Two PAA Senior Title Races,” *Stanford Daily* (8 October 1925), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012); and “Swimming and the Brandstens,” *Stanford Pictorial* (May 1921), 218, and “Stanford Swimmers Will Have Heavy Schedule,” *Stanford Daily* (27 January 1925), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>81</sup> “Stanford Men Re-Fish Lake Searsville to Thrive Again-Felt Lake Furnishes Supply,” *Stanford Daily* (10 April 1925), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

The park opened relatively late in 1925, just before the Fourth of July. What with both Brandstens teaching and coaching full-time until June, and then allowing a troop of Campfire Girls to camp out at Searsville Lake towards the end of June, they did not have much of a break before opening the resort seven days a week for the season. That year they “provided canoes, diving apparatus, and picnic grounds” for their visitors.<sup>82</sup>

Camp Searsville had always been intended for both the Stanford community and the general community, with many people coming from as far away as San Francisco. One of the San Francisco-based groups who regularly came to Searsville Lake for picnics was the Swedish Club of San Francisco and the Bay Area. The connection was a natural one, given the regard of the club members for “the most wonderful Swedish couple” that ran Camp Searsville.<sup>83</sup> Swedish picnics featured *sillopotatis* (herring and potatoes) and no doubt Mrs. Brandsten, known for her well-developed cooking skills, also supplemented the outdoor menu with other Swedish delicacies.

One of the first community groups to take advantage of the new resort was a local troop of Campfire Girls. The Campfire Girls was a national youth association founded unofficially in 1910 by Mrs. Charles Farnsworth of Vermont, along with Dr. Luther Gulick and his wife, Katherine Vedder Gulick, of Maine. Dr. Gulick was a friend of James West, the executive secretary for the Boy Scouts of America. Campfire Girls was created as a sister organization to the Boy Scouts, also founded in 1910. The Campfire Girls, officially organized in 1912, was noted for their nonsectarian and multicultural members. The programs included small group experiences, after-school programs, camping and environmental education, child care and service learning. Like nature study, the teaching of environmental education was to foster progressive ideas of conservation in tomorrow’s future adults. The various programs were all geared for promoting confidence and leadership.<sup>84</sup> Searsville Lake was an ideal place for the girls to camp and to experience nature and camaraderie first-hand.



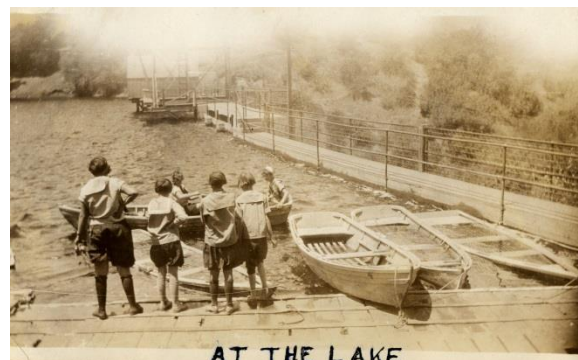
<sup>82</sup> “Searsville Opens for Summer Season,” *Stanford Daily* (2 July 1925), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>83</sup> Interview with Jan Johanson, niece of Ernst and Greta Brandsten (August 2013); and Swedish Club of San Francisco and Bay Area, <http://www.scandinavius.com/swedishclub.html> (accessed 10 August 2012).

<sup>84</sup> “Camp Fire,” Wikipedia, <http://Wikipedia.org/> (accessed 16 August 2013).



The Campfire Girls who spent time out in the wilderness of Camp Searsville in 1925 and 1926 camped in an area away from the lake. They entered the resort at the Whiskey Hill gate but instead of proceeding forward and then across the bridge towards the dam, the campers were driven down a dirt road that made an immediate right at the gate and paralleled Sand Hill Road (also still a dirt road), passing alongside an enormous meadow before coming up on Bear Creek. Photographs dated 1925 and 1926 show a troop of uniformed girls camping in tents, preparing for morning assembly where they pledged allegiance to the American flag, going on hikes, playing in either Bear or San Franciscquito Creek, and boating on the lake.<sup>85</sup> At least one girl in the photographs is wearing a bathing suit, so presumably they swam as well. Two mothers can be seen washing up dishes. The assembly area boasted a large flagpole and an assortment of wood and canvas structures. Brandsten was an adept carpenter and built most if not all of the camp structures himself, no doubt ably assisted by the numerous lifeguards he hired.



<sup>85</sup> Campfire Girls photographs held at Portola Valley Archives.





### Water Safety

The Brandstens took water safety extremely seriously; Brandsten was “a leader in the Red Cross life-saving movement” long before he and his wife ever opened Camp Searsville.<sup>86</sup> Most of the lifeguards Brandsten hired came directly from the Stanford swim teams, with the money they earned sometimes making the difference on whether they attended the university or not. Lifeguards were posted on the beach and patrolled the lake in boats. Additional lifeguards worked on the busy weekends, especially on the heavily attended Sundays and holidays. Despite their best efforts, multiple drownings still occurred at Searsville Lake.<sup>87</sup> Many people did not know how to swim at all, or were poor swimmers. The weeds that grew in the lake easily entangled people, and those who fell out of boats in the deep water or willfully jumped off of the out-of-bounds crest of the dam may have panicked and hastened their deaths. Consumption of alcohol and bravado were two additional factors. James O’Brien, a nineteen-year-old man from San Francisco, reportedly told the lifeguards he could swim when he and his buddy Fred Pierce rented a canoe one Sunday afternoon on 27 June 1926. The two friends paddled out of sight of the beach and headed for the dam. Somehow the boat overturned and O’Brien sank below the surface of the water without ever coming up. People who were nearby tried to rescue him themselves while others immediately summoned lifeguards, but the body could only be recovered with the use of a clamshell drag some twenty minutes later. Brandsten and doctors both tried to resuscitate the body but to no avail. As a result, Brandsten decreed “that in future everyone renting a canoe at Searsville will have to demonstrate to the lifeguards that he is able to swim at least two hundred yards.”<sup>88</sup> The lifeguards managed to save

<sup>86</sup> “Ernst Brandsten Has Charge of Aquatics,” *Daily Palo Alto* (15 February 1921), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>87</sup> A search of the online coroner’s records for San Mateo County revealed seventeen drownings occurred at Searville Lake between the years of 1925 and 1967; no records were available beyond 1967. San Mateo County Coroner’s Records, 1865-1967, <http://sfgenealogy.com/sanmateo> (accessed 6/11/2013).

<sup>88</sup> “San Francisco Youth Drowns on Sunday at Searsville Lake,” *Stanford Daily* (29 June 1926), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

many more lives than they lost. James Triolo ('35) was a swim team member hired by Brandsten to work as a lifeguard. Triolo later recalled fifteen specific interventions on one busy holiday that resulted in fifteen lives saved that day.<sup>89</sup>

The Sunday atmosphere was captured by the *Stanford Daily*:

Searsville Lake attracts quite a throng of people these hot days, especially on Sunday. On that day it presents an interesting spectacle for the philosopher or student of human nature. The majority of the bathers are workers from San Francisco and South City [South San Francisco] who get their only touch of nature in this way. They start coming early in the morning and staying on the beach. A corps of ten lifeguards—all Stanford students—are required to watch over this crowd, and their alertness is often the means of saving people from trouble who swim out over their depth and get into difficulty.<sup>90</sup>

The *Daily*, with a complete lack of accuracy in regards to the mining activities in the area, went on to add fuel to the rumor that had dogged the lake ever since it was created.<sup>91</sup>

The spot where this lake is was once the scene of mining activities. Numerous tunnels can still be seen which pierce the hills and give evidence of a quest for quicksilver. A dam was later constructed to store up water for the irrigation of Stanford. Several years ago when the lake went dry the remains of buildings could be seen on the bottom—the tombstones of an abandoned mining camp.<sup>92</sup>

### Horseback Riding

In 1922, the same year the Brandstens applied for a lease to create Camp Searsville, a local horseback riding group in the Woodside-Portola Valley area organized into the Woodside Trail Club in an effort to keep their habitual trails usable. In the past most of the area had been made up of large estates and working ranches, and neighbors routinely visited each other on horseback or driving a horse and buggy. Gates were left unlocked to facilitate easy passage and a horse-centric lifestyle continued to flourish long after automobiles became commonplace. As private property became more developed riders were losing accessibility to trails but not their desire to ride. One of the Woodside Trail Club's solutions was to apply to Stanford to ride on university land local to their area.<sup>93</sup>

The Menlo Circus Club was initially formed by three children living in Menlo Park in 1920 but adults gradually also joined the club. One of these adults was Gordon Coryell, who rode the local trails extensively. Another was Frank King, a local banker. King is credited with obtaining permission for Menlo Circus Club riders to have access to Stanford property. Starting with the early to mid-1920s, both

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<sup>89</sup> Lisa Ehrlich, oral history with James Triolo (14 May 2002), Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Archives.

<sup>90</sup> "Peninsula Points," *Stanford Daily* (21 August 1928), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>91</sup> Brandsten greatly added to the tall tale, smiling as he told his divers not to go too deeply lest they hit their heads on a roof or chimney. Sandstone and Tile (already cited in overview)

<sup>92</sup> "Peninsula Points," *Stanford Daily* (21 August 1928), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>93</sup> James M. Gerstley, *The Shack Riders* (privately printed by The Shack Riders, 1970), 8.



clubs had separate access gates with separate keys to ride on Stanford property that included Camp Searsville grounds. The Brandstens were interested in including horseback riding as part of the recreational activities, especially Mrs. Brandsten, who was herself a rider.<sup>94</sup> Brandsten at some point began subleasing a portion of Camp Searsville acreage to the nearby Why Worry Farm, whose owners were growing hay on the land.

Some two decades later, the *Peninsula Diary* columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle* recalled:

Children of the last twenty years who have grown up near Searsville Lake have had many exciting adventures and explorations both afoot and on horseback through the resort. First the Woodside Trail Club, and then the Menlo Circus Club, were given permission to construct bridle paths around the lake and through the surrounding hills. Now the Menlo Circus Club has its own picnic grounds and barbecue area at Searsville Lake, and breakfast rides are held all during the spring and summer.

Games of tag on horseback over rolling hills around the lake were great sport on week days when the picnickers weren't around, and on Sundays when the hordes of people escaping from the city would make the banks of Searsville Lake look like a miniature Coney Island, it was fun to ride a skittish horse through the crowds, and hear the remarks, sometimes jeering, often admiring.<sup>95</sup>

#### A Pivotal Time

In 1926 the Woodside Country Club expressed interest in building a golf course just south of Searsville Lake. The group had broached this request, along with permission to use the lake for boating and swimming, with the Spring Valley Water Company, back in 1910. Spring Valley was willing to lease the property but Stanford University also had to agree to the lease and the university, for whatever reason, was unwilling to do so.<sup>96</sup> However, by 1926, university administrators were more supportive—several high-ranking officials, including university president Ray Lyman Wilbur, were listed as charter members—and the Woodside Country Club leased Lot 98 with an expiration date of 30 September 1931<sup>97</sup>. The club also owned property adjacent to Lot 98, with their clubhouse and swimming pool standing on the former Dimond estate.<sup>98</sup> Plans were made to raise funds for the new golf course and other improvements by selling undeveloped lots in the area.

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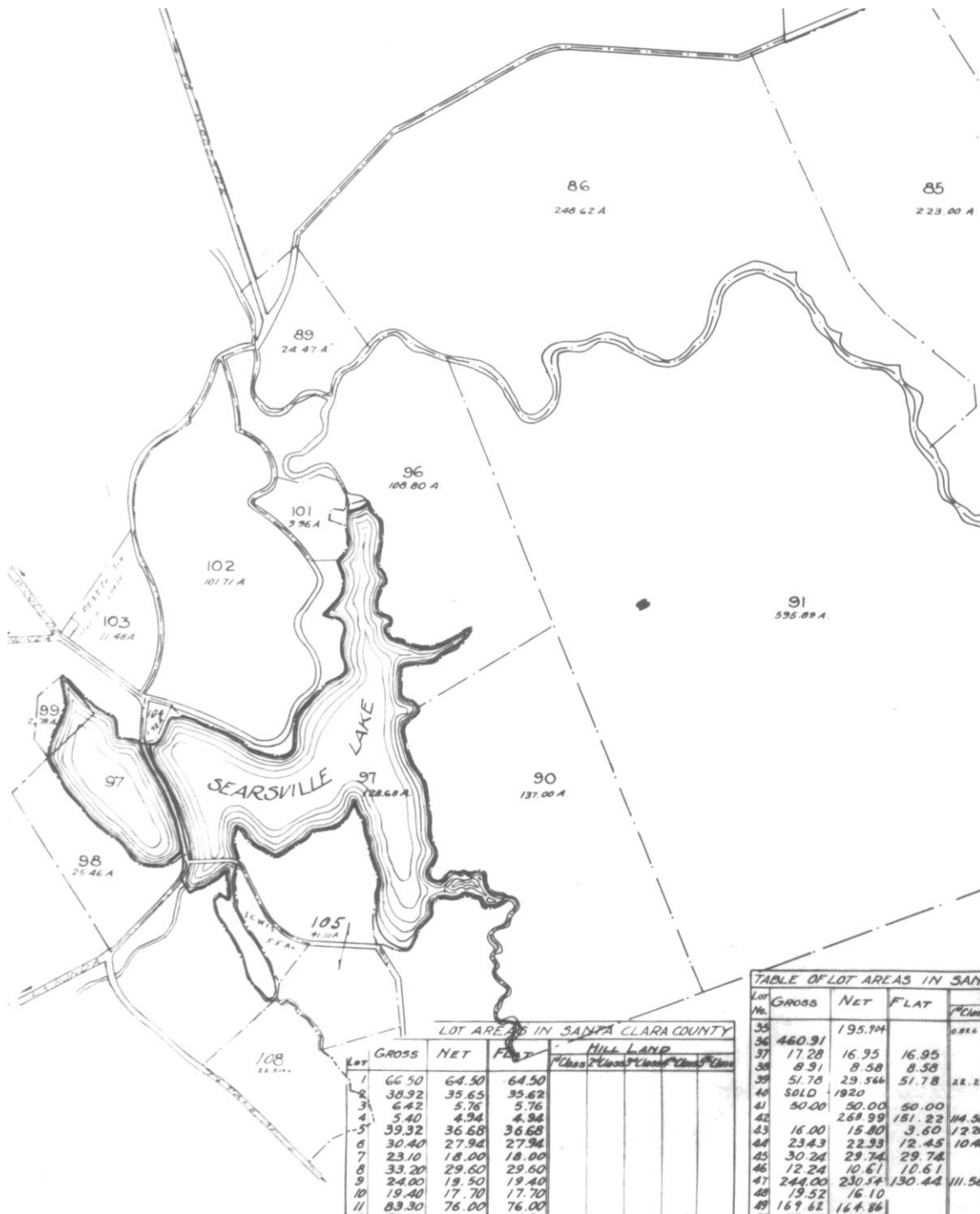
<sup>94</sup> "Sweden to Searsville."

<sup>95</sup> "Searsville May Again Site for a Town," *San Francisco Chronicle* (3 January 1954), clipping file, Palo Alto Library Archives.

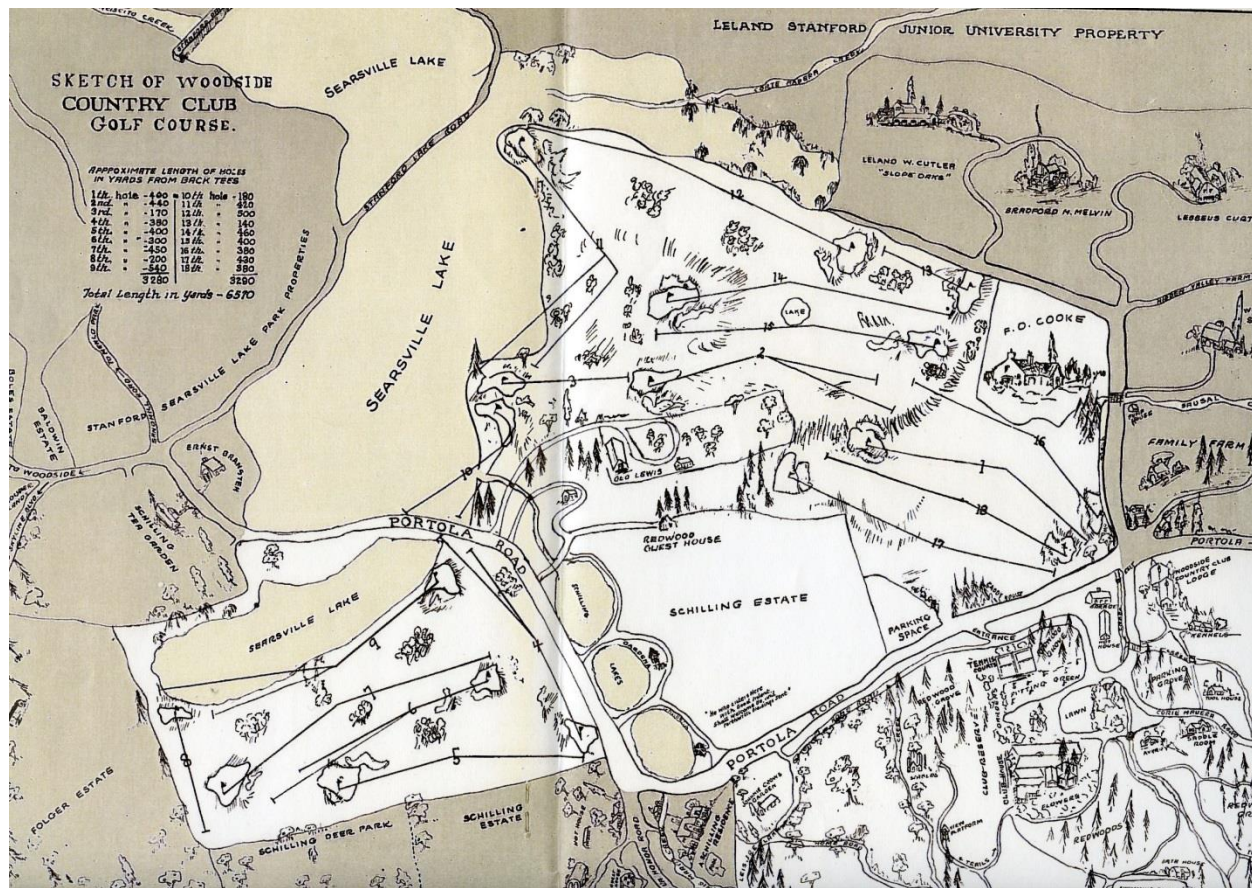
<sup>96</sup> Regnery, *Jasper Ridge*, 122; and SC027, Stanford University Board of Trustees, Supporting Documents, SUA.

<sup>97</sup> "Analysis of Acreage by Lot Number," SC100, Stanford University Controller's Office Records, SUA; and "Woodside Country Club," unpaginated brochure, PVA.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.



A 1947 map of the Stanford lands showing the lot numbers assigned as property was acquired.



The golf course, designed by Dr. Alister MacKenzie (he designed the prestigious Cypress Point course at Monterey, among several others), “offered alternative tee shots over coves of Searsville Lake.”<sup>99</sup>

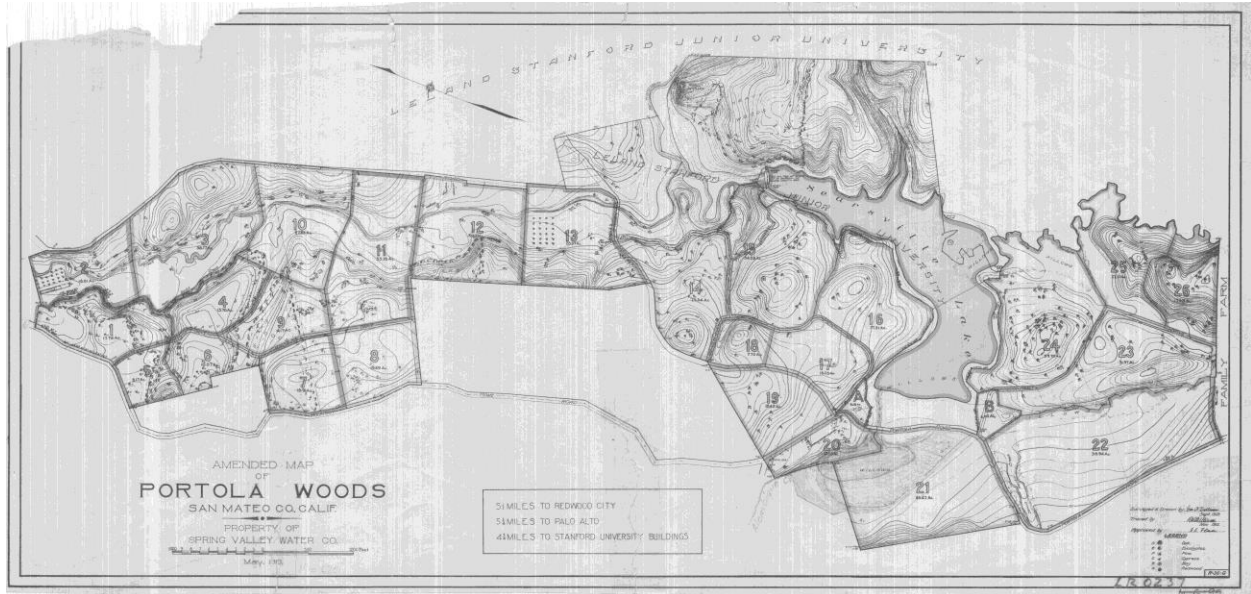
In June 1926 the Brandstens were finally able to purchase a lot that bordered the northwest shore of Searsville Lake from Harry and Winifred Allen. Instead of building a house there, they instead sold their lot to the university, which had also acquired an adjoining 100 acres from the Allens. These two parcels were respectively designated as Farm Lot 101 and Farm Lot 102. In addition, Stanford also purchased a relatively small lot in September 1926, designated Lot 104, which had a house on it built by Palo Alto realtor Norwood Smith and his wife Jessie circa 1921.<sup>100</sup> The house was likely designed and built as an office or temporary quarters for either a Spring Valley Water Company employee or realtor involved with selling company-owned lots in what was known as the Portola Woods Subdivision.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Bob Weisgerber, “California Dreamin’,” *Golf World* (11 January 2008), 31.

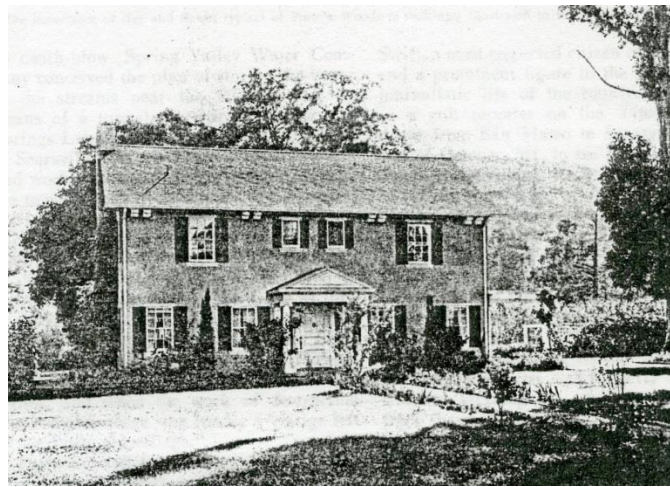
<sup>100</sup> The Smiths may have been neighbors of the Brandstens; both couples lived on Waverley Street in Palo Alto before moving respectively to Portola Woods and Searsville Lake. Norwood Smith wrote future Jasper Ridge docent Herb Dengler in 1947 that “the contractors uncovered a pit filled with old bottles and cans when they were digging my basement. The house I built overlapped the location shown on the plat where it is my opinion the [Eikerenkotter] hotel stood. Another indication was a pipe line which ran along the row of eucalyptus parallel with the road and connecting with a spring above the John Hooper Estate.” Norwood Smith to Herbert Dengler (9 April 1947), M0479, Dorothy Regnery Papers, SUA.

<sup>101</sup> Anthony Kirk, DPR for Jasper Ridge caretaker House, 12-750 (9 July 2013), 1, 5.





Lots 1-26 depicted on an amended Portola Woods subdivision map flanked three sides of Searsville Lake. The original subdivision map was dated 1913; this map was dated 1919. Stanford University ultimately purchased 125 acres of the area north and west of the lake in 1926.



House built in the Spring Valley Water Company's Portola Woods subdivision by real estate agent Norwood Smith, the former owner of the Searsville Lake Park caretaker's house the Brandstens rented from the university beginning in 1926.

After four years in the "makeshift place," four years that often included lodging long-term guests such as Swedish swimmer Arne Borg, one can only imagine the Brandstens' happiness at moving into a relatively new home that presumably had all of the previously lacking amenities of electricity, running water and a telephone. Their earlier purchase of what became Lot 102 and subsequent leasing of the house on Lot 104 signaled an expansion of their original plans for Camp Searsville, one wholeheartedly supported by the university. The Brandstens entered a new ten-year lease effective 1 September 1926 that encompassed

Lots 89, 96, 101, 102, 103 and 104, with an annual rent due of \$9,432.30.<sup>102</sup> The new arrangement was noted in the Annual Report of the President:

[Stanford University] purchased approximately 125 acres of beautiful rolling land adjoining Searsville Lake, on the west and north, and lying between the Lake and Sand Hill road, at a cost of \$112,782 and has contracted to purchase an additional 1.42-acre tract with improvements, in this same area, at a price of \$9,427. This land, with improvements, has been leased to Mr. Ernst Brandsten, Swimming Instructor at the University, for a period of ten years at a rental which will yield the University a good return on its investment. For the present it is to be used as a recreation park in connection with the swimming and boating concession which Mr. Brandsten has been operating at Searsville Lake.<sup>103</sup>

The additional lots added up to approximately 250 acres and allowed the Brandstens to shift their operation to the more hospitable west side of Searsville Lake. Brandsten installed a new entrance gate on Lot 104 close to the new home; he also built a large and comfortable wood toll booth there with large arched windows similar to those found on the west side of the house. Cars stopped at the booth and visitors received tickets in return for their entry fees. The entrance road forked at the gate, with drivers entering the resort on the road bearing to the right and exiting on the left-hand road. The Brandstens cleared and created a new beach almost directly across from the original eastside beach and presumably moved the bathhouse and store accordingly, or built new ones. Two large parking lots flanked the beach area.



The new entrance to Searsville Lake Park. Mrs. Brandsten's spacious ticket booth was built in a style resembling the caretaker's house she and her husband moved into in 1926. She spent most of the day in the booth when the park was open.

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<sup>102</sup> This lease, like the original one, has been lost over time but the lots leased to the Brandstens were listed in SC100, Stanford University Controller's Office Records, 1929-1936, SUA. Need full citation, plus included in SUPSA 1955 memorandum.

<sup>103</sup> *Annual Report of the President*, ending August 31, 1926, 59.



The demands for campus water were greater than ever during the 1920s as the campus underwent ambitious building and landscaping programs, including plans for an extensive botanic garden that would stretch all the way from the arboretum on campus to Searsville Lake. A golf course was also in the works and adequate water for all of these ventures was in short supply:

Increased demands on the Searsville Lake water supply brought about by the increased number of athletic fields and residences have necessitated the operation of the 12-inch pipeline at a maximum capacity these past two years.

In order to furnish the necessary increased supply, the University faced the alternatives of building another line to Searsville or of enlarging Felt Lake and laying a 12-inch main with that body of water. The Felt Lake plan was decided upon by the University.<sup>104</sup>

Silt filling the Searsville Lake had been an ongoing problem since the dam was completed in 1891 and it had already been dredged at the upper end in 1918. As the lake continued to shrink due to increasing sedimentation, university officials took action in 1929 by undertaking an even more ambitious dredging project:

A total of \$25,000 is being expended by Stanford University to make Searsville Lake one of the outstanding and scenic centers of Northern California, according to J.W. McDonnell, engineer in charge of construction. A dike, 300 feet long, is being built across the slough at the sound end of the lake, near the highway. This slough is to be dredged at the cost of \$20,000 and kept free from growth. Present plans call for six islands in the area, south of the dike. These small bodies of land will be planted and maintained to add to the scenic beauty of the lake.

A roadway is to be constructed across the dike and built into the hills above the lake. This, too, is for beauty and nature lovers, and it will end at a point where a view can be obtained of the California terrain between San Jose and Oakland.

These improvements are being made near the point where four creeks—Corte Madera, Sausal, Dennis Martin and Alambique—enter Searsville. The dike is designed to keep growth out of the main body of water, and the dredging in the slough will accomplish a similar work there.

The water level of the dredge area, south of the dike, will be higher than that of the lake proper, and a spillway is to be constructed through to connect the two.

When Searsville Lake was constructed in 1891 its capacity was 450,000,000 gallons [sic] of water, but since then sediment and silt have decreased that capacity by approximately 200,000,000 gallons. While the dredging work will not materially increase the present capacity, it will, in a large part, prevent further filling, McDonnell said today.

Ralph Oakley, of Palo Alto, is the contractor doing the work.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> “New Water System Assures Building of Campus Golf Links,” *Stanford Daily* (1 May 1929), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

Two months later, the Redwood City *Democrat* reported:

A large piece of work is under way at Searsville Lake that will result in making it one of the most attractive resorts in this part of the state. No longer is it to be a mere reservoir dwindling to a muddy expanse in the fall but is to be a permanent lake over two miles long dotted with islands, and offering every facility for boating as well as bathing. The work is being done by Stanford University, the owner, and Ernst Brandsten, the lessee. The western end is being dredged so as to give a good depth of water clear to the highway and by the building of supplementary reservoirs it is hoped to be able to maintain a high water level in this lake during the entire season. The work is being done with regard to landscaping effects and will greatly add to the appeal of this always popular resort.<sup>106</sup>

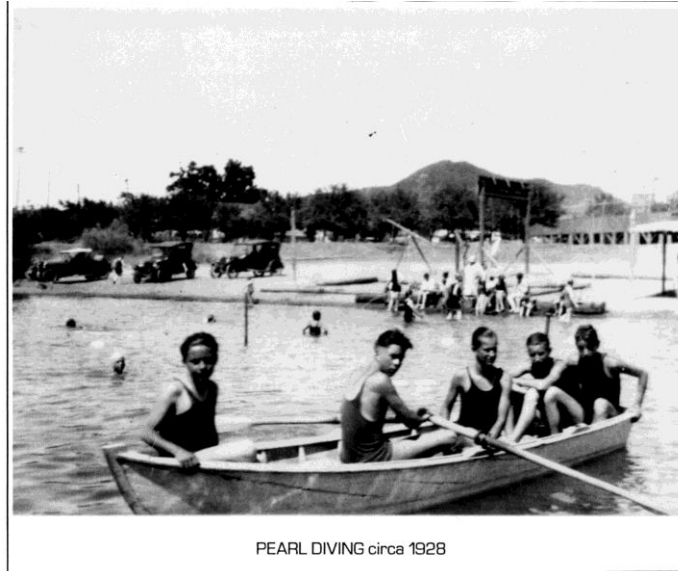


“Searsville attracts the wayward,” a tongue-in-cheek claim made in the Stanford *Quad* (1927).

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<sup>105</sup> The final cost of the ambitious project was \$43,443.31. The university bore half of the cost and extended a loan to Ernst Brandsten to cover the other half at six percent interest. E.S. Erwin to A.E. Roth (19 April 1938), Box 4369, Stanford University Property Services Archives; and Palo Alto *Times* (14 October 1929), reprinted in Regnery, *Jasper Ridge*, 137-138.

<sup>106</sup> Redwood City *Standard Democrat* (24 December 1929), Schellens Collection, Redwood City Public Library.

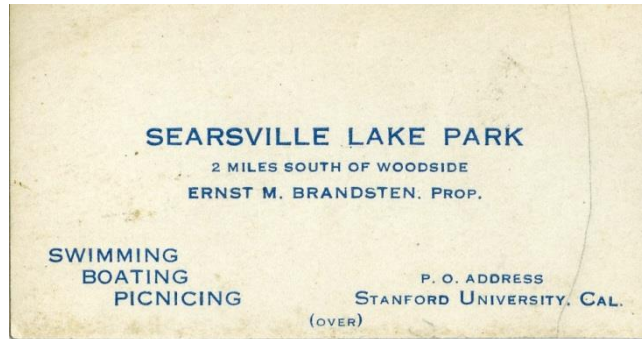


Local Gene Chaput's father and uncle with friends at Searsville Lake ca. 1928.

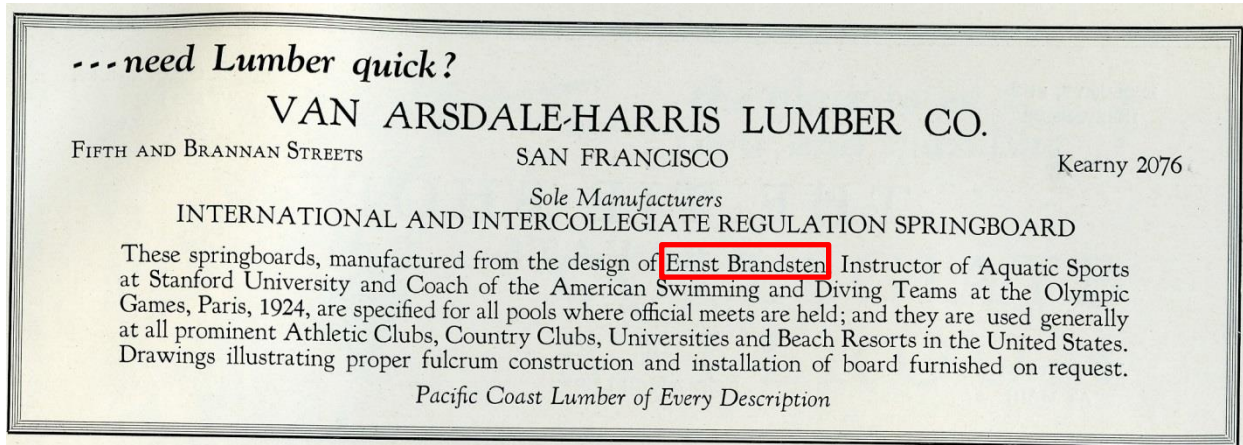


Future Jasper Ridge docent Jean Clebsch (*third from left*) at Searsville Lake Park with her siblings in the late 1920s.

While this work was being done up at Searsville Lake, down on campus a new set of Encina pools was being constructed to conform with Ernst Brandsten's wishes. He had coached the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics with Stanford swimmers again medaling.<sup>107</sup> The increasing importance of swimming at Stanford was best seen in the money and care the Board of Athletic Control put into this current project that produced not one but three separate pools for the men.<sup>108</sup> One pool was intended for class use, one for water polo and swim meets and one for diving. All three were arranged adjoining each other to afford good viewing from the surrounding bleachers. Although the creation of the new Encina pools appears to have brought an end to meets being held at Lake Searsville, Brandsten continued to use the lake for training his swimmers.<sup>109</sup>



Ernst Brandsten's business card.



<sup>107</sup> Brandsten was still using Searsville Lake as well as the Encina Pool to train not only the Stanford swimmers but other swimmers from all over the United States. Following the 1924 Paris Olympics he was willing to train any swimmers who wanted to benefit from his coaching. "Sideline Slants: The Father of Modern Diving," *Stanford Daily* (23 May 1928), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?a=p&p=home&e=-----en-20--1--txt-in-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012); and "Olympic Trials at Fleischacker Pool for Diving Titles," *Stanford Daily* (31 May 1928), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?a=p&p=home&e=-----en-20--1--txt-in-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

<sup>108</sup> Orville H. Tucker, "Stanford University Swimming Pools," *Western Construction News* (25 October 1929), 553.

<sup>109</sup> Three and later two new pools were also planned to replace Roble Pool; one for class use and another for recreational use. Only one new pool was constructed when the new Women's Gymnasium was built in 1931. "Athletic Board Plans Five New Swim Pools," *Stanford Daily* (27 June 1929), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN-----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?a=p&p=home&e=-----en-20--1--txt-in-----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).



Ad placed in the 1927 Stanford *Quad* for lumber featuring diving boards made to Ernst Brandsten's specifications.

While the dredging and the new pool and road construction were taking place, the New York Stock Exchange crashed over a series of days, the worst being "Black Tuesday," on 29 October 1929. At the time, few foresaw the paralyzing grip the resultant Great Depression would place on the American economy. By 1933, the worst year of the economic failure, one out of four people in the country were out of work with no hope in sight of getting back on their feet. Another one out of four was working part-time or had taken a substantial cut in wages. Those who lost their homes or farms, without family or a local church to help care for them, were forced to live on the streets or in dangerous "Hooverilles," with some literally starving to death. Thousands took to the rails or migrated westward in an effort to survive.

### The Great Depression

The Great Depression (1929-1939) had a profound effect on American society at large and neither Stanford University nor the Brandstens' operation of the Lake Searsville Park was exempt from the economic hardship that had snared the country.<sup>110</sup> The Brandstens saw the gate decrease at the park beginning with the 1930-31 season. Unaware of how long or how deep the Depression would become, this same year also saw the construction of an Automobile Bridge on Lot 102, part of the Brandstens' leasehold.<sup>111</sup> In 1931, Mrs. Brandsten was back at work at the university, an instructor for swimming and diving at the new Roble Pool, built adjacent to the new Women's Gymnasium.<sup>112</sup> The Brandstens also continued to advertise Searsville Lake in the *Daily*:



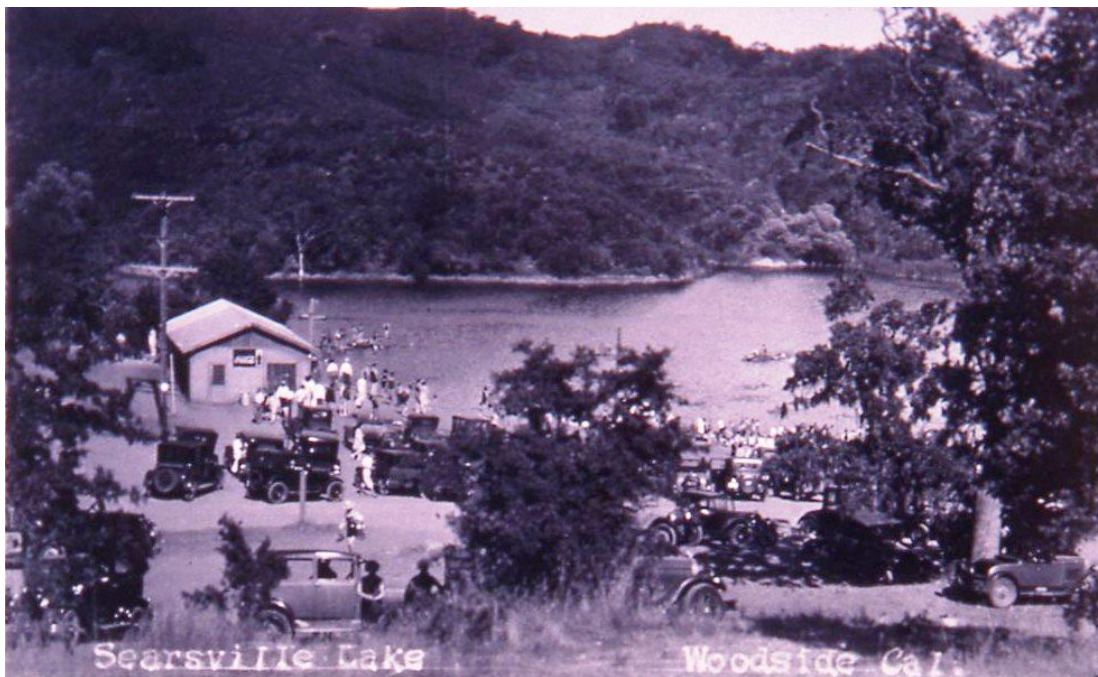
<sup>110</sup> The Great Depression put an end to the ambitious plans made earlier by the Woodside Country Club. The golf course underwent construction in 1930 but was never completed and the club sold the property they owned to Stanford University in 1932. It was designated Lot 108. Stanford University also appears to have considered developing part of the property it purchased from Spring Valley in 1926, designating the subdivision "Lake Shore Hills." It also was a victim of the Depression. "Purchase," SUPSA binder.

<sup>111</sup> Former Stanford student and United States President Herbert Hoover had erroneously pronounced that the American economy had "passed the worst" in March 1930. "Fifty Interesting Facts About the Great Depression," Random Facts, <http://www.facts.randomhistory.com/> (accessed 20 August 2013), and "Valuation Summary," 22 September 1988, San Mateo County Assessor's Office.

<sup>112</sup> "Three Appointments Made for Faculty," Stanford *Daily* (16 February 1931), CDNC, [HTTP://STANFORD.DLCONSULTING.COM/CGI-BIN/STANFORD?A=P&P=HOME&E=-----EN-20--1--TXT-IN----](http://stanford.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/stanford?a=p&p=home&e=-----en-20--1--txt-in----) (ACCESSED 26 DECEMBER 2012).

Ad placed in the *Stanford Daily* on 9 April 1931.

In 1932, Brandsten quit his job as Director of Stanford Aquatics, most likely because he was again coaching the divers for the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, and simply did not have the time to devote to the overall swim program. He remained on in an advisory capacity, coaching the swimming and water polo teams. That year the Board of Trustees agreed to lower the annual rent of the “Searsville Lake concession” from \$9,432.20 down to \$8,067.43.<sup>113</sup> In 1934, “due to an unusually bad season caused by the general effects of the Depression and augmented by the poliomyelitis epidemic, gross income has dropped to \$16,000 from an anticipated income of \$24,000.”<sup>114</sup> Direct maintenance had already been reduced as much as possible “without actually neglecting the property,” and the Brandstens hoped to pay thirty percent of their gate in place of an annual rent figure.<sup>115</sup> Thirty percent of the 1934 season was \$4,720.67, approximately half of what the Brandstens had paid out each year between 1926 and 1931. Despite these hard times and reducing their own park-related salaries, the Brandstens continued to employ lifeguards from the varsity swim team and paid them fifty cents per hour, an incredibly generous wage for the Depression era.<sup>116</sup>



The beach, the snack bar and informal parking ca. mid-1930s.

<sup>113</sup> A.E. Roth to Board of Trustees (31 August 1934), Box 4369, SUPSA.

<sup>114</sup> The final gross income figure for 1933-34 is listed elsewhere as only \$14,723.09, the worst year Searsville Lake Park suffered during the entire Depression. In addition to the difficult economic times, the weather that year was dry and led to low water conditions and a depletion of fish. These conditions led to the suspension of all fishing permits for Searsville Lake from 1934-1945. “Fishing Privileges in Searsville and Felt Lake,” (17 July 1945), Box 4369, SUPSA; and Ibid.

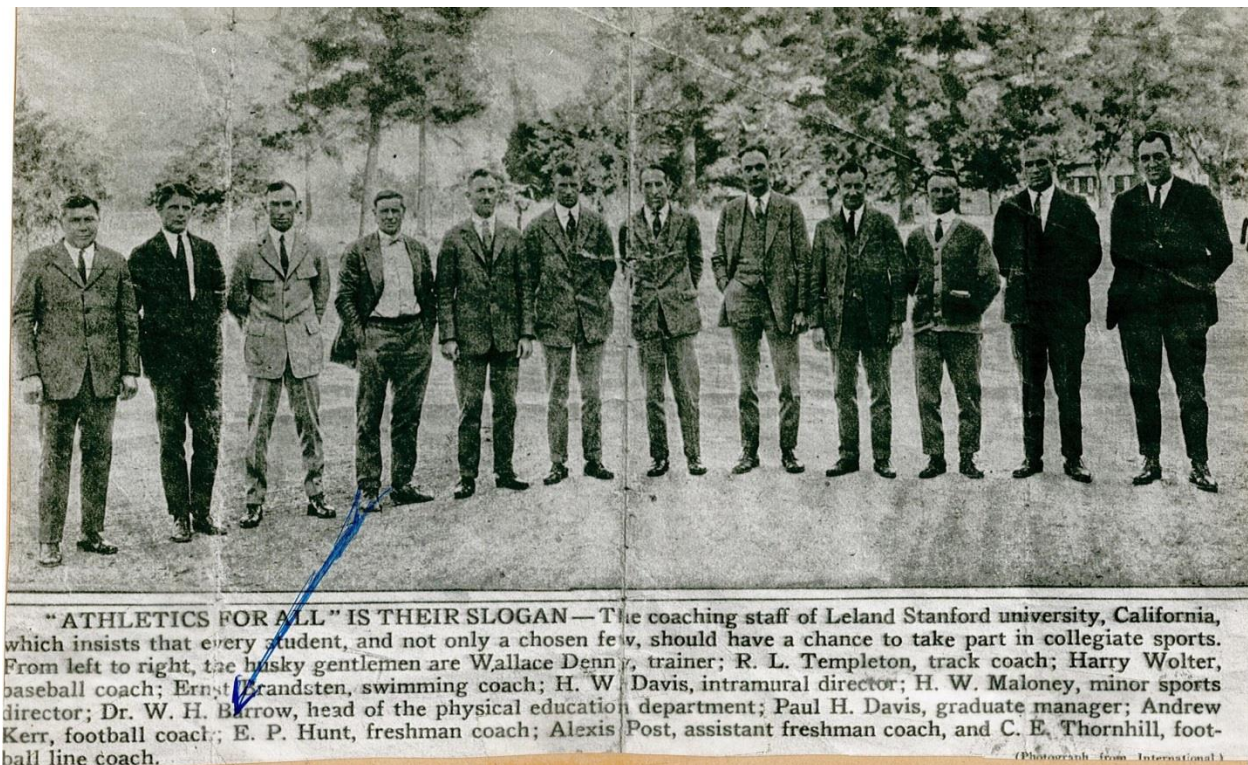
<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> In addition to gate receipts, the park income included store sales, suit and towel rentals, boat rentals, umbrella, tent and horse rentals, the sale of gasoline and oil, telephone tolls, the sale of water to neighbors and unspecified miscellaneous income. “Searsville Lake Park Comparative Income Accounts: 1927-1933,” Box 4369, SUPSA; and Triola Oral History, 1.



While much of the general public might have been staying home, the Athletic Control Board often treated the various sports teams to barbecues up at Searsville Lake. Sam McDonald, responsible for the maintenance of athletic facilities on campus, recalled:

There were other pleasurable affairs [referring to staff meetings] arranged for families of the staff, often in the form of barbecues at Searsville Lake or La Honda; and it became an annual occurrence for the football, track, and baseball squads to look forward to similar outings likewise predicated upon conviviality. It is pleasant now to recall memories of these many gatherings, which often included others such as Al Roth and his Controller's Office staff, Professor J.P. Mitchell's Registrar's Office staff, etc., when I would voluntarily assume the pleasurable duty of sizzling the meat over a barbeque pit.<sup>117</sup>



Ernst Brandsten (fourth from left) is identified by the hand-drawn blue arrow connecting his image to his name. The clipping was pasted into one of Ernst Brandsten's scrapbooks.

Sam McDonald was legendary among the Stanford community for the wonderful barbecues he prepared. His culinary feats were not confined to Athletic Department gatherings; he also held barbecues for several campus and community groups, one being the local Buck-of-the-Month Club. The first time he did so for the "Bucks," during the 1930s, he remembered coming upon a small shack and tidy garden on "a classic promontory overlooking the surroundings, including Searsville Lake."<sup>118</sup> As the barbecue wound down and McDonald began packing up with his assistants, he noticed a stranger approaching the site. Hailing him and striking up a conversation, McDonald was struck by the man's inherent dignity. John Bonini was

<sup>117</sup> Emanuel B. "Sam" McDonald, *Stanford Reminiscences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954), 284.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

an Italian immigrant, just as Domingo Grosso had been some sixty years earlier, and he was living in the shack McDonald had passed on his way from the campus. Bonini was working for Brandsten: “I have little place little ways below here; I have little garden, everything I want. Nobody bother. I be alone, happy, I bother nobody. I work all time for Mr. Brandsten and other people.”<sup>119</sup> McDonald, fully aware of the deprivations brought on by the Depression, offered Bonino a job working for him at the university but Bonino declined, more than content with his current living conditions. He pressed his business card on to McDonald, which listed his address as Searsville Lake and even had a telephone number, no doubt for the telephone belonging to the Brandstens.

John Bonini assumed Grossos’ mantle of living like a hermit on property that did not belong to him, but he was not the only person to build a shack or cabin in the area. Stanford student Herbert Dengler had been granted permission to build a small cabin close by the site of the old Zoology cabin in 1931 or 1932.<sup>120</sup> Leonard Ely, grandson of university president Ray Lyman Wilbur, also built a cabin near the site of Grosso’s home with his best friend, Henry D’Andney, in 1937-1938. The boys sold magazines at the train station and washed pots for Palo Alto and Stanford University benefactress Lucy Stern at the rate of one penny per pot. Their earnings covered the cost of materials that were trucked to the site by Ely’s father. The boys rode their bicycles to nearby Webb Ranch and walked to the cabin site from there.<sup>121</sup>

The Boy Scouts was another group who continued to use Searsville Lake on a regular basis throughout the Great Depression. They camped below the site of the Ely cabin and along San Francisquito Creek in the redwoods directly on the steep hillside above the site of the Zoology cabin. One of these Boy Scouts was Carl Reynolds, son of a Stanford faculty member. Carl joined Troop 51, also known as the Ahwahnee Patrol, which was based on the Stanford campus and met at the original schoolhouse on Salvatierra Street, in the fall of 1930.<sup>122</sup> Hiking and camping, in addition to making their equipment, were “the heart of Scouting” for this troop, and they camped in the Stanford Arboretum, at nearby Felt Lake and most often in the area above San Francisquito Creek known as “The Weekend Camp.”<sup>123</sup> The weekend trips involved hiking from the campus with packs on their backs out to the campsite, spending one or two nights there and hiking back on Sundays, when they would take soapy showers due to the prevalence of poison oak. The boys encountered cattle grazing in the area, riders from the Menlo Circus Club and the Woodside Trail Club, wildlife of all sorts and one memorable discussion with Stanford professor Baily Willis. Willis, an eminent geologist, lectured the boys about the escarpment they camped on and explained to them the workings of the San Andreas Fault.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>120</sup> Barbara Bocek and Elana Reese, *Land Use History of Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve* (Stanford: Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve, 1992), 80.

<sup>121</sup> The shack was still standing in 1992 but has since collapsed. Leonard Ely, Oral History (1992), e-mailed to Julie Cain from Bob Dodge (27 June 2013).

<sup>122</sup> Carl Reynolds, *Family Memories, 1931-1935* (privately printed, 1995), 82.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 83-85.





Five members of Ahwahnee Patrol wearing their self-made pack boards used when hiking to and camping out at the escarpment above the site of the original Zoology Cabin ca. 1932. Nathaniel Lawrence, Donald Reynolds, Carl Reynolds, High Smith and David Bell (*left to right*).

Carl Reynolds's reminiscences demonstrate how ideas inherent to nature study, recreation and the Boy Scouts all merged together in his youthful experiences that remained with him the rest of his life:

Over a period of years we became very familiar with all parts of this wonderful natural area....I can smell the good odor of the dry grass and feel the scratch of the grass seeds in the stockings. The wildflowers seem like old friends and the dry leaves rustle underfoot. Many other scenes come back....These were the years of the Great Depression, but for us they were rich and happy years, costing us almost nothing. We were living close to nature, absorbing wonderful memories without knowing it. My inward eye sees grass heavy with dew hanging to every blade, or sparkling with frost in winter. We developed a sensitivity to the environment, by becoming ourselves a part of the environment, part of the local fauna, and I retain a strong homing instinct to this day.<sup>125</sup>

Docent John Working was another local boy who grew up on campus and also belonged to Troop 51 during the 1930s. He remembers being dropped off for camping by his parents rather than hiking up Sand Hill Road but he slept under the same redwood trees that Carl Reynolds did. He clearly remembers cooked meals over a campfire and suffered mightily when the troop once mistakenly used poison oak for fuel. John also went up to Searsville Lake regularly with his family. He remembers his father paying fifty cents at the tollbooth to get in, then traveling down a straight road lined with Monterey pines, with Upper Lake off on the right-hand side of the road. The road veered left and uphill towards the beach where the

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 84, 85.

snack bar and changing house stood. John's family always brought their meals in a picnic basket and thought the boat rentals too expensive at another fifty cents per hour due to the Depression. John also remembered the diving tower still standing on the dam, playing on the thin layer of sand on the beach, swimming out to the floats and the underwater weed population steadily increasing as the season progressed from summer towards the fall.<sup>126</sup>

James Triolo, a Stanford swimmer, worked for the Brandstens between 1931 and 1936. He trained with three Stanford Olympians at Searsville Lake in 1932, namely Austin Clapp, Frank Boothe and Ted Wiget. Swim practice consisted of swimming to the dam and back, and Triolo claimed that one of the divers coming off of the high platform once almost landed on top of him in the water below. Triolo drove a Model A down Sand Hill Road (still a dirt road in the 1930s) from the campus to the lake. He said that Mrs. Brandsten handled the bookkeeping and financial end of the park. She also collected the money and handed out the tickets from the booth near the entry gate while Brandsten dealt with park maintenance and supervised the lifeguards. Stanford faculty and students received a discount entrance fee.<sup>127</sup>



Brandsten with the varsity swimming team in 1933. James Triolo (*second row, fifth from the left*) worked as a lifeguard at Searsville Lake Park.

In 1938, despite the American economy's sluggish improvement, the Brandstens owed \$15,515.40 on their 1929 loan of \$21,721.65 to the university and were not interested in renewing their lease. One San Francisco promoter who did want to take it over insisted the university "take the necessary action to prevent the lake from silting up."<sup>128</sup> The university could not possibly meet that condition and instead the Brandstens' lease, which had officially expired on 31 August 1936, was informally carried forward from year to year until 1955.<sup>129</sup>

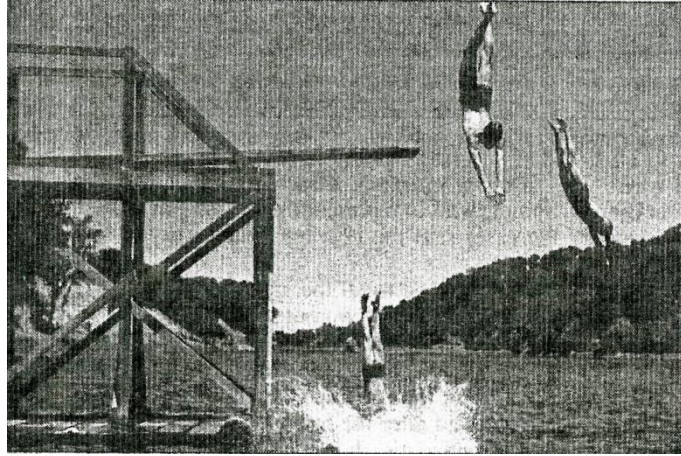
<sup>126</sup> Telephone interview with Julie Cain (18 June 2013).

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, Triolo, 1.

<sup>128</sup> D. La Fern to Norwood Smith (18 April 1938), B0x 4369, SUPSA.

<sup>129</sup> The Brandstens renegotiated their rent down from 30% of the gross income to 20% and down again to 10%, with half of the rental to be applied against the loan. They paid the loan off in 1945 and by then were back to paying 20%





Stanford swimming team members diving off float at Searsville Lake, 1939.

Training for the swimming teams continued out on Searsville Lake. One determined student, track star--and later Stanford track coach—Richard “Dink” Templeton, wrote about transforming himself from a “string bean of a kid” into a successful athlete by walking the fourteen miles back and forth between the campus and lake for fifty-six days in a row.<sup>130</sup> Once he reached the lake he would swim two miles each day. By the end of his self-imposed regime his physique “was as great as any you would ever find in a ‘before and after’ ad.”<sup>131</sup> Templeton’s transformation had occurred while Brandsten was still coaching at UC-Berkeley, but once Brandsten came to Stanford in 1916 he convinced the runners that “the combination of easy swimming exercise with thorough sun-baking was the one sure cure for pulled muscles.”<sup>132</sup> Concerned that a short amount of time in a swimming pool was an outmoded training method gaining new popularity, Templeton wrote:

It was because of this that Ernst Brandsten developed Searsville Lake into a great place to swim. Floats form a huge circle to make swimming there as safe as in a tank. The yen to get to the farthest float is irresistible, and as a consequence, more actual swimming goes on there than any place I know of.<sup>133</sup>

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of the gross income for rent. E.S. Erwin to Frank Walker (29 August 1945), Box 4369, SUPSA; and M. Pohlman, “In re: Brandten lease,” (21 January 1955), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>130</sup> Dink Templeton, unidentified newspaper clipping (25 June 193x), Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.



The ring of floats arranged to encourage safe swimming. Note also the two parking areas bracketing the beach.



Future Jasper Ridge docents Jean and Bill Clebsch at Searsville Lake Park in 1938. Bill is eating the ice cream cone and Jean is reclining on the blanket next two him.

## World War II

The Great Depression slowly came to an end starting in 1939 as United States President Franklin Delano Roosevelt subtly encouraged industrial growth in an effort to support Great Britain's involvement in World War II. He had to move slowly because Americans were largely isolationist in outlook and, until the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, they did not want to support the war, much less fight in it. Pearl Harbor created a sea change in public opinion, and after 7 December 1941 the vast majority of the country was behind the war effort. The 1940 Olympics were cancelled due to the global conflict, leaving Brandsten without any Olympic responsibilities for the first time since 1920 when he first coached Stanford student Norman Ross to three gold medals.





Local Chrystel Goss with her mother, Minnie Kerstan, at Searsville Lake Park on 14 July 1941.

Dean Clark, son of architect Birge Clark and grandson of Stanford faculty member A.B. Clark, grew up in Palo Alto. He remembers that the Brandstens did not open Searsville Lake Park in 1942<sup>134</sup>. This is unsurprising since the attack on Pearl Harbor had taken place only three months earlier and the entire country had been quickly galvanized into an all-encompassing war effort. In fact, Brandsten resumed his position as Stanford's Director of Aquatics after current director Nort Thornton resigned his position in April 1942.<sup>135</sup> Clark believes the park remained closed for most of the duration of the war<sup>136</sup>. He had also hiked out at Searsville Lake with the Boy Scouts in the 1930s, and he returned to Searsville Lake in 1947 as a weekend lifeguard. Just out of the Navy, and hired on the recommendation of a friend, Clark remembered that the high diving platform was still in place on the crest of the dam but was strictly off-limits to the public. He recalled closing the beach for early morning searches of the water after people were reported missing, the use of a grappling hook to retrieve bodies, and that more often than not whoever was missing was off hiking somewhere. The extra lifeguards needed for the heavy weekend crowds worked out of boats and off of the dam as well as the beach.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Brandsten requested and received permission to put in a dance platform in May 1941. However, its use was restricted to "lodge, club and school picnics that are properly supervised by their respective officers. There is to be no public dancing at any time." The location of this dance platform is unknown. Frank Walker to San Mateo County Planning Commission (13 May 1941), Box 4369, SUPSA.

<sup>135</sup> *San Francisco Chronicle* (7 April 1942), scrapbook entry?????????

<sup>136</sup> The Brandstens opened the park in 1944 and brought in \$23,601. In 1945 they grossed \$37,994, an increase that may have reflected optimal weather and water conditions and a booming wartime population. The population in the Bay Area would boom even more in the years following WWII. E.S. Erwin to Frank Walker (29 August 1945), Box 4369, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>137</sup> Telephone interview with Julie Cain (late June 2013).



One of the parking lots during the mid to late 1940s.

Another local, Ross Bright, also went to Searsville Lake Park during the 1940s, first with his family and later on his own with friends. Born in San Francisco in 1934, Ross's family moved into the area in 1936. His father was a Stanford student who knew Ernst Brandsten. Ross remembers Sand Hill as a two-lane dirt road and using the main gate to enter the park when coming with his family. One of their traditions was a two or three hour hike on Thanksgiving Day at the park. They also spent time lying on the beach, boating and swimming out to the floats. When he was a little older he would sneak through the Whiskey Hill gate with friends. They would stash their bikes and hike endless hours through the hills, always on the lookout for the Hermit's Cabin but never finding it.<sup>138</sup>

Jeanie Treichel remembers Searsville Lake Park as the local "hangout" when she attended Sequoia High School from 1944 to 1948. She thought it was a wonderful place for swimming and later, after she married, she took her own son there and taught him to sail.<sup>139</sup>

1947 saw Brandsten announcing his formal retirement as a diving coach to take place the following year. He had already completed thirty-two years of active service with the university and had been running Searsville Lake Park with Mrs. Brandsten for twenty-three years.<sup>140</sup> The park was making a profit again in what was soon to become a booming economy following the end of WWII. It is unknown if the university forgave the debt or if the Brandstens eventually paid the \$15,000 they had owed back in 1938, but for the 1948-49 year they paid \$8,915.22 in rent for their Searsville Lake lease.<sup>141</sup>

Felix Brandsten, Ernst's older brother whom the Brandstens had lived with for several years before opening Searsville Lake Park, had returned to Sweden and married during the intervening years. At some

<sup>138</sup> Interview with Julie Cain (18 June 2013).

<sup>139</sup> E-mail from Jeanie Treichel to Thomas Ramies in response to Portola Valley Forum request: Looking for people who used to swim at Searsville Lake (18 June 2013).

<sup>140</sup> George F. Lineer, "The 'Solid Swede' Will Retire, San Francisco Chronicle (1947), Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook, ISHOF.

<sup>141</sup> R.O. Houghton to D.B. Adams, "Searsville Lake Lease" memo (1959), Box 4852, SUPSA.

point between 1935 and 1940 he got divorced and came back to California, living with the Brandstens at Searsville Lake while working as a trucker.<sup>142</sup> Felix, like Ernst, possessed superior carpentry skills that he used to build a sea-going vessel while living at Searsville Lake Park. He set sail in June 1948, at sixty-seven years of age, and landed safely in Falmouth, England, after sixty-two days at sea.<sup>143</sup> He proceeded on to Sweden, where he remarried and lived for the rest of his life. The boat he built at Searsville Lake is now in a museum in Sweden.<sup>144</sup>

Insert photo of boat at searsville here; ask TK or Jan for copy.



Memorial Day at Searsville Lake Park, 1951.



The sign for Searsville Lake Park that stood outside the main entrance during the 1950s.

<sup>142</sup> Karn F. Brandsten, 1940 United States Federal Census, <http://Ancestry.com> (accessed 14 September 2012).

<sup>143</sup> Felix Brandsten to the Brandstens, Western Union telegraph (8 August 1948), Jan Johanson.

<sup>144</sup> Interview with Jan Johanson (August 2013).



The Brandstens were not alone for long. They had attended the 1948 London Olympics and met up with nephew Eric Johanson, the son of one of Greta's two brothers. Like his famous aunt and uncle, he was also a competitive swimmer. In 1949 they sponsored Eric, then twenty-six years old with college and two years of compulsory Swedish military service behind him, to leave Sweden and come to America. He lived with his adoptive aunt and uncle for the next four years, working as a lifeguard at Searsville Lake Park and helping his uncle with park maintenance. This 1951 photograph shows Brandsten and nephew Eric treating the lake with chemicals to cut down on the invasive weeds that choked the water and endangered swimmers.



Ernst Brandsten and nephew Eric Johanson treating the lake with chemicals for weed abatement in October 1951.

#### The Austin and Gloria Clapp Years (1955-1971)

As the postwar economy continued to boom throughout the 1950s, the Brandstens purchased an eleven-acre site off Skyline Road in anticipation of their retirement. By 1954 they had been operating Searsville Lake Park for thirty-one years; Brandsten was seventy-one years of age and Mrs. Brandsten was sixty-one. He had been retired from Stanford athletics for the past six years. On 28 December 1954, Brandsten wrote to the Board of Trustees on Searsville Lake Park letterhead, stating that “in my opinion Austin Clapp is the best person you could find to continue the operation and supervision of Searsville Lake.”<sup>145</sup> Clapp was a Stanford graduate and had been one of Brandsten's champion swimmers, winning a gold medal for the men's 4x200 meter freestyle relay at the 1928 Amsterdam Olympics and a bronze medal for water polo at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics. After his graduation from Stanford University he attended law school at UC-Berkeley. Married and with two young sons, Clapp was practicing law where he lived in southern California. Like many of the students Brandsten had mentored over the past three decades, Clapp had kept in close touch with his former coach once he reached adulthood. He had also remained involved with competitive water sports, including coaching the American water polo team at the 1948 London Olympics.

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<sup>145</sup> Ernst Brandsten to Board of Trustees (28 December 1954), Box 4852, SUPSA.





Austin Clapp (striped shirt and ball cap) with the American Olympic water polo team in 1948.

The Board of Trustees voted to approve the application of Austin and Gloria Clapp “to purchase the personal property now belonging to Mr. Ernst Brandsten at Searsville Lake and to enter into a lease with the University for the operation of this concession...effective February 1, 1955.”<sup>146</sup> The lease was for two years, covered “Lots 89, 96, 101, 102 and 104, containing approximately 237.25 acres, together with a residence situated on Lot 104 which belongs to the university.”<sup>147</sup> The Brandstens would reassume operation of Lake Searsville Park if the Clapps defaulted for any reason. The Clapps paid the Brandstens \$30,000 for the park business and owed the university 20% of the annual gate and all other operations except for the store, where they were to pay 20% of the net profit.<sup>148</sup>

While Austin and his wife Gloria were the official lessees, they were to be assisted by Austin’s brother, Stuart, who also moved his family to Searsville Lake. In fact, while Austin was still down in Los Angeles selling his house and wrapping up his practice, Stuart moved his family into what was likely “the makeshift place” the Brandstens had first lived in back in 1923 and began working with Brandsten to learn the ropes. Austin Clapp officially took over management of the park in May 1955, just in time for the start of the season.<sup>149</sup> He also continued to work as an attorney, employed by the San Francisco law firm of Goldstein, Barceloux, and Goldstein.<sup>150</sup> Stuart, who had worked in the aeronautical and engineering field down in southern California, planned to attend Stanford to obtain an engineering degree.<sup>151</sup> Austin and Gloria Clapp were the parents of two teenaged boys, Dan and Jim. Stuart and Virginia Clapp had a son and daughter, Billy and Nancy. Austin and Stuart’s mother, Gloria Wheeden

<sup>146</sup> E.S. Erwin to Austin Clapp (20 January 1955), Box 4852, SUPSA

<sup>147</sup> E. S. Erwin to Robert M. Brown (16 March 1955), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Austin Clapp to Board of Trustees (24 December 1954), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>150</sup> “Austin Clapp,” SR/Olympic Sports, <http://www.sports-reference.com> (accessed 2 September 2013).

<sup>151</sup> “Former Stanford Swimming Star, Brother, Succeed Brandsten as Searsville Operators, Palo Alto *Times* (2 February 1955), Clipping File, Palo Alto City Library; and Austin Clapp to Alf Brandin (24 August 1956), Box 4852, SUPSA.

Clapp, also moved in, presumably with Austin and Gloria and their two sons in the larger caretaker's house the Brandstens had lived in between 1926 and 1955.<sup>152</sup>

Recreation in 1955 had not changed much since the Brandstens first entered the profession in 1923. People still believed that one needed a respite from the stresses of everyday modern life, that satisfying and enjoyable leisure alleviated the fast pace found at every avenue in terms of large numbers of people crowded into urban areas and the complexities of current American political, social and economic structures. Faster transportation was also considered a source of anxiety, as was the longer retirement period due to the progress of medical science adding to longer lifespans.<sup>153</sup> A person working forty hours per week might have as many as seventy-two leisure hours per week, and anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 leisure hours per year. The challenge was to fill this time constructively rather than wastefully, to achieve balanced growth by working but also fostering additional skills through physical exercise and the participation in aesthetic experiences that included art, dance and music.<sup>154</sup> Searsville Lake Park was considered commercial recreation, organized for the general public and situated in a rural environment that was the perfect antidote to a stressful urban life while offering enjoyable physical exercise in the form of swimming, hiking, climbing, horseback riding and boating. Being out in nature, whether relaxing on the beach or at a picnic area, and breathing fresh air while being soothed by the beauty of the lake and the magnificent oak trees, were also significant aspects of attending the park.

Austin Clapp was already experiencing the challenge of running a recreational park reliant on a consistent water source before he moved his family to Searsville Lake in May 1955. The previous two winters had been drier than usual and Brandsten, Clapp and university business manager Alf Brandin had already discussed utilizing a potential water conservation policy as early as the previous fall, long before the Clapps signed their lease.<sup>155</sup> Clapp wanted the university to use Felt Lake water rather than Searsville Lake water for campus and golf course irrigation since the lake was already lower than usual and had dropped a full inch within the last week alone. The university did not consider the conditions dire enough or did not feel Felt Lake would provide sufficient water and continued to use Searsville Lake water.<sup>156</sup>

On 14 August 1956, Austin and Stuart Clapp wrote a progress report detailing their accomplishments over the past two seasons. The two-year lease that Austin and Gloria Clapp had signed would soon be up for renewal and the university needed to decide if they approved of the current operation of the park and would therefore extend the lease. Austin and Stuart Clapp had enlarged the beach by 10,000 square feet and brought in 5,000 square feet of new sand. They had overhauled the cesspools, painted all of the structures except for the shingled caretaker's residence, created a new winter fishing program for the off season, and bought an underwater lawnmower for weed abatement (they were also still using chemicals to treat the weeds). They had also built 100 new picnic tables, built more barbecue pits and experimented with allowing water skiing on the lake. Why Worry Farm was still growing hay on Lot 89, as they had been doing throughout the Brandsten years. The Clapps wanted to establish a boy's day camp program

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<sup>152</sup> *U.S. City Directory* (1955 and 1956), Ancestry.com (accessed xx September 2013).

<sup>153</sup> Charles K. Brightwell and Harold D. Meyer, *Recreation: Text and Readings* (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), 4.

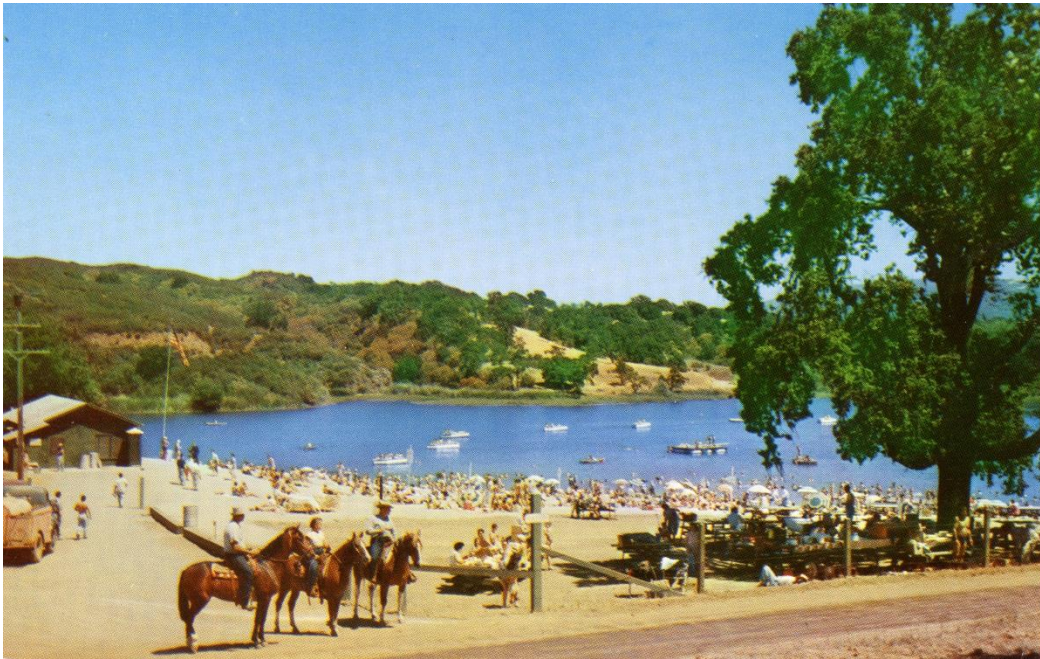
<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>155</sup> Austin Clapp to Alf Brandin (10 April 1955), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>156</sup> E. S. Erwin to Austin Clapp (15 April 1955), Box 4852, SUPSA.

and wanted an additional ten acres to do so. The biggest complaint made by customers was of the clouds of dust stirred up by driving and parking on the dirt roads and lots.<sup>157</sup>

The university's response was positive, prompting Austin to request permission to construct a kit home for Stuart and his family to live in. He also arranged for financing to build a new refreshment stand and to create the start of a boys' summer camp, with Stuart taking fall quarter off from attending classes to supervise construction of the home and "some other improvements in the Park during the period of its closing and the commencement of the winter rains."<sup>158</sup> The Clapps, who had promised not to make any significant changes from the way the Brandstens had run the park, were also reaching out to community users with their winter fishing program and plans for the day camp. The university agreed to extend their lease for another year.



A postcard made of the beach at Searsville Lake Park ca. 1950s.

### The Return of Sports to Searsville Lake

In 1957, local bicycle enthusiast Charles Allert wanted to promote competitive bicycle racing in the area and he approached Austin and Stuart Clapp, asking them to build a bicycle bowl at Searsville Lake Park. They agreed and reportedly put up the \$5,000 needed to bulldoze the velodrome some 200 yards from the lake. Allert, a champion cyclist himself and Northern California representative of the Amateur Bicycle League of America, envisioned weekly Sunday programs lasting some three hours long and consisting of various races. He had scheduled the Northern California championship for 14 July 1957 as the kickoff event, to be followed by the California Dirt Track Championship over the long Labor Day weekend. If the races were well attended, night races would be scheduled the following year. In addition to local bicycle clubs, Allert wanted to hold stock races for boys before the regular Sunday programs, bringing in

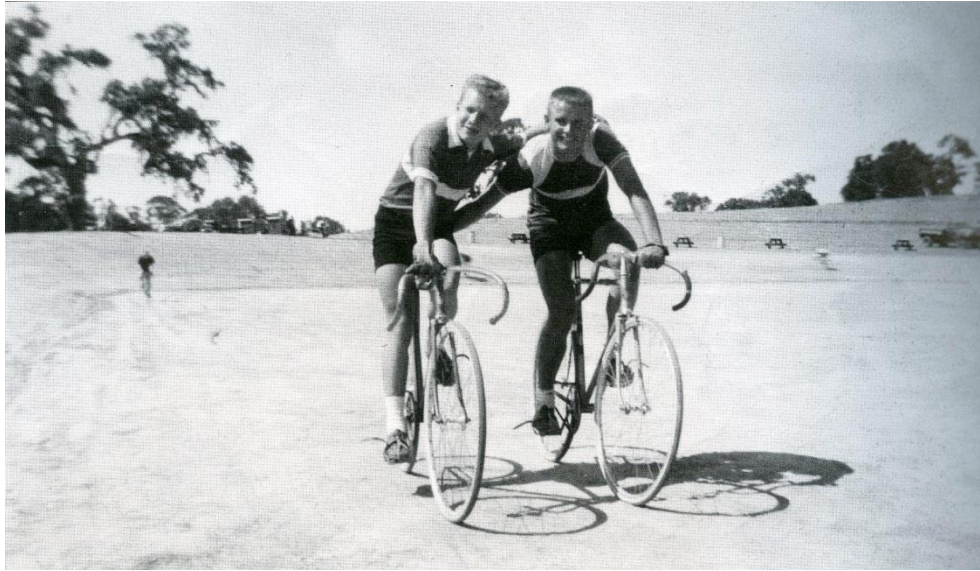
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<sup>157</sup> Austin Clapp and Stuart Clapp to Alf Brandin (14 Aug 56), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>158</sup> Austin Clapp to Alf Brandin (24 August 1955), Box 4852, SUPSA.



“newspaper carriers, schools, Boy Scouts and YMCA groups.”<sup>159</sup> Several cyclists who had won Olympic medals were also expected to compete at the track. It is unclear how successful the racing program was at the bicycle bowl; there is no historical evidence available as to whether or not the programs ran for just that season or somewhat longer and there is no anecdotal evidence of the bowl being used for programs beyond those initially scheduled.



Two friends at the bicycle bowl. Check Woodside book for names.

August 1957 saw a nearby rival, Adobe Creek Lodge—an upscale day resort in the Los Altos Hills--announcing its closure, and the Clapps expected that Searsville Lake Park would have to absorb a good number of the 9,000 weekly visitors who frequented the other park.<sup>160</sup> They were also worried about Searsville Lake’s capacity to handle the holiday crowds as the Fourth of July had brought in a crowd of 4,300 people that strained the park’s current capacity. Austin Clapp wanted to build a new dressing room and toilet room at the beach, with the expectation “that the store and other buildings and structures in the beach area should be made within a reasonable time to conform to the architecture of the new dressing room.”<sup>161</sup> He also realized that the corporation yard needed to be cleaned up and organized, along with the erection of a new service building.

Community use of the Searsville Lake Park was also extended to include canines. The Golden Retriever Club of America requested that their trials take place at the Searsville Lake venue; the dogs competed

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<sup>159</sup> Dave Wik, “New Searsville Bicycle Bowl to Open Season July 14,” *Daily Palo Alto Times* (4 July 1957), Clipping File, Palo Alto City Library.

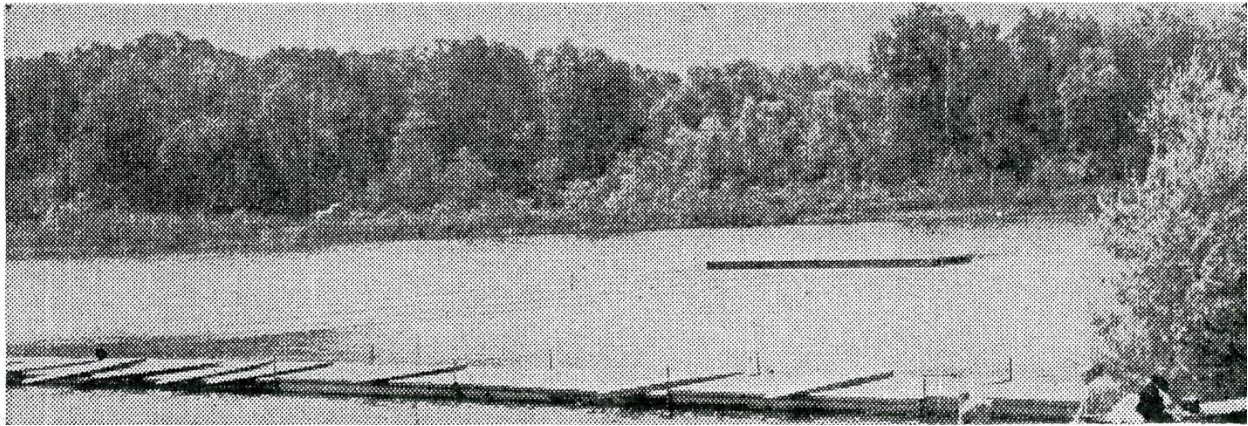
<sup>160</sup> Adobe Creek Lodge was created from a 35-acre Los Altos estate built by Consolidated Chemicals vice-president Milton Haas in 1935. It was expanded to 100 acres by successive owners and featured five swimming pools, hiking trails, horseshoe pits, basketball courts, baseball diamonds, lawns for sunbathing and prepared picnic lunches. The beautifully landscaped grounds lent themselves to weddings and featured a supper club where noted bandleaders such as Harry James and Tommy Dorsey played. It did not close as anticipated in 1957 but continued on a commercial basis until January 1979. It was ultimately subdivided but the main house and six surrounding acres are now a private estate. John Ralston, “Adobe Creek Lodge Story,” Los Altos Hills Historical Society, <http://www.losaltoshillshistory.org> (accessed 4 September 2013).

<sup>161</sup> Austin Clapp to Alf Brandin (8 August 1957), Box 4852, SUPSA.



over three days in 11, 12, and 13 March 1958.<sup>162</sup> The Clapps also wanted to include horseback riding on Lake Searsville Park trails again, tying into the local trails already accessed by Menlo Circus Club and the Woodside Trail Club.<sup>163</sup> At some point in 1958, or possibly as early as 1957, they also ran the first boat drag on the lake, with some speedboats gaining speeds in excess of 90 miles per hour.<sup>164</sup>

In April 1958 the Board of Trustees had agreed to extend a \$16,000 loan to Austin Clapp to make improvements on the property.<sup>165</sup> One of these improvements, at a cost of \$2,700, was the creation of an Olympic-regulation fifty meter swim course that consisted of six lanes set up between a 200-foot-long pier and a floating dock that performed as a wall for the swimmers to turn against.<sup>166</sup> Searsville Lake resumed its role as a training site for swimmers belonging to various local groups, including the Santa Clara Swim Club. They were the defending champions of the National Senior Women's AAU Swimming Championships and now had the opportunity to train at the only metric pool in the area. Eight local men were also training at Searsville Lake for the upcoming Men's AAU Championship, as were the Covington Swim Club of Los Altos, the Berkeley YMCA and the Olympic Club of San Francisco. The Olympic Club members were training for National AAU water polo matches scheduled to take place in August in Chicago.<sup>167</sup> Austin Clapp had also begun coaching the University of Santa Clara water polo team.<sup>168</sup>



The 200-foot-long pier and the floating dock that performed as a turning wall made up a new fifty-meter swim course. Lanes were designated by lines strung between the pier and wall.

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<sup>162</sup> D.B. Adams to Austin Clapp (5 December 1957), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>163</sup> D.B Adams, "Memo for the file," (20 October 1958), Box 4852, SUPSA..

<sup>164</sup> One of those performance boats, a Belmont named Sea Witch, came up for sale in 2013 in decrepit condition. There is a plate attached to the back of the boat that reads: Searsville Lake Boat Drag, MPH 76.10, Date 3-22-59. She was purchased and is currently being restored to her former glory. Performance Boats, <http://performanceboats.com> (accessed 21 February 2014).

<sup>165</sup> Board of Trustee Minutes (17 April 1958), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>166</sup> Dave Wik, "Searsville Plays Big 'Role' in AAU Meet, Palo Alto *Times* (30 July 1958), Clipping File, Palo Alto City Library.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.



San Francisco Olympic Club water polo team practice at Searsville Lake in 1959.

In September 1958 the Adobe Creek Lodge was unexpectedly re-opened, costing Searsville Lake Park potential losses in deferred customer revenue. By 1959 the Clapps had overextended themselves, falling \$9,000 behind on two years of property taxes (the university paid the taxes and billed the Clapps); they were also falling behind on their quarterly payments.<sup>169</sup> Despite these financial issues, Stanford University renewed the lease on 18 February 1960.<sup>170</sup>

Early in the 1960 season the Clapps instituted an experimental family membership program for Stanford faculty and staff.<sup>171</sup> The Clapp season generally ran from March 15 through October 15, depending on the weather. Swimming was restricted to the beach area only and lifeguards were on duty all hours the park was open. Row boats, pontoon boats and paddleboards were available for rent at one dollar per hour, sixty cents for the half hour. The snack bar provided hot dogs, hamburgers, sandwiches, soft drinks, milk, coffee, ice cream and candy. Babies' bottles would be warmed up at the snack bar upon request. During the winter, when the park was formally closed, faculty and staff members still had access to the park via a key to the gate. No swimming or boating was allowed in the winter. The fishing season ran from September 15 through May 15 and had a long waiting list but faculty and staff were allowed to jump this line while still subject to paying fishing club dues and charges. Special arrangements could be made for after-hours swimming and parties, and for boating out of season, with an additional charge for the requisite lifeguards or watchmen. All children under the age of thirteen had to be accompanied by parents or a responsible adult.<sup>172</sup>

Local Dave Cranfield went to Searsville Lake Park throughout the early 1950s until he graduated high school in 1965. He grew up in San Carlos and came to the park with his family, with the Cub Scouts "or with any neighbor who might invite me along."<sup>173</sup> His family drove down Alameda de las Pulgas to

<sup>169</sup> MP[olhman] to unidentified recipient (10 April 1959), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>170</sup> Lease No. 583, (18 February 1960), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>171</sup> D.B. Adams, "Memo for the file," (30 March 1960).

<sup>172</sup> Austin Clapp to Stanford Faculty or Staff Member (22 April 1960), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>173</sup> E-mail to Julie Cain (17 June 2013).

Mountain Home Road which ended near the entrance to the park. He remembers the sandy beach being big enough to handle the largest crowd but was disappointed that castle-making was thwarted by the relative lack of depth of the sand, hitting soil after digging down six to eight inches. As a child he had no idea the sand was trucked in. The snack bar sold soda pop in waxed paper cups, sticky bricks of pink popcorn, hot dogs, novelty ice cream bars and Popsicles. He hated wading through the thick mud to get into the lake because it clung to his feet and ankles but a few flutter kicks soon washed them clean. Any kid who could swim out to the raft moored equidistant between the west and east beaches was “a hero for a day” but “if someone chickened out by not being able to swim back, requiring the lifeguard to row and haul you back, your name was mud for the day.”<sup>174</sup> His parents forbade him to swim all the way to the east shore, for fear of the weeds catching hold of him and causing him to drown.

### The First Shot Across the Bow

In February 1961 Biology Professors David Regnery and Paul Ehrlich asked the university business office to remove Lot 96 from the Clapp lease.<sup>175</sup> These two faculty members, along with Professor Ira Wiggins, had begun to seriously lobby the university to establish a biological preserve on the ridge back in 1959.<sup>176</sup> Known as the Biological Preserve at Jasper Ridge, the area was fenced but still overrun with various trespassers. Regnery and Ehrlich had issues not only with Searsville Lake Park visitors, but also with the Los Alto Hunt Club running a fox hunt over the Jasper Ridge flat in late 1960 and again in early 1961. The two men also believed that the three riding clubs based in the area, the Menlo Circus Club, the Woodside Trail Club and the recently formed Shack Riders, were abusing their trail privileges by straying from marked trails and sharing keys with riders who were not club members and therefore not authorized to use horseback riding trails on Stanford property.<sup>177</sup> Local Helen Quinn confirmed that the fears of shared keys were not without foundation. She had a friend who was a member of both the Menlo Circus Club and the Shack Riders. She would ride with him through Woodside to the shack, then take his keys and “spend a few hours riding whatever Jasper Ridge trails I chose, returning to meet him at the shack after all the other members had left and he was cleaning up.” No doubt any of the collegial riders guilty of key-sharing saw any harm to this kind of activity, despite the fact that Regnery and Ehrlich were correct about the trails being limited to specific riding groups.

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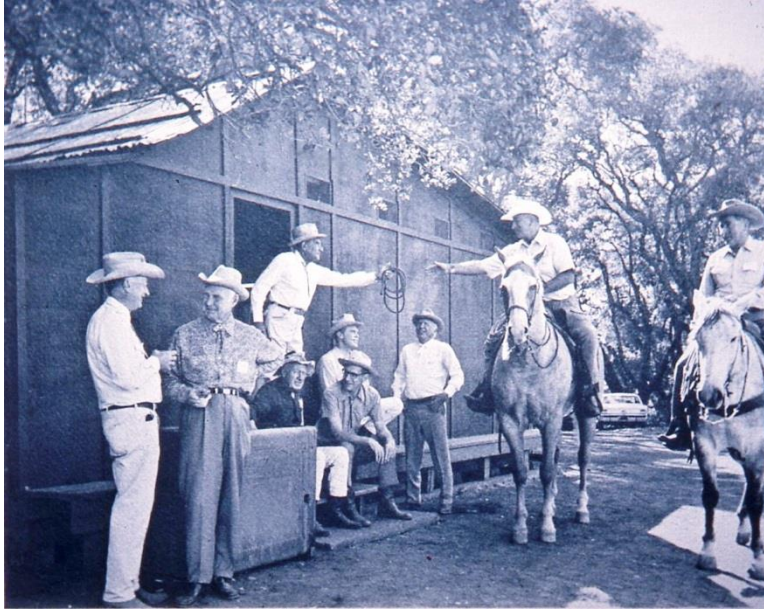
<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> E.A. Scoles, “Memo for the File Re: Jasper Ridge,” (27 March 1961), 1-2, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>176</sup> Regnery, *Jasper Ridge*, 143. (She footnotes this assertion with a 1957 reference of the Zoology Club discussing usage of the “Jasper Ridge Academic Preserve.” Presumably this is the preserve established by Wilbur back in 1919 but are there any maps or papers to document this? Of course, her footnote is not cited!) BUT NONA HAS 1928 MAP SHOWING PLANT RESERVE

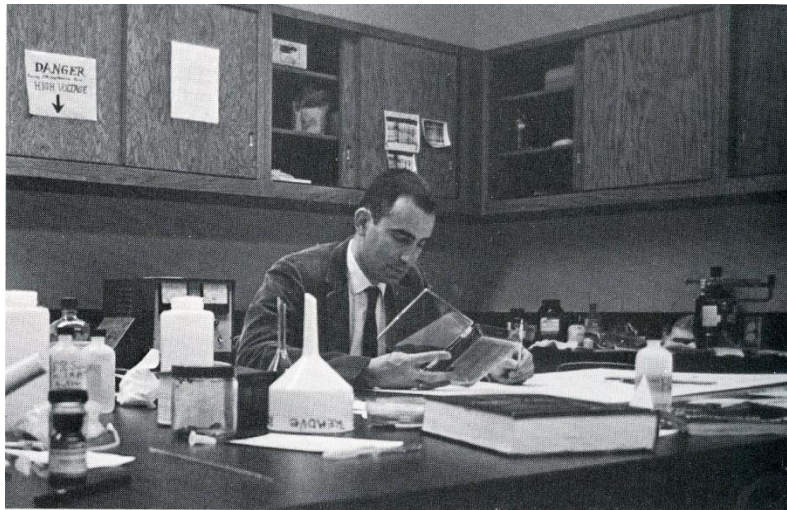
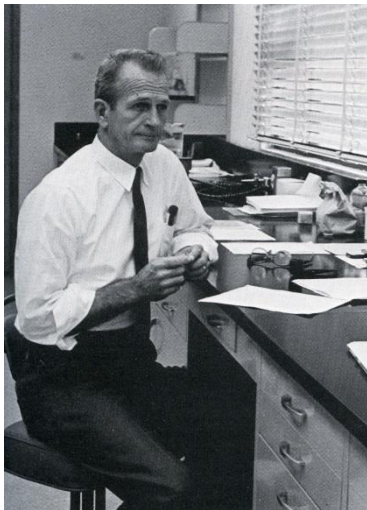
<sup>177</sup> The Shack Riders were an all-male offshoot of the Menlo Circus Club. They started riding together after WWII and membership increased throughout the early to mid-1950s, when the Shack Riders was formally organized. They rebuilt The Shack, originally used by the Menlo Circus Club and located within Lake Searsville Park, as a place to store supplies, the most important one being a nip of something to chase away the cold. Rides, including moonlight and overnight rides, centered on the local trails and once a year the club held Ladies Day, when a large barbecue was held at picnic tables around The Shack. Gerstley, *The Shack Riders*, 9-11.





A few of the Shack Riders gathered at the The Shack, first built in the 1930s and refurbished after WWII..

Regnery and Ehrlich were also concerned about people carrying firearms, both youngsters who were target shooting and hunters who were knocking down the fences in the Westridge area and driving jeeps onto the property at night. The Biology Department was willing to pay for “No Trespassing” signs to be posted on their fence line and also to pay \$350 for six weeks of weekend police patrol provided by the William D. Young Detective Agency of San Jose. The local riding clubs, in addition to the Mounted Patrol of San Mateo County, were to provide lists of their members so that the Biology Department and the detective agency could properly identify them. Sam Campbell of the Woodside Country Club and Gordon Coryell of the Menlo Circus Club also volunteered funds to cover the costs of additional patrolling of the preserve.<sup>178</sup>



Biology professors David Regnery (*left*) and Paul Ehrlich (*right*).

<sup>178</sup> Scoles, “Memo for the File,” 1-2..



The university's response to Regnery's and Ehrlich's concerns was to close some of the bridle trails and terminate one of the grazing leases in 1960, although some grazing still continued through the mid-1960s. INSERT GRAZING LEASE MAP? However, they drew the line at removing Lot 96 from Searsville Lake Park. Clapp had protested that he could not possibly afford to give up the contested acreage. Spanning much of the east side of the lake and stretching eastward to the Whiskey Hill gate, Lot 96 held 100 picnic tables that seated up to 2,000 people. He had also arranged to set up a Girl Scout's summertime day camp to take place in one of the large meadows in Lot 96, and warned that the Girl Scouts organization was unlikely to give up their camping area without protest. The Shack Riders were also riding through Lot 96 on a regular weekend basis throughout the year. Finally, Clapp did not believe that fences or gates would "keep out those who are intent upon invading either the Searsville or Jasper Ridge areas."<sup>179</sup>

He knew whereof he spoke; both the Brandstens and the Clapps unhappily endured numerous people climbing through various split rail or barbed wire fences that bordered Searsville Lake Park and entering for free. Local Bob Nahmans, who worked for Austin Clapp throughout much of the 1960s, remembers that "sneak patrol" was one of his regular duties.<sup>180</sup> The university, dubious that even the erection of a "substantial cyclone fence between it [the Biological Preserve] and the rest of Searsville Park" would actually improve matters, sided with Clapp but this exchange was merely a harbinger of the escalating tension being created between faculty trying to run undisturbed scientific experiments for academic purposes and Searsville Lake Park operators trying to run a recreational business on immediately adjacent university-owned lands.

#### A Tribute to Ernst Brandsten

The Clapps had maintained a close relationship with the Brandstens, who lived nearby and often had dinner with the Clapps at Searsville Lake Park. Back in 1957 Brandsten had been one of fourteen coaches inducted to the Helms Foundation Hall of Fame, founded in Los Angeles in 1936.<sup>181</sup> Now Austin Clapp and Carl Stevenson, another Brandsten champion who had won the Golden Gate Swim (as had Brandsten himself in 1911), had planned a surprise party for Ernst Brandsten to be held at Lake Searsville Park on Sunday, 9 September 1962. The two men invited people associated in one way or another with Brandsten's own swimming and diving feats, as well as the numerous aquatic stars he had coached for over three decades. The highlight of the party was the unveiling of four trophies, two won by Clapp and the other two won by Stevenson during the 1920s, for the prestigious Silver Gate swim held at San Diego, California. Norris West, executive director of the San Diego Hall of Champions that was housed at Balboa Park, also attended the party to accept the four trophies and transport them back to their new permanent home. Brandsten received several letters of congratulations from those who were unable to attend, including his longtime friend Duke Kahanamoku and the current university president, J. E. Wallace Sterling, but perhaps the most telling letter came from former student James Benét:

For me and for hundreds of others to whom you gave help in our young days it is a pleasure to look back across the years and to remember those happy times. It is a pleasant duty, too, to say a belated word of thanks.

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<sup>179</sup> Scoles, "Memo for the Fille," 1.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Julie Cain (xx June 2013).

<sup>181</sup> "Helms Honors 21 Swimmers, Pilots," unidentified newspaper clipping, Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook, 88, ISHOF.

Young men are lucky indeed when they have a good teacher, a wise counselor and a generous helper who is always ready to set aside his own concerns to listen to theirs. For generations of Stanford swimmers, that was Ernie Brandsten.

Let the many champions and Olympic medalists you coached speak for themselves. For my part I can remember that you were just as quick to encourage and to help the less talented plodders who filled up the ranks, for I was one of them.

Thanks, Ernie.<sup>182</sup>



Greta and Ernst Brandsten standing in front of the four San Diego Silver Gate swim trophies in 1962.

The party was a highlight held near the end of the 1962 season, an otherwise poor year that was marred by windy weather, a lack of any hot spells that would compel people to seek relief from the heat, the prevalence of yellow jackets and a low lake level due to a dry winter. 1963 also got off to a shaky start with lake silt causing flooding at Family Farm Drive in January.<sup>183</sup> In May 1963 an overturned tanker truck accidentally dumped 5,000 gallons of oil that flowed from one of the creeks into Searsville Lake.<sup>184</sup> The newly constructed boat pier diverted much of the oil to the east side of the lake. Clapp initially hired a commercial septic tank firm to pump oil out of the water to avoid contaminating the beach but he was ultimately forced to remove boards from the dam, allowing the lake level to drop by eighteen inches and sending some eighteen million gallons of water downstream.

<sup>182</sup> James Benét to Ernst Brandsten (6 September 1962), TK EB Scrapbook or JJ scrapbook?

<sup>183</sup> E.A. Scoles to Mr. Post, (31 January 1963), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>184</sup> E.A. Scoles, "Memo to File," (7 May 1963) Box 4852, SUPSA.

Clapp had barely recovered from the oil spill polluting Searsville Lake when he took on the presidency of Save Our Skyline, a local group formed to protest the placement of towers and power lines needed to support the running of the Stanford Linear Accelerator.<sup>185</sup> SLAC was a joint project between Stanford University and the Department of Energy. Built near Searsville Lake on Sand Hill Road, it was in the process of being constructed and Clapp did not want obtrusive towers and hanging power lines destroying the scenic beauty that Searsville Lake Park was known for. He knew that SLAC was inevitable but hoped that the structures and lines needed to supply power could be placed underground and therefore out of sight. He would spend the next two years consumed with this issue.

### The Times-They Are A-Changin’

Searsville Lake Park was mentioned in *Billboard* in 1963: “Pete Seeger and the Freedom Singers of Atlanta held a ‘bon voyage folk music concert’ August 17 at the Searsville Lake Park, Woodside.”<sup>186</sup> Seeger, a renowned American folk singer, had been blacklisted during the McCarthy era and was banned from performing on American television. In 1963 he embarked on a ten-month-long world tour, hence the “bon voyage” aspect of the concert.<sup>187</sup> A popular radio star in the 1940s and a song-writing member and performer in the very successful folk group *The Weavers* during the early 1950s--until they were blacklisted--Seeger was about to embark on a new phase in his long career, that of a protest singer whose causes included international disarmament, civil rights and the environment.<sup>188</sup> When Seeger performed at Searsville Lake Park in August 1963, the season of hope, promise and change engendered by the inauguration of U.S. President John F. Kennedy in 1961 (“Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country.”) still existed to some degree, with Kennedy successfully facing down Russian president Nikita Krushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962. Kennedy’s presidency would come to an abrupt end with his assassination in Dallas on 22 November 1963. American campuses and streets had already exploded in rage and violence over the fight for civil rights, and this literal fury—expressed in various forms of protest that initially shocked and offended mainstream society--would only be fed in the coming years over the escalation of the American presence in Vietnam, concern for the environment, the fight for women’s and gay’s rights and a painfully divisive generation gap fueled by the countercultural revolution.<sup>189</sup>

The countercultural movement had its roots in the younger generations’ disenchantment with mainstream society and one of the most significant symbols--and catalysts--of this phenomenon was Jack Kerouac’s novel, *On the Road*. This book reflected the post-WWII generations’ search for meaning in American society. Known as the Beat Generation, the Beats (San Francisco columnist Herb Caen, spinning off of Sputnik, coined the term “Beatnik”) living in San Francisco during the early 1960s were then the elder statesmen of anti-materialism whose lives revolved around jazz, poetry and drug use. The succeeding new generation of Hippies (a devolvement of the Beat term hipster; hipsters lived in New York’s Greenwich Village and San Francisco’s Haight-Ashbury district) that lived in San Francisco during the 1960s also

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<sup>185</sup> “‘Save Our Skyline’ Unit Sends Out SOS,” *Palo Alto Times*, clipping, (26 June 1963), Box 4852, SUPSA.

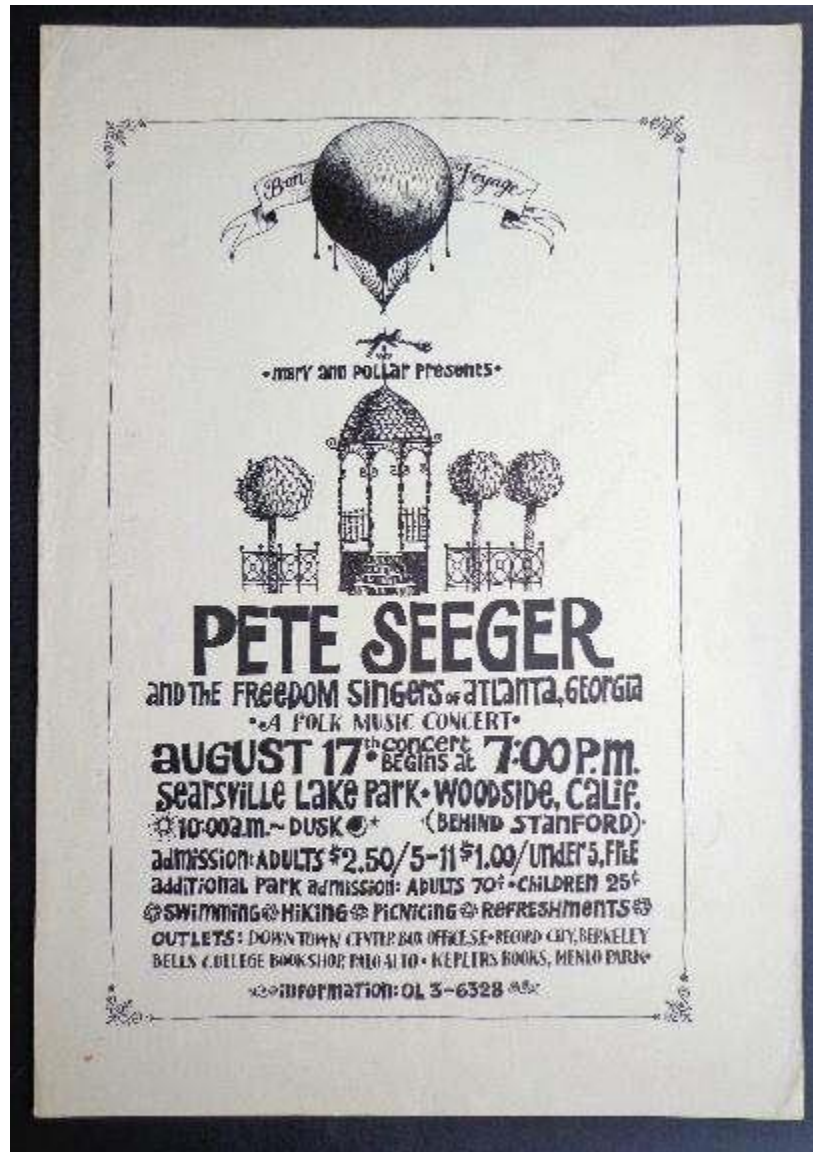
<sup>186</sup> *Billboard* (21 September 1963), 20.

<sup>187</sup> “Pete Seeger Live in Australia 1963-Press Release,” Pete Seeger Appreciation Page, <http://peteseeger.net> (accessed 10 September 2013).

<sup>188</sup> “Pete Seeger,” Wikipedia, <http://wikipedia.org> (accessed 10 September 10, 2013).

<sup>189</sup> Harvey Solomon and Rich Appel, *The Book of Days:60s* (New York: Metro Books, 2009), 7.

suffered from profound disenchantment with mainstream America.<sup>190</sup> Their form of rebellion was most often manifested by running away from home or from the Establishment, preferring the freedom of a Utopian-minded communal lifestyle and the use of recreational drugs. Psychedelic art was a visual manifestation of the Hippies' druggie lifestyle—the use of LSD, mescaline and psilocybin mushrooms being the mind-altering drugs of choice--and was a counterpart to the development of psychedelic rock music ("acid" rock) that dominated the San Francisco music scene of the mid-1960s through the early 1970s. The Seeger concert was Searsville Lake Park's first direct connection with the social unrest and political divisions that would define the tumultuous 1960s but this 1963 performance was relatively low-key. The concert featured only folk music and acoustical instruments and there were no complaints of any kind listed in the university's SUPSA for Searsville Lake Park.



<sup>190</sup> "Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin: 900 Nights," documentary (2001).



This Pete Seeger handbill of the Searsville Lake Park concert recently sold for \$259.87 in an online auction held by The HeArt of Rock and Roll. The concert was held in the large meadow below Rattlesnake Rocks. Source: [http://auction.sixtiesposters.com/Bidding.taf?\\_function=detail&Auction\\_uid1=2914584](http://auction.sixtiesposters.com/Bidding.taf?_function=detail&Auction_uid1=2914584) (accessed 10 January 2014).

By 1965 Save Our Skyline had gone to court and succeeded in keeping the above-ground towers and power lines out of Portola Valley.<sup>191</sup> However, Stanford University and the DOE were able to place these towers and power lines on the university-owned property at Searsville Lake Park and in March 1965 plans were made to put in an overhead 220 KV line.<sup>192</sup> The towers and lines were set up in an L-shaped power line easement that began at Portola Road and roughly paralleled Sand Hill Road before turning inward through the park and ending at San Francisquito Creek. While Clapp must have been disappointed in the presence of the towers and lines after the prolonged two-year fight, they were not visible from the lake or beach, the two most heavily used areas of the park. In May 1965 Clapp stopped issuing season family passes for Stanford faculty and staff. When he had first started the program in 1960 over 200 families had signed up but by 1965 only seventy-six families were participating and the low enrollment was costing Searsville Lake Park too much loss of revenue.<sup>193</sup> May 1965 also saw the passing of Ernst Brandsten. He had been living at the Idlewood Acres Rest Home in Sunnyvale and had suffered poor health for the past five years.<sup>194</sup> He was survived by his wife, Greta Brandsten, in addition to a sister and his brother Felix, both of whom lived in Sweden.

Privies were still in use at Searsville Lake Park and in 1966 the Redwood City Health Office informed Clapp he would need to install flush toilets.<sup>195</sup> He made plans to put them near the children's play area, in addition to a concrete slab bandstand and dance floor. The 2,400-square-foot concrete slab was installed by August of that year and in September the DOE was supposed to remove large rocks from the streambed that had been displaced near the Bear Creek and San Francisquito Creek confluence.<sup>196</sup> They did not follow through, however, and the resultant heavy flooding displaced culverts the following March due to heavy spring rains.<sup>197</sup>

May 1967 saw the induction of Ernst Brandsten as an Honor Coach into the Swimming Hall of Fame at Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Mrs. Brandsten made the trip east to pick up his posthumous plaque.<sup>198</sup> In the summer of 1967—the Summer of Love was in full swing in San Francisco—Clapp hosted Camp Searsville, a summer day camp for boys and girls ages six through twelve.<sup>199</sup> Run by a local man, Leonard Krivonos, the children were picked up from home and spent the day at Searsville Lake Park under direct supervision. The day's activities included “swimming instruction, nature, hiking, games, sports, arts and

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<sup>191</sup> Dave Boyce, “A Few Minutes with Martin Litton: Portola Valley to Honor a Life of Activism,” Almanac News, <http://almanacnews.com> (accessed 6 September 2013).

<sup>192</sup> E.A. Scoles to Mr. Kirk, (18 March 1965), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>193</sup> Dwight Adams to John K. Vennard (12 November 1965), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>194</sup> Walt Gamage, “Ex-Stanford Coach Ernie Brandsten Dies,” Palo Alto Times (17 May 1965), Ernst Brandsten Bio File, SUA.

<sup>195</sup> Redwood City Health Office to Austin Clapp (11 February 1966), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>196</sup> E.A. Scoles to Clapp File (17 August 1966); and Austin Clapp to Laurence Mohr (11 September 1966), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>197</sup> Austin Clapp to Verne Kinney, (5 March 1967), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>198</sup> “Hall of Fame Swimmer,” *American Swedish Monthly* (May 1967), clipping, Ernst Brandsten Scrapbook, 122, ISHOF.

<sup>199</sup> “Camp Searsville to Open Fourth Season,” unidentified clipping (20 May 1970), Clipping File, Menlo Park Historical Society.

crafts, horseback riding, overnights, trips away from camp, and many other special program features.”<sup>200</sup> Although not affiliated with any Scouting program, the philosophy of the summer day camp was the same. Children benefitted from exposure to nature combined with supervised activities. This community use would prove extremely popular and Camp Searsville was repeated over the following summers, bringing an additional 400 children to the park each year.<sup>201</sup>

The other community groups that used Searsville Lake Park on a regular basis were numerous. Several of the local and not-so-local middle schools and high schools had their class picnics at the lake. Regular corporate users who held company picnics on the grounds included the Stanford Bookstore, Anderson Auto Parts, the Honeywell Corporation, Saxon Business Products and the Crocker Citizens National Bank, among others. United States Representative Pete McCloskey held an annual picnic at Searsville Lake for years and in 1970 would be a co-chair of the first “Earth Day.” The Audubon Society came for the birds and the Blue Fin Fishing Club for the fish. Bing Nursery School youngsters and San Mateo Historical Society elders came for the fresh air. Several local recreation clubs took advantage of the beach and hiking trails, as did the many locals who enjoyed Searsville Lake with no affiliation whatsoever.<sup>202</sup> Over the years, Lake Searsville Park had assumed “considerable regional importance as a place for public recreation.”<sup>203</sup> There was no equivalent facility on the San Francisco peninsula and its longevity had made it significant to generations of users, with parents bringing their children and years later those grown children in turn bringing their own young ones.

The Palo Alto YMCA, like the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and Campfire Girls, held regular summer day camp sessions at Searsville Lake Park. They ran two five-day sessions and two eight-day sessions, with around eighty children attending per session. Their emphasis was on fun as much as on education. The Scouting groups continued to focus on designed activities that fostered learning about the natural setting. These projects included creating sculptures using natural clay on the property, dyeing cloth with pigments of natural origin, hiking, exploring the creek and identifying plants, animals, animal tracks and animal scat. Campfire Girls held an award for the girl who picked up the most litter. The Girls Scouts also emphasized living in the outdoors, teaching hiking and trail safety, knife and fire safety, cooking over an open fire and the requisite nature study walks.<sup>204</sup>

Docent Carol Hake recalls being one of the mothers who supervised Girls Scouts in the early 1960s in day camps that lasted for a week or two and ended in one overnight stay. Her troop, along with several other local troops, spent the days bivouacked in the large meadow along what today is Trail C. The Clapps kept the meadow mowed and it was wide open with peripheral trees providing much-needed shade. Buses brought about seventy girls through the Whiskey Hill gate in the morning and they spent much of the day hiking, observing nature and working on crafts projects. Mrs. Hake says they were seldom allowed to swim in the lake due to fears of drowning and she or one of the other seven to ten mothers blew a whistle every five minutes when the girls were in the water. At that time each girl and her assigned buddy would raise their clasped hands in the air to be accounted for. Aside from drowning, ticks and rattlesnakes were

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> “Conversation with Austin Clapp Regarding the Closing of Searsville Lake,” memo (8 January 1971), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>202</sup> “Survey of Groups Using the Lake” (1970), SC619, Jasper Ridge Records, SUA..

<sup>203</sup> “Report on Searsville Lake,” unpublished paper (1971), 13, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 14-15a.

also concerns. One of the highlights of the day camp experience was homemade ice cream, made with the requisite rock salt, evaporated milk and water.<sup>205</sup>



The beach and snack bar ca. 1966. Locals recall the snack bar was called the Snack Shack.

The aforementioned Summer of Love in 1967 was the advent for the music festivals that would define the late 1960s. These multi-act concerts, generally imbued with social and political meaning, were usually held in rural areas over two or three days and tended to draw enormous crowds that inevitably overwhelmed the concert site. One of the earliest was the Monterey International Pop Festival; the first one took place at Monterey, California over 16-18 June 1967 and featured Janis Joplin with Big Brother and the Holding Company, Jimi Hendrix, Jefferson Airplane and other San Francisco luminaries of the period.<sup>206</sup> Several performers who were scheduled to play could not make it for various reasons, one of the most prevalent being drug-related arrests. Estimates of the crowd over the three days ranged from 50,000 to 90,000 attendees with 8,500 people jamming into a space meant for 7,000 for the highlighted Saturday night performance. The epitome of music festivals was yet to come; the Woodstock Music and

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<sup>205</sup> Interview with Julie Cain (14 June 2013).

<sup>206</sup> The Monterey Pop festival was organized by John Phillips of The Mamas and the Papas, along with producers Lou Adler and Alan Pariser. All artists, whether commercial (those based in Los Angeles) or those in rebellion against The Establishment (those based in San Francisco), were asked to play for free up front, then asked to sign a waiver to be filmed as part of a documentary just before going onstage. Big Brother and the Holding Company initially refused to sign, suspicious of Los Angeles promoters trying to take advantage of “the hippie thing” going on in San Francisco. After their un-filmed and well-received performance, lead singer Janis Joplin was prevailed upon to have the band perform again but to be filmed this time. The San Francisco groups, largely unknown outside the Bay Area, dominated the show with Jimi Hendrix memorably setting his guitar on fire onstage at the end of his performance. *Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin: Nine Hundred Nights* (Documentary, 2001).

Art Fair, better known simply as Woodstock, would celebrate three days of peace and music in New York on 15-18 August 1969.<sup>207</sup> Woodstock attendance was estimated at 400,000 to 500,000 people.

In the meantime, Searsville Lake Park had been a successful venue for the Pete Seeger concert in 1963. In June 1968, Austin and Gloria Clapp signed an agreement with Topstar Productions of San Jose to hold a music festival, called the San Francisco International Pop Festival, at Searsville Lake Park. The two-day festival was to be recorded live with an album released following the gig. A brief listing in the 7 September 1968 “Teen Age” section of the *Oakland Tribune* announced that dates were set for 5-6 October 1968 at Searsville Lake, featuring Traffic, Iron Butterfly, Country Joe and the Fish and the Steve Miller Band, among other yet-to-be booked groups.<sup>208</sup> Other artists included Joan Baez, Creedence Clearwater Revival and the Ike and Tina Turner Revue.<sup>209</sup> Over 2,000 tickets sold immediately at \$5.00 apiece but Stanford University cancelled the festival, despite arrangements made for additional police and fire support, objecting to the violence, trash and drug abuse problems that accompanied these typically overcrowded events.<sup>210</sup> The concert was rescheduled and held in Pleasanton, California over 27-28 October, and any music played at Searsville Lake Park from that point onward would be restricted to Stanford fraternity parties, high school senior class parties and other relatively small-scale celebrations. Even these more intimate activities led to complaints of noise from households living near the park, citing the use of bongo drums and amplified music, including radios, record players and, less often, live bands.

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<sup>207</sup> The low point was the Altamont Speedway Free Festival held between Tracy and Livermore, California on 6 December 1969. The Grateful Dead, who helped sponsor Altamont, ultimately declined to play due to the violence engendered by the crowd of 300,000 people. Their fears were justified as four people died that day; one was a young man named Meredith Hunter. High on methamphetamine, Hunter was stabbed to death by a Hell’s Angel doing stage security when Hunter pulled a gun while the Rolling Stones were performing onstage. A jury found the Angel acting in self-defense based on film coverage of the event. “Woodstock” and “Altamont Free Concert,” Wikipedia, <http://wikipedia.org> (accessed 12 September 2013).

<sup>208</sup> “The San Francisco Pop Festival, Searsville Lake, San Mateo County, CA October 5-6, 1968 (rescheduled),” Rock Prosopography 101, <http://google.com> (accessed 21 August 2012).

<sup>209</sup> Advertisement, *San Jose Mercury News* (8 September 1968), 9.

<sup>210</sup> The university regularly hosted rock concerts in Frost Amphitheater beginning with the mid-1960s. All rock concerts were banned in 1971 due to the violence, drugs, robberies and other problems, following a July 1971 Elvin Bishop and Cold Blood concert, where fights and bottle-throwing erupted between concertgoers, motorcycle gang members and the police. All concerts were banned in 1972 after many attendees of a Miles Davis show pushed through the gates without paying. After concerts were reinstituted, the Grateful Dead was banned in the mid-1980s due to problems with the Deadheads camping in the Arboretum and the attendant drug use. Ivan Maisal, “A Place in the Sun,” *Stanford Magazine*, <http://alumni.stanford.edu> (accessed 12 September 2013).



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San Jose Mercury-News, Sunday, September 8, 1968 9E

Ad for the San Francisco International Pop Festival, to be held at Searsville Lake, in 1968.

At the same time Stanford was cancelling the San Francisco International Pop Festival, the Provost's Office determined that the Biological Preserve at Jasper Ridge was to take over responsibility for Searsville Lake.<sup>211</sup> Discussion had already taken place in July 1968 between Alan Grundman, the director of the Biological Preserve, and the university's Community Relations department about the repercussions of closing the popular recreational park.<sup>212</sup> By November 1968, the Clapps were on a month-to-month lease, rather than the two-year leases they had been signing throughout the 1960s. The Biology Department again wanted the park closed but the university was unwilling to give up the income. The Clapps were now forced to run Searsville Lake Park on what amounted to a day-by-day basis, with the

<sup>211</sup> Not in September 1968, Box 4852, SUPSA. Check JR Records.

<sup>212</sup> Dixon Arnett to Alan Grundman, (11 July 1968), Box 4852, SUPSA.

understanding that the park could be closed at any time. This uncertain state of affairs provided the Clapps with an understandable lack of incentive to continue investing money and other resources in the park. However, they remained on the property and continued running Searsville Lake Park for several more seasons to come.



Locals Erika Zipf, Leanne Raines, Kelly Raines and Maggie Zipf (*from left to right*) in 1968.

Locals Erika Zipf-Williams and Kelly Raines Diedrich shared separate memories of Searsville Lake Park. Erika was born in 1964 and her family moved to Portola Valley in 1965. She remembers swimming during hot weather, eating tuna fish sandwiches from the snack bar, having birthday parties in the picnic areas, lying on the sand and finding rattlesnakes.<sup>213</sup> Kelly recalls swimming out to the first platform and performing cannonballs, splashing the sun-bathing teenagers who were lounging on top of the float. She ran over hot sand as fast as possible to reach the cool water and rented a paddleboard. As it neared the dam she always worried if she didn't pedal fast enough it would somehow go over the edge. Cook outs were held at various barbeque sites and lizards were hunted when she climbed over the rocks.<sup>214</sup>

In August 1969, a protest in the form of a Hunger Show was planned to take place at the park by Stewart Brand, a former Stanford student who was then the head of the Portola Institute's Whole Earth Catalog.<sup>215</sup> Some 300 people were going to sleep in a communal inflated tent and live without eating any food for a week. Mrs. Clapp, who, like Mrs. Brandsten before her, routinely dealt with all manner of people and incidents, put a stop to the tent raisers.<sup>216</sup> Brand, who had not gotten permission from the university to hold the protest at Searsville Lake Park, vowed to announce a new location at a press conference at the Sheraton-Palace Hotel.

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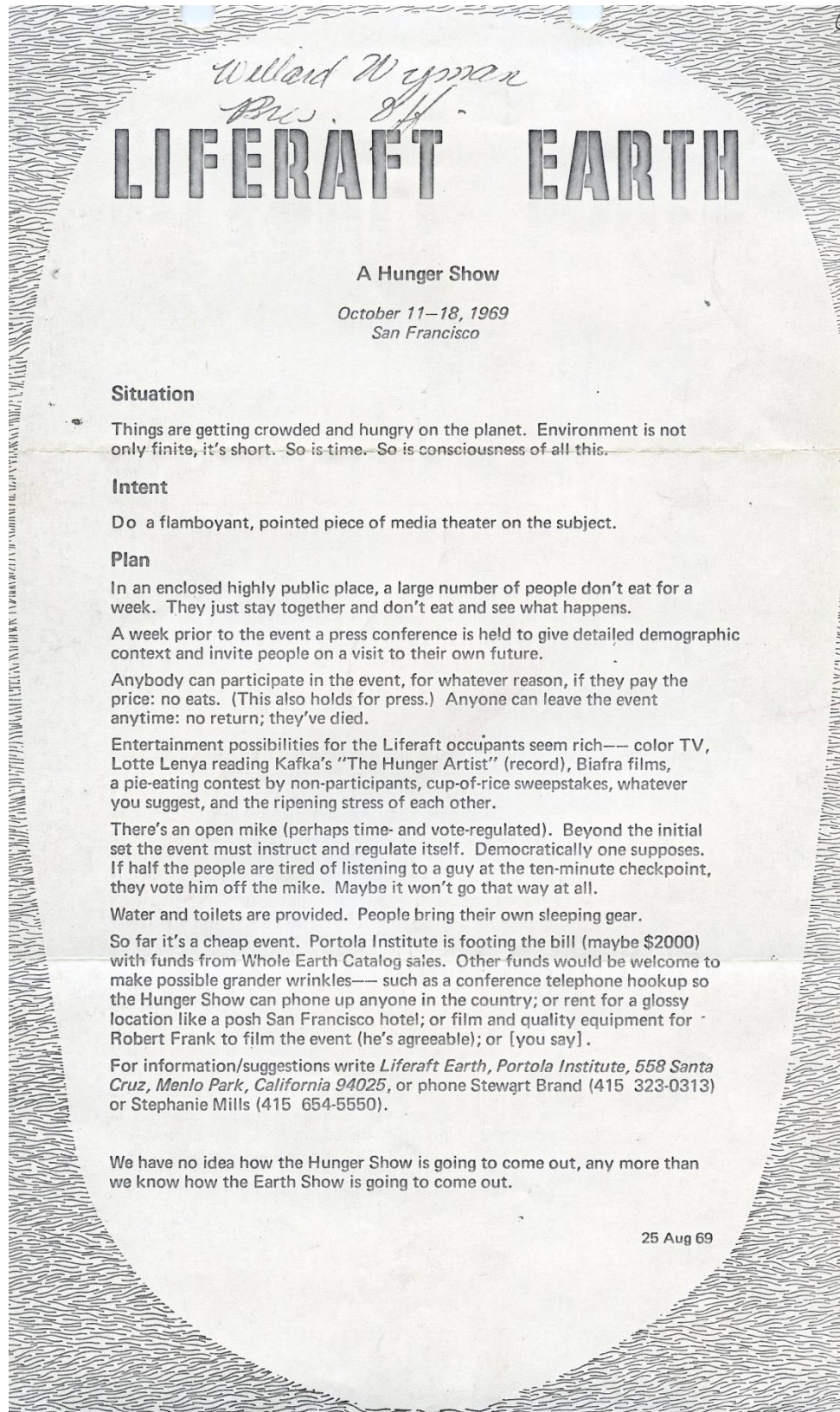
<sup>213</sup> Email from Kelly Diedrich to Thomas Ramies (17 June 2013).

<sup>214</sup> Telephone interview with Julie Cain (13 June 2013).

<sup>215</sup> "Tent-Raising Attempt Deflated at Woodside," *Palo Alto Times* (2 October 1969), clipping, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>216</sup> "Liferaft Earth," (25 August 1969), leaflet, Box 4852, SUPSA; and Ibid.





Former Stanford biology student Stewart Brand hoped to hold the Hunger Show at Searsville Lake Park.

Stanford University's water polo team was still training at Searsville Lake during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Water polo player Rob Jensen remembers the lake being used for pre-season boot camp when he played from 1968 through 1970. Team members swam from the beach to the dam and back again, then spent from two to two-and-one-half hours working out in the water while never touching the bottom. Once the training session was over, all of the players formed a line on the beach to allow the coach and assistants to put drops of rubbing alcohol into each ear and spritz their open mouths with an antibacterial spray to counter-affect any potential issues relating to water quality. The players then changed into dry clothes without showering and headed back to campus.<sup>217</sup>

### The Rise of Environmentalism and Ecology

The term environmentalism was coined in 1922, the year the Brandstens first showed interest in leasing Stanford property to create their recreational park. This social movement used education, lobbying and activism to protect natural resources and ecosystems. Two Americans whose philosophies influenced this course of events were Henry David Thoreau and John Muir. Thoreau believed that people needed to live a simple life close to nature and he wrote about this idea in *Walden; or, Life In the Woods*, published in 1854. John Muir, who had worked with Stanford University president David Starr Jordan to create the Sierra Club in 1892, spent his adult life fighting for nature's rights, two examples being his leading roles in the creation of Yosemite National Park and the vociferous fight he led against—and ultimately lost—the building of the Hetch Hetchy Dam, which routed Sierra Nevada water to the San Francisco Bay Area. These two men contributed to a growing American awareness of the significance of America's natural resources in the nineteenth century and in 1916 United States President Woodrow Wilson acknowledged that particular American lands deserved federal protection with the formation of the National Park Service. Harold C. Bryant, student of the famed UC-Berkeley zoologist Joseph Grinnell—Grinnell had also studied under David Starr Jordan—was one of Yosemite's first naturalist interpreters and later founded the park service's interpretive programs.<sup>218</sup> Bryant's accomplishments were a direct reflection of Grinnell's and Jordan's Progressive Era thinking, that natural history study “promoted healthful recreation and an informed citizenry.”<sup>219</sup> More nature study in public schools and educational programs from state and federal agencies, such as Bryant's programs in the National Park Service, put people in touch with nature and ultimately taught them to promote wildlife conservation.

American biologist Rachel Carson's publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962 was a catalyst for launching the contemporary environmental movement. Carson had researched the dangers of widespread agricultural use of DDT and its resultant killing of birds and other wildlife.<sup>220</sup> She cautioned against accepting pesticide companies' assurances of safety and believed that humans were being harmed as well in their exposure to carcinogenic substances. The book was widely read and U.S. President John F. Kennedy instructed his Science Advisory Committee to investigate Carson's findings. They concurred and the use of DDT was ultimately banned, with people now acknowledging that nature was vulnerable to human

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<sup>217</sup> Telephone interview with Julie Cain (18 June 2013).

<sup>218</sup> Alagona, *After the Grizzly*, 53.

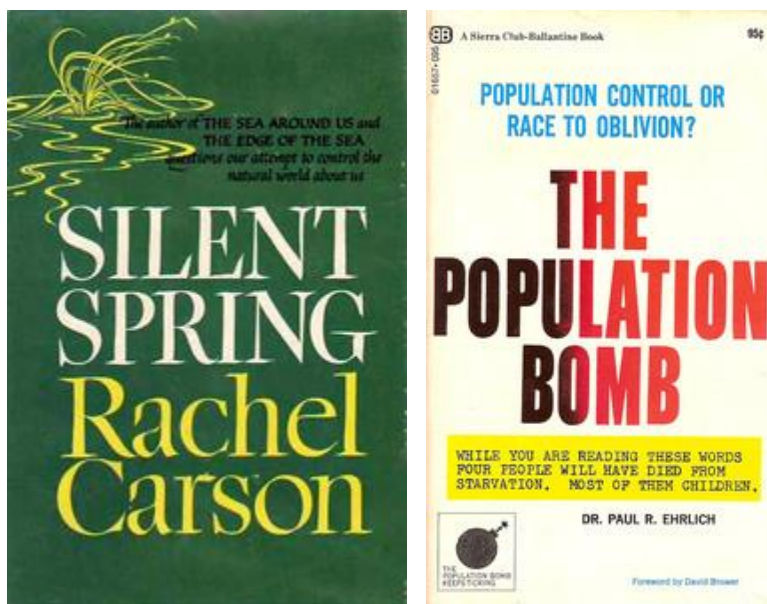
<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>220</sup> Carson herself died of breast cancer in 1964. “Rachel Carson's Biography,” The Life and Legacy of Rachel Carson, <http://www.rachelcarson.org> (accessed 24 September 2013).



intervention.<sup>221</sup> The issue of conservation and the preservation of the wilderness had now broadened to embrace protection of the environment, with the understanding that contaminated food chains and water sources could lead to cancer, genetic damage and the deaths of entire species.

Environmentalism in the 1960s was also linked to feminism and the zero population growth movement. One of the leading proponents of this movement was Professor Paul Ehrlich, a member of the Biology Department at Stanford University. In 1968 he published *The Population Bomb*, a controversial book warning about unlimited population growth and the resultant destruction of the planet's limited resources. Ehrlich had already lobbied Stanford for the creation of the Biological Preserve at Jasper Ridge back in 1959. By the late 1960s the Department of Biological Sciences was teaching 125 undergraduates per year and had 100 graduate students in residence, producing fifteen to twenty Ph.D.'s per year.<sup>222</sup> The focus was on population biology, which encompassed ecology, systematics, evolutionary theory and population genetics. Teaching covered evolutionary and ecological processes in natural populations and research in public education in terms of the human population-resource-environment crisis.<sup>223</sup>



Two books that shaped environmental thinking in the 1960s.

In 1969 the university acknowledged the expansion of research interest by both population biologists and plant ecologists at the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve.<sup>224</sup> The Biology Department wanted Jasper Ridge to consist of Farm Lots 90, 91, 92, 96 (this lot was removed from the Clapp leasehold in 1970) and 97 (the lake itself), in addition to the banks of the San Francisquito Creek that ran through Lots 85, 86 and 89. Immediate plans were made for putting up eight-foot-high steel chain link fencing topped with a foot-high barbed wire guard, to be installed by June 1970. Future plans included the erection of several

<sup>221</sup> "The Story of Silent Spring," Natural Resources Defense Council, <http://www.nrdc.org> (accessed 24 September 2013).

<sup>222</sup> "Report On Searsville Lake," 6.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>224</sup> "Program for Jasper Ridge Improvements," unpublished report, Stanford University Planning Office (9 December 1969), 1, Box, 4852, SUPSA.

structures on the preserve, including a caretaker's residence. The Searsville Lake Park would be confined to Lots 89, 101, 102 and 104, with Jasper Ridge personnel working in conjunction with the park operators and the Business Office "in establishing conditions of use in future leases which will protect the adjoining Jasper Ridge wilderness experimental area."<sup>225</sup> Jasper Ridge personnel wanted an end to the use of motor boats on the lake and a say in whether or not pesticides could be used to treat the lake for weed abatement.

The Clapps continued to run the lease on a month-to-month basis and by the time a university official met with Austin Clapp on 8 January 1971, he was fully prepared to hear that the park would not open for the coming season in March 1971. He offered to help with the public relations angle—by this time everyone involved with the continuing dialogue of closing Searsville Lake Park in favor of Jasper Ridge had acknowledged that the public relations issues were manifest due to the diverse and long term constituency of the park users—and suggested that the Biology Department place an information booth at the beach in the upcoming season, should the park remain open.<sup>226</sup> He even brought his legal expertise to bear and recommended that the university "include the property within the recreation provision of the Williamson Act, and transfer it to the Academic Reserve the following year" to reduce taxes.<sup>227</sup> Clapp was most concerned with potential loss of the fishing program, which he estimated included about 750 people. He believed that about 500 members lived in East Palo Alto and were reliant on the fish they caught to supplement their diet.<sup>228</sup> The university responded to his fishing club concerns by investigating his claim. Professor Lyle Nelson had one of his communications students research the conflicting interests of who wanted to use the lake and how best to resolve the complex situation.<sup>229</sup> Searsville Lake Park did re-open for the 1971 season but Jim Clapp, the younger of the two adult Clapp sons, ended up being responsible for the bulk of the daily operations as his father was sick in the hospital. Austin Rhone Clapp died at the age of sixty-one on 22 December 1971.

Local Thomas Ramies went to Searsville Lake Park during the late 1960s and early 1970s with his parents and his two brothers, Ron and Bob. When he was very young, Thomas was content to play on the beach near his parents, digging for clams in the water and throwing them back in. Eating hot dogs or hamburgers bought at the snack bar were a special treat, akin to eating hot dogs at a ballgame. Venturing out to the first float was as far as he was willing to go into the water. When he became older, Thomas went to the park with brother Bob every weekend until he went to high school. They hung out with their

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>226</sup> "Conversation with Austin Clapp Regarding the Closing of Searsville Lake," (8 January 1971), 1, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> The paper does not bear the student's name. The author notes the added layer of racism to the fishing club situation. Many black East Palo Alto residents disagreed with the notion that the university's mission was education and research—as opposed to providing recreation—and some of these residents "look[ed] at the Searsville decision as discriminatory—just one more attempt of a wealthy institution to prevent the poorer Black community from enjoying the recreational facilities that others do. With the Black Student Union at Stanford currently making new demands, this reaction could become intensified out of proportion, causing even more problems." The author was correct that the vocal Black Student Union, empowered by the local presence of the Black Panthers in Oakland, were making their presence felt on campus. "Ecology vs. Recreation," unpublished student paper (1971), 5-6, SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, 1954-1992, SUA.

friends, renting canoes or paddleboats, and swam out to the rafts placed into the middle of the lake where they would lounge around soaking up the sun.<sup>230</sup>

Older brother Ron Ramies was the daredevil of the three boys, sneaking off to the dam and jumping into the water from the crest—a strictly forbidden activity. He says the dam was too far away from the beach area to have been supervised by anyone of authority. His parents also instructed him to stay away from the eastside beach, lest he be caught in the weeds and drown. He remembers a power boat outfitted with a clamshell drag being used when a suspected drowning took place. Both brothers recall the black sticky mud found along the edge of the beach when entering and exiting the water.<sup>231</sup>



These clips were taken from Ramies family home movies shot in the late 1960s.

### The Dan and Jim Clapp Year (1972)

The park was closed for the season when Austin Clapped passed away and it was not set to re-open until the following March 1972. The university received three proposals to run the park, including one written by Jim and Dan Clapp. They protested the proposed reduction of the current leasehold that allowed much of their picnic areas, and thus much of their naturally shaded areas, as well as some of the permanent restroom facilities, to be absorbed into the Jasper Ridge preserve.<sup>232</sup> They also wanted to reduce the university take of the gate revenue from 27% to 16% on the assumption that the number of park visitors would drop appreciably when longtime users faced new restrictions on their access and activities. The university take from the store would remain at 20% and the annual cost of weed control would be shared between Searsville Lake Park and Jasper Ridge on a fifty-fifty basis. The brothers also promised several improvements to the property, including upgrading the interior and exterior of the store, replacing the boat house and improving the landscaping with newly planted lawns and trees. They also noted that since the Biology Department had banned the use of any chemical treatment of the lake water, both algae and weeds had proliferated despite the use of an underwater lawnmower. They asked for a fifteen-year lease and noted that “a principal share of the lake income/profit would be committed to the support and maintenance of Mrs. Austin Clapp.”<sup>233</sup>

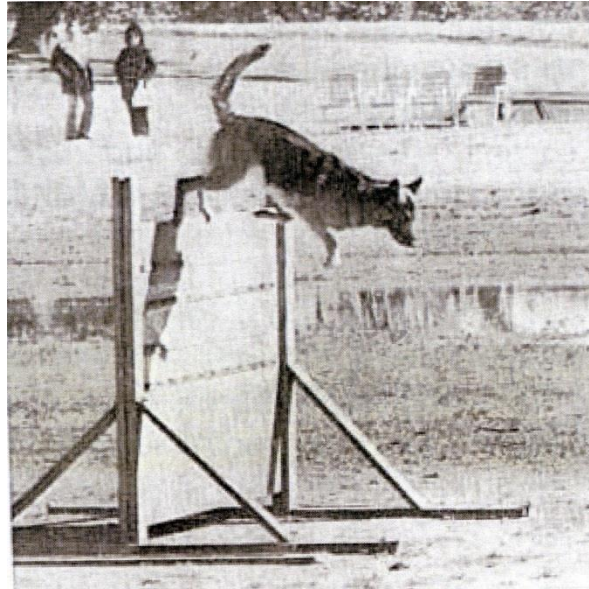
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<sup>230</sup> Interview with Thomas Ramies (17 June 2013).

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Ron Ramies (17 June 2013).

<sup>232</sup> Dan and Jim Clapp to Boyd Smith and George Burtness (16 February 1972), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.



The Peninsula Police Canine Corps held their *Schutzhund* (protection dog) training and trials at Searsville Lake in 1972. They had been training their dogs at the park as early as 1969. Despite protesting the loss of the bicycle bowl as their usual trial site, the 27 May 1972 competition was held at Searsville Lake Park with judge Herman Kunz flying in from Germany to preside.<sup>234</sup>

The university initially agreed to a nine-month lease and, in preparation for the following 1973 season, had drawn up guidelines for new proposals in August 1972.<sup>235</sup> These new guidelines reduced the size of the park down to approximately forty acres (it had been approximately 250 acres during the Brandsten and Clapp years), and motorboats, motorcycles and high volume amplified music were strictly forbidden.<sup>236</sup> The lease was to be for ten years with a five-year extension and an immediate buy-out clause. The two Clapp brothers submitted a more thorough proposal on 15 September 1972. On 24 October 1972 a complaint was made about Jim Clapp leading a group of four to six motorcyclists close to the Campfire Girls campsite. A week later, on 31 October 1972, their lease was officially terminated. They had until 5 January 1973 to vacate the property. On 1 January 1973, Dan Clapp held the “First and Last Annual Searsville Lake New Year’s Day Motorcycle Race,” with 150 entrants racing their bikes “from the beach area to the dam, swinging through the area of trees west of the dam, up across the open hill beside Portola Road, and around the bicycle bowl back to the beach area.”<sup>237</sup> When approached by university official George Burtness—who was responding to several neighbors’ telephoned complaints--Clapp acknowledged that he had arranged a “sort of lease-breaking party” and was very cooperative in

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<sup>234</sup> Linda Fox Vartanian, Peninsula Canine Corps: First Fifty Years, <http://www.google.com> (accessed 21 August 2012).

<sup>235</sup> Andy Doty of the University Relations department also noted that the Shack Riders were then balking at removing their cabin, claiming that it was too heavy and that “the biologists don’t really need all that room.” They had agreed to move the structure in 1971 but as time passed they were reconsidering their agreement to the move. The original rider’s shack is still in place and a new one was built nearby but outside of Jasper Ridge. The Shack Riders still have limited access to a trail that passes through Jasper Ridge and leads to Webb Ranch. Andy Doty to George Burtness (4 August 1972), SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

<sup>236</sup> On 30 May 1972 there was a complaint about live rock music played during a high school graduation celebration at the park. In June 1972 there was a complaint about water skiing on the lake, something that had already been forbidden by the Biology Department. George Burtness to Dan and James Clapp (23 June 1972), SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA; and John Thomas to George Burtness (30 May 1972), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>237</sup> G.L. Burtness to File (2 January 1973), SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.



asking the “exuberant” cyclists to leave, including corralling those who were riding up on Jasper Ridge once the races were over.

When Austin Clapp had passed away in January 1972, the university was faced with the dilemma of what to do with Searsville Lake Park. George Burtness, a member of the university’s Real Estate Department, commissioned an analysis of the park by consultant Les Goldman. Goldman noted the recent focus on recreation in the San Francisco Bay Area, partly due to U.S. President Richard Nixon’s visit there in support of an effort to create the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, an 81,000-acre open space overseen by the National Park Service that stretched from Marin County to San Mateo County. Additional local interest had also been focused on the need for local parks and the day use patterns of California’s state parks.<sup>238</sup> The notion that the work week would continue to shrink due to automation and thus provide Americans with even more leisure time was still prevalent, placing an increasing importance on recreation and, for the Stanford Business Office, a financial opportunity to take advantage of the rising trend.<sup>239</sup> Goldman recommended that the university improve and expand Searsville Lake Park while taking credit for “acting as a responsive community entity,” increasing their revenue and providing educational overtones at the facility while also providing “outlets and practical grounds for educational experiences and special training for special academic needs.”<sup>240</sup> Clearly, the university could both enhance its reputation within the local community and make money at the same time, a win-win situation if only the issues between Searsville Lake Park and Jasper Ridge could be resolved. While Burtness had initially agreed to lease to the Clapp brothers due to the family’s long tenure, he would not make a decision about who would now operate the park based on sentiment the second time around.

#### The Janes and Beeson Years (1973-1976).

Addison Janes had submitted a proposal to run Searsville Lake Park in February 1972 when the university had decided to lease to Jim and Dan Clapp. Janes had thirty years of water-related recreational experience behind him when he wrote his proposal. While working as a teacher, he had also run a day-camp and boat rental in Clear Lake, California from 1938-1952, with a break for military service during WWII. In 1953 Janes and his wife, Vera, moved to Menlo Park and he opened a swimming school, which he expanded to include a family club operation in 1958. Janes would continue to operate his swimming school while also running Searsville Lake Park. Don Beeson, a local man still in his late twenties, had coached a swimming team and turned a Christmas tree operation into a successful business over a six-year-period. His tree lot was located at Janes’s swimming school. Beeson was to help with promotion and daily management. A third partner, Ned Spieker, was to come in as a financial consultant and investor but his name does not appear on any additional paperwork.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> Les Goldman to George Burtness (15 February 1972), 1, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>239</sup> San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, “Recreation On and Around San Francisco Bay,” (San Francisco: San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, January 1968), 1.

<sup>240</sup> Goldman to Burtness, 2.

<sup>241</sup> Addison Janes, Addendum to Proposal (March 1972, September 1972, November 1972), 21-22, Box 4852, SUPSA.



Addison Janes and Don Beeson, the new proprietors of Searsville Lake Park.

Beeson had heard that Searsville Lake Park was looking for a new operator but he did not have the funds or experience needed to deal with the park on his own. He approached Janes about a prospective partnership. Janes assessed the rundown park and saw the potential in both improving and further developing the facility. He remembered that twenty years earlier everyone local to the area went to Searsville Lake Park but attendance had fallen off sharply in the past few years and most of the current users of the park were coming from San Mateo and San Francisco Counties.<sup>242</sup> Confident that he could turn the park around, Janes and his wife signed the lease and formed a corporation (Searsville Lake Park, Inc.) that “owned” Searsville Lake Park, with the majority of the stock in their name. Janes was the president of the corporation and held primary responsibility for the park through the lease, with Beeson becoming a minority shareholder and acting as the daily manager. The university insisted Janes retain control of the corporation and, therefore, primary control of the park operation.<sup>243</sup> Despite the recommendation that the park be cut back to forty acres, advertising indicated that the park ultimately remained approximately two hundred acres in size.<sup>244</sup>

Janes and Beeson had ambitious plans for Searsville Lake Park; their master plan included putting in a swimming pool, an amphitheater and an area for overnight recreational vehicle camping. However, their first order of business was to bring the neglected and run-down park into a desirable state that would encourage local families to once again visit the recreational site. They found a maze of dirt roads that wound all over the property, many of them heavily rutted and unnecessary. The imported beach sand had washed into the lake, and weeds choked both the shoreline and the eroded beach area itself. The snack bar had been vandalized with broken equipment and old supplies left littering the interior. The dressing rooms and the rest rooms were filthy with many of the toilets in need of repair. The residences were dirty and had been stripped of all carpeting, wall trim and electrical fixtures. The corporation yard took up two acres and hosted a combination of abandoned and broken machinery, equipment and just plain junk.<sup>245</sup> With the March deadline for opening the 1973 season already well behind them, Beeson and Janes set to work in April 1973 to bring the park up to an acceptable condition of use.

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>243</sup> Addison Janes to George Burtneiss (15 March 1976), 2-3.

<sup>244</sup> “We’re Making Waves at Searsville Park,” *Time Magazine* (5 June 1973), unpaginated; and unidentified and undated newspaper clipping, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>245</sup> Add Janes, “Searsville Lake Park,” 1, typewritten report, SC619, Jasper Ridge Records, SUA.

They opened for Memorial Day Weekend in May 1973, having repaired the beach area and replaced the sand, renovated the snack bar, cleaned and repaired the dressing rooms and bathrooms, repaired picnic tables, repaired the floats and set up a marked swimming area. The remainder of the season they continued to learn the ropes and figured out where improvements were still needed before any real development could begin. One of their most significant problems was dealing with rowdy crowds who in the past few years had been allowed to spend their time unrestricted by rules or supervision. Other issues were the choking amounts of dust created by people parking anywhere and everywhere, including the picnic areas, sewage water entering the lake in the beach field, and weeds continuing to choke the swimming area.<sup>246</sup> There was not enough time to develop any good playing field areas, and the volleyball courts and horseshoe pits also needed renovation still. Many of the picnic areas lacked running water and some of the tables were perched precariously on sloping sites. Despite these problems local people, including families, did return, prompted not only by word-of-mouth but also in response to a publicity campaign that included placement of a full-page advertisement in *Time Magazine* and two local newspaper articles extolling the virtues of the renovated park.<sup>247</sup> Community use also resumed, with local organizations requesting picnic sites, institution of a new fishing program and the return of Scouts for overnight camping. Heaviest use of the park continued to be on Sundays and holidays, with most of the people using the beach and swimming area of the lake. Many took advantage of the new programs Janes and Beeson instituted for swimming, boating, sailing and windsurfing lessons.

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 6.





## ***We're making waves at Searsville Lake***

Searsville Lake, nestled in the quiet, wooded hills outside Menlo Park, on Stanford land, is one of those enticing spots you'd like to call your own. It's attractive, pleasant, serene. Searsville is so much a natural delight, in fact, that Peninsulans have wondered for many years why it hasn't been made more appealing to greater numbers.

There's good news: Now it has. Dramatic, extensive improvements presently under way promise to make Searsville the most complete recreation park on the Peninsula.

The man engineering this progress is Add Janes, who for 20 years has operated his own highly regarded Swim School in Menlo Park. For several months now, Add and his associate, Don Beeson, have spent lots of time — and just as much money — performing many small miracles which, though far from finished, already have transformed Searsville as *the* place for

all types of outdoor recreational activities. Now ready for public use are: a picturesque freshwater lake for swimming, rowboat, sailboat, or paddleboard rentals, and for sunbathing on a comfortable, sandy shore; several play fields, large and small, for volleyball, badminton, softball; special picnic and barbeque areas; canopied outdoor snack-bar area overlooking the attractive beach; walking paths for relaxing strolls through pastoral surroundings; day and overnight camping for organized youth groups.

Scheduled to open soon is an on-site 25-yard swimming pool for recreation, instruction and competition. And, on the drawing boards are such things as tennis courts, a harbor for mooring of nonpower boats, and perhaps a bridle trail.

All improvements, present and future, have been planned with two priorities in mind: 1) Creating a

full-service public park for your enjoyment and 2) Preserving the natural beauty of the 200-acre site.

If you have seen Searsville in the past, you'll scarcely recognize it today. Consider this your invitation to drive on out. Take Route 280 to Menlo Park, and follow the Sand Hill Road exit west about a mile. After you've visited, give Add or Don a call at 323-7717. They want to know what more they might do to give Peninsulans the facility they deserve. You see, they're going out of their way so you needn't go out of your way to find a clean, safe, supervised, fun-filled park both adults and kids can enjoy.

Pass the word, the *NEW* Searsville Lake Park is here. Open seven days weekly till dark. Daily admission or season pass optional.

**searsville lake park**  
Woodside, California

An ad for Searsville Lake Park, *Time Magazine*, 5 June 1973.



At the end of the first season, Janes and Beeson met with Alan Grundman and other members of Jasper Ridge to facilitate a meeting of minds on future Searsville Lake Park development.<sup>248</sup> The Jasper Ridge staff was cool to the idea of an amphitheater that would draw large raucous crowds attending rock concerts but had no objection to an amphitheater used to host more intimate “Music-in-the-Vineyards” performances. Beeson wanted to plant Christmas trees on various sites and this was also acceptable, with Jasper Ridge input about where Monterey Pines, Douglas Firs and Scotch Pines could be planted and maintained. Overnight trailers were acceptable under specific conditions but no tent or open camping was to be allowed beyond that of the local Scout troops. The proposed twenty-five-meter swimming pool could be used as an adjunct location for Janes’s swimming school but could not be used as a home site for that business.<sup>249</sup> The meeting was indicative of the cooperative efforts being made by both Searsville Lake management and Jasper Ridge management to co-exist as successfully as possible, given that there were no available or foreseeable funds as of yet that would allow Jasper Ridge to buy out the lease and absorb the park property into the biological preserve



Swimming out to the floats will still a popular pastime in 1975.

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<sup>248</sup> Jasper Ridge staff had more than just trespassers to cope with. In 1974 a handwritten letter signed “Nature Boy” was mailed to the Marine Ecological Institute in Redwood City. It was forwarded to various officials, including Alan Grundman as Director at Jasper Ridge. Nature Boy was ostensibly concerned with the survival of the trout and steelhead trout living in San Francisquito Creek. He wanted the safety valve at the bottom of the dam to be left partially open during the summer to prevent the creek from drying up. If the valve was not left opened, he would blow it up. In 1975, a similar letter with identical handwriting was mailed to the Bowman Alumni House and again forwarded to Grundman. The author identified himself as Cliff Cruickshank living at La Mesa Drive in Menlo Park. He again raised the issue of the creek drying up during the summertime and reiterated that the valve needed to be left open. Valves along the pipeline between the dam and Webb Ranch had been broken in the intervening period between the receipt of the letters but no bomb was ever set off. Nature Boy to Concerned Members of the Institute (22 July 1974), Cliff Cruickshank to Sirs (13 June 1975), Alan Grundman to Jim Siena (27 June 2013), SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

<sup>249</sup> Alan Grundman to the Jasper Ridge Committee (4 October 1973), SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

1974 and 1975 saw greatly increased numbers of people using Searsville Lake Park, attesting to Janes's business acumen and continued efforts to improve the basic facility. These efforts were mainly focused on improving the road surfaces and overall road system, the parking lots and the general landscaping. When the Clapps had operated the park, the heaviest attendance was 77,000 in 1968. This number fell drastically in 1969 to 63,900 and even further in 1970 to 61,500. In 1974 the attendance rose to 81,700 and it peaked in 1975 at 102,900 before the season had actually come to an end.<sup>250</sup>



Moored boats and boats on the water at Searsville Lake Park, 1975.

Janes and Beeson had initially enjoyed a good working relationship but as time passed by their differences in work and philosophy had caused their partnership to deteriorate. By the spring of 1974, Janes was ready to terminate the working relationship because he found Beeson “insubordinate, often inefficient, [he] interfered with my carrying out my responsibilities as administrative officer, and threatened to impair my ability to perform under the terms of the lease.”<sup>251</sup> Beeson compounded these problems further by moving into the caretaker's house and changing the locks without discussing it with Janes. He also withheld attendance and income figures from Janes, and acted independently of Janes when he contracted to have the lake dredged at a cost of \$2500 on his own.<sup>252</sup> Burtness, who had sympathized with Dan and Jim Clapp, also hoped that Janes, rather than firing Beeson, would work things

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<sup>250</sup> Stanford Research Institute, “Recreational Carrying Capacity of Searsville Lake Park,” (Menlo Park: Stanford Research Institute, October 1975), 15.

<sup>251</sup> Janes to Burtness (15 March 1976), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

out amicably. Janes felt that the time for conciliation had long since passed and intended instead to buy Beeson out.<sup>253</sup>

Despite all of the background drama, 1974 saw Janes and Beeson upgrading the sewage disposal system. They also closed one of the waterfront parking lots and planted it over with grass. They added an oil emulsion to the road surfaces to cut down on dust but it evaporated too quickly to be of any long-term use. In 1975, the most heavily used roads were treated again by applying a grey rock surface that was covered with two coats of oil and screening. This treatment worked perfectly and for the first time in the long use of the park dust was no longer a problem. Roads not in use were phased out. A second waterfront parking lot was also closed and seeded with grass. All of the parking lots were landscaped with trees and ground cover. A sprinkler system was installed to keep the lawns green, weeds and brush were removed to improve the shoreline, and weeds were continuously removed from the lake to keep the swimming area clear.<sup>254</sup> Jasper Ridge also requested that Searsville Lake Park install a permanent float line that would run from the causeway along the eastern shore all the way to the dam and then turn westward along the face of the dam to keep people inside the park.. They also wanted additional posting warning signs posted. The bridge and dam were already in the process of being fenced at the time.<sup>255</sup>

While the Business Office was delighted with the improvements and success of Searsville Lake Park, the 81,000 attendance figure of the 1974 season was not without its critics. Aside from the aforementioned concerns held by Jasper Ridge staff, the residents of Woodside also had objections to the noise and increased traffic issues. The idea that park use would be even further expanded if an amphitheater, a swimming pool and overnight recreational vehicle camping space were still to be built increased the tensions building between the local community and the university. In spring of 1975 Stanford University commissioned the Stanford Research Institute to assess the carrying capacity of the park in an attempt to analyze just how many users could safely be in the park at any given time. The SRI staff produced a report that was highly in favor of the current concessioner, the recent improvements and the planned improvements. Based on eight unannounced visits in 1975, spread out over weekends, weekdays and one holiday (Memorial Day), the team determined that the park was functioning well under heavy use days with the exception of the holiday. Memorial Day had seen 4,400 people use the park over the course of the day, and this number of visitors strained the capacity of the beach; under ideal conditions the beach could hold 2,300 people with an additional 225 people swimming in the lake.<sup>256</sup> Since the heavily used Sundays averaged 2,000 visitors, the park was only used beyond reasonable capacity three days out of the year: Memorial Day, the Fourth of July and Labor Day. SRI recommended that if the beach were not to be expanded, on these three days only an appropriate number of people should be allowed in throughout the day.<sup>257</sup> The team also noted the inevitable silting in of the lake and recommended that existing vegetation along the shoreline be preserved to protect the banks and minimize erosion.<sup>258</sup> Their conclusion that the current and future operation of Searsville Lake Park was successfully striking a balance between the surrounding community, the university and the immediate environment (meaning the

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<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Addison Janes, "Searsville Lake Park: summary of Improvements from Apr.1, 1973 to Mar.1, 1976," SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

<sup>255</sup> Alan Grundman to Addison Janes (15 August 1974), SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

<sup>256</sup> "Recreational Carrying Capacity of Searsville Lake Park," 5.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 27.



park itself, not Jasper Ridge) did not satisfy the Town Council of Woodside. They claimed the park was in a “nonconforming use” zone that prohibited illegal “expansion of facilities or substantial increase in the use or capacity.”<sup>259</sup> They wanted Sunday use to be restricted to 1,130 users and holiday admittance be determined by advance registration that would limit too many users and the resultant traffic problems.<sup>260</sup>

Janes was amenable to scaling back his long-term plans—he also pointed out that all of the improvements made so far were necessary to bring the park into good operating order--and to restricting the number of people allowed into the park although he did not agree specifically that 1,130 visitors would be the daily limit.<sup>261</sup> He and his wife, Vera, also planned on moving into the caretaker’s house and turning the primary gate into a “show place entrance to properly set off a first class community recreation facility and provide a park-like resting area for hikers, bike riders and others as they pass by.”<sup>262</sup> Finally, Janes made it clear he was more than willing to work with the local community, with Jasper Ridge and with the university to make the running of Searsville Lake Park work for all parties involved.

### Community Reaction Then and Now

By 5 October 1976, word had gotten out to the public through the newspaper that Stanford University was considering closing Searsville Lake Park in favor of ceding the property to the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. The outcry was immediate, encompassing protests from regular visitors of Searsville Lake Park, the local horse people, local companies bemoaning the loss of their annual picnic sites and numerous local youth groups who used the site for sports, picnics, nature hikes and day camps.<sup>263</sup> Many of the protests cited the lack of public notification and public discussion as adding fuel to the flames of discontent. On 9 November 1976, the university Board of Trustees voted to add three hundred twenty acres that comprised Searsville Lake Park and adjacent lands to the thirteen hundred acres belonging to the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve.<sup>264</sup> While university officials were not insensitive to the desires of the local community, they firmly believed that their first obligation was to support academic purpose, as opposed to recreation.

Stanford has an unparalleled opportunity to create one of the finest, outdoor laboratory/classrooms in the United States. In this regard, the Lake is particularly valuable: to our knowledge, there is no academically-controlled lake on a campus anywhere in the country. The Board, therefore, moved to take advantage of that unique potential.<sup>265</sup>

The 1976 season was the final season of Searsville Lake Park. Nearly thirty-five years later the feelings of the local community who mourned the loss of the park back then are still in evidence. People who used

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<sup>259</sup> Woodside was also bitter about the fact that Searsville Lake Park trails were closed to horseback riders in June 1973, affecting some 800 families in the area who had frequented those trails. The Town Council of Woodside to The Adjacent Lands Use Committee (7 February 1976), 1-2, SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>261</sup> Addison Janes to George Burtness (16 March 1976), 1, 5, SC619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

<sup>262</sup> Don Beeson was actually still in residence at the caretaker’s house and, in fact, remained there until the park closed. He continued to live in the area once the park closed, leasing Christmas tree lots from Stanford every winter until at least 1978. Ibid., 2; and Christmas Tree File, Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>263</sup> Public and Journalistic Reaction to Searsville Lake Closure by Board of Trustees file (1976), Box 4852, SUPSA.

<sup>264</sup> Edward Shaw to Alan Grundman (15 November 1976), S0619, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve Records, SUA.

<sup>265</sup> William Miller to William Royer (22 November 1976), Box 4852, SUPSA.

the park, especially those who attended with their parents and in turn later brought their own children, have held a strong emotional connection to the memory of a place tied closely to their own childhood experiences. In addition to the links of family and childhood memory was that of community. Many former visitors went to Searsville Lake Park on family picnics, school picnics and, later, company picnics. Birthday parties of friends and classmates were followed by high school graduation parties, which were followed in turn by university parties. Photographer/artist Robert Buelteman, who grew up in Woodside, enjoyed coming to Searsville Lake Park with his family during the 1950s. In 2009 he took part in a hike on Jasper Ridge and “was flooded with memories, and a warm sense of coming home.”<sup>266</sup> His photographs of Jasper Ridge are a physical expression of a fourth emotional connection, the connection to nature. This most vital connection is one that is still experienced today by those members of the local community fortunate enough to qualify for Jasper Ridge’s highly popular docent program.<sup>267</sup> It is no wonder that, with the often overlapping opportunities for former visitors to connect through childhood memory, family, community or nature, emotions in the local community still run high even today over the closure of Searsville Lake Park.

#### Conclusion (Evaluation)

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<sup>266</sup> Robert Buelteman, “Chasing the Light: Morning at Jasper Ridge,” unpublished notes of presentation

<sup>267</sup> I talked to several docents in the course of my research and they invariably cited both the connection to nature and the connection to the staff at Jasper Ridge as reasons why their volunteer work at the preserve was a richly rewarding aspect of their lives.

