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BREACH OF TRUST - Essay entry for the 1997 Santa Clara County Historical
Essay Contest.

This is a description of how the historic building known as The Trianon
located on the DeAnza campus was saved from demolition. It is a personal
account which only Mary S. Levine could write. Thus there can be no
formal Table of Contents.

There was only a brief time between learning of the contest and receiving
the statement of information to the April 25, 1997 deadline date. There
was neither time nor funding to retrieve the personal files now in storage.
If this entry is judged as the first place winner, the prize will fund
hiring assistance to access the stored files. Records, reports, news articles
etc. which are adjunct to this "inside" story can be added.

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BREACH OF TRUST

AN HISTORICAL ESSAY RELATING HOW THE TRIANON WAS SAVED

Shocking! Unbelievable! The anger and dismay I was expressing drenched all defenses at the time the just delivered Palo Alto Times shook in my hands, already weakened by a recent surgical trauma. It was the evening of the first day following discharge from Stanford Hospital. It was the first newspaper I had seen in ages. It, certainly, was the antithesis of what I had been expecting to see. It was accepted that convalescence would include a minimally protective cocoon from which I could struggle to recover physical strength. I was not expecting what I saw.

The headline roared up at me as my eyes scanned the very large picture which stretched from one side of the page to the other. "Trianon Demolition Contract Let!", it said. My head which had been proudly raised in a gesture of victory over weakness, was poised then to enjoy a spot of reading. Now, it fell heavily back upon the stack of pillows behind me in utter defeat. Memories flooded forward in my thoughts as if a tape were playing back old conversations. First, there was the meeting of the Foothill College District Board of Trustees wherein it had been clearly and unequivocally agreed to the request of Mr. Euphrat to preserve the historic structures on the estate he had so generously made available for the site of DeAnza College. Furthermore, there was unanimous consent to use the property's mansion as an art museum, naming it in the memory of Mr. Euphrat's late wife. It was a happy evening. All were delighted with this arrangement as they previously had been with the unique arrangement to purchase the estate.

Naturally, it follows that you will ask me to fill you in on the background of that agreement. Indeed, it is important to understand that background.

Many years ago, two proposals, in intervals, had been presented to the voters for the creation of a Junior College District in the northern region of the Santa Clara Valley. Both had been soundly defeated, leaving the area between the San Mateo County boundary and the City of San Jose with no publicly funded Junior College District. All of that changed when a new ballot offering was proposed. I recall the tremendous effort I mounted as an individual citizen to get that measure passed. By residing in Eagle Rock, I had become familiar with Pasadena's Junior College and as a member of the education profession was struck with the superiority of California's system of higher education over what the public supported in the East where I had attended school. This third try was successful and the Foothill Junior College District (later to be known as the Foothill-DeAnza Community College District) became a reality.

I felt satisfaction in playing a part in the establishment of a splendid educational opportunity for all and I smiled at my three little children and felt pleased for all children. Because I had conducted the Junior College study for the Palo Alto League of Women Voters, it was possible for the League to formally support the ballot measure creating the district. After the election, I agreed to serve as the League's Observer for the newly appointed Interim Board of Trustees. It became clear at the deliberations during the meetings of the Interim Board, that the strength of the outstanding opportunity offered through a totally new district was not being reflected. This was not the vision which the voters had approved.

Prior to the election of a permanent Board of Trustees, Nathan Finch, legal counsel for the Hewlett-Packard Co., and an appointee to the Interim Board, let it be known that he would not run for the Permanent Board. The other four members of the Interim Board announced their candidacies. News of the "open" seat drew others into the race. I was bombarded with urgings to run to bear the banner extolling excellence over mediocrity within a clear, bold vision.

There was no question in my mind that this was not the time for me to take on such a grave responsibility. My husband was opposed. And so it was that one bright and chilly Sunday, a delegation of civic leaders called at our home to convince my husband that I was the best person for the job. When he declared, "Of course, she'll run", I was startled, then furious. He had committed me without even quietly discussing the decision with me. I was trapped between knowing that I really was the best person for the job and my not being able to make the final decision myself. There was no such thing as "women's lib" in those days. I acquiesced, becoming the ninth candidate for the five positions and the only woman in the field. The callers pledged their support.

Deciding that I was in the election to win, I organized the campaign effort as I had the support for the creation of the District. Although a complete novice in politics, I sought knowledge from others. Being joined by these talented people was an enormous confidence boost. There were no paid staff people, but loads of volunteers. I organized and reorganized as I learned on the job. Any group, anywhere in the district could count on me as a speaker. Sometimes I made five or six speeches a day and I found the interaction with the citizenry both interesting and challenging. It was delightful to see the exuberance they felt for the vision I presented. Until the polls closed on election night I continued to make phone calls to get out the vote, feeling obliged to go down to the wire trying. "Aren't you going to stay up to hear the returns?", my husband asked as I bid him good night. "I think I have won a place on the Board", I responded and wearily wondered off to bed. It was about midnight when my husband shook me awake. "You won!, You won!", he shouted. I sputtered and dooped back into the sleep of the physically spent. He shook me again, "But, you came in #1. The top of the pack!" I remember laughing. Three of the remaining four Interim Board members were elected and one additional member from the other candidates. I was appointed to serve out the balance of Nate Finch's term on the Interim Board and was sworn in July 1 as a permanent Trustee.

As a member of the Original Board of Trustees, who had campaigned on a platform of master planning, I pressed hard for data before addressing the matter of site selection for the new district. A study had just been completed by the De'Leau Cather organization for population projections, transportation arteries etc.. Without much additional cost, they prepared data for the Foothill District which clearly indicated the eventual need for two or possibly three campuses, within the district's boundaries which encompassed the cities of Sunnyvale, Mountain View, Palo Alto, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and Stanford University. First the property for Foothill College was secured and the building begun. Then, the property for the DeAnza campus was explored.

Under the able leadership of Dr. Calvin Flint, Superintendent of the Foothill District, and the generosity of Mr. Euphrat, owner of the Cupertino property sought for DeAnza College, a first-in-the-state arrangement was reached to purchase the Euphrat estate. Mr. Euphrat agreed to a variation on the concept of an installment purchase. The lease purchase was not permitted under the existing law because one school board was not empowered to encumber a later board for future capital expenditures. Voter approved bonds were permitted, but the District had just floated a \$10,400,000 bond for the Foothill campus. Another solution had to be found. The agreement Mr. Euphrat offered was to sell one parcel at a time to the Foothill District while he held the balance of the property until all parcels were purchased. The state approved this new kind of site purchase which had tax benefits for the seller and site benefits for the district. At the time Mr. Euphrat relinquished his estate to house the DeAnza College campus, he requested that the mansion on the property be kept in tact to become the college's art gallery which would be named for his wife. Mr. Euphrat said he would donate the mansions furnishings including lovely oriental rugs. This mansion with its long history was known as, "The Trianon". This Cupertino mansion had, indeed, been designed in the style of Marie Antoinette's summer palace, Le Petit Trianon. These understandings could not be in hard written contract form due to the unique manner of the property's purchase. However, I never doubted that as a Trustee, I had given my word that

this is what we would do and felt honor bound to do so. How then could this wild news story in the Palo Alto Times be true? Unbelievable! Shocking! I felt that my very integrity had been violated.

By the time the design for the DeAnza campus was completed and construction had begun, I had retired from the Board, choosing not to run for re-election. The Trianon was moved from its original location to make room for the large auditorium later named the Flint Center. The royal mansion resided on stilts behind the library. Its beautiful furnishings were in storage and state funds were being sought to establish it as the Euphrat art gallery. What had happened? How could I read that, "Demolition Contract Let"?

I reached Cal by phone. Cal, Dr. Calvin Flint, Superintendent of Foothill District, then Chancellor of the Foothill-DeAnza Community College District, had been a history major. I knew he had been positive about the preservation of the mansion, and had so stated to Mr. Euphrat. I opened our phone exchange with, "Have you seen tonight's Times? Is it true?" Cal assured me that it was explaining that the state funds were approved for a completely new art gallery and the art faculty was more interested in a modern building for modern art. If a new structure were built, the District would relinquish The Trianon. I did not see why the District could not keep The Trianon, anyway. Cal went on to say that the Board had advertised to find out if anyone in the community were interested in saving the mansion. Only three people came forward and the Board had not concluded any arrangement so decided to demolish the building. I was indignant. "I was not informed", I declared. Besides, we gave our word to Mr. Euphrat that it would be preserved. How could those original Trustees still serving on the Board support this demolition? They had given their word as I had done. "Well", Cal said, "The District has thirty days during which they can withdraw the contract, do you want to have that thirty days to see what can be done?". I agreed and Cal said he would not take immediate action on the contract to demolish. Further, he would give me the names of the three people who had come forward and tell me how to reach them. I sank back into the bed, physically exhausted and spiritually drained.

When Lorraine, Dr. Flint's secretary, called me the next day, she began with, "I hear you are really upset by the Board's reniging on the Euphrat promise to keep the Trianon". She chuckled as she spoke. "Yes", I responded, and "I do hope they will reconsider". She dutifully gave me the three names with their addresses and phone numbers. By phone, I quickly learned that one had no real interest and had contacted the District out of sheer curiosity. I arranged for the other two to meet with me. One was an investor who thought he might move the building to a piece of property he owned and the third was president of the Cupertino Historical Society, Mr. Louis Stöcklmeir. His ranch was not far from the DeAnza campus site and his family had been pioneers in the region. He was a Renaissance Man, a classical scholar who was retired from a successful business career. He told me that he had been keenly disappointed when he could not rally enough support to save The Trianon and had to give up. To my delight, he pledged his support.

At the next meeting of the Board of Trustees, I was well enough to stand before them and plead for an extension of time. I reviewed the pledges made to Mr. Euphrat who had more than kept his pledges to the District. I pointed out that The Trianon was to DeAnza what the Mission was to Santa Clara University. I reminded them that people from our communities spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to visit historic buildings in Europe and The Trianon was the "acre of diamonds" in our own backyard. Furthermore, a demolition contract would always be obtained, but destroying an historic building was quite final. With Cal Flint's recommendation, the time extension was granted.

I grew up in a town where the Historical Society was a major activist group of considerable clout, so I was surprised when the ladies from the Palo Alto Historical Society rejected recommending their group's support and participation.

I decided to contact someone who had been successful in an historic preservation project, so was delighted when "The Cable Car Lady" agreed to talk with me. She invited me to tea in her lovely home at the top of a close-in San Francisco hill. In her living room, gazing at the breathtaking view below, she told me how very difficult it would be to save The Trianon. She recounted how she had been thwarted, castigated, denied access to critical people, etc..She agreed that my idea to set up a non-profit foundation was advisable and pledged her assistance.

Through personal contacts in the San Francisco French community, I was able to meet with the French Consul just prior to his return to Paris to attend his daughter while she was enduring surgery for a brain tumor. The Consul was an impressive gentleman, displaying not only gracious composure under stress, but genuinely attentive to my presentation of The Trianon's story. He generously offered to secure the famous French pianist, Pierre Entremont for a benefit concert. What a splendid opening for our fund raising! He put our Board to shame.

Peter Hom, a local attorney, drew up the papers creating The Trianon Foundation on a pro bono basis. At my next presentation to the Board, I got an agreement to have the Trianon structure transferred to this new foundation for a token fee. Thus the state funding was secured for the District so that the new art gallery could be constructed and momentarily, The Trianon was safe.

As the months progressed, our ranks expanded. Dr. Walter Warren, a DeAnza faculty member suggested we establish a California History Center to be housed in the mansion upon the completion of its restoration. Louis Stockmeir undertook the complicated task of securing a place for The Trianon on the State and National Registries of Historic Places. Despite his physical limitations, Louis would accommodate me by coming to my house for meetings or holding them at his Palo Alto office. He treated my family to enthralling stories which he generously shared. Through a professor friend at Cal Berkeley, he met Ishi. The professor had taught Ishi to speak English and Louis grieved for the loss of Ishi's tribe as they were hounded to death by hostile hunters. As a boy, Louis experienced the 1906 earthquake and recounted seeing a wide fissure open up across the length of one of the field's on the ranch. He told how he had bagged quail and sold them to a local restaurant to earn pin money as a boy. Telling us of his days as an attache to General Pershing in WWI gave my youngsters a keen sense of how to reach back into history through the reality of someone who was there.

Meanwhile, my husband was developing a heart problem with more and more severe angina. I had to miss the Entremont concert due to his becoming so ill, but we knew we were making progress albeit slowly. The District had seen Dr. Flint retire due to prostate cancer and deeply saddened two years later when he died. It was a blow to The Trianon effort when the Board authorized the sale of Mr. Euphrat's Trianon furnishings to save the storage costs. Although Bill Cutler who was in charge of the Districts business affairs was on the Board of The Trianon Foundation, he said nothing to the rest of us until after the auction was completed and these antiques were scattered to buyers all over the Bay Area without recording the names and phone numbers of the buyers. We obtained an inventory of the items sold, but recovery was impossible. A few people whom we found out about were quite willing to consider returning the items, but the first professional director of the History Center failed to act. This was not only a permanent loss to The Trianon, but a breach of faith with Mr. Euphrat. That gentleman had told me that he had long before lost faith in Foothill and didn't believe we could succeed because there were people who wanted to scuttel the project.

The fund raising continued including an enormous effort to submit a request for a grant from a private foundation. I had been assured of a \$5,000 initial grant with a following \$50,000 if we proved ourselves as a serious effort. The staggering amount of paper work was completed just before the deadline and I drove to San Francisco to hand deliver it. Between the time I left Palo Alto and the time I reached my destination in the city, a call was made. Someone in the District had talked to someone on the granting foundation's Board and I was not supposed to find out about it. The gross undercutting of the preservation project by the person in the District so upset some people in San Francisco, that I learned why their commitment to me was not funded. Shocking! Unbelievable!

It is interesting to note that President Kennedy had shephearded through the Congress, legislation requiring all countries to inventory all of their historic buildings and sites, Less than one third on our County's list survive.

Another non profit foundation had been set up for the college district. One afternoon, a subordinate administrator came to my home and in a very abusive manner told me to stop cyphoning off community contributions from the college by fundraising for The Trianon Foundation. I was appalled. I had never been contacted by the two professional fundraisers hired by the District, nor had I ever contacted them. Confronted with a choice, I decided not to respond with a frontal assault as this would be disruptive to the community, so I quietly continued organization efforts, secured items for the Trianon Museum and waited. The matter was resolved when the two fundraisers quit after having raised only enough to pay their own salaries. The administrator who had given me the cease and desist order was eased out.

Dr. Warren had begun publishing a series of books on local history which advanced the recognition of the Trianon Foundation and brought academic credit to the fledgling History Center. The Trianon was now scheduled to be placed on a piece of land adjacent to where it had been parked. We had plans to dig a basement on that parcel, giving the History Center work space without changing the historic integrity of the building. It would enjoy a spot next to the other historic buildings which had housed the estate's stables and would front on the ballistrade which delineated the sunken fountain area in front of the Flint Center, thus remaining close to its original location.

What was so consistently worrisome was why those who did not want to help would want to actively work against it. You can imagine my distress when I received a call from the DeAnza library saying a truck had been observed deliberately raming The Trianon. When I reached the scene, I saw the damage was considerable but not fatal. The wonderful craftsmen of old built things to last so once more The Trianon survived.

Dr. John Dunn had succeeded Dr. Flint as Chancellor of the District and I was pleased to receive a call from him one day. He said he was deeply concerned about The Trianon and thought the matter of the District's responsibility should be resolved, once and for all. He was scheduling a meeting to see what could be done. Representatives of the Board, Administration were there

and Mr. Stocklmeir, Dr. Warren and I were invited to represent The Trianon. We talked over lunch and into the afternoon. Dr. Dunn adjourned the session concluding that he would have to research the District's documents to make a determination if the District had an obligation to preserve the historic building known as The Trianon as it had the other historic buildings on the DeAnza campus. As we left, Dr. Robert Smithwick, who had served with me on the Board of Trustees and who remained a Trustee up to then, came over to me greeting me affectionately, laughingly said, "Well, Mary, if we decide against you what will you do?". I replied, "Well, Bob, first I would cry and then I would get very angry". Bob knew as well as I that the commitments had been made to Mr. Euphrat and I never understood why he had not remained true to them.

The matter was on the agenda for the next Trustees meeting. All of the interested parties were represented. This was, indeed, a vital historic moment. Dr. Dunn reviewed the matter briefly and then told of his search of District documents. The conclusion he had reached was that there was no doubt left in his mind that the District had a responsibility to preserve The Trianon. While circumstances had precluded the developing of an iron clad contract, and whereas the District could fight the responsibility on legal grounds, he felt strongly that on all other ethical grounds the District should keep its commitment to preserve this historic structure as it had the others on the campus. I had kept the faith entrusted to me and now the District was to honor its at last.

DeAnza College had been waiting to develop the land on which the Trianon was parked temporarily. It was destined to become a much needed faculty parking lot. There was a reserve account to fund the construction work but before it could begin, The Trianon had to be moved to the next parcel of land. There was no time to complete the plan to dig a basement so regreably that work space was sacrificed. Had we given up on the commitment to save The Trianon, the District would have had all of the money in the reserve account. Was it this money which had given rise to the attempts at sabotage?

Sadly Mr. Euphrat never lived to see this part of Cupertino history preserved. The last time I talked to him, he was very depressed. Mr. Euphrat could have developed his property and made a great deal of money, but he sincerely believed a better legacy would be created by providing a home for the college which has since served thousands of students. He would have enjoyed being there the day they moved the mansion. That was believable! It was cold, the huge metal rollers were placed beneath the building and all the ropes and levers were hooked up. It was a fascinating engineering venture, a rare opportunity to behold, but where were the engineering students? I asked if someone could make the rounds of the classrooms in engineering and math in particular to alert them of this happening in case the professional staff had missed the formal announcement when it was published. No one came from the college buildings. Unbelievable! What had become of intellectual curiosity? Then my attention was diverted by motions on the pathway just above the construction site. Like the Pied Piper of old, a small stream of children could be seen dutifully following their teacher. It proved to be a fourth grade class whose dedicated teacher had somehow walked them to campus and herded them into view. They were out of harm's way but well within sight of the house as it rolled off its supports and on to the newly constructed permanent foundation. Probably for the only times in their lives they could see such an exciting sight. What they will be able to tell their grandchildren! Perhaps one of them would even become a creative engineer, herself.

Officialdom was present, ceremonies were completed, and photos recorded the event. There she stood, the mansion took on a noble glow as the children paraded out of our view. Maybe most people were not paying attention that day but then, one day, when my car was in the shop a cab picked me up and the driver said, "I know who you are. We call you the Trianon Lady."

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