



PHI BETA KAPPA

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION
THE GAMMA ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA
Association Chartered June 14, 1946

March 2022

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From the President



I am writing this missive prior to our Presidents' Weekend retreat at Asilomar, to be held 18 to 21 February. Although last year we didn't hold it due to COVID restrictions, this year it WILL be in person, with all attendees vaccinated, boosted, and masked. I look forward to meeting members who haven't previously attended, and to renewing friendships with "old-timers." I certainly hope that by February 2023, we can feel comfortable in larger group settings again.

Our First Vice-President for Programs, O'Neil Dillon, has planned the almost-monthly meet-ups that PBKNCA has offered throughout the years. If you want to attend one of these events, please check our website, <https://www.pbknca.com/page-18433>, for information about them and directions for signing up. Payments for events can be made securely on the website, or by check.

Planning all our events is a big job, so we have asked a few people to do one event each to take some of the burden off O'Neil. If you would be interested and willing to plan an event (with our help) please contact O'Neil at oneilsdillon@gmail.com.

We welcome Alex Casendino as our [Young Professionals section](#) leader, who has already had several very successful events for our members in the under-40 bracket. If this applies to you and you haven't received emails, or wish to be on the committee, contact Alex at alexander.casendino@gmail.com.

Perhaps you have an interest in serving the Association on another committee or as an officer. We are always looking for enthusiastic members! Duties are certainly not onerous, and one meets delightful people who usually become one's good friends. Contact me at mltg@aol.com.

I look forward to meeting you at one of our upcoming activities, either in person or virtually. Thank you for your continued support of Phi Beta Kappa Northern California Association.

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The Young Professionals of PBKNCA



The [Young Professionals](#) of PBKNCA are off to a strong start from Fall 2021 into 2022. On Saturday, November 13th, 2021 the YPs met for a tasty meal at Oren's Hummus, sharing abundant falafel plates and delicious hummus. Then, following a brief break in event planning with the rise in COVID-19 cases, young PBKs from around the SF Bay Area enjoyed a relaxing stroll through Lovers' Lane in the Presidio on Saturday, February 5th. The group enjoyed stunning weather and finished their afternoon hike at the Palace of Fine Arts. In February, the YP Committee also met with members of the national PBK organization to establish links with other PBK YP chairs and brainstorm additional events. Moving forward, the YP Committee is planning additional social and professional activities for members in 2022, organizing virtual networking events for members across Northern California, and elevating the YP PBKNCA online presence and the promotion of future events.

[Alex Casendino](#)

Upcoming Events

Currently, the Phi Beta Kappa Northern California Association requires proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 for attendance at any and all events. This may change as the Covid situation changes. Watch the website <https://pbknca.com> and your email. Full vaccination is defined as completion of the two-dose regimen of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or one dose of Johnson & Johnson vaccine, plus a booster, administered two weeks or more in advance of the event. A well-fitting N95 or KF94 mask for all indoor activities except while eating is also required. We do not recommend the KN95 masks, as there are many fakes on the market. **Cloth masks, bandanas, or neck gaiters are not acceptable. Face masks must completely cover the nose and mouth.** A well fitted mask has no gaps between the face and mask, such as above the nose or at the sides. <https://pbknca.com/Attendee-Safety>

Full event information, and means of credit card payment or a form with which to send a check are available on our website pbknca.com/page-18433.

If you won't be able to make an event, contact O'Neil Dillon at oneilsdillon@gmail.com ASAP, or if it is the day of the event, call him at 510-207-8761 as there may be others on the waiting list who will then be able to take your place.

No-shows do NOT receive a refund!

Pt. Reyes wildflower walk. Date change from April 23 to Saturday, April 9, 10:00 AM



The spring wildflower bloom at Chimney Rock is one you do not want to miss. This is a 1.75-mile round trip on a mostly level trail. Besides wildflowers, you can see elephant seals, other wildlife, the old Coast Guard lifeboat station and some of the most phenomenal views of our ocean and coastline. You can add on a visit to the historic Pt. Reyes Lighthouse at the other end of the peninsula as well. This is an opportunity to spend the weekend in the area and enjoy other aspects of the National Seashore. Fee \$10. Only a few spaces left, but you can go on the waiting list. Meet at Parking lot at Chimney Rock trailhead.

What to bring: Binoculars, lunch, wildflower identification books, hiking and sun gear. <https://pbknca.com/event-4653447>

Annual Meeting and Awards, May 2022

Scholars and Teachers will be honored in May, 2022. We will probably ask awardees to make videos of their “Annual Meeting Talk”. The video will then be available on our website: Go to pbknca.com/, then use the menu bar at the top, click on Scholarship or Teaching. There will be links by most awardees that go to the YouTube videos. <https://pbknca.com/Scholarship> and or <https://pbknca.com/Teaching>

Wayne Thiebaud, retrospective exhibit, Crocker Museum of Art, Sacramento, private guided tour. Wednesday, June 8, 10:00 AM



Wayne Thiebaud was among the most noted artists of our time, elevating ordinary objects to fine art. His paintings of cakes, pies and ice cream cones graced the covers of *The New Yorker* for a half-century. However, his body of work was far more expansive, including landscapes of Yosemite and streetscapes of San Francisco. He was a professor of art at the University of California, Davis (he practically founded the department), and he lived in Sacramento.

The Crocker presented an exhibit marking his 100th birthday in 2020, but it was on display for only a short time because of the pandemic. He died on Christmas Day 2021, and so the Crocker is reprising the exhibit as *Wayne Thiebaud: A Celebration*. The exhibition represents the artist’s work in all media, with pieces drawn from the Crocker’s holdings and from the collection of the Thiebaud family — many of which had never been shown publicly until this show. <https://pbknca.com/event-4700152> Fee \$25. We will have two docents guiding us in groups of ten. Your admission also allows you to explore the extraordinary Crocker Museum of Art at your leisure.

Date: Wednesday June 8 at 10:00 AM. **Limit:** 20 **Fee:** Crocker Members \$15, Non Members \$25

Location: Crocker Art Museum, 216 O Street, Sacramento (corner of 3rd and O streets, downtown Sacramento near I-5 and Highway 50 exits). **Parking:** Lots and metered spaces are nearby. **Meet at the Crocker Museum ticket desk.** **Accessibility:** The Crocker Art Museum is fully ADA accessible and barrier-free.

PBKNCA on-site contact: Jim & Lori Richardson, who will meet you inside the museum

For more information about the exhibit:

<https://www.crockerart.org/exhibitions/wayne-thiebaud>

**Everything You Wanted to Know About Bees (maybe) and More! Novato, CA
Saturday, July 16, 1:00 PM**



Join us for a visit to PBKNCA member Jean James' small apiary in Novato at 1 PM on Saturday, July 9. We will talk about the lives of bees, demonstrate hive components and hive setup, view different kinds of wax, open an actual hive (participants will stay at a safe distance), talk about methods of honey extraction, and taste some actual honey from Jean's hives. Participation limited to 10 (limited to member and one guest). Fee \$10
<https://pbknca.com/event-4701949>

35th Annual Asilomar Conference Feb 17–20, 2023



More details are posted about this wonderful event online at <https://pbknca.com/event-4695002>. It is not too early to sign up now for 2023!

Deirdre Frontczak, Asilomar Chair

A review of the 2022 talks. Full details <https://pbknca.com/event-4418637>



Friday night – Nancy Abrams, Crone-at-Large :) *Cosmic Cabaret! Songs of Social Justice, Satire, and Myth.* take a look/listen [here](#)

Nancy Ellen Abrams got started singing cabaret with a troupe in Italy. She came back to the USA, earned a law degree, spent another year in Italy on a Fulbright working on international environmental cooperation, worked on the staff of the US Congress on science and the future, lectured at the University of California, Santa Cruz, co-authored two books with her astrophysicist husband [Joel Primack \(speaker, Saturday morning\)](#) on the meaning of the dark matter/dark energy picture of the universe for our lives and societies, and has authored a third book that radically rethinks the concept of God for a scientific future. Through it all she has continued to write and perform topical songs, most often as entertainment for conferences. Most songs you will hear tonight were inspired by the opportunity to perform at a conference. Sometimes a bigger picture can emerge from a 5-minute song than from a day of lectures.



Saturday morning – Joel Primack (PBK Williams College; *summa cum laude*), Distinguished Professor of Physics Emeritus, UC Santa Cruz: *State of the Universe Report*

This lecture will discuss the current understanding and some recent challenges regarding cosmology, galaxies, and planets. There is persuasive cosmological evidence that most of the density of the universe is invisible dark matter and dark energy, with atomic matter making up only about five percent of cosmic density. But the latest high-precision measurements of the expansion rate of the universe have revealed potential discrepancies that may require new physics.



Saturday Afternoon – Jonathan Lear (PBK UMass/Amherst), 2021 recipient of a PBKNCA graduate scholarship award (video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHkm_WsT24), Ph.D. Candidate in History: *Japan, West Germany, and the Global Atomic Age*

The Atomic Age typically evokes a certain set of images, events, and ideas: for instance, the mushroom cloud, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and deterrence theory. When the "peaceful uses" of atomic energy are brought into the discussion, we often view the early promises of nuclear power with a healthy dose of skepticism and sometimes simply as cold war propaganda. My talk shifts the focus of the Atomic Age to Japan and West Germany, two countries that shared recent experiences of fascism, total war, and catastrophic defeat. I will discuss how a range of historical actors— among them engineers, journalists, scientists, and managers— used the promise of the peaceful atom to repurpose their personal and professional lives and to conceive their nations anew after decades of social and political crisis. By focusing on how Japanese and West German elites conceptualized their commercial nuclear projects, we might come to a more global understanding of the Atomic Age that goes beyond the usual focus on the United States and the Soviet Union.



Saturday night – Judy Bicknell (PBK U. Oregon) and Neil Bicknell, Filmmakers: *Poetry, Power and the Artist's Influence in Society*

JFK: The Last Speech, the documentary, companion book and website, were created with the conviction that the messages and civic values of President Kennedy and Robert Frost speak to us today.

Those messages and those values can point a way for actions we can take to move us beyond our debilitating polarized politics to a "more hopeful, civilized and peaceful American future."

In honoring Robert Frost on that idyllic fall day in 1963, the President honored the arts and artists and those who speak truth to power. He challenged those who receive a great education to recognize their responsibility to sustain our democratic system, a responsibility that rises above that of others. His words that day remind us of the beauty, insight and expression of universal feelings in Frost's poetry and remind us of the qualities of a leader, who can inspire a nation to do great things and who can "stand up to bullies abroad..."

This presentation and the ensuing film are a call to action to rebuild our civic sphere – infused with "broad sympathy, understanding and compassion."



Sunday morning – Bruce Cain (PBK Bowdoin), Political Science, Stanford: California’s Extreme Weather Challenge: *A Battle on Two Fronts*

Extreme weather is battering California in multiple ways. Decades ago, climate scientists predicted that heat, drought, flooding, wildfires and sea level rise would become more extreme, but California is still not well prepared to deal with these problems. Decarbonization and extreme weather adaption are political as well as technical problems. Climate change denial is the obvious challenge at the moment, but NIMBYism, localism, governmental fracture, and the like also play a role. What can we do to be more effective in meeting the climate change challenge?



Sunday afternoon – Zeke Hausfather, PBK Grinnell, Climate Science, Berkeley / Director of Climate and Energy, The Breakthrough Institute. *The Magnitude of the Climate Challenge: Where we are, where we are headed and what’s needed to meet Paris Agreement goals*

A decade ago the world seemed on track for a particularly grim climate future. China was building a new coal plant every three days; global emissions were increasing at a rate of 3% per year and increased by 31% between 2001 and 2010. Scenarios where global carbon emissions tripled by the end of the 21st century, with coal use increasing sixfold, seemed plausible to many. Researchers argued that “business as usual” would likely lead to a world 4°C or 5°C above pre-industrial levels by 2100. Today, the world is a very different place. We are succeeding in making clean energy cheap, with solar power and battery storage costs falling 10-fold since 2009. Over the past two years, the world has produced more electricity from clean energy — solar, wind, hydro, and nuclear — than from coal.



Sunday night – Kristin Kusanovich, Theater and Dance, Santa Clara: *The Interdisciplinary tUrn: A New Invitational Model for Climate Crisis Awareness & Action in Higher Education*

The climate crisis – including environmental racism, ecological collapse, and runaway global warming, with their implications for all living beings – is upon us. So are political upheavals and social injustices of every sort. And the pace of events, their severity, their aggregate power to disrupt and take lives and livelihoods away is breathtaking.

Most people know this, and say they care. But of those, fewer than half are taking decisive action. Many educated people, including those with resources, energy and skills to spare, still do not create the time or space to discuss the climate crisis with those with whom they work, live, teach or lead – let alone get involved in influencing the outcome of our future history.



Monday morning – Sam Buttrey is an Associate Professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, where he teaches statistical computing and graphics. He holds a Ph.D. from U.C. Berkeley and a Bachelor’s degree from Princeton University, both in Statistics, and he serves on a committee funded by the National Science Foundation to produce a new generation of windows-based undergraduate statistics computer labs.

In December Dr. Buttrey, a native of Pacific Grove, took home the title and \$100,000 grand prize after facing off against fellow professors Ed Hashima and Alisa Hove for two days in the finals. Winning the Professors Tournament grants and a spot in the upcoming Tournament of Champions.

In December Dr. Buttrey, a native of Pacific Grove, took home the title and grand prize after facing off against fellow professors in two days of finals. Winning the Professors Tournament grants him a spot in the upcoming Tournament of Champions. After a brief introduction to operations research for the curious, Buttrey will describe the nature of trivia, the progression of trivia as an activity, and the attributes of trivia questions, borrowing heavily from Ken Jennings’s book “Brainiac.” Then he will describe his experiences getting to Jeopardy! what it was like being on the set, and what it was like preparing for, competing in, and winning the tournament.

The editor thanks Dr Larry Lerner for proofing this newsletter.

ΦBK Board, July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

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