



## Palisades Park: A Novel

By Alan Brennert

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### Palisades Park: A Novel By Alan Brennert

Bestseller Alan Brennert's spellbinding story about a family of dreamers and their lives within the legendary Palisades Amusement Park

Growing up in the 1930s, there is no more magical place than Palisades Amusement Park in New Jersey—especially for seven-year-old Antoinette, who horrifies her mother by insisting on the unladylike nickname Toni, and her brother, Jack. Toni helps her parents, Eddie and Adele Stopka, at the stand where they sell homemade French fries amid the roar of the Cyclone roller coaster. There is also the lure of the world's biggest salt-water pool, complete with divers whose astonishing stunts inspire Toni, despite her mother's insistence that girls can't be high divers.

But a family of dreamers doesn't always share the same dreams, and then the world intrudes: There's the Great Depression, and Pearl Harbor, which hits home in ways that will split the family apart; and perils like fire and race riots in the park. Both Eddie and Jack face the dangers of war, while Adele has ambitions of her own—and Toni is determined to take on a very different kind of danger in impossible feats as a high diver. Yet they are all drawn back to each other—and to Palisades Park—until the park closes forever in 1971.

Evocative and moving, with the trademark brilliance at transforming historical events into irresistible fiction that made Alan Brennert's *Moloka'i* and *Honolulu* into reading group favorites, *Palisades Park* takes us back to a time when life seemed simpler—except, of course, it wasn't.

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## Editorial Review

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When Eddie Stopka first visits New Jersey's Palisades amusement park with his family in 1922, he is so charmed he knows he is destined to come back. When he does return, it is to become a french-fry vendor, marking the beginning of nearly half a century of work at the park. Eddie marries Adele, also a park vendor, and shortly after their children, Toni and Jack, are born, Eddie joins the navy to help resurrect Pearl Harbor. In 1949, when the park comes under the scrutiny of civil-rights activists protesting the whites-only pool policy, Toni, who has become a first-rate lifeguard, boldly joins the fray. She then follows her dream to become one of few female high divers in the nation. Brennert effectively captures twentieth-century American history from the unique perspective of the park and the lives of those who work there. But if at times Brennert's narrative seems to only lightly skim the surface of history, then Stopka's old-time integrity and lovable gullibility are rewarding depictions of the more cheerful, hopeful American of old. --Sarah Grant

## Review

"Brennert writes his valentine to the New Jersey playground of his youth in Ragtime style, mixing fact and fiction. It's a memorable trip." *?People Magazine*

"Palisades Park is a perfect novel. Alan Brennert does a spectacular job of laying out a family saga from 1922 to 1974... he gracefully conjures up a place and time that is no more." *?The Star-Ledger (Newark, NJ)*

"An epic journey through the life of a treasured amusement park, with a cast of characters who experience great wonders and tragedies." *?Lancaster (PA) Sunday News*

"Brennert...creates a real emotional pull in his evocative description of the eccentric, hardworking people who made up the Palisades family in good times and in bad." *?Publishers Weekly on Palisades Park*

"This nostalgic coming-of-age tale of a little girl with big dreams is the perfect read." *?Library Journal on Palisades Park*

"A literate, thoughtful saga....Brennert's tale is a universal one [and] a pleasure to read." *?Kirkus Reviews on Palisades Park*

"A sweeping, epic novel . . . beautifully told." *?Library Journal (starred) on Honolulu*

"A lush tale of ambition, sacrifice, and survival. . . . Immense . . . yet intimate." *?Booklist on Honolulu*

"A dazzling historical saga." *?The Washington Post on Moloka'i*

"A poignant story." *?Los Angeles Times on Moloka'i*

"A superb novel." *?Los Angeles Daily News on Moloka'i*

## About the Author

ALAN BRENNERT grew up in Edgewater, New Jersey, at the foot of the Palisades. He won an Emmy Award in 1991 for his work as a writer-producer on *L.A. Law*, and was nominated for two other Emmy

Awards as well as a Golden Globe. He won a Nebula Award for his story "Ma Qui." The author of the national bestsellers *Moloka'i*, a "Bookies" award–winner for Book Club Book of the Year, and *Honolulu*, winner of *Elle's* Lettres 2009 Grand Prix for Fiction, he lives in Sherman Oaks, California.

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#### **Anthony Collins:**

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#### **John Gravatt:**

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