Marco makes his mark
Little dog hits the big time as a Westminster competitor
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Housing plan raises fire concerns | Page 5
On the ballot: Senate race, parcel tax | Pages 5, 7
Nak’s Market owner Sam Kurose dies | Page 10
Five Months Left. Everything Must Go!

With the owner of The Oriental Carpet preparing to retire this year, everything in stock at the downtown Menlo Park store is on sale – with the steep discounts ranging from 50% to 80% off.

Owner Bruce Good amassed an incredible collection of high-quality hand-knotted rugs in his nearly four decades in the business, and he has more than 2,500 pieces left to sell in his Santa Cruz Avenue store. The store's entire inventory is priced to sell.

"As I get closer to retirement, there will be more reductions – but less choice," said Good. "The best pieces will go quickly."

He's seen some customers come in and buy a rug for every room in the house, he said. All the rugs the store sells are hand-woven and knotted from traditional producers and cooperatives in Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal. The store has pieces in every standard size and offers an array of designs including traditional, contemporary and "transitional" – rugs that can be formal or casual, depending on the furnishings they're paired with. The store offers rugs made from wool, silk and viscose, a material that looks and feels like silk but is more affordable.

Good says the majority of the rugs he sells are made of wool, which is the strongest and hardiest material. Viscose offers the soft feeling of silk but is easier to clean.

"I personally really like it," he said. "You can put it into a family room without worrying about it."

The store's selection also includes a large number of antique rugs. Collectors appreciate how a rug's colors soften over the years, giving the piece a fine and distinctive patina.

The traditional handcrafted method makes the rugs both beautiful and durable, said Good. The Oriental Carpet has been serving Peninsula residents for 46 years, helping homeowners and designers achieve the look and feel that a beautiful, high-quality carpet can bring to a room. Good said the handcrafted rugs last forever – but his sale won't. If you're looking for an attractive rug at an even more attractive price, now is the time to go shopping.

Come check out their selection at their showroom at 707 Santa Cruz Ave. or call (650) 327-6608 for more information.
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Candidates clash over housing, PG&E’s future

Some say it’s time for state to take over struggling utility, others decry too much government control

by Gennady Sheyner

The seven candidates vying to succeed state Sen. Jerry Hill in Sacramento tried to set themselves apart from the pack at a Palo Alto forum Wednesday night as they clashed over housing, transportation and a new proposal to have the state take ownership of PG&E.

The candidates, who include five Democrats, one Republican and one Libertarian, are all looking to represent Senate District 13, which stretches from South San Francisco to Sunnyvale. The top two vote-getters in the March 3 primary will move on to a showdown on Election Day in November.

The debate, which was sponsored by The Almanac, Palo Alto Weekly, Palo Alto Online, Mountain View Voice and CalMatters, brought a standing-room-only crowd of about 200 people to the Palo Alto Art Center to hear the seven candidates — Josh Becker, Michael Brownrigg, Alex Grew, Sally Lieber, Shelly Masur, Annie Oliva and John Webster — make their respective cases.

With the exception of Webster, a Libertarian who believes that government is the problem and who likened education spending to “socialism,” each candidate expressed on a firm belief that the state has an important role to play in solving California’s housing and transportation challenges, though each offered different takes on what that role should be.

Becker, a Menlo Park entrepreneur and creator of Full Circle Fund, an organization that provides grants to nonprofits, argued that the state should require tech companies to match their job growth with new housing. He attributed the Bay Area’s housing crisis in part to the exponential growth of companies like Facebook and Google since the early 2000s.

“For big tech companies — for every job they create, they should have to fund a unit of housing,” Becker said. “It’s not going to solve the problem, but it will stop the problem from getting worse — which is a first priority.”

Others called that proposal unrealistic and onerous. Masur, who serves as Redwood City’s vice mayor, noted that it costs about $600,000 to create one housing unit. Requiring businesses to build housing to match their jobs is “not sustainable,” she said. A more effective method, she said, is to rely on the impact fees that cities collect from builders through development agreements.

“SB 50, whose author, Sen. Scott Wiener, called that proposal too steep for mechanical fuel treatments, and goat grazing has not reduced the amount of live or dead woody material,” Enea wrote.

In addition, “the density configuration enables mature and immature trees which is conducive to a more rapid spread of fire within the tree canopy,” she wrote.

These characteristics pose a risk to homes on ridges above the property, including Westridge Drive and Minoca Road, and well as on the development site itself.

“Small housing clusters historically fare the worst in the wild-land-urban interface,” according to a 2008 article Enea quoted from the Real Estate Review, a journal dedicated to the development community.

Bullard led a community meeting on Jan. 28 at a private residence with a group called Portola Valley Neighbors United to discuss the fire district’s concerns.

“The fire (district) doesn’t think that is the best location to be putting in high-density housing because of the high fire severity zone,” Bullard said in a phone interview. “It’s a very dangerous place for fire. We should look for other areas for development that would be better, and we’ve suggested that the town do that.”

There are significant risks to developing the site for the residents in the subdivision and for those in the homes above, since
Oleg Lobynkin’s sculpture “Talking Heads” is part of a series of abstract pieces called “Void.” Leaders of a new arts nonprofit in Menlo Park hope to install the sculpture downtown at Fremont Park.

Is Burning Man sculpture coming to Fremont Park?

Talking Heads’ sculpture is 18 feet tall, with mirrored surface

By Tyler Callister
Special to The Almanac

The Menlo Park City Council this week considers allowing an 18-foot-tall sculpture that was originally featured at the Burning Man festival to be temporarily installed in Fremont Park, in the city’s downtown area.

The council was expected to make a decision about the sculpture during its meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 11. The meeting occurred after The Almanac’s press time; for news about the council’s action, go to AlmanacNews.com.

The proposal for the art project comes from local nonprofit Menlo Park Public Art, which says its mission is to “develop, support and maintain public art that serves the community.” Designed by East Palo Alto-based sculptor Oleg Lobynkin, the nebulous abstract art piece is called “Talking Heads.” It features a mirror-like surface that allows viewers to see themselves and their surroundings in distorted reflections.

The total cost for loacing the sculpture for a two-year period is about $16,500. However, Menlo Park Public Art has secured private funding for the project, and said it will be of no cost to the city.

The sculpture is meant as a pilot project of the nonprofit art group, which has announced ambitions for a series of public art installations in town. CEO Katharina Powers, who is also the owner of Art Venture Gallery at 888 Santa Cruz Ave., spoke to The Almanac in October about the idea behind the organization.

“In order to do this we have to educate people about the importance of public art, how it can ignite imagination, start a conversation and be a positive part for our community,” she said. “Art expands what it is to be human.”

The nonprofit has identified other potential art installation sites, including along Bayfront Expressway; on Sand Hill Road between the Rosewood Hotel and the Sharon Heights Golf & Country Club, at the west exit of Marsh Road; and at the Santa Cruz Avenue and El Camino Real intersection, near Cafe Borrente.

Powers first brought the idea of advancing a public art program in Menlo Park to the council last October. In November, the council directed city staff to work with Menlo Park Public Art and come up with a pilot program proposal.

The Parks and Recreation Commission then reviewed it in...
Portola Valley schools parcel tax renewal measure on March ballot

By Angela Swartz
Almanac Staff Writer

Renewal of a parcel tax, which now generates about $1.2 million annually for Portola Valley School District classroom programs and teaching staff, is on the March 3 ballot.

Measure P would update the district’s Measure O parcel tax, which expires in June 2021. It would continue the tax at its current rate of $581 per parcel in its first year, then increase it by 3% in each following year.

This amounts to an additional $17 to $21 per parcel annually, said district Chief Business Officer Connie Ngo. Voters will be asked to extend the measure by eight years. Approval requires a two-thirds voter majority.

All voters who live within the school district boundaries — which go beyond those of the town of Portola Valley — can vote on the bond measure. The district includes Woodside residents who live in the Skyland and Skywood Acres neighborhoods and off Philips and Family Farm roads, and part of Mountain Home Road. See a map of the school district boundaries at isgd/PVSDMap.

The Almanac sat down with Measure P proponents and district officials to discuss the proposed tax. The current tax, Measure O, funds advanced math, science and technology programs; reading and writing programs; art and music programs; reduced class sizes; and retention of teachers for the district’s two schools, Ormondale and Corte Madera, explained. District staff asserts that the measure “must be renewed” to maintain these programs.

“It’s easy to take our wonderful schools for granted, but it’s the parcel tax that makes our schools possible,” said Joshua Harmssen, a district parent and co-chair of the Committee to Protect Portola Valley Schools, formed in support of Measure P. “It provides essential funding for programs that we all want and expect for our children. Without it, our schools would look very different.”

People move to Portola Valley for these “extras” — offerings such as art, advanced math, science and technology programs and more, said Superintendent Roberta Zarea.

Harmssen said he can’t imagine the district’s two schools without their music programs, for example. He recounts how his child learned to play the trumpet for the fifth grade play in just a month through Corte Madera’s music program.

“We’re competing with private schools in the area,” he said, noting that the district’s programs are a draw to many.

With enrollment in the district declining — it is down 4.5% this school year — some might wonder why the district needs additional money for programming. The district is “community funded,” which means it receives most of its revenue from local sources, including property taxes, parcel taxes and donations.

Ngo said the cost of providing a high-quality education continues to increase. The purchasing power of the same amount of money in 2013, when the Measure O parcel tax passed, has changed, she said.

Part of the need for new funds is the increasing cost of utilities and keeping teachers’ salaries on pace with the high cost of living in the area, she noted.

“This is one of the most expensive areas in the Bay Area, and it (the tax) helps retain high-quality teachers,” she said.

There is also some confusion in the community about why the district is seeking parcel tax funding after a bond measure, Measure Z, passed in fall 2018, said Nelly Wolfson, the other co-chair of the Committee to Protect Portola Valley Schools. The difference is that Measure Z funded construction projects on campus, while parcel tax funds go toward areas such as educational programming and paying teachers, she explained.

Mark Hinkle, president of the Silicon Valley Taxpayers Association, filed the only ballot argument against the measure. He argues that the district is already spending $27,000 annually per student, 224% above the statewide average, and doesn’t need additional funding.

Part of the tax’s purpose is maintaining small class sizes. The average district class size for grades K-3 is 19 students, and the average class size for grades 4-8 is 20 students, according to the district.

Measure O passed in 2013 with 69% of the vote. It consolidated two expiring measures: Measure C (with an annual tax of $290 per parcel) and Measure D ($168 per parcel), and increased the rate by $123 per parcel to $581, Ngo said.

For more on the tax measure, go to avensacore.org/current-election.

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Sen. Jerry Hill endorses Becker to take his place in Sacramento

by Kate Bradshaw

S

tate Sen. Jerry Hill wants Josh Becker to be his suc-
cessor, Becker’s campaign announced Wednesday, Feb. 5.
Becker, a Democrat from Men-
lo Park running to represent
Senate District 13, which runs from South San Francisco to South San Jose, announced via email that, out of the seven candidates running for the position, he had

won the endorsement from Hill. Hill, the seat’s incumbent, is ineligible for reelection due to term limits. He was in a policy meeting and not immediately available to confirm the informa-
tion last week, according to his spokesperson Leslie Guevarra.

“I’m excited and honored to have his endorsement,” Becker said in an interview.

Calling Hill “one of the most respected state officials we’ve ever had,” Becker said, “It means a lot to me to have his support and confidence that I’m the right person to represent this region.”

Becker added that he believes he earned the endorsement from Hill because he’s an independent thinker.

“It’s a big priority of his to have people that are independent and willing to take on the big power players in Sacramento,” he said.

In a statement he provided to Becker’s campaign, Hill praised Becker as an innovator and collaborator.

“He’s got his priorities focused on the right issues,” Hill wrote, noting that those priorities include figuring out how to protect public-private places that’s affordable; tackling traffic that clogs the area’s streets and highways; and taking on climate change in the region and beyond it.

Becker, Hill writes, “has a wealth of experiences that will serve him well in Sacramento,” such as working on Capitol Hill, being appointed by former Gov. Jerry Brown to a state commis-
sion and winning Gov. Gavin Newsom’s endorsement for the seat.

Josh is well-rounded, experienced and someone who can get things done,” Hill said.

Housing Plan

from teachers’ unions and Real-
tors, respectively. Both said that while they are grateful for the donations, they are not coordin-
ating with these donors.

“I’m very humbled and hon-
ored that they noticed my work and I’m very grateful for their support,” Oliva said when asked about the $409,000 she had received from the California Association of Realtors.

Lieber said she’s had to use her own money in every campaign she’s run. That, she said, has
d to do with the fact that most big-money interests aren’t keen on donating to her “progressive campaign,” she said.

“I think I’d get agreement that I’m the most progressive (candi-
date),” Lieber said. “That’s not something that special interests appreciate. Having been in Sac-
ramento, I’ve seen the emotional toll it takes on you to have to call lobbyists for money, when you’re voting on a bill that they’re lobby-
posing on and that they’re concerned about.”

The tensest moment in the debate came during the discus-
sion of charter schools, when
candidates were asked what they would do to make sure these

schools are accountable to the taxpayers who fund them. While Masur, a former Redwood City school board member, touted recent efforts to require charter schools to have open meetings and to make their records acces-
sible to the public, Lieber broadly

criticized charter schools, which she said should be ended.

“I have never voted for any charter school at any point in time and, frankly, that’s a differ-
ence we have,” she said, referring to Masur.

Masur responded by noting that Lieber had never served on a school board and, as such, didn’t have an opportunity to vote for a charter school. Lieber then took a shot at Masur for supporting Rocketship, a chain of charter schools that has run into trouble over the past year for charter violations relating to inadequate financial reporting.

“Sometimes you just have to kick the ball downfield and try as hard as you can to block a troubled entity from coming into a school district,” Lieber said.


CANDIDATES

continued from page 5

critical conversation.

“What’s important is that it’s kicked off a discussion that is so far overdue: that it, the account-
ability of cities to not just plan for but actually see that afford-
able housing — extremely low-
income and low-income housing and supportive housing — is actually built,” Lieber said.

Oliva argued that each munici-
pality should be allowed to plan for its own needs and used as an example the residents and com-
mercial developments around her city’s transit hub.

“We do not need to solve the housing crisis by disrupting our single-home neighborhoods,” Oliva said.

Glew called SB 50 an “abomi-
nation.” Housing policy, he said, should be handled by city coun-
cil and local commissions.

“We want the state to help us, not control us,” he said.

The candidates largely con-
curred on transportation poli-
cies, with everyone agreeing that California’s high-speed-rail project was a massive failure in the way it was executed. Most candidates said they support investing more funding in grade separations at rail crossings and other Caltrain improvements.

Masur said she would like to see better coordination among the Bay Area’s 27 transit agencies and used as an example the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, an agency that is charged with making sure that the vari-
ous transit services are working together effectively.

There was somewhat less con-
ensus on the subject of PG&E and Wiener’s proposal to have

the state take over the utility. Masur noted that the takeover would not be legal under exist-
ing law, while Glew, an engineer who is the lone Republican in the field, said he opposes a public takeover of the utility.

Instead, Glew said, PG&E should be segmented, with dif-
ferent utilities serving the state’s rural areas and its high-popula-
tion hubs. He also suggested that the utility is now overregulated.

“PG&E is a business,” Glew said. "If they’re going to fail, let them fail.”

Becker, Brownrigg and Lieber all said they would support hav-
ing the state take over the utility. Brownrigg said that while he has no problem with investor-owned utilities in general, he does have a problem with PG&E in par-

icular. Making the company public, he said, would allow the state to take the company’s 10% profit margin and invest it in infrastructure.

“ ‘The current structure isn’t working,’” Brownrigg said.

After Glew suggested that reorganization may be a better option, Lieber noted the compa-
ny has already completed a man-
agement changeover. The former execu-
tives, she said, “jumped off PG&E like rats off a sinking ship the moment their misdeeds came to the public.” The state needs to plan for publicly owned, renewable and locally resourced energy, she said.

Brownrigg said, “They disproved the notion of ‘too big to fail’,” he said of PG&E. “Because they’re too big and they’re failing.”

Becker and Brownrigg also fielded questions about large
donations that their campaigns have received, in some cases from independent committees.

Becker received $500,000 from Reid Hoffman, co-founder of LinkedIn, through an indepen-
dent committee, while Brownrigg received a donation of $460,000 from his mother, Linda Brown-
rigg, also through a committee.

Becker said he has worked with Hoffman at Full Circle Fund, which makes grants to nonprof-
ts, and that he was “shocked” by Hoffman’s contributions. He also noted, however, that Hoffman is spending $2 million to oppose President Donald Trump.

“I don’t have money from tech companies, but I do have money from individuals and they want something we all want — they want great schools, great public transportation systems and they want California to be the national and global leader on climate change,” said Becker, who is lead-

ing the field in fundraising.

Brownrigg and Lieber also talked about their decisions to contribute to campaigns at any cost.

Brownrigg said he was told by his advisers that he would have to spend about three hours per day on the phone trying to get funds to get his message out across the broad senate district. Instead, he opted to participate in house parties in cities through-
out the district to talk politics, a decision that required him to rely on his own funds.

Brownrigg said he was “incred-
ibly touched” by his mother’s donation, which came in the aftermath of her losing her part-
ner of 45 years.

“The most my mom will ask of me is that I’ll come visit more often,” Brownrigg said. “And that will happen anyway.

Josh and I are also were asked about the major contri-

butions that they have received from teachers’ unions and Real-
tors, respectively. Both said that while they are grateful for the donations, they are not coordi-

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He's remembered by family and friends as an “extraordinarily kind” man who faced an unkind illness bravely.

By Renee Batti
Almanac Editor

S

ikeichi “Sam” Kurose, who

with his wife Ikie owned and

operated Nak’s Market in Menlo Park for decades, died on Jan. 26 at the age of 77.

He had struggled for over seven years with progressive supranuclear palsy, or PSP, a severely disabling disease, but thanks to the help of his children and son-in-law was able to continue living at home until his death, according to his family.

Sam and Ikie, who died in 2018, were a fixture in downtown Menlo Park, where their Chestnut Street market offered local shoppers Asian foods that, decades ago, weren’t widely available. The couple worked side by side six days a week, creating a community of good will — as well as of good culinary taste — among their many loyal customers.

The couple, both natives of Japan who moved to the United States in 1970, had taken over the market in 1980. That’s when the original owners, Ikie’s sister and brother-in-law Edith and Fred Nakamura, who opened the store in 1968, were unable to continue running the business.

When Sam took over, the business suffered, he was so grateful for the support shown by his many loyal customers,” his daughter, Tamami Hansen, writes in a tribute to her father. “Nak’s Market was his second home, and he knew many of his customers by name. Knowing my dad, I know he would have wanted me to take this opportunity to express his heartfelt gratitude to all of his friends and customers for supporting Nak’s Market for over thirty years.”

One of those customers, Suzanne Rocca-Butler, had made Nak’s a regular stop since before the Kuroses took over. The change in ownership didn’t change that.

“The Kuroses made it into a welcoming spot in Menlo Park and I was often stopped by just to say hello to them, even if I were not needing any products that day,” Rocca-Butler wrote in an email.

“I remember both of them as extraordinarily kind, and Mr. Kurose was always willing and interested in answering my many questions about Japanese food products, how to prepare certain dishes, and even helped me in my folk dance teaching by translating the Japanese words used to describe certain dance movements,” she wrote.

“Once, when he and his wife returned from a trip to Japan, he told me he was very glad to return to Menlo Park and the Bay Area — that this was his home. He said it had surprised him, but it was true.”

Rocca-Butler stayed in touch with the Kurose family even after the Sam and Ikie were no longer able to run the store and moved from the Bay Area to Nevada, then to Florida. Son Ken Kurose “would commute to Sparks (Nevada) Saturdays after Nak’s closed in order to see them and would then make the long drive back. Monday morning to open the store,” Rocca Butler wrote. “He showed such kindness, caring and devotion. While Mr. Kurose could still write, he sent me several letters and cards from him and his wife.”

Ken and his sister, Naomi Harrison, and her husband, John, “gave Mr. Kurose the greatest gift one can give,” she wrote. “They gave him their love and provided round-the-clock care for him and made it possible for him to spend his final days, months and years in his family’s home.”

Seikichi Kurose was born in Tokyo, the eldest of four children. “He was no stranger to hard work, and from an early age, he worked several jobs while juggling school; first to help support his siblings then later to put himself through college and support his young, growing family,” his daughter Tamami wrote. After landing a job as a news reporter, she said, “he became fascinated with the international arena outside of his native country.”

So despite having launched a promising career as a journalist, Sam moved with his family to the United States, “and never looked back,” his daughter said.

“To many in Menlo Park, Sam’ was the friendly owner of Nak’s Market, but to his family, he was our hero; the one who saved us when we needed help; the one person who we could always rely on for anything and everything,” she wrote. “He never complained about the hardships he faced as a child or as an immigrant in a foreign country, struggling to support his young family or later in his elder years after being diagnosed with PSP, a horrible, crippling progressive disease that left him bedridden, non-verbal, and basically blind. Like everything in life, he faced these difficulties courageously and stoically because he never wanted to be a burden on anyone, especially his family.”

His son, Ken, said that no memorial service is planned. The family, he said, will scatter their parents’ ashes on Mount Rose in Nevada when “the wild flowers bloom” on the mountain. “My folks always went to Reno when they had time off,” he wrote in an email.

“My mom loved going to (nearby) Mount Rose. She loved flowers. She used to take flower seeds from her garden and when they went to Mount Rose, my mom used to scatter her seeds up on the summit and said, ‘This is where I want my ashes to be scattered when I die.’”

Sam Kurose is survived by his three children, Tamami Hansen, Ken Kurose; his granddaughter, Alainna Hansen; and his two sons-in-law, Eric Hansen and John Harrington. [ ]

Whitehurst/Moshers seeks to charge the district a monthly retainer of $5,000 for a minimum of three months, according to a report prepared by staff for the Jan. 28 meeting. Services covered by the retainer include picking the election date that would “maximize” voter approval of a measure, community outreach, crafting a ballot measure, attending district meetings, preparing reports and policy research and polling, the report said.

The district’s parcel tax and bond board subcommittee, made up of trustees Mark Box and Scott Saywell, interviewed four consultants and narrowed the field to the two finalists: San Francisco-based TBWB Strategies and Oakland-based Whitehurst/Moshers.

“The subcommittee was impressed by both, ultimately feeling as though Whitehurst/Moshers would best meet the districts needs primarily because they are familiar with the District having advised us and the Measure X campaign to a successful result,” according to a staff report prepared for the meeting. The Board has ultimate authority to choose which consultant the district will use to develop any future ballot measure. A subsequent campaign would then have the responsibility to either continue with the selected consultant or not.”

Burmeister noted at the early January meeting that November 2022 is probably the latest the district would be able to put a parcel tax measure on the ballot without some “significant budget cuts.” [ ]
Spectacular Mid-Century Modern Home with Breathtaking Bay Views and Adjacent 1/3+ Acre Vacant Lot

480 Erlin Drive, San Carlos

3 Bed | 2 Baths | 2,907 Sq. Ft. | 31,790 Sq Ft Lot | $3,250,000

Rarely does a home present such remarkable San Francisco Bay views with the benefit of a close-in, yet very private location. From the moment you arrive, the breathtaking views unfold with unobstructed vistas enjoyed from almost every room, beginning with the San Francisco skyline, spanning across the San Mateo Bridge and Peninsula, and out to the East Bay hills. This stylish mid-century home has spacious formal rooms, a beautifully appointed chef’s kitchen, 3 bedrooms and 2 baths, plus a lower-level recreation room with an entertaining bar and fireplace. Massive walls of glass and expansive entertaining decks take center stage presenting exceptional views from every angle. This unique property, comprising two separate parcels, each over 1/3rd acre, offers myriad options as well. Explore all of the various development alternatives with the city of San Carlos. Adding to the property’s unique appeal is its secluded location on a private street just north of the vibrant downtown and in close proximity to outstanding local schools!

Open House Saturday & Sunday, February 8th & 9th from 1:30 - 4:30pm
480ErlinDrive.com

Colleen Foraker
Realtor
650.380.0085
colleen@colleenforaker.com
DRE 01349099

Rankings provided courtesy of Red, Tendu. The Thousand list of individual agents by total sales volume in 2018. Compass is a real estate broker licensed by the State of California and abides by Equal Housing Opportunity laws. License Number 0147735. All material presented herein is intended for informational purposes only and is compiled from sources deemed reliable but has not been verified. Changes in price, condition, sale or withdrawal may be made without notice. No statement is made as to accuracy of any description. All measurements and square footage are approximate.
Gracious Living In Coveted Central Menlo

Elevated style, extensive automation features, and inviting spaces blend at this 6 bedroom, 4.5 bath home of 5,088 sq. ft. (per plans) sitting on a peaceful lot of 10,710 sq. ft. (per county) in one of Menlo Park’s most coveted neighborhood. The home enjoys bright and airy gathering areas with a gourmet kitchen that opens to the voluminous great room as the formal living room accesses the deck. The spacious master suite and secondary bedrooms, two of them en-suite, plus a bedroom on the main level assure flexible living arrangements. From this prestigious location, children may attend highly-ranked Oak Knoll Elementary, Hillview Middle, and Menlo-Atherton High or renowned private schools. Drive only minutes to Stanford University, Stanford Shopping Center, downtown Palo Alto and Menlo Park, Sharon Heights Golf and Country Club, and VCs along Sand Hill Road.

For video tour & more photos, please visit:
www.765Cotton.com
Offered at $6,788,000

LISTED BY MICHAEL REPKA OF THE DELEON TEAM, THE #1 TEAM IN MENLO PARK*

*Search Criteria as compiled by BrokerMetrics® using MLS Data; January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019, Menlo Park, All Residential Properties.

Michael Repka, DRE #01854880 | 650.900.7000 | michael@deleonrealty.com

中文諮詢請聯繫Audrey Sun, DRE #01933274 電話: 650.785.5822 | www.deleonrealty.com | DeLeon Realty, Inc. | DRE #01903224

OPEN HOUSE
Saturday 1:30 pm - 4:30 pm
DeLeon Realty  
COMMITTED TO TRANSPARENCY

2.5%  
Commission Paid to  
Buyer’s Agent  
Waived if DeLeon buyer’s agent

BRIGHT, STYLISH, AND CLOSE TO IT ALL IN SHARON HEIGHTS

2146 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park

Offered at $1,498,000

Stylish living awaits in this desirable townhome, boasting a prime location in the coveted Menlo Park neighborhood of Sharon Heights. Comprising 3 bedrooms and 2.5 baths across 2,030 sq. ft. of living space (per county), this two-level home has it all – bright living areas, a sparkling community pool, and easy access to everything Sand Hill Road has to offer, from Venture Capital firms to the exciting amenities of Stanford Shopping Center. Enjoy newly refinished hardwood floors, spacious formal rooms, and the well-designed kitchen, plus experience indoor/outdoor living with two large balconies that provide excellent space for al fresco entertaining. Upstairs, the master suite offers a private retreat, while two additional bedrooms ensure comfort for the entire family. Adding the finishing touch, this home offers access to acclaimed schools Las Lomitas Elementary and La Entrada Middle (buyer to verify eligibility).

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday 1:30 - 4:30 pm

Listed by Michael Repka of the DeLeon Team, the #1 Team in Menlo Park.*

*Search Criteria as compiled by BrokerMetrics® using MLS Data: January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019, Menlo Park, All Residential Properties.

For more information, video tour & more photos, please visit: www.2146SandHill.com

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Marco makes his mark

Little dog hits the big time as a Westminster competitor

Story by Maggie Mah
Photos by Magali Gauthier
Special to The Almanac

Marco, a 4-year-old Tibetan Spaniel, is a little dog of big accomplishment. His latest achievement: showing at the prestigious Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show in New York City — a widely watched international pageant that took place this year from Feb. 9 through 11.

Accompanied by Menlo Park resident Diana Gerba, his human companion, this charming, little-breed ambassador jetted to the East Coast last Friday to compete in the Westminster show, now in its 144th year and considered the pinnacle of all canine show ring competitions.

It’s the oldest continuously held show of its kind in the U.S. It is second only to the Kentucky Derby as America’s oldest sporting event, and as such, it predates the light bulb, the automobile and the basketball.

This year, more than 2,600 dogs from 49 U.S. states, Puerto Rico and 19 foreign countries attended the show. Representing the creme de la creme of 208 different breeds and varieties, they strutted their stuff over three days of intense competition in hopes of being chosen “Best in Show.”

Did Marco win? Unfortunately, show results were not available at press time. But you can learn how Marco did and find out about his other adventures in The Big Apple by checking AlmanacNews.com on Wednesday, Feb. 12.

The competition at Westminster is tough, which is not surprising. Every dog who puts a paw in the ring this year has already achieved American Kennel Club Champion of Record status. Marco, or “Brill Padme Dark Passion” as he is known in the show ring, has blown past the Champion and Grand Champion thresholds, and now holds the title of Bronze Grand Champion, a level that requires four times the number of points required for a regular “Grand” title.

In the world of dog shows, making it to Westminster is the chance of a lifetime, but for a seasoned competitor like Gerba, winning is just one aspect of competition. She sees

Top: Marco practices a trick with his owner Diana Gerba in their Menlo Park home before leaving for New York City. Above: Marco and Gerba on the grounds of the Stanford golf course, where they regularly roam.
Sporting” group will move on by the Aztecs. Often hairless breed developed xoloitzcuintlis, an ancient and diverse assortment that includes poodles, Dalmatians, and “Tibbers,” are relatively rare and are generally not popular because Marco builds on his impressive record, winning "Best in Show." Evidently it was worth the effort because Marco built on his impressive record, winning "Best of Breed" at major shows in Orlando and Philadelphia and "Best in Show" in Port-land, Oregon, last year. Marco. “Nothing fazes him,” says Gerba. Despite his good looks and obvious charisma, Marco is not high-maintenance. "I usually brush him once a week, and when we’re showing, he gets a weekly bath." He is also a sucker for whipped cream, pushing the limits of his normally impeccable manners to lick little dollops from Gerba’s fingers. The process by which a dog becomes a champion involves competing at American Kennel Club-sanctioned shows around the country in order to accumulate the requisite number of points. Tibetan Spaniels, or “Tibbles,” are relatively rare in the U.S. and consequently have fewer competitions than well-known breeds, a fact that translates to more time, travel and money in the effort to qualify. For Gerba, this meant traveling to 47 shows in 2019. "It’s hard to get points for Tibbles. I don’t want to know how many miles or how much it costs, but this last year has been mind-blowing,” she says. Evidently it was worth the effort because Marco built on his impressive record, winning “Best of Breed” at major shows in Orlando and Philadelphia and “Best in Show” in Portland, Oregon, last year. If Marco is named “Best of Breed” in the "Tibetan Spaniel class at Westminster, he will move on to compete against dogs of other breeds in the “Non-Sporting” group, a diverse assortment that includes poodles, Dalmatians, several types of bulldogs and xoloitzcuintlis, an ancient and often hairless breed developed by the Aztecs. The top dog from the “Non-Sporting” group will move on to the next rounds of judging, which culminate with the ultimate winner being named “Best in Show.” Tibbles are small, sturdy dogs with luxuriant coats and tails that drape gracefully over their backs. The breed is distinct from spaniels bred for hunting, and was developed more than 2,000 years ago by Buddhist monks who lived in Himalayan monasteries. The little dogs’ intelligence, keen eyesight and hearing made them ideal for work as lookouts on monastery walls, alerting the monks and their large Tibetan mastiff guard dogs to approaching strangers. However, their loyal nature and thick, silky coat made them treasured companions — and also good bed warmers. Tibbles were never sold, and left the monasteries only when presented as precious gifts to worthy recipients. The earliest appearance of the breed outside Tibet was first recorded in England in 1898, but it was not until 1966 that the first Tibbies arrived in the U.S. Although the breed was recognized by the American Kennel Club in 1984, Tibbles have been slow to catch on despite their many desirable characteristics. Popularity of a particular breed, it seems, does not correlate exactly to “Best in Show” titles. Labrador retrievers, for example, have held the No. 1 spot on the canine pop chart every year since 1991, and golden retrievers are currently No. 3. Despite wild cheers from the crowd when they enter the ring, no dog from either breed has ever won the title of “Best in Show.” The path to Marco Until she met Marco, Diana Gerba had always had big dogs with Italian names. A native of the Philadelphia area, Gerba attended Stanford University, where she studied documentary filmmaking. During what Gerba calls her “hippie years,” she hitchhiked across the country three times with her dog, Diablo, a Newfoundland/Saint Bernard mix. After getting her master’s degree, Gerba discovered Bernese mountain dogs. She went on to own and train several “Berners,” competing successfully in obedience, conformity and working competitions with Fidelio and Tesoro. In 2010, the loss of Donato, her 6-month-old Berner puppy, led Gerba down two new paths. Donato had died after ingesting poisonous “death cap” mushrooms. The deadly fungi thrive in the Bay Area and can be found throughout the year, particularly in the vicinity of oak trees. Gerba immediately went to work educating others about the dangers of poisonous mushrooms. She created a blog and a “mushroom alert” card. To date, over 70,000 cards have been distributed. (For more on mushroom hazards, go to tinyurl.com/fung911 and tinyurl.com/DCapAlert12.) Gerba says she is gratified that her efforts have helped, noting, “Ten years ago there was very little awareness of the dangers of poisonous mushrooms.” She is currently working with researchers to develop a product that would shorten the time required for diagnostic tests on dogs suspected of having ingested deadly amatoxin. The product, a test strip, works similarly to an in-home pregnancy test and would shorten the time required for diagnosis from the 12 hours needed now to a couple of minutes. (For more on the test strips click go to amatoxtest.com.) While Gerba was still coping with Donato’s death, her friend and business partner in Texas, Gail Krall, urged her to consider going down another path by taking on a new and very different type of dog.

See MARCO, page 16
Mary Loveless
October 7, 1923 – February 2, 2020

Longtime Woodside resident Mary Loveless, 96, passed away on February 2, 2020 in Bradenton, Florida. Born on October 7, 1923 in Fort Dodge, Iowa, she was raised in Texas and met her husband, Lee, at the University of Texas and married in 1944. Mary moved to Bradenton, Florida from California in 2010. She loved gardening, travelling, and outdoor activities such as house boating, swimming and tennis. She was always an active member in her church and loved volunteering at the local hospitals. In her later years you would always find her with a book nearby or outside tending to her yard.

Preceded in death by her husband and siblings, she will be greatly missed by her children Ruth, Jim (Connie), Mark (Kathy), and Rebecca as well as her five grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren. At her request a gathering honoring her life and passing will be a private family affair.

Mary Ann Southam (Currie)

On January 20, 2020, Mary Ann Southam, age 79, passed away at Sunrise Palo Alto due to complications of liver cancer. She was born in Bagley, Minnesota, to Archibald and Lillian Currie. Due to her father’s rising career as an educator, the family moved to Mahtomedi, Evansville, and Garden City, Minnesota, before relocating, in 1954, to Tustin, California.

After graduation from Tustin Union High School, Mary attended UCLA, where she earned her BS and MS degrees in kinesiology. She spent the following years as a teacher and school administrator before entering Stanford University and obtaining her PhD in Behavioral Healthcare. This led to a 20-year career as Vice-President at ALZA/Johnson and Johnson in Palo Alto, California, where she oversaw the clinical development of the world’s first transdermal fentanyl drug delivery product. Mary is credited with 12 publications and 14 patents. She has been retired since 2004.

In August 2019, Mary and her best friend and loving husband James Southam celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. They have enjoyed a life filled with the pleasures of world travel, parties, theater, opera and loving friends. Mary was an avid kinesiologist. She spent the following years as a teacher and school administrator before entering Stanford University and obtaining her PhD in Behavioral Healthcare. This led to a 20-year career as Vice-President at ALZA/Johnson and Johnson in Palo Alto, California, where she oversaw the clinical development of the world’s first transdermal fentanyl drug delivery product. Mary is credited with 12 publications and 14 patents. She has been retired since 2004.

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Coffeebar was born in the granite of the High Sierras in 2010. Since then, we’ve been on the pursuit to raise the bar of sustainability through excellent food & coffee. We believe that everything should be made from scratch and with love. From vertically sourced coffee to pastries crafted in-house daily as well as a seasonal menu developed by our expert culinary team, we are excited to serve you an experience that gives you everything you need to feel welcome in our world.

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Menlo Park pastor placed on leave for ‘poor judgment’

Pastor John Ortberg allowed a volunteer attracted to children to work with youth, church officials say

By Angela Swartz  Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park megachurch recently placed a pastor on leave after learning he allowed a volunteer who admitted an “unwanted thought pattern of attraction to minors” to continue working with children for about a year and a half.

Menlo Church senior pastor John Ortberg was suspended on Nov. 22 after someone alerted church leaders that Ortberg had offered “prayers and referrals for counseling” to the volunteer, but didn’t prevent the person from working with minors at the 950 Santa Cruz Ave. campus, according to a Jan. 21 email church officials sent members.

Ortberg did not consult anyone at Menlo Church — at which 6,000 people attend weekly services across the evangelical Presbyterian church’s six locations that run from South San Francisco down to Saratoga — about the situation, the email states.

The board retained an independent investigator, who did not find any misconduct in the Menlo Church community, said Beth Seabolt, the church’s Elder Board chair, in the email. Ortberg was reinstated on Jan. 24, she noted.

Nevertheless, the investigation showed John exhibited poor judgment that was inconsistent with his responsibilities as Senior Pastor,” she wrote.

On Feb. 2, Ortberg’s son, Daniel Lavery, a Slate.com columnist, posted a widely read tweet — which has garnered 203 retweets and 5,300 likes as of Feb. 10 — stating that he was the person who alerted church officials to his father’s interactions with the volunteer on Nov. 21, which occurred in July 2018.

Lavery did not name the volunteer, but said that he or she shared with him on Nov. 15 that the volunteer had experienced obsessive sexual feelings about young children” and was seeking that unsupervised volunteer positions with children to treat this obsession. In his tweet, Lavery said he confirmed with his father that his father had encouraged the unsupervised work. Ortberg, Lavery wrote, asserted that the “most important thing was maintaining secrecy over the affair.”

The individual in question was a part-time volunteer at the church and has not volunteered at any church events since this issue was raised with the board, said Heather Holliday, the senior director of marketing and communications at Menlo Church.

The church has policies in place to keep children safe, according to officials. For example, all leaders are interviewed and their background checked.

See Pastor, page 19

Menlo Church, the former Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, is on Santa Cruz Avenue in downtown Menlo Park.
PASTOR continued from page 18

they said. Also, they said, a child is never alone with an adult on overnight trips or in a room on the church campus.

In the Jan. 21 email, officials also mentioned they are reviewing their protective measures for children.

The January email was the church’s first public acknowledgment of why Ortberg was absent. Church officials told members in an early December email obtained by The Almanac that Ortberg was on an unspecific leave, explaining the reservation system that would limit wine tasting and sales to 16 hours per weekend, which would include Fridays, and limit the number of visitors to 50 per hour during daytime hours. Weekday wine tasting and sales would be by appointment, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and limited to 30 visitors per day.

There would be six standard distribution days and three special-release distribution days per year in which wine club members would pick up their wine at the site, with a limit, respectively, of 150 guests and 100 guests. There would also be one community event, where amplified music would not be allowed.

The current revised proposal maintains that all vehicles traveling to the site on routine daily visits and distribution days can be accommodated by the 32 parking spaces already on site, along with 13 additional gravel parking spaces.

The Neely family’s latest modification to the proposal that would address residents’ objections specifies a reservation system that would limit wine tasting and sales to 16 hours per weekend, which would include Fridays, and limit the number of visitors to 50 per hour during daytime hours. Weekday wine tasting and sales would be by appointment, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and limited to 30 visitors per day.

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Oslo offers a call for hope

Los Altos Stage Company’s political drama searches for optimism in the 1993 peace process

By Lloyd Lee

Before former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with former Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman Yasser Arafat on the South Lawn of the White House on Sept. 13, 1993, the day of the official signing of the Oslo I Accord, secret meetings between Israeli and PLO officials were orchestrated to negotiate the terms of agreements aimed to eventually end the decades long Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Ahmed Qurie, a PLO official, approached Israeli diplomat Uri Savir in one of the first meetings and, according to the New Yorker, candidly asked, “We are second-rate guerilla fighters. Why are we a threat to you?” A stunned Savir replied, “Because you want to live in my house.” J.T. Rogers’ play “Oslo,” currently presented by Los Altos Stage Company, starts months before Savir and Qurie actually met in real life — the two don’t interact until act two — but it constantly depends on these types of deeply personal and heated dialogue to flesh out the abstractions of geopolitics and make them more tangible.

Instead of portraying a war between two foreign bodies and its countless players, “Oslo” strips the Israeli-Palestinian conflict down to a simple but effective stage of shifting chairs, desk and large white double doors that constantly loom behind the bitter infightings of a few powerful but vulnerable men.

And it captures the rationale Norwegian sociologist Terje Rod-Larsen, depicted by Robert Sean Campbell, used when he helped facilitate clandestine meetings between PLO and Israeli officials with Norway’s foreign affairs minister and wife Mona Juul, played by Tanya Marie, who makes her company debut with “Oslo.” “You are trapped in a procedure that is rigid, impersonal and incapable of building trust,” the impassioned sociologist shouts. “Establish a second channel ... not grand pronouncements between governments, but intimate discussions between people.”

During the nearly three-hour dramatization of the true political saga directed by Los Altos Stage Company’s Executive Director Gary Landis, the couple deftly maneuvers through conflicting cultural beliefs and deeply rooted psychological trauma from years of political persecution in order to get officials from the PLO and Israel to sit in a room for a productive discussion of peace.

But whenever members of the two parties do enter the same space, civility feels as fragile as their masculinity and can only hold together for so long. When Qurie, played by Mohamed Ismail, and Savir, played by Josiah FRampton, begin to review a draft of the accords, it only takes a few lines before one of them starts to blame the other for the carnage that’s been inflicted upon their people.

“You have killed our athletes in Munich, murdered our schoolchildren,” says Savir right before Qurie reminds him that it’s the other side that “shoots our children,” says Savir right before Qurie reminds him that it’s the other side that “shoots our children for sport.”

Part of that tension is also made palpable with the help of Ismail’s towering 6 feet-plus stage presence, civility feels as fragile as the physical structure he stands upon.

In campbell’s interpretation of Larsen. Campbell depicts the sociologist as someone who is overly ambitious but clumsy when actually dealing with sensitive relationships — whether it’s with the negotiators or his wife — because he’s so desperate to get things done. It’s seen in his

Visit openspacetrust.org/lectures for tickets.

All lectures take place at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts.

### REVIEW

“Oslo” offers a call for hope, but it’s ultimately a working through of complex, emotionally charged political maneuvering. There’s a palpable sense of the fragility of the moment as the two sides do enter the same space and try to get things done. It’s seen in his

### West Bay Sanitary District Invitation to Bid-Surplus Vehicle 2008 Ford Escape.

“Vehicles are sold as is and all sales are final” 56,451 miles, Center Console, AC, Power Windows, Am/Fm/CD, Traction Control, Amber Safety lights, Rear cargo cover. Bids accepted in sealed envelopes marked “West Bay Ford Escape 2-6-2020” bids are due by 3pm on Feb 27, 2020 Location: West Bay Sanitary District Office 500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, CA 94025 Bidders must provide the following information in the sealed bid: Full legal name, current address, phone number, and bid amount. Vehicle may be inspected from M-F 8am – 4 pm Vehicles must be picked up and payment received within FOUR (4) working days following the bid opening. Office hours are M-F 8 AM to 4 PM. Payment: Cash, Cashier’s or Certified Checks, and Money Orders are only accepted forms of payment. No personal checks accepted. Call (650) 321-0384 for more info.

All vehicles and item are sold “As Is”. There are no warranties (expressed or implied), adjustments, repairs, refunds or exchanges. By bidding, buyer agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the District from any and all damages, injuries, and/or causes of action which may involve any equipment, tools, or other goods occurring subsequent to the date of this sale. All smog related repairs and certifications are the sole responsibility of the buyer (refer to California Vehicle Code division 12, section 24007.5.)
OSLO

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OSLO

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eyes and his movements, which can be uncertain and jittery. Some knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could be helpful for audiences (Maya’s character also has a few assets that provide context for who’s who), but it’s not necessary to see what emotional response Rogers tries to pull out from viewers when his characters tirelessly work to achieve peace amongst people that don’t seem to be prepared for it.

It’s an admirable, albeit sometimes forced call for optimism. (At one point, Campbell’s character makes a direct, clichéd request to the audience to look beyond the horizon and search for hope.) And knowing how the real Oslo Accord failed to establish a peace agreement or a century after the ceremonial handshake — reminiscent in the historic 1993 Oslo Accords. Through Feb. 16, 2-3 p.m. Free. Belle Haven Branch Library, 435 Ivy Drive, Menlo Park. menlib.org

Music

"Macbeth" West Oak Stage plays

Oslo’s Winner of the 2017 Tony Award for Best Play, "Oslo" tells the true and widely unknown story of how Norwegian diplomat and his husband planned the secret meetings between Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, leading to the Oslo Accords in 1993.

Austrian at the outset of World War II. Concert pianist Mona Golabek recounts her mother’s poignant saga of hope and resilience to illuminate her musical journey. Through Feb. 16; dates and times vary. $25-$55; discounts available. Holocaust Museum and Education Center, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. museum.mvm.org

Talks & Lectures

Ballroom Cultural Series

Frail’s Ballroom Cultural Series features nine unique events ranging from live music to interactive performances. This upcoming Sunday, Waterlily- Arbortron Huntinton Club Plant Collections Fellow Tony Huang talks about the curious sex lives of plants. Feb. 16, 3-5 p.m. $30. Frail Gardens, 86 Canada Road, Woodside. frail.org

It is L.D., ADHD, anxiety, or all of the above? The Children’s Health Council and Common Ground Speaker Series join forces to discuss learning and attention differences as well as anxiety and depression. Feb. 12, 7-9 p.m. Free. Menlo School, 50 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton. chconline.org

Kevin Fedarko and Peter McBride Wal- lace Author Kevin Fedarko and photographer Peter McBride talk about their adventure through an 800-mile hike of the Grand Canyon. Feb. 18, 8 p.m. $23-$43. Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, 500 Castro St., Mountain View. tickets.mvmc.org

Museums & Exhibits

"Contraptions: Classic Coin-Operated Machines" explores what it was like before the era of credit cards with classic coin-operated machines, including gambling devices, a multiscop, vending machines and more. Through Feb. 16. Friday-Sunday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. Free. The Museum of American Heritage, 351 Homer Ave., Palo Alto. moah.org

"Process and Pattern: Memory, history and making collage in the work of contemporary artists" at Mural McGinnis, Bjarne Melgaard and Analia Saban. Through Feb. 17, 2020; closed Tuesdays. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Anderson Collection, 314 Lomita Drive, Stanford. events.stanford.edu

Richard Diebenkorn See an intimate and interactive installation of famed Bay Area artist Richard Diebenkorn’s paintings and sketchbooks that shed light on the artist’s process, including his shift from figurative to more abstract work. Ongoing; times vary, closed Tuesdays. Free. Cantor Arts Center, 338 Lomita Drive, Stanford. museum.stan- ford.edu

"The Square Show" "The Square Show" is a group exhibition of 6 x 6 inch works ideal for gift-giving and new collectors. Through Feb. 19, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; closed Sundays. Free. Portola Art Gallery, 75 Arbor Road, Menlo Park. portolaartgallery.com

"Giselle" Drama Theatre uses the canonical giselle-filled ballet story, "Giselle," for a unique performance of aerial dance, ballet and butch. Feb. 13-15; times vary. $20-$30; discount available. Drama Theatre, 2102 Broadway St., Redwood City. dramaatb.org

"Buena Vista Social Club" From the streets of Havana to the stage of Carnegie Hall, "Buena Vista Social Club" is a documentary that explores the formation of Cuba’s greatest musical talents. Feb. 16, 6 p.m. Free. Ohlman Hall, McMurphy Buildings, 355 Roth Way, Stanford. live.stanford.edu

"Ruby Bridges""Madera Library screens a docudrama about the New Orleans school desegregation crisis of 1960, "Ruby Bridges," Feb. 15, 2:30-4 p.m. Free. Mondo Park Library, 800 Alma St., Menlo Park. menlopark.org

Lessons & Classes

English Conversation Club Practice and work with volunteer tutors to develop English language skills. Feb. 17, 10-11:30 a.m. Free. Menlo Park Library, 800 Alma St., Menlo Park. menlopark.org

Submiting items for the Calendar
Go to Almanacnews.com and see the Community Calendar module at the top right side of the page. Click on “Add your event.” If the event is of interest to a large number of people, also e-mail a press release to Editor@Almanacnews.com

Community Groups

Valentine Craft Week Create a Valentine’s Day card or any type of art to give to a spe- cial someone using provided materials. Feb. 19, 2-5 p.m. Free. Menlo Park Library Winner 800 Alma St., Menlo Park. menlopark.org

Author Events

Peggy Orenstein and Donovan Somera Yrastorla Author Peggy Orenstein and health educator Donovan Somera Yrastorla talk about the sexual lives of young men, sharing how they can understand and negotiate the new rules of physical and emotional intimacy.

Former Poet Laureate Local author John Billheimer visits the Mystery Readers Group to share his new book, “Primary Target,” the sixth addition to his Owen Allison mystery series. Feb. 19, 7-9 p.m. Free. Cantor’s Books, 1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park. keplers.org


Lloyd Lee is the editor-in-chief for the Palo Alto Weekly, The Almanac’s sister publication.

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Why I oppose the Neely wine tasting room plan

By Kathleen Bennett

I am writing to express my opposition to the Spring Ridge Conditional Use permit application by the Neely family for expanded use of their property. I oppose the Neely application for two reasons:

- The general plan does not support the Neely endeavor.
- The Neelys have demonstrated over the course of the last 13 years that they will continue to ask for conditional use permits to expand their wine growing endeavor as long as the town of Portola Valley continues to approve all or part of these applications. Only when we repeatedly demonstrate that the town does not want a wine business with a tasting room and an events space in an area designated as open space will they get the message that they cannot hold themselves above the mission, goals and vision of the town as clearly expressed in the general plan.

The general plan does not support a commercial endeavor that imposes upon open space. As a member of the General Plan Review Committee of 1995, I am sure the Neelys will argue that the general plan is outdated and needs updating. Additionally, the general plan urges that commercial activities be restricted to the four existing commercial areas:

- Four local shopping and service centers are indicated on the plan diagram. These centers are all existing at the present time and have sufficient area to meet the needs of local residents when the planning area is fully developed. The four centers are Ladera Country Shopper, Natherost Triangle Area, Town Center, and Sharon Heights Shopping Center.

As well, the general plan insists that new businesses in Portola Valley should serve the existing population: “The development of new commercial and office floor area should … only be permitted when it is demonstrated that the proposed additional space and uses are needed, within the objectives of this plan, to serve the existing population.”

In 1994-5, she is the founder of The Girls Middle School.

Additionally, the general plan urges that commercial activities be restricted to the four existing commercial areas: Four local shopping and service centers are indicated on the plan diagram. These centers are all existing at the present time and have sufficient area to meet the needs of local residents when the planning area is fully developed. The four centers are Ladera Country Shopper, Natherost Triangle Area, Town Center, and Sharon Heights Shopping Center.

As well, the general plan insists that new businesses in Portola Valley should serve the existing population: “The development of new commercial and office floor area should … only be permitted when it is demonstrated that the proposed additional space and uses are needed, within the objectives of this plan, to serve the existing population.”

Although the Neelys claim that 50% of their members are Portola Valley residents, we have no guarantee that their member base will remain at a 50/50 ratio. In 2011, the Neelys asked to build a barn. The Planning Commission unanimously rejected the request; yet a year later it was approved. Now they want to turn that barn into a wine tasting and event space. Does anyone believe they did not have this expanded use permit in mind when they built the barn?

In Conditional Use Permit X7D-151, which allows for additional acreage (5.5 acres) on which to grow grapes, item No. 5 states, “Customers may not come to the winery for tasting or purchasing of wine.” What has changed in the last seven years that would induce the Planning Commission to permit wine tasting and purchasing when it was expressly forbidden in the last application?

The town must demonstrate to the Neelys that their persistence in repeatedly submitting applications for expansion of their wine operations will not work! Compromise with this family only leads to more applications down the line to be allowed to create and grow a business that is inconsistent with the town’s goals.

The residents of Portola Valley want their elected and appointed officials to preserve the rural character of the town. This is especially true of the corridor that runs near the town center.

At the Planning Commission meeting I attended on Dec. 4, Lucy Neely nipped the general plan to try to demonstrate how her project could be approved. I urge the planning commissioners to stop looking at the details of this project and look at the bigger picture.

The Neelys want to run a commercial winery with many visits each day and several events a year. They have been pursuing this goal systematically since 2007. This project is not in a commercial area, it would disrupt the rural character of the town, there is no guarantee that the members would be Portola Valley residents, and there is no doubt it will disrupt the tranquility of the town by increasing traffic.

Most of us want to support the dreams of young people. Lucy Neely is a lovely, articulate, and passionate young woman. She has worked tirelessly to entice the town into supporting her project. But no one person or one family in Portola Valley should be allowed to override the goals of the town as clearly expressed in the general plan.

I urge you to reject all aspects of their application for yet another conditional use permit. Unless we want a full-scale commercial venture in the middle of our open space, we must stop negotiating endlessly with this family.
Stunning, Brand New Woodside Home!

With 4 bedrooms and 4 Bathrooms, this amazing brand new constructed home has numerous Velux skylights throughout the entire property. This ECO smart custom home built by Joseph Polati is approximately 4000 square feet of natural beauty. An open floor plan with vaulted ceilings throughout, this dream home boasts also oversized dueled paned windows that fill this home with natural light and sweeping views of nature at its finest. Additionally this home also has a Separate Guest Apartment with full kitchen and bathroom for your visiting family and friends. This property sits on one full flat acre of land and zoned for horses and is close to easily accessible riding trails!

Blue Dog Ranch

Stunning custom-built Rennie Boyd designed contemporary home in the highly desirable and rarely available Meder Street Upper Westside neighborhood. This estate offers ocean views, rolling meadows and oak trees. Truly a nature lovers paradise. Incredible gated property on 2 parcels totaling 7+ acres. 4,284+ sqft 2 story Green home with Durisol block construction (555 Meder St APN#002-312-14). The entire property benefits from a bank of solar panels on top of the barn and 3 car detached garage. Horse facilities include a 6 stall barn with wash rack, kitchen, bathroom, tack room, and hay room. There is also an arena, paddocks and round pen. The salt water pool is solar heated. Koi pond that sits next to a beautiful freestanding meditation room. In addition to the main house, there is a 2,750+ sqft 4 bedroom 3 bath guest house with studio (541 Meder St) adjacent to the primary residence on a separate parcel APN#002-312-18. 10 minutes to the beach and downtown and 13 minutes to Highway 17.

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