

Board Members Draw Upon Personal Experience

Vinnie Biberdorf and George Limbach have each done their share of nonprofit work, but personal encounters with Pilgrim Haven led them to share their vast experience with the community's advisory board.

For Biberdorf, her first contact with Pilgrim Haven came while she considered it as a living option for her mother. Though her mother ended up at a different community, Biberdorf's experience with Pilgrim Haven convinced her it was a "worthy and valuable place."

Among her board duties is working on behalf of residents and employees in Pilgrim Haven's Health Center, the skilled nursing area that she admits took a little education on her part.



Vinnie Biberdorf

"My experience on the board has been a very steep learning curve getting to know about CCRCs [continuing care retirement communities] and the complexity of an organization such as Pilgrim Haven," she says.

Learning curve aside, Biberdorf already possessed a wealth of professional

knowledge from her career at the Red Cross. Since retiring in 1992, she has volunteered in disaster areas such as New York City after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and along the Gulf Coast after Hurricane Katrina.

With an eye toward planning for worst-case scenarios, she has already studied Pilgrim Haven's disaster preparedness strategy and says, "I am committed to helping the community plan its own pandemic drill."

When not volunteering or spending time with her husband and two daughters, the busy 76-year-old can be found hiking and biking everywhere from the Bay Area to the mountains of Spain and Portugal.

Board member George Limbach shares a more direct connection with Pilgrim Haven, as his mother was a resident from the mid-1990s until her death in 2001 at 102 years old.

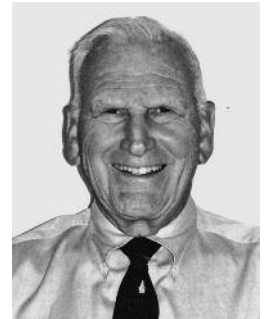
Limbach fondly remembers how he and his sister would meet their mother each morning before she ate breakfast. "It was just an ideal situation for us. She had always said she did not want to burden her kids with having to live with them, and Pilgrim Haven just worked out marvelously," he says.

"I felt my experience at Pilgrim Haven would be helpful to me as part of the board," he adds. "I focus on and appreciate the community and the experience it can offer to Los Altos residents."

Limbach is also an active volunteer for Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the Los Altos Community Foundation.

A semiretired patent and trademark attorney, he enjoys spending time with his wife, four children, and seven grandchildren, particularly during winter ski trips to Vail, Colo., and to a family cabin in Pinecrest, Calif.

He sees his role on the board as furthering Pilgrim Haven's modernization and its goal of adding memory support care.



George Limbach

"Having memory support on campus is extremely meaningful to couples at Pilgrim Haven in which one spouse develops memory problems," he says. "That spouse will be able to move into memory support without being transferred to a community outside Los Altos, where the other spouse may not see them very often."

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Los Altos Landmark

Located in the quaint village of Los Altos, Calif., Pilgrim Haven has been a local landmark for 60 years. The continuing care retirement community offers comfort, security, and a quality lifestyle on an idyllic garden campus.

For more information about Pilgrim Haven, contact Marilyn Sell at 650-948-8384, ext. 103.

Pilgrim Haven Retirement Community
373 Pine Lane, Los Altos, CA 94022
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Pilgrim Haven Board of Advisors

- | | |
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American Baptist Homes of the West

Founded in 1949, Pilgrim Haven was the first retirement community for American Baptist Homes of the West, one of the most respected senior living providers in the U.S. A nonprofit, nonsectarian organization headquartered in Pleasanton, ABHOW operates 11 continuing care retirement communities – including Pilgrim Haven and The Terraces of Los Gatos – and 20 affordable housing communities in four Western states.

insight

Perspective

From the Executive Director

When Pilgrim Haven opened in 1949, it was one of the few residences in North Los Altos. Orchards surrounded us. And yet Pilgrim Haven understood then that it was connected to a wider community. That understanding only deepened as neighbors arrived and Los Altos transitioned from an agricultural town to a suburban city.

Sixty years later, we're celebrating that wider connection. Our mission is to serve local seniors and their families. We do this best by providing the peace of mind and security that comes with continuing care.

During the years, as resident needs and expectations shifted, we have sought to respond with appropriate services, improved accommodations, and vital programs. Our investment in these areas makes Pilgrim Haven an even greater asset to Los Altos.

From the very beginning, our staff and residents have been active leaders and volunteers in various civic organizations. We've invited other groups to use our campus. We've sponsored events that are open to everyone. We've shared our expertise beyond Pilgrim Haven.

All of this illustrates our commitment to social accountability and points to one thing that hasn't changed in 60 years: Our mission is to be a good neighbor. After all, as longtime resident Esther Mort says, "We are residents of Los Altos."

— Karen Jenney

Community Remembers 60 Years of History

Esther Mort has a great view on life at Pilgrim Haven. Stepping out of her apartment into a hallway of neighbors, she says it's like talking over the fence. "All you have to do is open your door and you have people," she says.

Mort's perspective is a long one, too. She moved to the retirement community Nov. 15, 1980, days after the election of President Ronald Reagan and just past the midpoint of Pilgrim Haven's 60-year history.

Mort, who was then 69, had retired from the University of California, San Francisco, and was living alone in San Jose. Her husband had died five years earlier. When friends learned she was moving to Pilgrim Haven, they asked, "What's wrong with you?"

"There's nothing wrong with me," Mort remembers responding. "I just want more company." She has found plenty of company and, like other residents and employees throughout the community's history, has made many memories.



Esther Mort has lived at Pilgrim Haven since 1980.

Pilgrim Haven opened in 1949 in a mansion surrounded by orchards. Built in 1910, the original Wisteria Manor was a private residence until it was converted to a "rest home for the elderly" in 1939.

American Baptist leaders were dreaming of a community for retired ministers and missionaries when they came upon a for-sale ad for the Los

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Muriel Perkins (left) chats with longtime resident Esther Mort.

Altos property and immediately saw its potential. Soon after, the Northern California Baptist Convention purchased the property, secured a license, and dedicated Pilgrim Haven on Oct. 2, 1949.

The Rev. Harold E. Bottemiller, then a convention staff member, presided over the community's fund raising and its acquisition and development of adjacent parcels to meet a growing demand for quality retirement living. In 1952, Bottemiller became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Sunnyvale, but he returned to Pilgrim Haven six years later as its administrator.

The community continued to expand in the 1960s as Pilgrim Haven grew into its vision of a beautiful campus of apartments built around courts and fountains, all connected by walkways and lush gardens.

Becky Adams was hired in 1963 as the community's dietitian. She recalls Bottemiller's pride in her hiring – two years before Medicare started and mandated that all nursing homes have dietitians.

Such pioneering steps marked the community from the very beginning. Pilgrim Haven was one of the nation's first continuing care retirement communities. That model inspired other campuses in the organization

that eventually evolved into American Baptist Homes of the West.

Wisteria Manor was rebuilt in 1971, and other improvements were made to the campus. But even amid the growth, Pilgrim Haven maintained a family feel. Adams remembers residents canning apricots from nearby orchards and celebrating an annual Christmas breakfast with employees.

Adams' own parents moved to Pilgrim Haven in the late 1960s. One of her sons worked in the maintenance department during summers off from college, and her daughter-in-law volunteered at the community while in high school. "I felt part of a family, and it was part of my family," Adams says.

Dr. Richard E. Ice succeeded Bottemiller as ABHOW's president and CEO in 1972. By that time, retired ministers and missionaries were in the minority at Pilgrim Haven. New residents expected larger accommodations and expanded services. The community acquired additional adjacent lots – reaching its present size of six acres – and constructed three new buildings that opened during the 1990s.

Ice often visited Pilgrim Haven during those years. And when Bottemiller and his wife, Bea, returned to the campus as residents, Ice made sure he saw the founder. "I always stopped in and spent time with Harold and Bea," he says.

Esther Mort probably has a record to back up Ice. As manager of Pilgrim Haven's Heritage Room, Mort keeps tabs on the community's comings and goings. She files news clippings, photographs, and special documents on Pilgrim Haven's history – a task that seems especially appropriate for one who has called this place home for nearly 29 years.

"It's wonderful," Mort says of her Pilgrim Haven life. "I'd do it all over again."

Resident Broke Ground On the Basketball Court

As an athletic-minded girl growing up in Los Angeles, Markey Eakland had the good fortune of having the world's best athletes visit her city for the 1932 Olympics. But 77 years later, what she recalls most vividly isn't a triumph but an injustice.

Eakland, now 89 and a longtime resident of Pilgrim Haven, saw the great Babe Didrikson break the world record in the high jump. But Didrikson's gold medal was reduced to silver because a judge ruled that her head cleared the bar before the rest of her body. No judge objected to her unorthodox style in preliminary jumps, and the rule she violated no longer exists.

The incident underscored the precarious status of women athletes during much of the 20th century. When it came to athletic acceptance and success, attitudes and traditions made it hard for women to clear the bar.

Fortunately for Eakland, her father saw no such limits. He had two daughters and no sons. He assumed all young people should be interested in sports. So he regularly took his daughter Martha (Markey was an early nickname that stuck) to baseball games, saw her develop as a golfer and tennis player, and watched her flourish as a guard for the Los Angeles High School basketball team despite her 5-foot-4-inch stature.

"I was athletic. I'm short, but I had



Markey Eakland shows her team photo in the Stanford yearbook.

quick hands and reflexes. I was a good guard," says Eakland, whose maiden name was Nordling.

That early athletic development put Eakland in a position to break down some of the history that limited women in sports. In 1941, while a student at Stanford University, she was among a group of intramural basketball players brought together to play the University of California, Berkeley.

The two schools had met informally for years at the San Francisco Armory (Stanford and Cal are credited with playing the first women's intercollegiate basketball game in 1896), but neither school had a varsity women's program in the 1940s. For that special game, the women's team met at Cal's Harmon Gym, a venue also visited by Stanford's All-American Hank

Luisetti, one of the pioneers of the jump shot who had recently led Stanford to a win over Cal.

"I could not believe I was playing basketball in the very gym where Hank Luisetti thrilled everyone with his one-handed jump shot," Eakland wrote in a 1996 essay. "It was so exciting to play an intercollegiate game."

The excitement was heightened with a Stanford win by the remarkable score of 4-3. "The baskets were higher than we were used to," Eakland says.

But the bar to women's intercollegiate competition, at least for one day, was lowered. It would be a generation before the federal law known as Title IX compelled schools to provide equal athletic opportunities to women, but Eakland was on the court when

that future had one of its first glimmers. Later, she would be a season ticket holder watching Stanford's women play a full intercollegiate schedule.

In the 1990s, Stanford recognized the early role of Eakland and other women athletes by awarding them an official varsity letter, the coveted Block S.

Eakland spent most of her life after college as a homemaker raising three sons and a daughter. She encouraged them to enjoy the outdoors and sports, but she didn't talk about her accomplishments.

Eakland's son Peter also attended Stanford and served as sports editor of the student newspaper. But growing up, he wasn't aware of his mom's athletic history. "She took me out and taught me to play golf. She ferried us to Little League games, but she didn't talk about what she did in college," he says. "I played basketball in high school and I never knew that she played at Stanford."

Eakland plays down her history even now, but she's glad to see the expansion of women's sports and she encourages all women – athletic or not – to pursue fitness.

"It's important that women take heed of what's going on. I don't want them to compete with men. That's strange. We're different," she says. "But I think it's very important to have a well-rounded life and lifestyle."

These days Eakland is her own coach, and a good one. She stays busy, but doesn't press her limits.

"I keep going. I walk a lot. I go to exercise [class] to help my balance. I don't want to live forever, but I do take care of myself," she says. "I'm pretty much a moderate in everything."

Except, perhaps, in athletic history.

Pilgrim Haven Makes It Easy And Enjoyable to Eat Healthy

Grandmother always said, "Eat your broccoli." So now that you're the grandparent, it might be time to see if you're following her advice.

Pilgrim Haven makes it easy, because food is prepared with both the taste buds and the well-being of residents in mind, says Director of Dining Services Jon Brychta.

The kitchen doesn't cook with salt, and frying is kept to a minimum. That doesn't stop chefs from using fresh, seasonal ingredients to offer a wide variety of delicious selections every day.



"Many of our residents have active lifestyles and enjoy walking, using the fitness center, and other forms of exercise. I think that helps them maintain a good diet," he adds. "One of the best ways to eat healthy is to follow their example."

Here are a few tips Brychta offers to get the best out of Pilgrim Haven's dining services:

Monitor intake. Pilgrim Haven features buffet-style service, which can sometimes lead to your eyes being bigger than your stomach. Focus on smaller portions and a balanced selection of foods that emphasize proteins, vegetables, fruits, and healthy grains, while de-emphasizing fried items, starches, and desserts. Also, be conscious of your diet outside the dining room.

Count calories. Watch what you eat by utilizing the nutritional analysis manual that's located in the Wisteria Manor lobby. The manual lists calories plus food value for entrees on the Pilgrim Haven menu. A part-time nutritionist can address special dietary needs.

Eat fresh. Pilgrim Haven offers a weekly farmers market on campus during the summer months where residents can buy fresh fruits for meals outside the dining room or between-meal snacks. Also, a number of supermarkets and other nearby stores offer fresh produce in the off-season.

Plan ahead. Pilgrim Haven's menus are printed well in advance, so if you're not fond of one or both of the two entrees on a given night and worry that you'd eat less healthy food to get full, the kitchen can provide alternatives. All it takes is a call to Dining Services a day in advance to request fresh fish, a chicken breast, or a hamburger.