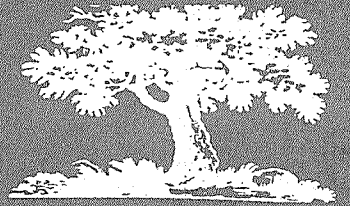


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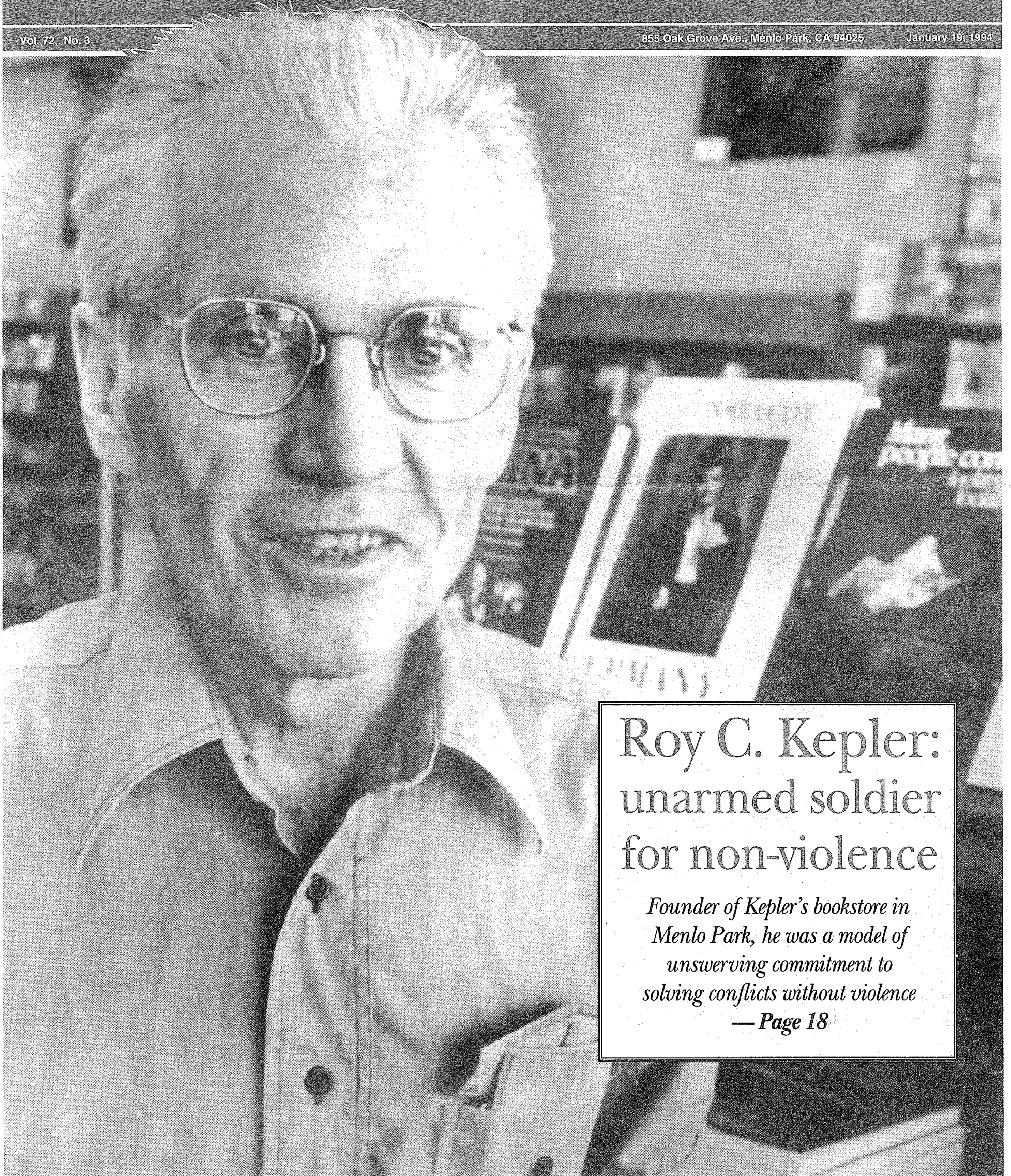
the Country
Menlo Park's Almanac



Vol. 72, No. 3

855 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025

January 19, 1994



**Roy C. Kepler:
unarmed soldier
for non-violence**

*Founder of Kepler's bookstore in
Menlo Park, he was a model of
unswerving commitment to
solving conflicts without violence*

— Page 18

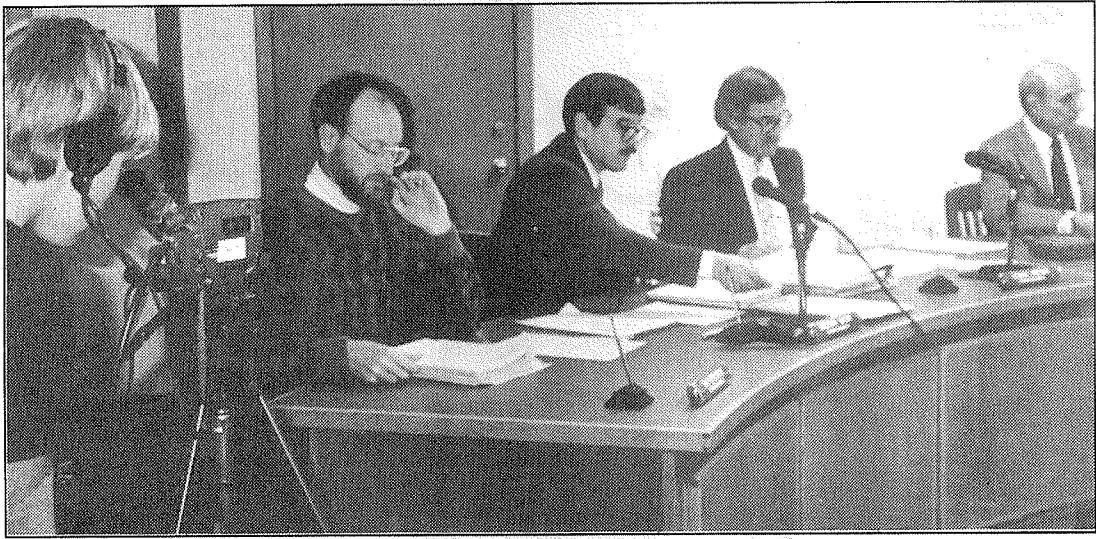


PHOTO BY MARION SOFTKY

ARE THEY READY FOR PRIME TIME?

An eighth grade television crew from Corte Madera School videotaped the Portola Valley Town Council Jan. 12 in a trial run to determine whether city meetings will be shown on Portola Valley's community cable television station. Adam Driscoll, far left, videotapes his dad, Councilman Ted Driscoll, left, and councilmen Richard Merk, Craig Brown and Mayor Gary Nielsen. Six students worked on the production, three taping the meeting and another three selecting pictures in the booth. "They loved it," said Jack Loustanou of the town Cable TV Committee.

Sheriff Horsley seeks reelection

San Mateo County Sheriff Don Horsley, elected to succeed retired Sheriff Leonard Cardoza in a tight three-way race last June, will seek reelection to a full term in November.

Sheriff Horsley claims a strong showing in his first six months, including increasing the number of deputies in East Palo Alto and opening

a new substation in North Fair Oaks.

If reelected, he hopes to create a specialized unit to deal with child abductions and develop a comprehensive approach to solving gang problems and violence by working with the courts, probation department and schools.

Sheriff Horsley also claims to have lined up the support of three-

fourths of the county's police chiefs as well as numerous government and civic leaders.

His list of supporters includes: all five supervisors, Menlo Park Police Chief Bruce Cumming and Atherton Police Chief "Kip" Rolle, Congresswoman Anna Eshoo, and Congressman Tom Lantos, State Senators Tom Campbell and Quentin Kopp, Assemblyman Byron Sher and Assemblywoman Jackie Speier, and Undersheriff Greg Munks.

Gail Slocum

(Continued from previous page)

as well as possible by the council and the city staff," she said.

With traffic, downtown improvement and high-density housing matters on numerous council agendas, 1993 wasn't all fun and games for the five council members deciding controversial issues. An example is the traffic program for west Menlo Park.

The council in June passed a plan, pushed by then-Mayor Slocum, that by all indications did not have the support of the majority of that area's residents. Several months later, the council rescinded its approval of the plan, which included numerous traffic-control street devices, and directed staff to study a drastically scaled-down plan.

The issue presented a major dilemma for Ms. Slocum, who advocates community participation in decision-making, but believes elected officials cannot ignore problems that the community is unwilling to face up to.

In west Menlo, there is a problem with speeding that endangers residents, and some sort of action is needed, she insisted. "Just because people are saying no, it doesn't mean the city should not do anything," she said, adding that policy-makers must

sometimes bite the bullet and make unpopular decisions.

An instance of a decision that met with large-scale public resistance was the approval of a high-density residential complex at Santa Cruz Avenue and Sand Hill Road. The project, 26 condominium units on a .06-acre parcel, will be the first residential project constructed under the city's new R-4 high-density zoning law.

The project was approved, but residents near the site formed a coalition and filed a lawsuit. Ms. Slocum called for mediation meetings between the residents and the developers, and a settlement was recently reached, avoiding costly litigation. The successful mediation "is an example of how I wanted to set a new tone of cooperation and constructive dialogue," she said.

She regrets that such efforts were not made during the dispute over the planned residential development on St. Patrick Seminary grounds, a plan that is still tied up in court more than a year after receiving City Council approval.

Now in the final year of her council term, Ms. Slocum said she is undecided about a re-election bid. She and her husband, Jordan, want to start a family, she said, adding that entering that stage in her life would place time restrictions on her. "I don't like to do anything half-way," she said.

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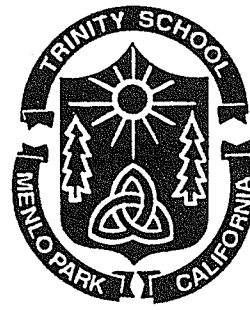
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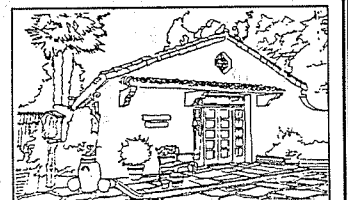
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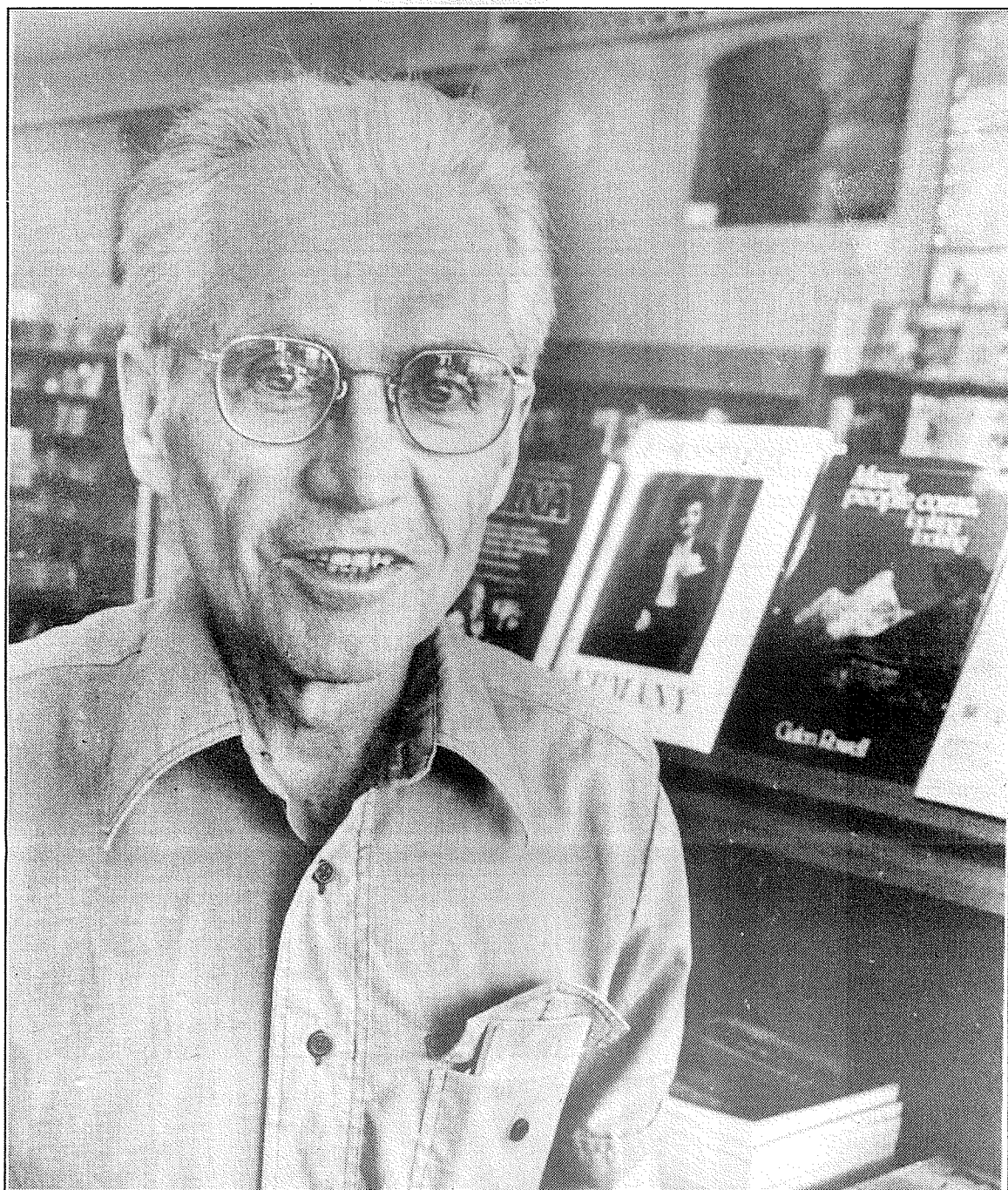


PHOTO BY MARION SOFTKY

Roy Kepler was a powerful influence on the Peninsula for his bookstore, which helped launch the paperback revolution, and for his steadfast pursuit of nonviolence through the turbulent years of anti-nuclear, anti-draft and anti-Vietnam activism.

939 El Camino Real where Roy and Patricia Kepler opened a little store for paperback books in 1955. The present Kepler's across the street is the fifth home for the growing store.

By MARION SOFTKY

In the window of Kepler's bookstore in Menlo Park there's a quotation by its founder: "I'm not so concerned with how I die. It's how I live."

The quotation aptly describes the life of Roy C. Kepler, nonviolence activist and bookselling pioneer, who died New Year's Day in Menlo Park after a long illness with Parkinson's disease. He was 73.

Mr. Kepler touched many lives on the Peninsula both through his bookstore and through his fierce — even though nonviolent — anti-war efforts during the 1960s and 70s.

Even as he sold paperback books at his funky bookstore on El Camino Real where people now buy baguettes and Mrs. Fields' cookies, he also spoke, taught, demonstrated and went to jail in the cause of peace.

His passionate involvement with controversial and unpopular causes led to violence as the bookstore — always a gathering place for long-haired intellectuals and counter-culture types, as well as housewives, kids and businessmen — was attacked. Mr. Kepler received death threats.

"Children were told not to go to the bookstore because it was communist — so they flocked there," says longtime friend and colleague Ira Sandperl of Menlo Park.

Mr. Kepler's friends describe a life of absolute integrity, with actions married totally to his beliefs.

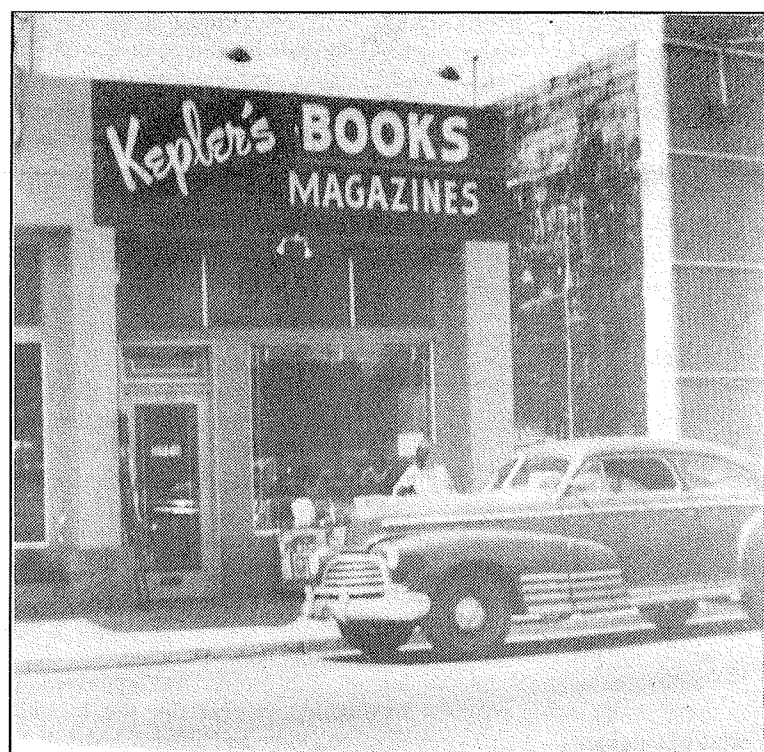
"I keep hearing 'A few good men' in my head," says singer Joan Baez of Woodside, who first encountered Roy Kepler at a Quaker meeting in Palo Alto when she was 16. "He was one of the few stalwarts."

Mr. Sandperl adds, "In the 30 years we were close he never told one white lie."

Pacifist since high school

Growing up in Denver where public schools in the 1930s taught peace courses, Roy Kepler became a pacifist early. He and friends would fight — nonviolently — the Jim Crow laws in Denver.

Throughout his life, Roy Kepler, founder of the well-known Menlo Park bookstore, was a model of unswerving commitment to solving conflicts without violence



Mr. Kepler turned down an appointment to West Point to be a conscientious objector during World War II — an unpopular thing to be at the time. He spent more than three years in internment camps throughout the country.

Lee Boucher of Portola Valley, also a conscientious objector, remembers meeting him in 1946 in a Forest Service camp at Minersville in California (now under the waters of Lake Clair Engle). "It was a punishment camp for COs," Mr. Boucher told the Almanac.

"Roy Kepler lived a life consistent with his belief in nonviolence," Mr. Boucher said. "He was a gentle man who never wavered in his belief and practice of paci-

fism."

After the war, Mr. Kepler graduated from the University of Colorado in 1951 and spent a year on a Fulbright fellowship in France at the Sorbonne studying terrorism in the French Revolution. On his return to the United States he joined the War Resisters' League.

After the War, Mr. Kepler was also among the organizers of KPFA in Berkeley as a pacifist radio station. For a while he worked there and sold Kirby vacuum cleaners in Marin County.

Marriage to his college friend, Patricia, in 1953 concentrated his mind on making a living that would be consistent with his ideals and would still support a family.

In May 1955 Roy and Patricia

Kepler opened their first paperback bookstore at 939 El Camino Real, next to the Guild Theater.

"It was something I could enjoy doing and make a decent living," he told the Almanac in a 1981 interview. "It was a way to operate in terms of my values."

The timing was good.

While conventional publishers and bookstores turned up their

noses at paperbacks, Mr. Kepler recognized that inexpensive paperbacks could make good books available to a whole new range of people.

"Even poor people could afford to buy books," he said. "It made it possible to bring classics into print."

Kepler's Books had many locations, but one of the best remem-

bered was two blocks south of the current location at the Menlo Center on El Camino Real, in what is now the Victoria Lane shopping center.

There hippies rubbed shoulders with housewives, the Grateful Dead sometimes played gigs, and you could stop for coffee and baklava while you browsed.

While Mr. Kepler was pacifist, the bookstore was not. You could buy anything from radical to conservative, from Buddhism to bodybuilding. The only book the store ever banned was "The Anarchist's Cookbook," which tells how to make homemade bombs, Mr. Sandperl recalls.

Roy Kepler was a marvelous organizer, Mr. Sandperl says. He was tireless and self-effacing and had enormous energy.

"He just worked dynamically all the time," he says.

"His recreation was work," adds his son Clark Kepler, who now runs the store. "When he wasn't working at one thing, he was working at something else."

One of the things he organized, Mr. Sandperl remembers, was the first major debate on the hydrogen bomb between its "father," physicist Edward Teller, and Nobel Prize-winning chemist Linus Pauling.

Susan McDonald of Menlo Park, now owner of Printers Inc. book-

store in Palo Alto, was one of the idealistic young people who was drawn to work for Kepler's because of Roy's politics and public stand on nonviolence.

"I learned a lot from him on how to conduct myself morally," she says.

Today's Kepler's, with its upscale location in Menlo Center, seems a far cry from the little store next to the Guild Theater. Yet the growth of Kepler's is a measure of the success of the paperback revolution Roy Kepler helped to launch. The first store carried almost every paperback in print, about 5,000 in all, Clark says. The new store carries about 115,000, not nearly all there are in print.

But Kepler's, wildly popular in its new location, still carries on the tradition that Roy Kepler started of a bookstore as a community resource.

"Even though we look different and don't look funky, we're still following his vision," said Clark.

True love: nonviolence.

Roy Kepler's "first and true love was the cause of nonviolence," said Clark.

This cause colored Mr. Kepler's life and the life of the store, even the life of the community, during the stormy years he and his friends were demonstrating against the draft, nuclear weapons, and the

Vietnam War.

"He was like a pacifist fire hydrant," says Joan Baez. "He knew what was right and what was wrong and was absolutely immovable. He had the kind of courage most of us don't have."

More than once Ms. Baez went to jail with Mr. Kepler and Mr. Sandperl for their passive resistance in demonstrations around the Bay Area. In her early days as a singer, Mr. Kepler was business manager for Ms. Baez.

"He had endless patience and was very kind," she says.

During the late 1960s the public mood turned ugly — and violent. The Kepler stores in Menlo Park and Los Altos were bombed half a dozen times, Mr. Sandperl recalls. Once someone shot pellets through the window on a crowded Sunday afternoon. More alarming were the death threats.

Clark Kepler was about 10 when the incidents came to a climax. After stakeouts and vigils in and near the store, a group of fundamentalist Christians was arrested.

The fear was harder on his mother than on the four children, he says. He and his three sisters slept in the living room of their Los Altos home, while neighbors watched out for them. When the time for the arrest came, the family went to Berkeley for a few days.

Was he scared? "It was more exciting than scary," Clark replied.

Mr. Kepler struggled for his causes in many ways and through many organizations. With Ms. Baez and Mr. Sandperl, he helped found the Institute for the Study of Non-Violence. Recently that merged with the Resource Center for non violence in Santa Cruz, which is continuing its work.

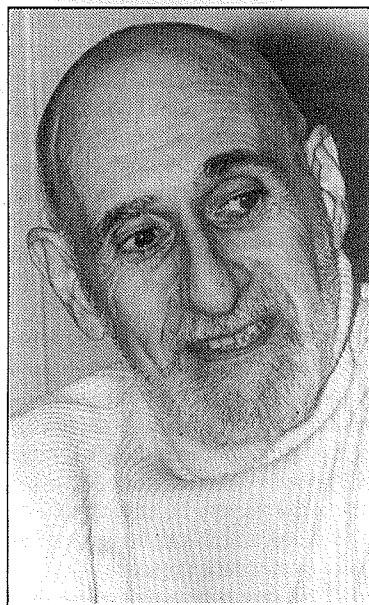
He was one of those who refused to pay the 60 percent of his income tax that supported the military. He was also active in a variety of other organizations, including the Peninsula Committee for the Abolition of Nuclear Tests, the Committee for Draft Resistance, Peacemakers, the Agape Foundation, the Free University of the Peninsula, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, and the Committee for International Nonviolence.

He was also affiliated with such organizations as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, War Resisters International, the Committee for Racial Equality (CORE), the American Friends Service Committee, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

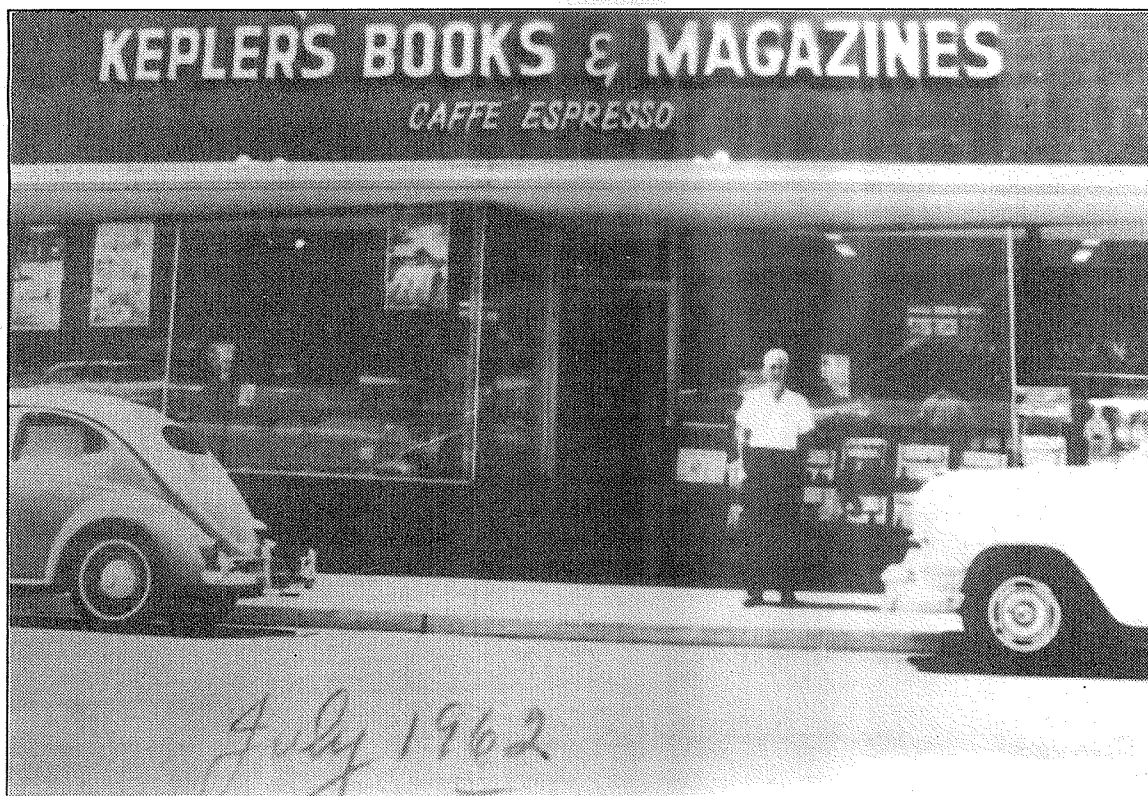
Mr. Kepler is survived by his wife, Patricia E. Kepler of Grass Valley, his son Clark Kepler of Menlo Park, and daughters Dawn, Melody and April. The family prefers donations to the Resource Center for Nonviolence, 515 Broadway, Santa Cruz, CA 95060; or the War Resisters' League, 339 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10022.



Joan Baez: "He knew what was right and what was wrong and was absolutely immovable. He had the kind of courage most of us don't have."

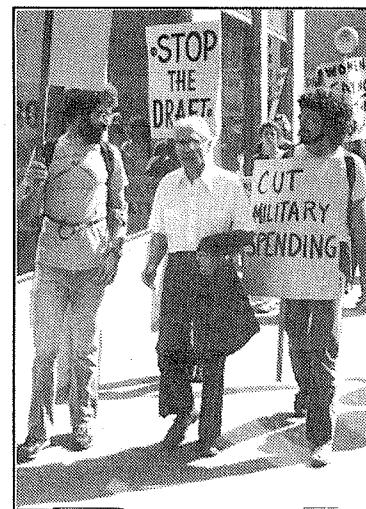


Ira Sandperl: The only book the store ever banned was "The Anarchist's Cookbook," which tells how to make homemade bombs.



The third location of Kepler's — two blocks south of its current site — was among the most popular. Roy Kepler stands in front of the store where the bakery and cookie store are now located in the Victoria Lane shopping center. In the 1960s, among the books and splinters, the Grateful Dead played while people browsed for books, sipped coffee, and planned political action.

Below: Roy Kepler, center, demonstrates in Oakland. He went to prison many times in his crusade to fight the war effort non-violently.



Roy Kepler: 'Even if you lose, you win in the long run'

"It's hard to think about a non-violent world. Our society tends in many ways to push us into violence," Mr. Kepler said in 1981. But much of his life was dedicated to building a nonviolent world — to developing techniques that will solve conflicts without violence.

■ "What's really endangering life is not the single, individual act of violence — a man beating

his wife — but the social organization of violence. The most outward form is all those weapons.

"I think we need to build a society that will tolerate fallible human beings, that will give them support. We all need help."

■ One characteristic of the nonviolent crusader has to be "tremendous persistence" and a willingness to take risks. "You

have to be willing to take casualties in a nonviolent war. You have to be willing to risk injury and even death."

Citing Gandhi's movement in India, he said, "Thousands were killed. Millions were affected."

"We think there are alternatives that are worth the risk of trying. Even if you lose, you win in the long run."