

# Book recalls odd events in PA's past

BY DAVE PRICE  
Daily Post Editor

Local historian Matt Bowling, in his new book "Palo Alto Remembered: Stories from a City's Past," mixes momentous events with odd subjects you might not find in a traditional book about a community's history. He has chapters on the Beatles' stay at the Hotel Cabana, Greg Brown's murals of space aliens, the town's first adult movie theater and the history of dog catching.

For example:

- In 1924, the police chief hired a man called "Dick the Dogcatcher" (no last name given) to crack down on unlicensed dogs roaming the streets. Until then, the police had a "shoot on sight" policy for strays. But a woman on Middlefield Road took in as many strays as her home and husband would allow. That led to the city's first dog pound.

- In the first half of the 20th century, Palo Alto schools had a "circus holiday" each year because educators reasoned that "children's minds are not receptive to 'book learning' when the circus is in town," as one newspaper put it.

- On Sept. 1, 1965, the Beatles stayed at the Hotel Cabana, 4290 El Camino Real (now the Crowne Plaza Cabana) after a concert at the Cow Palace. Some 500 fans camped outside the hotel hoping to get a glimpse of the Fab Four. But band left the next morning through the back entrance while everyone was looking the other way.

## Police seize adult movies

Throughout the book, Bowling connects local events to what was happen-



**FROM THE PAST** — Above, a March 1941 parade celebrating the opening of the University Avenue underpass. At left, Artist Greg Brown paints a mural on a downtown building. Both photos are in the new book "Palo Alto Remembered: Stories from a City's Past."

ing on the national scene. For instance, in his discussion of the town's first porn theater, he writes about how the U.S. Supreme Court and cities across the country struggled in the 1970s to define what constituted obscenity, and what restrictions should be placed upon it.

Accompanying his discussion of this issue, Bowling printed a newspaper ad for "Deep Throat" and "The Devil in Miss Jones," which played at the Paris Theatre, 124 University Ave., where eTrade Financial is now located.

In September 1973, Palo Alto police, armed with a warrant, raided the Paris and seized its copy of "The Devil in Miss Jones." No arrests were made. The theater got another copy of the movie and three months later the cops were back to nab a copy of "Deep Throat," which allegedly violated the Palo Alto Municipal Code.

Bowling said one of the stories that surprised him the most was the angry 1967 recall election that pitted the town's business establishment against residentialists.

The catalyst was the construction of the Oregon Expressway, which residentialists bitterly opposed, seeing it as a freeway that detracted from the town's character. Bowling writes that the town was bitterly divided and council members would have gotten into a fistfight at one 1966 meeting if it hadn't been for the city manager at the time, George Morgan, an ex-marine, interposing himself between councilmen.

In the recall, four residentialist council members lost their jobs and the establishment controlled council until the early 1970s, when other residentialists won seats.

Bowling said his goals in writing the

book were to give a national context to Palo Alto events and cover things that aren't traditionally considered historical.

## Like a 100-year-old storyteller

"Sometimes history can become a list of dusty old names and dates," Bowling told the Post. "If I have succeeded with this book, it will feel more like a good 100-year-old storyteller telling you their memories of the city. I only wish I had been there myself."

Bowling's book will make its public debut on Sunday (May 6) from 2-4 p.m. at the Palo Alto Historical Association meeting at Lucie Stern Community Center, 1305 Middlefield Road.

The book (\$25 a copy) will be available at Sunday's meeting and will go on sale Monday at Books Inc., Bell's Books, Kepler's and The Village Stationers in Palo Alto.