

ONCE UPON A TIME IN NORTH PARK
Fun Facts about North Park from Evelyn Roy Kooperman
By Katherine Hon

More than 10 years ago, on October 26, 1995, Evelyn Roy Kooperman was the featured speaker at the final NPCA General Meeting for the year. Mrs. Kooperman is the author of several books and a board game on San Diego Trivia. The report of the meeting in the November 1995 NPCA Newsletter noted that she spoke to “an appreciative audience of some 35 people who not only listened to her entertaining historic anecdotes but joined in with examples of their own ‘trivia.’ All in all, it was a congenial and entertaining finale to the year’s meeting schedule.”

Mrs. Kooperman grew up as Evelyn Roy in the Burlingame section of North Park where her father, “Rex” Roy, was the neighborhood barber and her mother once served as President of the Burlingame Club. She attended high school at Hoover and college at San Diego State, and then earned a Master’s degree in Library Science at UCLA. She worked for many years as a reference librarian at the Central Library in downtown San Diego. In the Preface of her book San Diego Trivia (Silver Gate Publications, San Diego, CA, 1989), Mrs. Kooperman explains how the book got started. “The project began in July 1986 when KFMB Radio contacted the San Diego Public Library where I work, asking if the librarians would submit 75 San Diego trivia questions that would be aired over the radio. I have always been interested in San Diego history, so I went to work and came up with 172 short questions; each one led to another, and the research was so addicting that I couldn’t stop.”

Test your North Park knowledge. Here are some fun facts about North Park from Mrs. Kooperman’s book.

1. When Balboa Park was taken over by the military during World War II, what was it called? Answer: Camp Kidd. It was named after Admiral Isaac C. Kidd who died at Pearl Harbor. Camp Kidd became the nation’s foremost corpsman training center, and most of the park buildings, with the exception of the zoo and the Ford Building, were used. The Balboa Park Club became an officers’ club called Captain Kidd Officers Club.
2. Where was the first J.C. Penny store in San Diego? Answer: North Park. It opened on University Avenue and Ray Street on March 26, 1942. A sign proclaiming that it was the first in San Diego was displayed over the front door until the store closed December 31, 1986.
3. When did the last electric streetcar run in San Diego? Answer: 1949. When the very last one crossed University and 40th Street in the early morning hours of April 24, a pajama-clad figure rushed out and placed a coin on the track in order to have a streetcar-flattened souvenir.

4. What native San Diego tennis player won the Wimbledon Ladies Crown in 1952, 1953, and 1954? Answer: Maureen Connolly. During her short playing career she was considered to be the best women's player in the world: she was the first woman to win a Grand Slam (Australia, France, Wimbledon, and the United States), and she won 12 major international titles before the age of 20.

5. What was Maureen Connolly's nickname? Answer: "Little Mo." It was an allusion to "Big Mo," the nickname of the battleship Missouri, because Maureen's strokes were so powerful and accurate. She was given this nickname when she was twelve years old by *San Diego Union* sportswriter Nelson Fisher, and the name stuck.

6. For many years there were two movie theaters in North Park. The North Park Theatre was on the south side of University. What was the name of the theater on the north side? Answer: The Ramona Theatre. It operated from around 1922 to 1930, and then reopened around 1933 as the New Ramona Theater, at 3018 University, one-half block east of 30th Street. From 1936 until it closed in December 1957 it was again called the Ramona Theatre. The North Park Theatre, built in 1928, was the first movie theater with a full stage to be built outside of the downtown area. It is still standing, and has recently been used for church services, films, and stage productions.

That's your North Park quiz for this issue. How many of these questions did you know the answers to?