

**Plan to build 135 condos plus commercial space  
downtown wins commission's OK. Page 5**

# The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

AUGUST 2, 2006 [www.AlmanacNews.com](http://www.AlmanacNews.com)

| VOL. 41 NO. 48 | 40TH ANNIVERSARY

## *sesquicentennial*

**From the Gold Rush to Silicon Valley,  
San Mateo County is celebrating  
150 years of history with events  
throughout the year [Page 14]**

*Sports Hall of Fame*

The rotunda of the San Mateo County historic courthouse, now the history museum.

REDEFINING QUALITY SINCE 1990

Reading between the emotional line makes the difference between finding a house and a home.



### ATHERTON

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**\$2,475,000**



# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

### Great tree falls

A heritage oak tree, thought to be one of the oldest in the area, fell on July 22 at the Meconi home in Menlo Park. Bob Meconi, who grew up in the house, examines the bottom of the tree. See story and picture on **Page 8**.

### Atherton

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### On the cover

San Mateo County's historic courthouse, now its History Museum, is central to celebrating 150 years of county history. Sesquicentennial events are being held all year throughout the county. Almanac photo by Marjan Sadoughi. See **Page 14**.



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## ATTENTION OWNERS

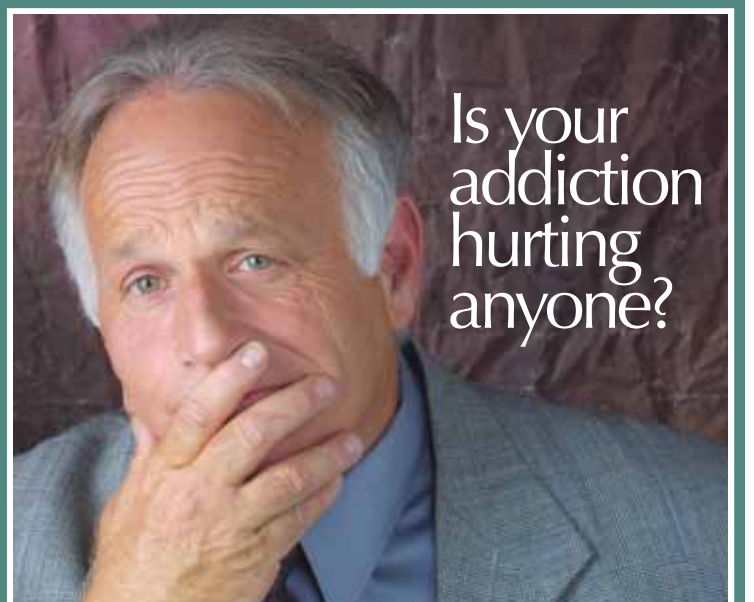
University Ford in Menlo Park and Palo Alto has closed.

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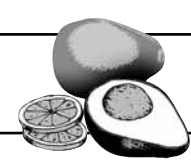
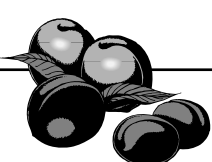
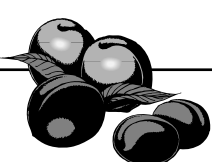
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### Frittata: An Omelet with a Twist

Julia Child can probably be credited with elevating the omelet to star status on U.S. menus years ago, when she burst on the scene as America's own French chef. Today many of those menus have added a similar yet delightfully different entree: the frittata. Like the French omelet, the Italian frittata is composed of eggs and practically anything else that strikes the cook's fancy, such as cheese, spinach, prosciutto, potatoes, or even bean sprouts. The twist on the omelet theme comes in the manner of cooking. Where the omelet is shaken in the pan as it cooks quickly, the frittata simmers undisturbed on top of the stove for about 20 minutes before being sprinkled with cheese and finished under the oven broiler.



Omelets are not just for breakfast. They can be eaten anytime, even as a different entree, especially a frittata. There are so many ingredients that we carry that can be incorporated into that great omelet. We feature the freshest produce along with an amazing variety of cheeses. We also carry quality meats, poultry, fish, breads, liquors and wines, and many precooked, ready-to-heat items.

Make your shopping experience even more enjoyable and stop by our Espresso coffee stand, or try one of our Smoothies.

*Hint: Frittatas are usually eaten hot, but they also make delicious appetizers served cold in bite-size pieces.*

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<b>CASCADE POWDERED DISHWASHER SOAP</b> 60 oz. — Also Lemon Citrus	<b>\$2.99</b>



## DELI

*This Week's Specials from Roberts:*

- ⇒ **Mozzarella Tomato with Basil**  
 ... and Lemon Zest Dressing.  
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- ⇒ **Fresh Mozzarella Balls Grande**  
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## WINE

### SUMMER WHITES

WHAT DO WE WANT in a summer white? Something lively, interesting, a little lighter, refreshing, even invigorating. The following wines are all this and more; ideal with seafood and the lighter cuisine we enjoy in the summer.

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- 2006 Goats do Roam Blanc, South Africa** ..... Reg. \$10.00 Sale - **\$8.99**
- 2005 Sauvignon Blanc Stellenbosch S.A., Amani** .... Reg. \$13.00 Sale - **\$11.99**
- 2005 Chignin "Anne de la Biguerne" Savoie** ..... Reg. \$13.00 Sale - **\$11.99**
- 2005 Grillo "Altavilla," Fririato** ..... Reg. \$13.00 Sale - **\$11.99**
- 2004 Sancerre "Les Charmes," Ande Vatan** ..... Reg. \$18.00 Sale - **\$15.99**
- 2005 Pinot Gris Marlborough, N.Z., Isabel** ..... Reg. \$18.00 Sale - **\$15.99**



## FISH / SEAFOOD

### Special This Week

<b>FRESH BAY SHRIMP</b>		<b>\$8.98</b> lb.
<b>TROUT</b>		<b>\$9.98</b> lb.
<b>COOKED PRAWNS 16-20 COUNT</b>		<b>\$15.98</b> lb.
<b>AHI (YELLOWFIN TUNA)</b>		<b>\$20.98</b> lb.



# Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## A good place to be when things get bad

San Mateo County is not as ready for a serious emergency as one might hope. A recent county Civil Grand Jury report detailed the shortcomings, but had a few kind words to say about the Midpeninsula.

The report called the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, which also covers Atherton, a model "in the forefront of disaster preparedness." Woodside Fire Protection District, which covers the unincorporated areas of Woodside and Portola Valley, boasted 300-plus trained residents in its Citizen Emergency Response and Preparedness Program, the highest number in the Peninsula.

Of course, the safest place to be when the big one hits is still probably out in the rural counties that many paramedics, firefighters and police officers call home.

If you'd like to pad Menlo Park fire's numbers, the district is holding free emergency prep classes starting September 21; call 688-8425 or go to [menlofire.org/cert](http://menlofire.org/cert).

## A little too rural for Atherton

The bumpy dirt expanse of Selby Lane in Atherton is finally going to get a coating of asphalt, says Duncan Jones, the town's public works director.

Paving work was set back by about a week when soil-compaction tests showed the roadbed dirt was too loose. Adding to the mess, a burst pipe on nearby Gresham Lane created a big mud pit. Additional work to prepare the soil did the trick, Mr. Jones says, and paving is set to start on Thursday, August 6, and should be done by the 13th.

The asphalt should make things a little more pleasant for the street's residents, but that doesn't mean Selby Lane will be open to the rest of us any time soon. Mr. Jones says to expect another two months of drainage and other work to be done before the road reopens.

Edited by Andrea Gemmet, [agemmet@almanacnews.com](mailto:agemmet@almanacnews.com).

# Allied Arts Guild dispute settled

■ Neighborhood group, nonprofit agree on new rules for events; council approval required.

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

Extensive negotiations and compromises by both sides have produced an agreement between the nonprofit group that owns and operates Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park and neighbors who sued over the expanded operation of the guild.

As a result of the agreement, which must be approved by the City Council, the guild will reduce the number of evening events held at the historic complex at 75 Arbor Road, cap the closing time of those events at 9 p.m., and limit the number of people permitted at the events to 150 — down from 225.

The agreement also lets the Woodside-Atherton Auxiliary, which owns and operates the guild, off the hook for commissioning — and paying for — a costly environmental impact report (EIR), which was required under a September 2005 ruling by the state Court of Appeal if the guild were to continue its expanded events programming.

The neighborhood group, Allied Arts Neighbors (AAN), had appealed a lower court ruling that allowed the auxiliary to significantly increase its special events programming without an EIR.

In a July 27 announcement of the agreement, AAN president Georgia Windhorst said that

the agreed-upon changes to the auxiliary's permit "are significant and substantial. They will limit the environmental impacts of the expanded operation of the guild."

The terms of the proposed amended permit are "the result of compromise on both sides," according to Jean Coblentz, president of the auxiliary.

## Background

The nonprofit group spent millions of dollars several years ago renovating and seismically retrofitting the historic buildings at Allied Arts Guild, which it operates to raise money for the Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford.

In 2003, the city issued permits allowing the auxiliary to greatly increase the number of

events at the complex, located on a 3.5-acre site in a quiet residential area bordered to the south by the creek.

Residents had pushed for the city to require an EIR for the project and to place tight restrictions on events they feared might be excessively noisy and would create traffic and parking problems in the neighborhood. Instead, the City Council voted unanimously to accept a small-scale environmental review known as a "negative declaration." The neighborhood group sued.

Although the two parties have tried since before the renovation project began to find an operational arrangement both could live with, the Appeals Court ruling was likely the turning point

See **GUILD**, page 8



The Derry project includes a two-level, 306-space parking garage (left) and buildings for condos and commercial use — retail or office.

Courtesy Steinberg Architects

# Derry condo-commercial project wins support

■ Commission OKs 'Derry' project.

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

A proposal to build 135 for-sale condominiums and 22,525 square feet of commercial space — for retail or offices — on Oak Grove Avenue near El Camino Real in Menlo Park won unanimous support from the Planning Commission on July 24.

The commission voted 7-0 to recommend that the City Council approve the project, which involves building 10

structures on a 3.5-acre site owned by the Derry family between El Camino Real and the Caltrain station.

The site borders Oak Grove Avenue and Derry Lane, and is currently home to several businesses, including Foster's Freeze and Wo Sing Laundry and Dry Cleaners.

The San Mateo-based O'Brien Group is partnering with the Derry family in the project, which involves demolition of existing structures and building 10 two- and three-story buildings.

Jim Pollart, vice president of land acquisition and planning for the O'Brien Group, said "it's

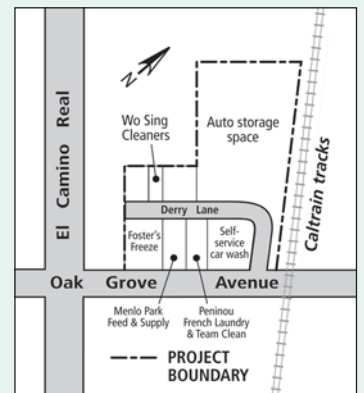
certainly a possibility" that existing tenants could fill the new commercial space, but detailed negotiations with any of the tenants have yet to take place.

The project includes plans for a two-level, 306-space parking garage with parking partially and fully submerged.

If approved by the council, construction could begin in early 2007 and be finished by late 2008, Mr. Pollart said.

Twenty-one of the condominiums would be below-market-rate units.

The City Council is tentatively scheduled to consider the project at its August 29 meeting. ■



A total of 135 condos and commercial uses — retail or offices — could replace existing businesses along Oak Grove Avenue and Derry Lane.



# Your Child's Health University

Lucile Packard Children's Hospital offers classes and seminars designed to foster good health and enhance the lives of parents and children.

## \* NEW FAMILY PROGRAM

This series of classes is designed to help families throughout the first nine months after birth, offering something for everyone. Enrollment includes participation in Mother-Baby Mornings, Dads' Nights and Working Mothers' Groups.

- Ongoing Weekly and Monthly Sessions

## \* INFANT CPR

The new Family and Friends Infant CPR program is a two-hour interactive class conducted by a certified instructor. The information in this class is specific for babies up to one year of age and includes presentation, video, text, practice on infant models and a certificate of completion.

- Monday, August 21

## \* INFANT CARE

Often touted as our "most fun" class, learn specifics of newborn care including bathing, temperature-taking, changing diapers, and feeding and soothing techniques. Infant doll models are used to allow for hands-on practice.

- Saturday, August 26

## \* REFRESHER CHILDBIRTH CLASS

An excellent refresher course on labor and delivery techniques, including how subsequent labors differ from the first, as well as sibling and family adjustments.

- Saturday, September 9

Call (650) 723-4600 or visit [www.lpch.org](http://www.lpch.org) to register or obtain more information on the times, locations and fees for these and other courses.



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# Dressing kids up for class

Nonprofit gives children in need new clothes to start the school year

By Sean Howell  
Special to the Almanac

Heather Hopkins has never forgotten her mother's childhood stories about dreading the first day of school because she was ashamed of her old, hand-me-down clothing.

Now the mother of a young daughter herself, Ms. Hopkins last month launched My New Red Shoes, a nonprofit organization that will outfit 332 homeless and low-income children in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties with new clothes for the upcoming school year. The number of participants more than doubles her original goal of 150.

On July 19, the Menlo Park resident began the process of sorting and packaging the clothing donations with five or six volunteers, including her mother, who had flown in from Texas for the occasion.

Taking a shopping bag made for a specific child from a stack in the middle of the room, Ms. Hopkins pulls out a bright pink shirt, jeans and a pair of kid-sized pink shoes, and sets them on the table in front of her. Children submit a wish list to the program with their sizes and favorite colors, and it's not hard to tell that this girl has chosen pink.

Three female volunteers follow Ms. Hopkins to the back of the garage, where she picks out socks and underwear to complete the order, then slides the clothing into a red sack along with a handwritten card.

The organization has already received the amount of donations it was looking for. Now, it's just a matter of packaging and distributing them, with the help of social service agencies like Shelter Network and the Girls Club of the Mid-Peninsula.

Ms. Hopkins created the program with disadvantaged children like her mother in mind, but the real impetus for forming it came from her

desire to teach more privileged kids, like her 2-year old daughter, about charity. When they moved into a house in Menlo Park a year ago, Ms. Hopkins started to wonder how her daughter would learn about issues like homelessness in a fairly affluent neighborhood. My New Red Shoes seemed like a good place to start.

Accordingly, Ms. Hopkins encourages kids to get involved in the donation process, either by helping their parents shop for the clothes that they will donate, or through a program she calls High Top Kids, in which she helps children at local schools organize clothing drives that contribute to My New Red Shoes' efforts. In the first High Top Kids program at Oak Knoll Elementary School in May, Ms. Hopkins enlisted 19 school children to write letters and make posters and cards.

"The goal is to plant the seeds of compassion and charity early on, to have children get involved at a young age and get a hands-on experience," she says of the effort. "Sometimes parents are so busy, they forget to talk to their kids about charity."

Ms. Hopkins says she was excited to see how willing the children were to learn about homelessness, and to sympathize with less fortunate kids. She hopes to organize another High Top Kids event during the coming school year, though she hasn't yet set a date.

She envisions doubling amount of kids the donations reach to 500 or 600 next year, and is contemplating turning the nonprofit into a national network, though she insists that if she does, it will retain its personal touch.

For more information or to learn how to donate, visit mynewredshoes.org. ■

*'The goal is to plant the seeds of compassion and charity early on, to have children get involved at a young age and get a hands-on experience.'*

HEATHER HOPKINS, WITH SACK OF CLOTHES



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For more information or to learn how to donate, visit mynewredshoes.org. ■

## Menlo Park commemorates its founding

A community event — with ice cream, vintage fire equipment, and the dedication of a plaque — will be held Saturday, August 12, to commemorate the founding of Menlo Park in 1893 by two Irish settlers, Dennis T. Oliver and Daniel C. McGlynn.

Organized by the Menlo Park Historical Association and the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce, the event will be held

from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the south parking lot of the Menlo Park train station.

The commemoration is being held in conjunction with San Mateo County's year-long sesquicentennial celebration, said Richard Angus, president of the historical association.

There will be tours of the West Bay Model Railroad Association facility and music by the South

Bay Stompers.

A new edition of the Menlo Park historical book, "Beyond the Gates," will be available, as well as an updated brochure on historical places in Menlo Park. Ice cream will be provided by the historical association as part of its annual Kavanaugh Ice Cream Social.

For more information, call the chamber at 325-2818.

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



How the real estate tax code makes downsizing easier for "Empty Nesters"

**Q. Our kids are gone and our house is too large for us. We want to get a smaller, less expensive home. How does the capital gains law relate to our situation?**

—LG

**A.** The capital gains tax code is perfectly tailored for "empty nesters" that want to "downsize". Now you can sell your larger home and move to a smaller less expensive home, and perhaps, completely avoid paying capital gains tax. You can put cash in your pocket and use the profit however you wish.

As long as the profit (the amount above the cost basis less selling costs) from the sale of the current home does not exceed \$500,000 if married or \$250,000 if single, there is no capital gain tax at all. You can move up, down, or sideways; there are no restrictions. The

old code restrictions no longer apply. Before, there was only a downsizing option if you or your spouse had reached age 55 or older and the tax exclusion was limited to \$125,000. Of course, in our area, and especially if you have lived in your house for a long time, there is such incredible appreciation that it still leaves a lot of gain on which to pay tax. Good news, bad news!

You might think about considering using some of your tax-free profit to buy income producing properties that generate monthly income for your retirement. While being a property manager can have its share of headaches, if you choose your property and your tenants wisely, investments in real estate, over the long term, almost always turn out to be excellent investments.

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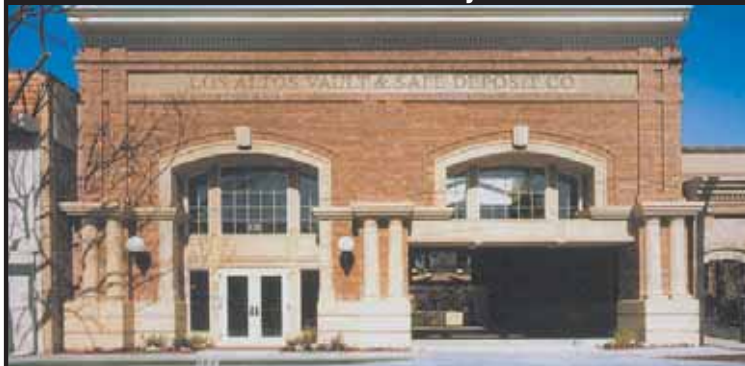


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# Three bids to take over child care programs

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

The city of Menlo Park has received three bids to run its preschool and school-age child care programs.

Pacifica-based Building Kidz, Redwood City-based Leaning Adventures, and city staff members who run the city's existing programs, have responded to a request for proposals (RFP) to operate the programs.

The three proposals will go before the Child Care RFP Committee, a nine-person task force of parents, appointed officials and child care specialists.

The committee is scheduled to review and discuss the proposals at its August 23 meeting; interview finalists September 6; and ultimately make a recommendation to the council regarding which bidder should operate the programs.

The city submitted the request for proposals to 29 Bay Area child care providers in June, after the City Council — led by council members Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc and supported by Mayor Nicholas Jellins — directed staff to explore privatizing the programs.

Ms. Winkler and Ms. Duboc say the programs are too costly.

Council members Kelly Fergusson and Andy Cohen opposed considering privatization until the costs of the programs are better defined.

The RFP process focuses on the city's child care programs based in the new \$3.4 million Menlo

Children's Center — not those in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

## Building Kidz

Vineeta Bhanderi, owner and administrator of Building Kidz, said her top priority would be to ensure "as little change as possible for children and parents" if her company wins the contract.

She added that at least half of the city's child care teachers would be invited to keep their jobs if Building Kidz was chosen to operate the programs.

Building Kidz was established in December 2002 as a for-profit company, and operates preschool and school-age programs in Pacifica and South San Francisco, Ms. Bhanderi said. She said the company is looking to become a non-profit organization and extend its influence in the Bay Area.

"We're looking to reach out to more families and having [a Menlo Park site] allows us to do that," she said.

The Child Care Coordinating Council of San Mateo County and the Community Care Licensing of San Mateo County have no records, licensing requests or contact information for the other private bidder, Learning Adventures. The city lists Teresa Brown as a contact for Learning Adventures, but there is no local phone listing for the provider.

More detailed information regarding the bidders and their plans for operating the programs is expected to be in the proposals, which have not been made available to the public.

— limited to 90 people.

■ The number of evening events each calendar year would be capped at 32; the current permit allows 43. Only 15 of the 32 can have more than 90 participants.

■ All evening events must conclude by 9 p.m. This was a compromise on both sides: The current permit requires evening events Mondays through Thursday to end by 8 p.m., and at 10 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.

■ A parking lot attendant will be required for all special events to valet-park cars or take other measures needed to prevent parking from overflowing into the neighborhood.

■ Amplified music will be allowed indoors only, and under tight restrictions.

■ The auxiliary's neighborhood liaison must return calls from residents complaining about problems during nighttime events within 15 minutes. ■



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

A heritage oak tree, thought to be one of the oldest oaks in the area, fell on July 22 at the Meconi home in Menlo Park.

## Mighty oak topples in Menlo Park

■ The tree may have been the oldest oak in the city, some 300 years old by one estimate.

By Sean Howell  
Special to the Almanac

As San Mateo County celebrates its 150th anniversary, a heritage oak, which had served as a reminder of life well before the county's creation, fell in Menlo Park on Saturday, July 22.

The tree, located near the back of the front yard at 550 Hobart St., may have been over 300 years old, making it one of the oldest, if not the oldest, oak in Menlo Park, according to city arborist Juan Alvarez. Bob Meconi, who grew up in the house, said he spoke to an arborist who estimated that it was the second-largest oak in the Bay Area, at about 9 feet in diameter and 45-50 feet tall. Mr. Meconi said that he was building a shelf on the front lawn when he heard something that sounded like acorns falling, which seemed odd because oak trees don't produce acorns during the summer.

"I walked over to the tree, and the ground around it looked different," Mr. Meconi said. "It was almost hallucinatory; it just didn't look right."

He noticed a crack in the concrete behind the tree, and decided to call 911.

When firefighters arrived, they considered evacuating the

house next door, concerned that the tree would either fall on that house or on the wing of the Meconi home.

Instead, it toppled forward into the front yard at around 2:30 p.m., causing only slight damage to a car parked in the driveway and few shingles on the roof of one wing of the house. Mr. Meconi said that the ground started to rise up, he heard a crack, and within three seconds the tree had fallen.

### Member of family

He said that the tree was like a member of the family, providing a place to swing during his childhood and a shady refuge when he was an adult. His family has lived there for 47 years.

"It was like a father, a grandfather, or a big brother; silent, witnessing our lives," he said.

It also provided a home for wildlife, including squirrels, robins, and red-tailed hawks, he said, serving as a faint reminder of the natural world that existed long before Menlo Park was founded.

Dianne Dryer, the environmental program coordinator for Menlo Park, said that Mr. Alvarez noticed fungus in the roots when he came by the house to examine it after it had fallen, the probable cause of the tree's collapse.

She said that root fungus

is responsible for the deaths of most old trees, hollowing them out and leaving them unable to stand. She added that it usually results from a tree getting too much water, and urged owners of oaks not to water them.

"You can't tell that the process [of root fungus] is going on, so it's very dangerous," she said, adding that she was grateful no one was hurt when the Meconis' tree fell.

But she was quick to say that she thought the Meconis had maintained the tree well, and that age was certainly a factor. Bob Meconi's parents, Harold and Maria Teresa, received an award from the city's Environmental Quality Commission in 1998 for taking good care of the tree.

A comprehensive study of the tree's life will be undertaken when an arborist and environmentalists visit the house next week, Mr. Meconi said.

The family is considering either replacing the oak with a statue after it is cleared away, or simply leaving the y-shaped stump as a reminder.

"We need to give ourselves some space to have some quiet time to think about it," Mr. Meconi said of his family. "We're still realizing more about our relationship to it, and the role it played in our lives." ■

See picture on Page 3.

## GUILD

continued from page 5

to resolving the matter, giving the neighborhood group more bargaining power.

Jim Dickerson of the neighborhood group said that residents continued the fight for tighter limits on guild events to protect the neighborhood over the long term. The auxiliary, he said, generally acted in good faith with the neighbors, but "our concern was that the guild could be sold." In that event, the same terms would be in place, but the new owners wouldn't necessarily act in the neighborhood's interests.

## The agreement

Highlights of the proposed permit amendments include:

■ Evening events would be limited to 150 people, with events labeled "small special events" — also in the evening

# Excavation fees root of problem in building department probe

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

Duplicious developers, a “wholly inadequate” software system and sloppy procedures appear largely to blame for more than \$130,000 in uncharged fees by the Atherton Building Department, an audit shows.

The failures revealed by the audit, however, were not widespread in the department; instead they pertained to the staff’s collection of the town’s new excavation fees, said Atherton Finance Director John Johns, who has been overseeing the internal audit.

Atherton’s new excavation surcharge is a fee triggered when dirt is trucked on or off site.

Mr. Johns detailed the audit’s most current findings in a report to the Atherton Audit Committee on July 27.

The town’s building department is facing inquiries on two fronts. There is a recently completed investigator’s report on allegations of misdeeds by building department staff, and an expanded internal audit reviewing the department’s books and operations.

The building department reviews plans, issues permits and does inspections, and collects about \$2 million a year in various fees.

Shortly before a surcharge on excavation was put into place in May 2005, there was a flurry of applicants trying to get permits for basements, swimming pools and the like in order to avoid the new charge of \$22 per cubic yard on off-haul. Mr. Johns said 11 projects representing \$134,000 in excavation surcharge fees appear to have been improperly exempted from paying the fees.

“The department exceeded the discretion it had in letting people

## ■ ATHERTON

off the hook for the excavation surcharge,” he said.

The surcharge is used to fund road repair projects. Atherton charges all builders a road impact fee, but the City Council chose to impose an excavation surcharge after a study found that trucks

*‘The department exceeded the discretion it had in letting people off the hook for the excavation surcharge.’*

JOHN JOHNS  
ATHERTON FINANCE DIRECTOR

loaded with dirt do exponentially more damage to the streets than do passenger vehicles.

However, town employees weren’t entirely to blame. Mr. Johns noted that in two cases, applicants appeared to have pulled a “bait and switch” on the town, applying for a simple excavation permit for a swimming pool, for example, then using the permit to build a much larger basement.

“There appeared to be some intent on the part of the property owner to get the permit and use it (for something else),” Mr. Johns said.

A real cause for concern was that four of the 11 permits were submitted by a single contractor, and

represented half of the \$134,000 in uncollected excavation fees, he said. Other applications were accepted even though they were incomplete, or were accepted on or after the date the surcharge became effective, he found.

The smallest amount that should have been paid was \$2,904 for a swimming pool, Mr. Johns said. The largest was a basement project that should have been charged \$30,932, he said.

The developers with the questionable permits eventually may find a bill in the mail. City Attorney Marc Hynes is going to determine whether the fees can still be collected, Mr. Johns said.

## Remodeling

Another area initially of concern to auditors was remodeling projects that appeared to be undervalued. Some remodeling project fees that should have been based on the standard valuation of \$250 per square foot instead relied on the property owner’s declaration of the project’s value, said Mr. Johns.

“We thought we had a real issue here,” he said. As it turns out, having combed through half of the 105 files he targeted for review, he found that fees totaling only \$9,900 were not charged, he said.

Councilwoman Kathy McK-ithen, one of the two council

See FEES, next page

# Atherton city attorney faces council critique

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

City Attorney Marc Hynes, who has faced heavy criticism by several council members for withholding access to an investigator’s report into allegations of misdeeds by Atherton Building Department employees, is facing scrutiny over his job performance at an impromptu review this week.

The Atherton City Council, which traditionally doesn’t meet in August, has called a special closed session on Thursday, August 3, to evaluate the performance of Mr. Hynes, said Mayor Charles Marsala.

According to Mr. Hynes, attorney Lance Bayer’s investigation turned up no criminal misconduct, but disciplinary action may be taken against some building department employees.

Councilwoman Kathy McK-ithen, who went so far as to file a public records request for the report, has dismissed Mr. Hynes’ arguments for keeping the report away from the council. Mr. Hynes cited attorney-client privilege and employee privacy in denying her request, she said.

The City Council, she said, is the ultimately the client, since the investigator was hired by the town. As a council member, she said she pledged to bring transparency and accountability to town government, and that she has a fiduciary duty to know what is going on in the building department.

Jim Ewert, an authority on public records law who serves as the legal counsel to the California Newspaper Publishers Association, told the Almanac he’d never seen a city attorney “stiff-arm a council” in such a fashion, and called it “career suicide.” ■

## Correction

A story in the July 26 issue of the Almanac reported that a La Honda man was rescued July 15 after the car he was driving went off the road and plunged 100 feet into a valley in the mountainous part of Highway 84 in Woodside.

The story said the driver, Martin Browne, 56, was cited for drunken driving, according to information from the Sheriff’s Office. Sgt. Gary Brown has informed the Almanac that this information is incorrect. He was not cited for drunken driving or for any offense, Sgt. Brown said.

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## Town's excavation fee faces scrutiny

Atherton's surcharge on excavation work may be facing legal scrutiny.

Atherton charges a road impact fee to all builders, but in May 2005, the City Council imposed an excavation surcharge of \$22 per cubic yard of off-haul after a study found that dirt-laden trucks do serious damage to the streets.

Atherton's building community is not happy with the year-old excavation surcharge, and some builders are questioning its legality. The surcharge can add tens of thousands of dollars in permit fees to new home projects that include large basements

or other excavation work.

Atherton resident Carol Flaherty complained that she and her husband are facing \$58,000 in excavation surcharges for a retaining wall associated with a new house they're building.

"I have a very hard time believing the fee is not a tax, and as such has to be voted on by the citizens," she told the Atherton Audit Committee on July 27.

### Steve Westly

Also in the audience at that meeting were state Controller Steve Westly and his wife Anita. Ms.

Westly told the Almanac that they were there to learn about the excavation fee.

"There's more to it than we thought," she said. "We're purely interested as Atherton residents. We own a couple of properties that we are looking at building on."

Mayor Charles Marsala said no one has filed suit against Atherton over the excavation fee, but that he wants to keep on top of the issue.

"I have requested a second legal opinion to make sure we are doing the right thing and would be successful in a legal challenge," he told the Almanac.

## Three file for school board

Three candidates for election to three seats on the Menlo Park City School District Board turned in candidate papers on July 17, the first day of the filing period for the November 7 election.

They are: incumbent Laura Linkletter Rich, current board president, and parent volunteers Jeffrey B. Child and Deborah J. Fitz.

Mr. Child, a financial manager, was co-chair of the district's successful 2003 parcel-tax campaign and treasurer of the Menlo Park-Atherton Education Foundation that raised \$1.6 million in grants for the district this past year.

Ms. Fitz was the co-chair of the district's campaign to pass a \$91.1 million school bond on June 6. The bond measure received more than 70 percent voter approval; only a 55 percent majority was needed for passage. Her ballot designation is community volunteer.

Long before the candidate filing period opened, trustees Nancy Serrurier and Carol Orton said they would not seek re-election.

The filing period for candidates is automatically extended by five calendar days, until August 16, when an incumbent does not file by the August 11 deadline.

■ ELECTION 2006

### FEES

continued from previous page

members who sit on the Audit Committee, said the issue of project valuation has long been a concern to her. She advocates using either the standard basis of \$250 per square foot, or receipts for the work done.

"I've said for years, as far as valuation is concerned, that we need equity, we need a process that's valid and equitable," Ms. McKeithen said. "I was told that it doesn't matter, that as long as the Building Department pays for itself, we don't have to look at that."

I've been disgusted by that."

### 'Inadequate' system

Mr. Johns focused much of his discussion at the July 27 meeting on deficiencies in the Building Department's financial controls and procedures.

Record-keeping is so inadequate that in reviewing 185 project files, auditors found that only 68 of them had enough information to verify the permit fees. All the others required a time-consuming examination of physical records, he said. He blamed the department's antiquated record keeping system. "(Calling it) software would be a

generous term," he said.

The staff has been using printed tables to calculate fees rather than computer-based algorithms. Plan-checkers have not been independently recalculating fees tabulated by front-counter staff, a procedure that former Building Official Mike Hood had told him was in place and working efficiently, Mr. Johns said.

Mr. Hood retired June 30 after nearly 11 years with the town.

Mr. Johns came up with a number of recommendations that he said would improve accountability, such as a new database for tracking permits and monthly reconciliation of permits and fees collected. ■

## Two Carlsons file for council

Atherton City Council members Alan Carlson and Jerry Carlson (no relation) have filed council candidate papers and have qualified for the ballot, said Acting City Clerk Kathi Hamilton.

Alan Carlson, who is seeking a third term, is an attorney and a resident of the Lindenwood neighborhood. Jerry Carlson, who was appointed in January to fill the seat left vacant by Councilman Bill Conwell's

death, is CFO of the Selby Education Foundation, a former member of the Atherton Audit Committee, and a former president of the Atherton Civic Interest League.

The other incumbent, Mayor Charles Marsala, is seeking a second term, and said he was turning in his candidate papers Monday morning, July 31.

Three of the five seats on the Atherton City Council are up for election in November.



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Music@Menlo is made possible by a leadership grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Additional support provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Koret Foundation Funds, and the many individuals and organizations that share the festival's vision.

## No change to parking ban at popular Woodside trail

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Hikers hoping to park near the Crystal Springs Trail access on Raymundo Drive in Woodside, don't hold your breath. It looks like the town's two-year-old parking ban on the narrow road leading up to the trail gate is going to stand.

The popular trail leads into Huddart Park, but complaints from residents of Raymundo Drive led the Woodside Town Council to ban parking along the street in 2004. Among their issues: surly trespassers, drunken teens, armed marijuana farmers, and driveways — and sometimes the whole road — blocked by parked cars.

Since the parking ban's been in place, residents and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office report a steadily decreasing number of complaints.

However, runners, hikers and other outdoor enthusiasts say they have to park so far away that they are discouraged from using the trail. People now park on Runnymede Road to get to the trail.



**Crystal Springs Trail** leads into Huddart County Park.

Several compromise ideas were floated at the town council's July 25 meeting, including creating permit parking for Woodside residents only, and designating a few parking spots and limiting their use to daylight hours.

"The walk from Runnymede to the trail entrance is not an easy walk, and I'm a pretty fit person," said Page Kurnie, who asked the council to consider allowing permit parking. "I feel like something's been taken away from me, and my family, and my

See **TRAILS**, next page

## Details topple tree ordinance

■ Subcommittee sent back to the drawing board on tree-protection law.

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

The town of Woodside's struggle to get a tree protection ordinance on the books seems to be taking almost as much time as it takes a tiny acorn to grow into a mighty oak.

Although Woodside Town Council members agree that the town needs a clear set of rules governing tree removal and protecting significant trees, they are bedeviled by the proposed ordinance's details.

The town's Conservation and Environmental Health Committee spent two years drafting an ordinance. Their efforts were then tweaked by the town's Planning Commission and the resulting draft was recommended to the Town Council.

However, an attempt at the June 12 council meeting to pass the tree protection rules ended in a stalemate, and a subcommittee of two council members, two committee

members and Planning Director Hope Sullivan was formed to negotiate a compromise.

At the July 25 council meeting, after 1-1/2 hours of back-and-forth between the council and conservation committee members, it turns out that the subcommittee still has more work to do. Ms. Sullivan and some council members support a uniform ordinance that triggers a review of any tree with a circumference of 30 inches or more, measured 4 feet from the ground.

They said that the average property owner can't identify tree species and they don't want an ordinance that requires people to hire an arborist.

In most cases, tree removal permits would be issued over the counter with no fee.

The conservation committee supports an ordinance that lists significant native tree species and calls out slow-growing blue oak trees to be protected at a smaller trunk circumference than

### ■ WOODSIDE

other trees. If there is to be a one-size-fits-all rule, the size of significant trees should be reduced to 24 inches, they argued.

Stephanie MacDonald, the vice chair of the conservation committee, said that simpler was not necessarily better.

When the meeting ended just before midnight, the subcommittee was left with a list of eight issues to work out, such as creating a definition for a significant stand of trees and notifying nearby neighbors if the removal of a significant tree is going to be reviewed by the town's Architectural and Site Review Board or Conservation and Environmental Health Committee.

Ms. McDonald estimated that, so far, about 77 e-mails had flown back and forth between herself and the other subcommittee members, Mayor Deborah Gordon, Councilman Peter Sinclair and committee chair George Offen.

At least the paperless communiqués ensured that no trees died during the dickering.



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Vivien Abad, M.D., MBA, medical director, Clinical Monitoring Sleep Disorders Center, Camino Medical Group, affiliated with PAMF

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Hearst Center for Health Education, Level 3, Jamplis Building, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 795 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. RSVP to (650) 853-4873.

### Classes

"AARP Driver Safety Program," Friday, August 11 & 18, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Two-session, 8-hour classroom refresher tailored to older drivers. Sessions cover age-related physical changes, declining perceptual skills, rules of the road, local driving problems and license renewal.

"Supermarket Wise," Thursday, August 24, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Learn techniques for making healthier food choices in a local supermarket tour with dietitian Karen Ross, M.S., R.D.

"Good Nutrition and Feeding Practices for Toddlers," Wednesday, August 30, 6 – 8 p.m.

This class will address parental concerns regarding nutrition and feeding practices. It should be attended by parents or caretakers only.

"What You Need to Know About Warfarin," Wednesday, August 30, 2 – 3 p.m.

Learn what warfarin is, why you are taking it and how you can help yourself.

"Advance Health Care Directives," call for available dates and times.

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# Cities urged to act on public pension cost problem

■ League of California Cities urges officials to take initiative on 'pension and retiree medical benefit reform.'

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

A move to cut costs for public-employee pension plans sputtered to a halt in the spring of 2005 when Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, under pressure from unionized firefighters, police, nurses and teachers, withdrew a ballot initiative that would have trimmed their retirement benefits.

The League of California Cities, an association of city officials, has apparently taken the governor's proposal as a shot across the bow. In a recent letter to elected and appointed local government officials statewide, League spokesman Rod Gould, who is also the city manager in Poway in San Diego County, urged his colleagues to consider several changes to their local pension plans.

The governor, or someone with a similar agenda for change, will be back, Mr. Gould predicted. "It is only a matter of

time before others take up the mantle of pension and retiree medical benefit reform in California," he said. "Put simply, if we don't examine our systems and programs for excesses and abuses, and root them out, others will do so for us, and much more."

The league's proposed changes stop well short of the governor's 2005 initiative, which would have capped state payments into the pension fund and created a 401(k)-like plan in which new employees contribute to individually managed investment accounts.

Such a plan, known as defined-contribution, would have replaced the current system of defined benefits, which bases retirement pay on a fixed percentage of the employee's highest earning years.

Pension obligations have become a concern statewide. Many local government agencies adopted generous benefit plans during the booming

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The League of California Cities recommends:

- Raising employee retirement age to 55 from 50.
- Lowering pension benefits if retirees are entitled to Social Security benefits.
- Having employees share higher contribution rates with employers when returns from stock and bond markets fall off.

stock market of late 1990s. Since the market collapsed in 2000, the return on investment of the state-run pension fund has suffered but benefit packages have remained generous.

In the letter, the League of Cities makes several recommendations, including raising employee retirement age to 55 from 50; lowering pension benefits if retirees are entitled to Social Security benefits; and having employees share higher contribution rates with employers when market returns fall off.

## Local reaction

"My overall comment (on the League's letter) is that I certainly agree that this is a very, very big issue, like a time bomb that needs to be addressed," said Councilman Jerry Carlson of Atherton.

The first step, he said, is for public agencies to work together to "level the playing field" by reducing the ability of

one agency to lure employees from another by offering better benefits packages.

Atherton City Manager Jim Robinson said that such a conversation could start after the November election, with a goal of new legislation. "I think it's going to be a tremendous task to accomplish it," he said.

A major hurdle could be the two-tiered retirement plan, with new employees offered a defined-contribution rather than a defined-benefit plan.

"At some point in time, there has to be a switch-over," Mr. Carlson said, adding that he supports the principles in the governor's 2005 initiative.

## Union comment

No way, said Sascha Eisner, who represents Menlo Park staff for the Service Employees International Union. Such a plan "creates inequalities in the workplace," he said.

Mr. Eisner said he opposes bringing private-sector methods to public jobs. "We here in the labor movement believe that the public sector is a model which all working Americans — and people worldwide, for that matter — ought to enjoy," he said.

How to pay for those benefits? Finding that money might be easier if local agencies would raise taxes, said Mr. Eisner. Living in California is expensive and reliable public employees are hard to find. As hard as it is

to talk about tax increases, it's a discussion that needs to happen, he said.

Defined-benefit plans definitely attract private-sector employees, said Woodside Town Manager Susan George.

What if they were no longer offered? "I frankly think that if that happens, we would have a much harder time competing for top employees," she said. "If all I can offer is a 401(k), which is what they're offered in the private sector, I'm going to lose that edge."

## Fire district

Peter Carpenter, a member of the Board of Directors of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, is open to higher retirement ages and a two-tiered benefit plan, provided the impact is on new employees only. "It sets the stage for much more fiscal responsibility for the long term," he said.

Finding firefighters is no problem for a fire district with a reputation as an interesting and exciting place to work and that receives "hundreds of applicants" for every job opening, he said.

Mr. Carpenter said he does oppose legislation that would set rules about benefit packages. "Why have local government if you're going to make all the decisions at the state level," he asked. "That's what I was elected to do and that's what I'm prepared to do." ■

*'This is a very, very big issue, like a time bomb that needs to be addressed.'*

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## TRAILS

*continued from previous page*

community."

Alan Fitch, who lives adjacent to the trail, urged the council not change a thing.

"Why would you want to undo something that solved a major problem?" he said.

The council directed a dubious town staff to investigate whether any safe places existed that would accommodate about four marked parking spaces and asked them to report back after 60 days. In the meantime, the council is leaving the parking ban in place.

"I've come to know Raymundo well in the past couple of years. I'm not sure where we could put a dedicated parking space," Town Manager Susan George told the council.

Earlier this year, the county parks and recreation department closed the trail entrance in a dispute over trail easements. The county had plans to eventually close the trail permanently, but the town of Woodside secured easements from the two adjacent property owners, giving the town control over the trail and ensuring that it would be kept open.

Councilman Ron Romines said he thought the town should do a little more "scientific research" into the feasibility of carving out a few legal parking spaces before dismissing the idea entirely.

"No matter how you slice it, no one is going to be happy," said Councilman Pete Sinclair, who argued for keeping the status quo. "I think safety and privacy have to trump convenience." ■

## Park Theatre owner wants to convert it to office or retail use

■ But the front, including the sign, would be restored to resemble a theater, says Howard Crittenden.

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

A Menlo Park landmark for more than 50 years, the now-abandoned Park Theatre may house office or retail space rather than independent and foreign films.

The theater's owner, Atherton resident Howard Crittenden, has submitted plans to convert the former single-screen theater on El Camino Real, between Oak Grove and Valparaiso avenues, to office or retail space.

"Times change, and a theater just isn't an economically viable use," said Mr. Crittenden. "I'm running out of options here."

Mr. Crittenden closed the theater in August 2002. He said the theater's tenant, Landmark Theaters, could not afford to pay market-level rent.

The theater has remained vacant since the closure, as Mr. Crittenden's efforts to find new tenants and sell the property have been unsuccessful.

After the closure, Mr. Crittenden angered some people in the community by taking down the theater's neon sign, but he said under the new plans, the sign would return to the theater.

The front of the building, which faces El Camino Real, would continue to resemble a theater, as the main entrance would stay intact, said architect Ken Hayes of the Redwood City-based Hayes Group.

"We plan on completely restoring the El Camino side of the building to create a symbol of the past," Mr. Hayes said.

The square footage of the structure would stay largely the same, but the interior of the building would be gutted to make way for office or retail space, depending on what interest the property sparks among potential tenants, Mr. Crittenden said.

Mr. Hayes said that any proposal to renovate the structure would likely be subject to a full environmental impact report (EIR), because under the California Environmental Quality Act, a historical assessment of potentially significant structures must be conducted before they are changed or demolished.

If an EIR is necessary, the City Council will have the final say on the proposal.

Mr. Crittenden said he expects opposition to any plans to change the building, and at least one resident is already living up to those expectations.

Winter Dellenbach, a Palo Alto activist and member of the preservation group Save the Park Theatre, said the building should stay a theater.

"If [Mr. Crittenden] wants to get a tenant in there, he should pick up the phone and call Landmark Theaters," said Ms. Dellenbach.

She said Mr. Crittenden has neglected to maintain the building so the community will be more likely to support plans to revamp the site.

"It's basically been demolition by neglect," she said. "And just looking at these incredibly preliminary plans, it's clear everything that makes the theater a theater will be demolished." ■

## Menlo antique dealer arrested on child molestation charges

An 87-year-old Menlo Park antique dealer is in custody after being arrested on six felony counts of lewd acts with a 14-year-old girl and two counts of battery.

Bela Joseph Demeter, owner of Demeter Antiques Ltd. at 721 Oak Grove Ave., is accused of cornering the girl, who was shopping in his store, kissing her and touching her breasts, over her protests, according to the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office.

The girl reported the assault to the Menlo Park police, who sent in a youthful undercover

officer a week later. Mr. Demeter attempted to grope and kiss the officer, the District Attorney's Office report said.

Mr. Demeter was arraigned in Redwood City Municipal Court on July 21 before Commissioner Kathleen McKenna. He pleaded not guilty, and a private defender was appointed to represent him.

A preliminary hearing is set for 2 p.m. on Thursday, August 3. Mr. Demeter remains in custody on \$250,000 bail.

He has no prior convictions, according to Deputy District Attorney Melissa McKowan.



The Almanac/Kainaz Amaria

The abandoned Park Theatre on El Camino would be converted to office and retail use under a plan submitted by property owner Howard Crittenden.

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# Celebrating



Since 1856, San Mateo County has seen wars, earthquakes, vast wealth, lumbering, a population explosion, and growth into a high-tech and venture-capital center for the world.

**By Marion Softky**  
Almanac Staff Writer

**J**uly 7, 1856: At its very first meeting, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to repair “the principal road through the county ... leading from San Francisco to Santa Clara.”

The expense was “not to exceed \$50.” (Just think how far \$50 would go to fix El Camino Real today.)

The very stuffiness of the minutes of that first meeting jerk the reader into the different world that challenged those who governed the newly minted county, which had just spun off from San Francisco.

July 11, 2006: The current San Mateo County Board of Supervisors marked the 150th anniversary of that first meeting by reading its minutes aloud.

Meeting in 1856 in a Redwood City warehouse owned by J.V. Diller, two of the three-member board — James Berry and Charles Clarke — also ordered (for less than \$300) an “Iron Safe” to keep county “Books, Papers, and Treasure.”

The supervisors fired a magistrate who was “incompetent and refused to perform the duties of his office,” and appointed two new magistrates. They also agreed to pay two bills totaling \$511, “when the money is in the treasury.” And they arranged to lease rooms from Mr. Diller for county offices and courts for \$40 a month for six months, “with the privilege of 12.”

There was another huge difference between today’s five supervisors who read the historic minutes and the two who launched the county’s government 150 years ago: Two of the current supervisors, Rose Jacobs Gibson and Adrienne Tissier, are women; in 1856,

women could not vote, much less serve as supervisor.

### Serving San Francisco

A lot of history has surged through San Mateo County since the Gold Rush. That history is still pushing us forward.

For its first century, the county primarily served San Francisco. The giant redwoods of its southern mountains — chopped and sawed into boards and shingles — built the new capital of the West. Its farms, ranches and dairies fed the city. San Francisco’s water supply and airport are located in San Mateo County.

“Without San Mateo County, San Francisco would have had a hard time,” says Mitch Postel, president of the San Mateo County Historical Association. “Much of the political, environmental, economic, and suburban history of San Mateo County has been affected by San Francisco.”

In the decades that followed the county’s founding, San Francisco’s new-rich tycoons financed a railroad, and built their country homes in the oak-studded hills and meadows of the county. Waves of immigrants cut the trees, worked the estates, and settled in the small towns that served them.

In the next century came the automobile. People of more moderate means moved to the country for affordable housing; they began building today’s cities and suburbs.

More dramatically and formatively, county residents also endured a great earthquake, a Depression, and two world wars.

In its last 50 years, the county has enjoyed a massive population and economic boom following World War II. Silicon Valley has become a household word around the world

**Only the dome** of San Mateo County’s third courthouse survived the shaking of the great 1906 earthquake intact. Rebuilt in 1908 as the “Temple of Justice” — and then marred by a concrete addition during the Great Depression — the Redwood City historic courthouse is being restored to its original elegance, with a portico facing Broadway across a new plaza. It should open later this year.

— a symbol of the scientific and computer revolution that is changing our lives. Its scientific and technical epicenter was Stanford University; its financial core lay with the venture capital firms along Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park.

Starting about 1960, backlash from the explosive growth in the county and the Peninsula generated the environmental movement, which has slowed and channeled that growth. Its results can be seen in the preservation and beginning restoration of San Francisco Bay, and in the preservation of forests, farms and open spaces across San Mateo County’s mountains and Coastside.

Over those momentous years, the county’s population has soared more than 300-fold, from an estimated 2,500 in 1856 to today’s 725,000. And it’s still growing.

This history — and the individual threads of lives and communities that make it — are the subject of a year-long celebration. The Board of Supervisors, the San Mateo County Historical Association, and city historical associations are working together to bring that history alive in a series of events throughout the year.

### Really dirty politics

San Mateo County was born of the every-man-for-himself anarchy of Gold Rush California.

The immigrants flooding San Francisco included alumni of Sing Sing and Tammany Hall back East, who were after riches the old fashioned way — by organizing, intimidating, killing and stealing.

They arrived in fertile territory. California just became a state in 1850; it was still writing its laws. San Francisco, which extended south to San Francisquito Creek, the old boundary between missions, had both a city and a county government.

So there were positions aplenty to be bought and paid for. “It was pretty chaotic,” says Nita Spangler, a history buff from Redwood City who has followed county history for 60 years. For people seeking power, “it was almost necessary to have your own militia.”

By 1856, several things were changing, Ms. Spangler explains. The first glow was off gold mining, and in 1855 there was a big financial crash. More important, she says, women and families began arriving; they helped tame the population and bolster the impetus for reform.

“People were trying to get good government,” she says, but notes that often, “Good

# 150 Years

government' meant 'good for me.'"

A movement born in the south county to form a new county — to be called Raymundo — was mostly ignored. Folks in Woodside and Redwood City felt disenfranchised because of the distance to the county seat in San Francisco. Their supervisor, the notable Dr. Robert Orville Tripp, had to ride his horse to San Francisco and back for meetings.

In 1856, Horace Hawes, a state assemblyman from San Francisco who later moved to Redwood City, introduced a bill to consolidate the City and County of San Francisco into a single government. After some political infighting, the Consolidation Act passed in April and included a provision that a new county be created for the southern portion of the territory.

Thus, San Mateo County was formed through a political deal; the mobsters planned to take over the new county and enjoy its political spoils.

Descriptions of the election for officers in the new San Mateo County read like a political farce. The thugs took over the polling at three northern precincts and systematically stuffed ballot boxes and created voters — some taken from the passenger list of a recently arrived steamer.

In one precinct with 25 eligible voters, 297 ballots were tallied. Overall, an unlikely 1,800 votes were recorded in a county with a population of less than 2,500 — including women and children who couldn't vote.

Ultimately the court threw out votes from the fraudulent precincts, and San Mateo County government dodged the mob.

## First 50 years: redwoods and mansions

Starting with Spanish times, lumbering brought rugged men and colorful characters to attack the giant redwoods with ax and saw. Sawmills, first powered by water and later steam, sprouted in the canyons and gullies, as the giant trees were reduced to boards and shingles.

In Woodside, Dr. R.O. Tripp was the first to haul boards and logs to Redwood City, and float them to San Francisco using the power of tides.

Innovative and versatile, Dr. Tripp soon found it easier and more profitable to run a store than haul logs. He operated the Woodside store — now a historical museum — for more than 50 years. It became a community center to the fledgling town, providing a stagecoach stop, post office, and library. Plus, people could get their teeth pulled or "plugged" —filled — in the dentist's chair, which is still there as part of the historic exhibit.

Just to the south, the town of Searsville served the lumberjacks and local farmers with necessities, ranging from a couple of hotels to a school and several popular saloons. By 1879, the town gave way to Searsville Lake, originally planned to provide water to San Francisco.

By the late 1860s, lumbering on the east side of the mountains was winding down. The trees had been cut up and over Skyline; loggers were

tackling the larger redwood forests toward the coast.

On October 17, 1863, the first train of the San Francisco-San Jose Railroad puffed down the tracks from San Francisco through Menlo Park to Mayfield, now Palo Alto. Then it backed up for a gala picnic hosted by Gov. Leland Stanford on the banks of San Francisquito Creek.

This trip marked the beginning of a new era on the Peninsula. Rich San Franciscans built mansions and estates near the railroad line; they could retreat from the summer fogs of San Francisco, and keep supplied year-round with fresh produce from their country farms.

The names of the families in the south county alone recall the biggest names of the time: Ralston, Atherton, Mills, Sharon, Hopkins, Donohoe, Hooper, Folger, Schilling, Douglass, and many others. Now the names mainly refer to roads, buildings, stables, and a lake.

Most famous was Linden Towers, built by "Silver King" James Flood, who made his mint in the Comstock Lode. Called "Flood's wedding cake," the showy mansion stood for more than 50 years, before being torn down in 1934 to make way for the subdivision of Lindenwood, where lights, statues, pots and fountains still recall its past glory.

Possibly the most entertaining of the great estates belonged to San Francisco cable car magnate Andrew Hallidie in what is now Portola Valley. Mr. Hallidie, who built mining equipment, erected an aerial cable system, like a ski lift, which ran more than a mile up the hill from near where Christ Church stands now.

## Next 50 years: two World Wars, Depression, suburbs

San Mateo County celebrated its 50th anniversary with an earthquake.

That earthquake, which did far less damage in the county than in San Francisco, brought a flood of refugees to San Mateo County; not all of them returned.

Then World War I brought some 43,000 soldiers to Camp Fremont in Menlo Park. Local families were much involved in serving the troops and supporting the war effort.

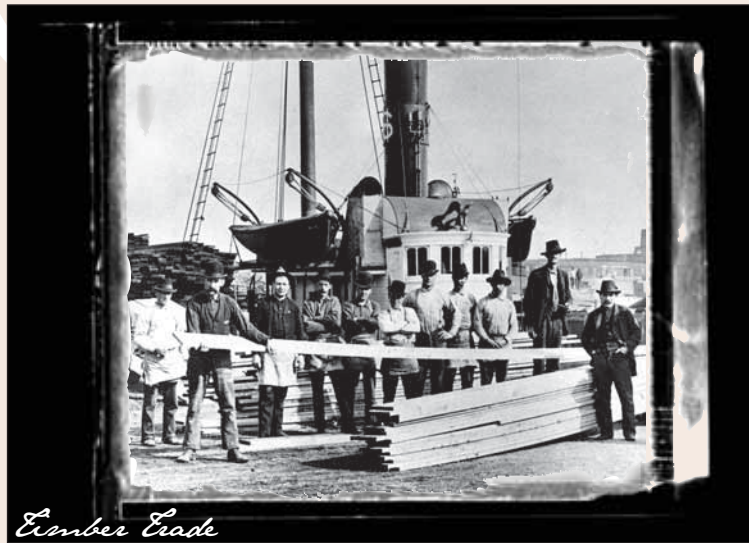
All that's left is a flagpole at Fremont Park, the veterans' hospital on Willow Road, and the original YWCA hostess center, designed by famed architect Julia Morgan, now moved to Palo Alto and remodeled as the MacArthur Park restaurant.

By the 1920s, roads improved, streetcar lines served north county, more and more people had automobiles. Veterans returned from World War I wanting a better life; homes in the suburbs came within reach of the rising middle class. "This started a new sort of suburban experience," says Mr. Postel.

This new middle class also began building vacation homes in the woods of the south county with names like Woodside Glens, Los Trancos Woods, and Stanford Weekend Acres



Woodside Horse



Timber Trade



Linden Towers



Camp Fremont

See captions on next page

Continued on next page

# 'San Mateo County did very well during the Depression era'

History buff Nita Spangler

Continued from previous page

— communities that have gone upscale as summer cottages expanded to meet the aspirations of today's families. "There was lots of cheap housing around then," says Ms. Spangler.

The 1920s also brought Prohibition, which spawned lots of stills, speakeasies, and revenooers in the county.

Then the Depression hit. "San Mateo County did very well during the Depression era," Ms. Spangler says. Federal money helped build El Camino Real, Bayshore Freeway, and the port in Redwood City. "That was a real boost to the county economy."

Money from the PWA (Public Works Administration) was used to attach a three-story annex to the front portico of the 1908 domed courthouse. That ungainly annex is finally being removed, and the original portico restored. The "Temple of Justice," which now houses the San Mateo County History Museum, will reopen with a new plaza sometime this fall.

Between the wars, government entities expanded to serve the new population. Atherton incorporated in 1923 to keep out the small lots and working folk from the village of Menlo Park. Menlo Park incorporated in 1927.

With the Board of Supervisors plagued with corruption, and supervisors trading favors, San Mateo County adopted a new reform charter in 1932. Key to the reform was election of supervisors at large, rather than by district. Even now, all voters in the county get to vote for each supervisor. "District election disenfranchised people. That's the strength of this system," Ms. Spangler says.

During the 1930s, San Mateo County also built up the schools, skills, and businesses that took off during and after World War II, and set the stage for the postwar boom.

The war brought industry to the county, including electronics, shipbuilding in South San Francisco, and the development of the San Francisco Airport, Mr. Postel says. "By 1956, much of the infrastructure was in place: highways, airport, roads, hospitals, schools, water."

## Third 50 years: boom times, green movement

People here today remember the surge of growth on the Peninsula as veterans of World War II came back to get a free education under

**Nita Spangler** and her husband, the late Ray Spangler, have been a storehouse of San Mateo County history. Mr. Spangler tracked county history as it evolved during a long career as a reporter, editor and publisher of the Redwood City Tribune — and later as columnist for the County Almanac.



Photo by David Boyce

the GI Bill and build their dream houses.

Along with the building boom came the high-tech boom of computers, the Internet, and venture capital, all fed by county scientists and organizations. The Stanford Linear Accelerator Center has probed the secrets of matter and generated several Nobel Prizes. The local office of the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park has become Earthquake Central for California. SRI International, Raychem and others have moved science forward and made new-age gadgets. From South San Francisco, Genentech is leading the revolution in biotechnology.

People like Doug Engelbart, Bob Taylor, Steve Jobs, Gordon Moore and Larry Ellison have also helped shape our futures.

The county's growth spurt also posed new problems for government, as numerous public agencies struggle to provide roads, freeways, cops, schools and services to new communities and residents. San Mateo County's budget went from \$5 million in 1945 — astronomical at the time — to \$1.6 billion this year.

New cities formed to control their own destiny. Woodside in 1956, and Portola Valley in 1964, incorporated to stay rural and keep the developers at bay. Now San Mateo County has 20 cities, plus numerous independent school districts and special purpose districts.

But around 1960 something started changing; people started questioning the mantras of growth — more filling of San Francisco Bay for development; industry in the Peninsula foothills; or new freeways across the county and along the Bayfront and coast. The environmental movement took root here.

Grass-roots groups around the Bay — and across the country — have blocked projects, passed laws, stopped freeways, cleaned air and water, and saved land for the future.

In San Mateo County, one new freeway, Interstate 280, has been built; three were taken



Searsville Dam



Menlo Park Train Station



Alpine Inn

Photo by Joe Melena

## Historic Photographs

Courtesy of San Mateo County Historic Association

### Woodside Store

The historic Woodside store, at the corner of Tripp and Kings Mountain roads, was operated for more than 50 years, until 1909, by the dentist and early lumberman Dr. Robert Orville Tripp, (who also operated a stagecoach stop, winery and library). It is now preserved as a San Mateo County park and museum.

### Lumber Trade

Lumber from the redwood forests was sawed into boards and shingles and dragged to the boat landing at Redwood City. The lumber was loaded onto rafts and floated by tide power north to help build San Francisco.

### Linden Towers

Linden Towers was probably the most famous of the Peninsula mansions built by San Francisco tycoons. The country home of silver king James Flood, it was torn down in 1934. The area is now Atherton's Lindenwood neighborhood.

### Camp Fremont

During World War I some 43,000 troops trained at Camp Fremont, and transformed sleepy Menlo Park.

### Searsville Dam

Searsville Dam, completed in 1891, replaced the lively lumbering town of Searsville. The lake provided irrigation for Stanford and recreation for generations of swimmers, boaters and partiers. Now the lake has almost filled up with silt from the hills.

### Menlo Park Train Station

Possibly the oldest railroad station in California, the Menlo Park train station has served working folks and tycoons, excursionists and commuters since the 1860s.

### Alpine Inn

The Alpine Inn, shown here in 1967, has been a local institution and popular watering place for longer than San Mateo County has existed. The original roadhouse and casa de tableta (house of cards) was opened about 1852 by Felix Buelna, a former mayor of San Jose. Now it's a California and national landmark.

off the maps, thanks to public pressure: the Willow Freeway across the Bay and through Menlo Park; the Bayfront Freeway off the shore; and the Coast Freeway.

With former Portola Valley Mayor Eleanor Boushey in charge, the county's Scenic Roads Committee persuaded the state to declare Skyline Boulevard a scenic highway. "We set design standards for Skyline," says Ms. Spangler, who served on that committee.

The only new freeway, I-280, is also a scenic highway. A major political fight, led by Sid Liebes of Atherton, resulted in the new freeway running up hill from the Crystal Springs lakes and securing 23,000 acres of the San Francisco Watershed as permanent open space under a federal easement.

Most important in preserving open lands in San Mateo County was establishing the Midpenin-

sula Regional Open Space District in 1972 and the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) in 1977. These agencies — one a government agency, the other a private nonprofit trust — have changed the land-use debate in the county. Instead of fighting battles to stop one project or another, they raise money and buy key lands.

So far, they have preserved close to 50,000 acres of open lands in the county for open space, recreation, farming, grazing, park, habitat or other open space uses.

In his state of the county speech to the annual Progress Seminar in Monterey last April, Jerry Hill, president of the county Board of Supervisors, reviewed the last 150 years in the county. "We have promises to fulfill," he said. "It is up to us. It is our responsibility. Can we leave the gem of a legacy for the next 150 years?" ■

## Frank Skillman's

### *1955 prophecy*

*The late Franks Skillman, a resident of Ladera and planning director for San Mateo County when it produced its first master plan in 1960, wrote these prophetic words in 1955.*

Alarming things are happening in San Mateo County. The once sleepy Peninsula, home of the Ralstons and the Floods, is now bustling with "Progress" and progress can be a terrible thing!

It can mean the "floating" of tract houses on marsh lands, where industry might be more valuable to our economy.

It can mean the desecration of our natural environment of beauty in our hills and valleys and the replacement by "Goliathan" steps of row houses — a "Terracide" symphony of monotony.

It can mean the uprooting of the artichoke from the earth's richest soil and the planting thereon of the roof and macadam of the subdivision.

It can mean burning dumps, auto graveyards, unsightly roadside development, cities rotting at the core — victims of the "motor age."

It can mean highways so spilling over with traffic that they are no longer avenues of adventure but raceways of torture and fear.

Yes, all these in the name of Progress! Must it be so?

The prediction is that San Mateo County population will double by 1990. That can mean but one thing — more progress!

**Note:** Mr. Skillman was pretty close. San Mateo County's population was about 340,000 in 1955; in 1990, it was 650,000 — not quite double. Now it's 725,000, and growing.

*These words were republished in the most recent edition (Vol. 35, No. 1) of La Peninsula, an occasional publication of the San Mateo County Historical Association that is free to members and sold for \$6 at the San Mateo County History Museum store.*



Painting by Jane Gallagher

**Windy Hill** is more than just a landmark overlooking the Midpeninsula; it is a symbol of efforts over the last 50 years to channel growth and preserve the county's natural beauties. Once a large estate marked for development — as envisioned by Frank Skillman — it is now public open space.



The Almanac/ Marjan Sadoughi

The interior view of the dome at the San Mateo County History Museum.

## Events celebrate sesquicentennial

The San Mateo History Museum, with its historic stained-glass dome, will be the center of events celebrating the creation of San Mateo County in 1856.

Three new exhibits, which opened July 29 with a big party, have doubled the exhibit space in the old county courthouse, once called the "Temple of Justice." They are: "San Mateo County History Makers: Entrepreneurs who Changed the World"; "Land of Opportunity: The Immigrant Dream"; and "Living the California Dream."

Another new exhibit will open Tuesday, August 8. "Precious Cargo: California Indian Cradle Baskets and Childbirth Traditions" will show cradle baskets crafted by native weavers and displays that highlight traditional beliefs and practices surrounding childbirth.

The history museum can be entered at 750 Middlefield Road in Redwood City; it is open Tuesdays through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.. Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for seniors and children, and free to members and children under 5.

Other events are planned for the Sesquicentennial celebration. They include:

- Dedication of a plaque honoring the two Irishmen who founded Menlo Park: Saturday, August 12, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Menlo Park train station. There will be historical exhibits, copies of a new edition of "Menlo Park: Beyond the Gate," and self-guided walking tours.
- The San Mateo County Fair, from August 11 to 20, will feature a new "Museum on Wheels" with a sesquicentennial exhibit onboard. Visit the Web site, [www.sanmateocountyfair.com](http://www.sanmateocountyfair.com).
- Dr. Thomas Fogarty of Portola Valley will be honored at a "History Makers" dinner September 21.
- Release of a new book, "San Mateo County: Sesquicentennial History," by Mitch Postel, president of the San Mateo County Historical Association. Date to be announced.
- Grand opening of restored County Courthouse and the plaza facing it on Broadway in Redwood City. Date to be announced.

Information on other events, including historic tours in different cities, may be checked online at [www.smcl150.org](http://www.smcl150.org), or by calling 299-0104.

**Mitch Postel**, president of the San Mateo County Historical Association, has supervised conversion of the old county courthouse into the new History Museum. This year, he is leading the sesquicentennial celebrations; just last week, three new exhibits opened featuring immigrants, entrepreneurs, and the California dream.



The Almanac/ Marjan Sadoughi

# Menlo council backs election on two-tier utility tax

■ Final council action is expected August 1 to put the measure on the November ballot.

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park City Council voted unanimously July 25 to ask voters to approve a utility tax measure to help balance the city's budget.

The council agreed on a two-tiered measure on the November ballot that would authorize the city to tax water, gas and electric bills up to 3.5 percent; and telephone, cell phone and cable bills up to 2.5 percent.

City staff estimates the tax would produce about \$2.5 million a year for the city.

The 5-0 council vote is the first step in the process to put the measure on the ballot. Final action by the council is set for August 1. Two-thirds of the council — or four of the five council members — must approve the measure to put it on the ballot.

For the tax to become law, at least a simple majority of voters — 50 percent plus one — must support it.

The council settled on a two-tiered scheme after Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson proposed that electricity, gas and

■ **MENLO PARK**

The August 1 council meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center. Check [AlmanacNews.com](http://AlmanacNews.com) for a news update.

water bills be taxed at a higher rate because they are “consumptive utilities,” and the city should encourage residents and businesses to conserve natural resources.

## Annual cap

The tax would expire in 10 years and have an annual cap of \$12,000 for any single user — business or residential — of

electricity, gas and water.

If the tax is approved, the city could start collecting it in March 2007, said City Attorney Bill McClure. The council could set the actual tax rate lower than that authorized by voters.

The tax money is needed, the council decided, because projected city revenues are not expected to keep up with spending in this and future years. In the current fiscal year, the city plans to draw \$1.85 million from reserves to cover anticipated spending.

In a 10-year projection, city staff estimates that revenues would fall short of spending by an average of \$2.2 million a year.

The tax would be reviewed every two years, when four council members would have to vote in favor of the tax to keep it active.

Although the council was unanimous in support of the tax measure, Councilman Andy Cohen said the \$12,000 cap made it a “regressive tax,” as businesses were spared from paying a proportionally equal share of the tax. He said an unfair percentage of tax revenues would come from residents.

Council members Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc said the cap is necessary to avoid a business-backed campaign against the tax measure. ■

## Playfields at Bayfront issue goes to voters

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park voters will be able to use the ballot box to show their support of — or opposition to — the controversial idea of building playing fields at Bayfront Park.

The City Council last week voted 3-2 to put an advisory measure on the November ballot asking voters if they favor building playing fields on no more than 17 acres of the 160-acre Bayfront Park, located near Marsh Road and Bayfront Expressway.

Council members Nicholas Jellins, Lee Duboc and Mickie

Winkler cast the deciding votes, saying that if the ballot measure doesn't win a majority of votes, they won't pursue the Bayfront playing field option.

Council members Andy Cohen and Kelly Fergusson called the advisory measure a ploy to garner political support for the council majority leading up to the November election, when all three of their colleagues' seats are up for election.

The park is built atop a capped landfill, and consultants hired by the city have said that, although the landfill is continuously settling, fields can be built at the park.

Initial estimates have pegged

the construction costs of building fields there at about \$1 million an acre — \$15 to \$17 million, for example, to build four fields for soccer and baseball at the park.

The city will determine maintenance costs, and conduct traffic studies and an environmental impact report, only if voters approve building fields at the park, according to city staff.

Primary arguments for or against the ballot measure cannot exceed 300 words, and must be submitted to the city clerk by 5 p.m. August 16. Rebuttal arguments can't exceed 250 words, and are due to the city clerk by 5 p.m. August 25. ■

**Music in the park**

Jazz vocalist and Menlo-Atherton High School senior Hale Baskin wowed the crowd at a free hour-long evening concert in Fremont Park on July 19. At the next free concert, on Wednesday, August 2, a group called “Wanted” will perform country music for an hour starting at 6:30 p.m. in the park at Santa Cruz Avenue and University Drive in Menlo Park.

The Almanac/David Boyce



## Beltramo project on council's plate

The Menlo Park City Council is scheduled to consider at its meeting August 1 a proposal by John Beltramo to build a 26,800-square-foot building and 16 two-story townhouses on El Camino Real near Valparaiso Avenue.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Check [AlmanacNews.com](http://AlmanacNews.com) for a news update.

The two-story commercial building would face El Camino Real and the townhouses would front San Antonio Street.

Mr. Beltramo has requested the freedom to decide at a later date whether the commercial building will

## ■ MENLO WATCH

house office or retail uses — a request endorsed by Planning Commissioners when commissioners voted 7-0 on July 10 to recommend the council approve the project.

## City may merge dispatch services

The Menlo Park City Council is expected to decide at its meeting August 1 whether to merge its police dispatch services with those of San Carlos.

If approved, the four San Carlos dispatchers would become employees of Menlo Park, and all dispatchers would take calls from both

cities.

Menlo Park would have three, instead of two, dispatchers on each 12-hour shift.

Menlo Park would receive \$574,713 a year from the city of San Carlos. The payment would increase 5 percent annually over the five-year contract.

The San Carlos City Council voted 4-0 at its June 26 meeting to approve the contract.

The meeting is scheduled to begin at 7 p.m. in the council chambers.

## Cancelled meetings

The Menlo Park City Council will not hold its regular meetings August 8 and August 15. Meetings are scheduled to resume August 22.

## Simitian sets 'sidewalk talks'

State Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto, will hold his annual “sidewalk office hours” this weekend, stopping at farmers' markets

in Menlo Park, Palo Alto and Redwood City

and hear their questions and comments about state legislative issues.

He will be in Menlo Park on Sunday, August 6, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the market on Chestnut Street between Santa Cruz and

Menlo avenues.

On Saturday, August 5, he will be at the Palo Alto market, behind the downtown post office at Hamilton and Gilman, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.; and at the Kiwanis

Redwood City market in the downtown parking lot at Hamilton and Winslow streets, from 11 a.m. to noon.

For more information, call the senator's district office at 688-6384.

## ■ NOTES

## State hearing on charter schools

Charter schools — “what's working, what's not and where do we go from here?” — is the topic of a series of state Senate hearings that begin Tuesday, August 1, at 1:30 p.m. in Sacramento.

State Sen. Joe Simitian, D-Palo Alto is among eight panelists who will provide information about students in charter schools, research findings and a roadmap for the future. A fol-

low-up hearing will be held in Sen. Simitian's district in October.

Local residents can view a live telecast on California Channel 28, beginning at 1:30 p.m. People can listen to the hearing on the state Senate's Web site — [www.sen.ca.gov](http://www.sen.ca.gov) — by clicking the “Audio/TV” link and then clicking “Listen” on the upper left-hand side of the screen.

## Ford dealer closes in Menlo Park

■ University Ford exit leaves only one auto dealer in the city.

By Sean Howell  
Special to the Almanac

The University Ford dealership at 450 El Camino Real in Menlo Park shut down business July 26, along with a sister dealership at 4180 El Camino Real in Palo Alto.

It is Menlo Park's third auto dealer to close in the last year and a half, joining Cadillac Buick Pontiac GMC at 1300 El Camino and Anderson Chevrolet at 300 El Camino Real, which closed in April and August of 2005, respectively.

The only remaining dealer in Menlo Park is Stanford Lincoln Mercury at 444 El Camino Real,

next door to the former Ford site.

"We're not happy about it," said David Johnson, Menlo Park's business development manager. "It is not without impact (on the city's sales tax revenues)."

The city's sales tax income in the transportation category has fallen 55 percent over the last five years, a loss that can be attributed in large part to struggling and closing auto dealers, said Menlo Park Financial Director Carol Augustine. The transportation category includes the sale of new and used cars and auto parts, plus income from service stations and car-repair shops.

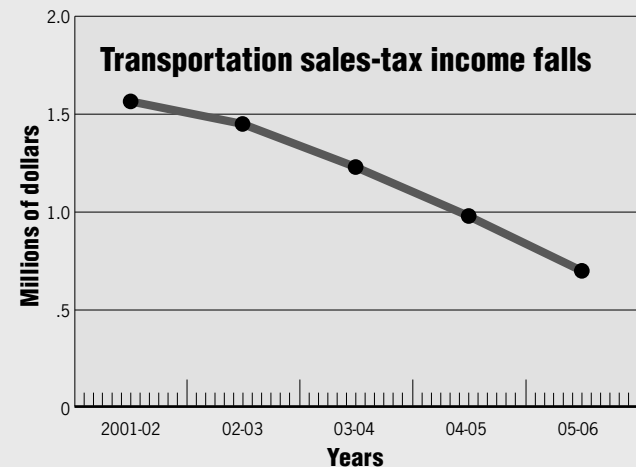
During the 12-month period ending March 31, the city received \$698,371 in sales tax revenue from businesses in the transportation category — down 29

percent from the year-ago period, and 43 percent from 2003-2004. That is the latest data available, Ms. Augustine said.

Ms. Augustine declined to say how much the Ford lot contributed to the decline, though she said Ford's revenues have been dwindling over the last few years.

Mr. Johnson said he doesn't have any businesses lined up to move into the Ford site, but the city is open to a wide range of tenants, including auto dealers. Because Stanford owns a lease on the property that is about to expire, any new tenant would have to be approved by the university.

The city is looking at ways to bring new businesses to El Camino, and is entertaining proposals for major housing and retail developments there.



Source: City of Menlo Park

Since 2001, Menlo Park sales-tax revenues in the transportation category have dropped 55 percent. The category includes sales of vehicles (new and used). The figures are calculated through March 31 of each year.

The city has considered a proposal for a new auto mall off Marsh Road near U.S. 101 in order to increase sales-tax

income. "This may be an opportunity for Ford to become interested in the east [Menlo Park] site," he said. ■

## Gentry publishers launch magazine for a 'younger demographic'

■ CAFE magazine operates out of Gentry's Menlo Park office.

By Sean Howell  
Special to the Almanac

The founders of Gentry Magazine have launched a publication designed to attract readers in the 25-40 age range with disposable income, according to executive publisher Jan DiNuscio.

CAFE magazine, which focuses on arts and culture, released its first issue in July, distributing the slick, 82-page publication to 400-plus public locations, such as coffee shops and bookstores, on the Peninsula and in the South Bay, as well as in San Francisco and the East Bay, Ms. DiNuscio said.

She added that the publishers are trying to capitalize on the surge of wealthy young professionals in Silicon Valley created by the success of companies like Google, noting that the magazine will be distributed to cafeterias in 28-30 high-tech companies.

The first issue included an article on people seeking real estate for between \$500,000 and \$1 million, a lower price than typical homes advertised in Gentry magazine.

CAFE shares headquarters with Gentry at 618 Santa Cruz Ave. in downtown Menlo Park, and is published by 18 Media, a company founded by Sloane Citron and Elsie Floriani in 1993. The pair combined to form Gentry, which is distributed to upper-crust households from Hillsborough to Los Altos



The first issue of CAFE magazine hit the streets in July.

CAFE will appeal to a "more edgy, contemporary demographic" than Gentry. It combines journalistic stories, including an article about the Joe Morrow murder case in Menlo Park, with features on reality TV and MySpace.

The first issue's 'Letters to the Editors' page consists of made-up letters from deceased literary celebrities, such

as Emily Dickinson and James Joyce.

Ms. DiNuscio said that the magazine's style will evolve as it better defines its demographic, and that the editors are open to suggestions from readers. ■

Hills.

Like Gentry, CAFE is a free publication, but it will be distributed in public places such as coffee shops and bookstores, instead of door-to-door.

Ms. DiNuscio said she hopes



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## Helping steelhead in McGarvey Gulch

Plans to replace a decaying culvert in Huddart Park to allow steelhead trout to get through will be presented to the San Mateo County Parks and Recreation Commission on Thursday, August 3, at 2:30 p.m. in the supervisors chambers, 400 County Center, in Redwood City.

The county will replace the culvert in the park where Richards Road crosses McGarvey Gulch. Steelhead cannot make it through the decrepit culvert when they come upstream to spawn from San Francisquito Creek via West Union Creek.

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# Sports

NEWS OF LOCAL ATHLETES AND TEAM SPORTS

## Alpine-Menlo Pumas travel to Sweden

The Pumas, a girls team in the Alpine-Menlo soccer club, traveled to northern Sweden this summer to compete in the Pitea Summer Games, from June 30 to July 2. They compiled a 3-2 record, good for a ninth-place finish out of 52 teams in their division.

The only American team in a field of over 800 clubs from Finland, Norway and Sweden, the club received attention from curious spectators and

the support of a team from Nousu, Finland, that started to cheer the Pumas on after losing to them.

Team members spent 18 months earning money for the trip, hosting garage and bake sales and refereeing on the side.

Pitea's population nearly doubled during the games, which are sometimes played until midnight — the sun sets for less than three hours in Sweden during the summer months.



The Alpine-Menlo Pumas with new friends from Finland. The team recently returned from Sweden.

## Atherton residents win horse show titles

Two Atherton residents, Meredith Landy and her niece, Suzanna Nelson, won titles at the 2006 World Championship Paint Horse Show, held in Fort Worth, Texas, from June 25 to July 8.

Ms. Landy and Ms. Nelson both won with Ultimate Bonanza, the 6-year-old gelding that Ms. Landy owns.

Ms. Landy captured the championship in Amateur Pleasure Driving, in which horses pull a small cart and driver as quietly as possible.

Ms. Nelson won her title in the Youth 14-18 Hunter Under Saddle Division, the most basic form of



Suzanne Nelson of Atherton

English equestrian competition in which a rider walks the horse around a ring without performing any jumps. She beat out a field of 99 for the win.

The woman who trains both Ms. Landy and Ms. Nelson, Karen Qualls of Chino Hills, won two championships with Ultimate

### SPORTS

Bonanza, in Senior Pleasure Driving and Hunter Under Saddle.

The event is sponsored by the American Paint Horse Association (APHA).

### Sako wins age group at junior golf event

Menlo Park resident Nick Sako, 15, won the boys 14-15 year-old first flight division in the San Francisco Junior Golf Championships at Lincoln Park Golf Course in San Francisco, held July 18-20.

Nick, an incoming sophomore

at Menlo-Atherton High School and a member of the golf team there, won his final two matches 7 and 6, and 2 and 1. He had been seeded first in his age group coming into the tournament.

Menlo Park residents Jamie Walsh (Menlo-Atherton) and Riely Kriebel (Menlo School) also advanced to the championship round.

### Woodside team third at championships

A team of five young riders from the Horse Park at Woodside took home third place in show jumping at the 2006 U.S. Pony Club Championships, held from July 13 to July 16 in Ran-

cho Murieta, California. The team also earned second place in a test of horse management.

In show jumping, horses must run through a course and clear a variety of obstacles.

The team was made up of Haley Dwight and Laura Krieger of Palo Alto, Georgia Thomas of San Mateo, Anna Medina of Redwood City and stable manager Carina Berlin of Portola Valley. All are members of the Portola Valley Pony Club, and are between 15 and 17 years old. Trudy Exton coached the club.

Ashley Guich of Redwood City earned first place at the eventing competition, a triathlon consisting of jumping, dressage and cross-country riding. He also won second place in horse management.

## Advertising Sales Director

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### Peninsula AAU team wins basketball title

Paye's Place, a girls basketball team located in San Carlos in the 10-and-under division of AAU, captured the state basketball championship on Sunday, July 16. The team includes players from Atherton, Portola Valley and Menlo Park.

The team beat Bay Area Heat, 29-27, at San Diego City College.

Local players included Sonia Abdul-Saud of Menlo Park, Jennifer Lucien of Portola Valley and Shelbi Aimonetti of Redwood City. The team was coached by Patrick Shannon and assistant coach Bob Meade.

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# FALL ClassGuide

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See CLASS GUIDE, page 22



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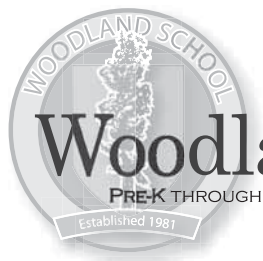
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**CLASS GUIDE**

*continued from page 21*

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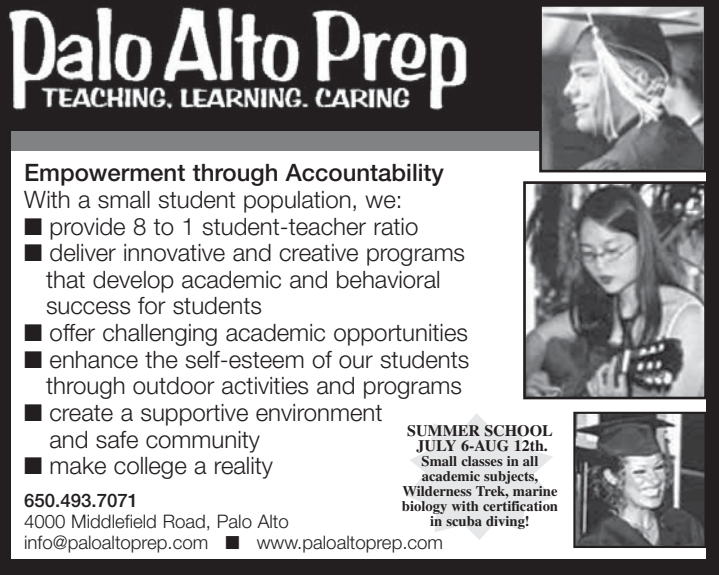
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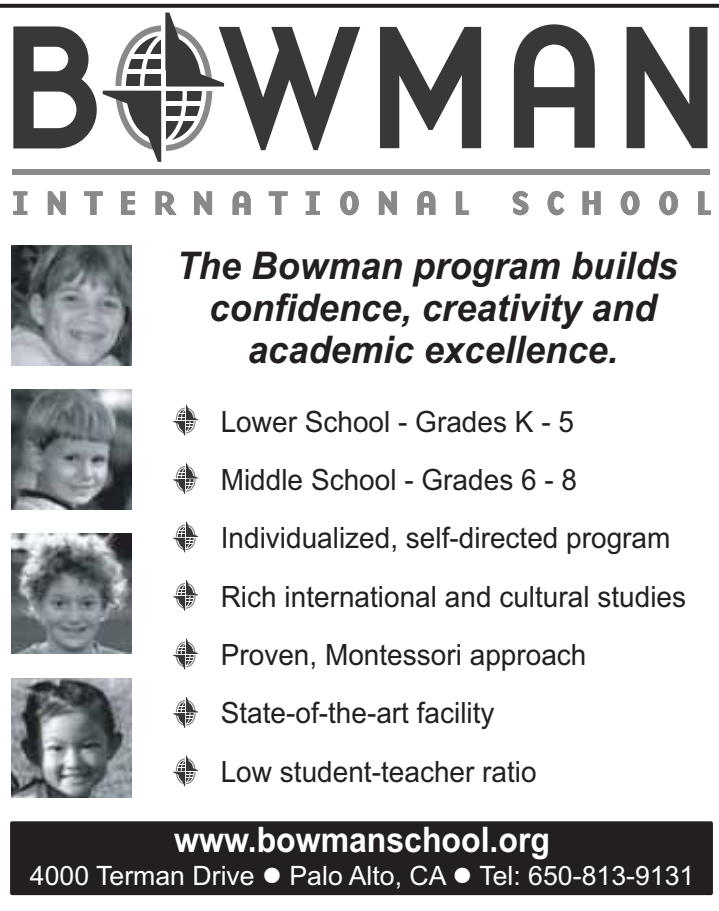
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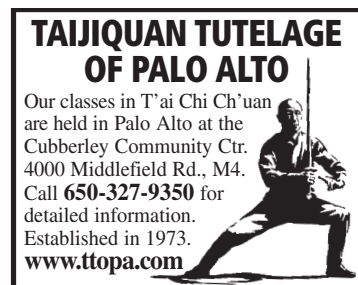


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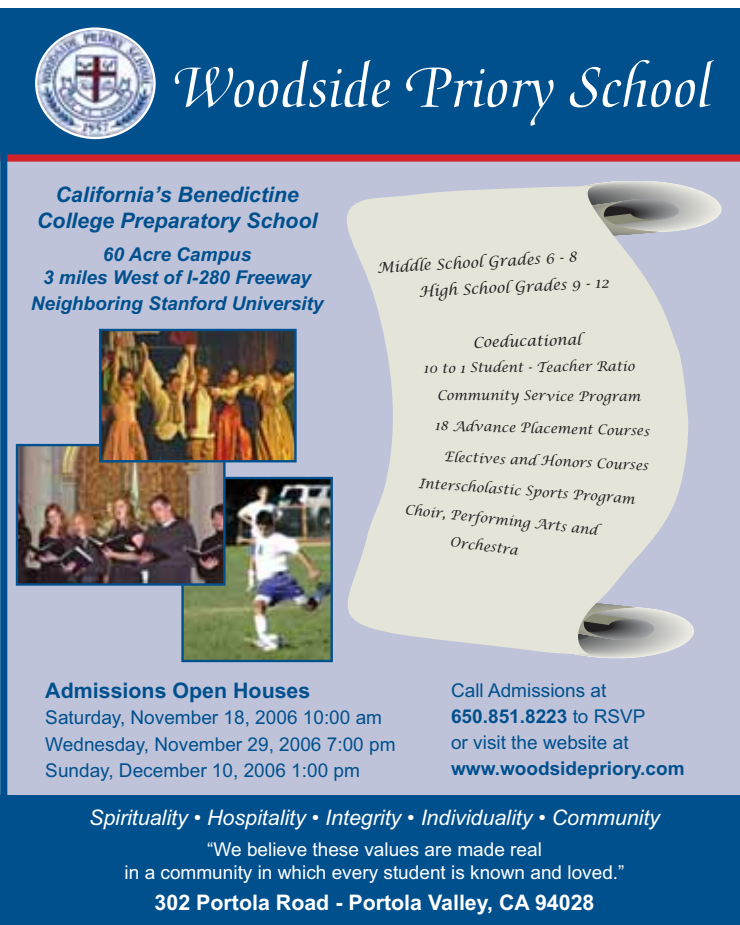
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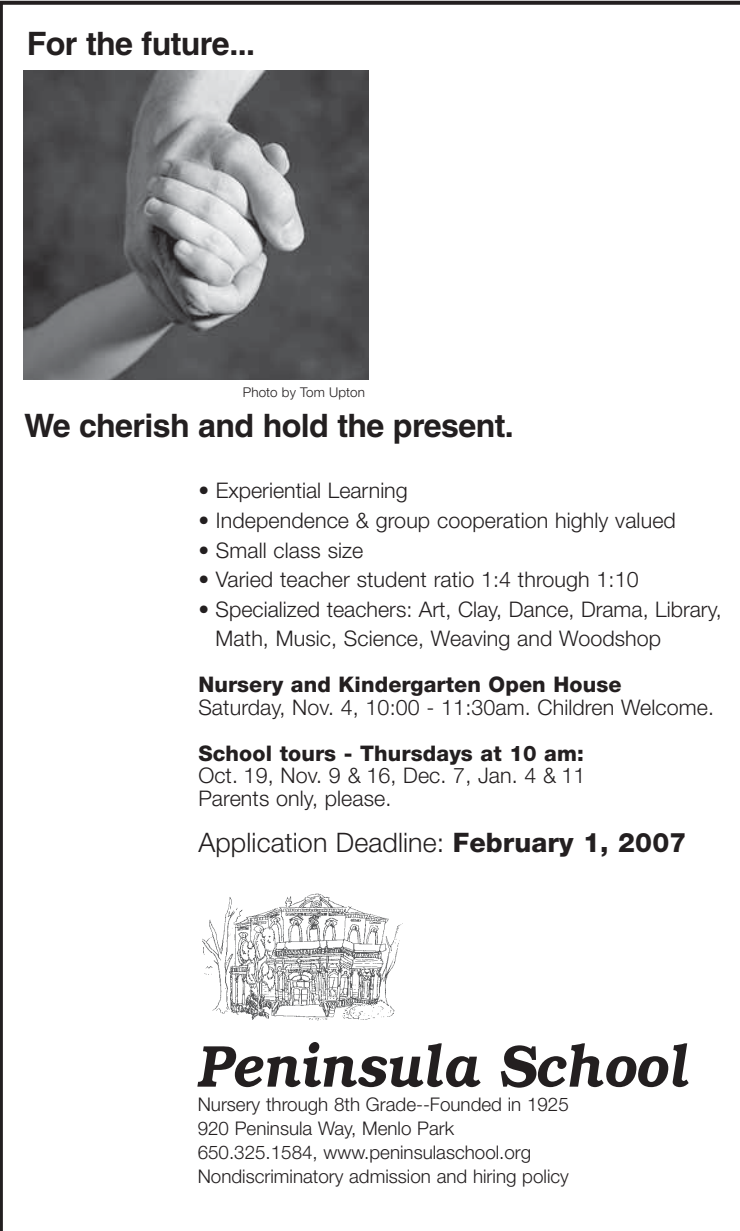
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# Artscene

PEOPLE AND PERFORMANCES IN ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

## Plucky Theatre in the Woods stages 'Rosencrantz & Guildenstern'

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

### REVIEW

If a show is staged in the forest, but nobody comes to see it, is it still a show?

Of course, but it's also a tragedy if the show in question is "Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead," being staged in the Woodside hills by the remarkable Theatre in the Woods.

This, theater fans, is a wonderful show, particularly if you're passionate about playwright Tom Stoppard and his unflagging mania for wordplay and existential truth-seeking. Also, if you enjoy outstanding acting, hiking, and the smells and sights of a lush forest.

"Rosencrantz" is the fifth production of Theatre in the Woods, which was founded by five actors who had studied together in an American Conservatory Theatre acting class and decided they didn't want to part company. Audience members follow the actors to a different wooded location for each scene, where there are benches or chairs to sit on.

Dave Sikula, who through the years has directed numerous Bay Area community theater plays, does a fine job directing this production — his first for Theatre in the Woods.

The play tells the "Hamlet" story through the eyes of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the two minor, ill-fated characters in

Shakespeare's play. It is teeming with Stoppard's famous wit and intelligence; it's characteristic of Stoppard, too, in the demands it places on actors — impeccable timing, unblinking panache.

The cast is certainly up to the challenge. Brian Markley's Rosencrantz is an utterly charming simpleton — a character who could step with ease from the dusty trail of the Woodside forest onto the country road where Estragon and Vladimir are (still) waiting for Godot.

Carolyn Zola's Guildenstern provides the needed, fierce contrast to her comrade. She is precise, intense, energetic and believable.

Reagan Richey is convincing as a low-key, almost gentle Hamlet. His performance was refreshing to watch after witnessing, over and over again, the *sturm und drang* roiling that character when

he's the main attraction on the Shakespearean stage.

While all those actors are founding or associate members of Theatre in the Woods, Richard Titus is a newcomer to the troupe. Please, good players, don't let him out of your sight. And next time, give him a bigger role.

Mr. Titus takes the relatively small role of the leader of the Tragedians — a ragtag traveling troupe of actors traversing the stage in both Stoppard's and Shakespeare's plays. Small role, huge presence. He's a marvel.

There are other minor roles played out very well by members of the small cast. Making the fine performances even more amazing when I saw the show on July 23 is that the players, dressed in often heavy period costume, pulled it all off in 100-plus-degree weather.

If the brutal heat that has scorched the Peninsula in recent weeks persists through the production's run — weekends through August 13 — people who are unaccustomed to being outdoors in extreme heat should think twice before heading for the Bear Gulch Road theater in the redwoods.

For those willing to endure the heat: Bring a hat and some cold bottled water. Bring an extra ice pack to slap on the back of your neck once in a while. But do grab the chance to see some very fine theater in the woods. ■

### INFORMATION

"Rosencrantz & Guildenstern are Dead," by Tom Stoppard, is being performed by Theatre in the Woods at 1 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays through August 13 at 2170 Bear Gulch Road (West) in Woodside. Tickets are \$10-20. For tickets, visit [atmostheatre.com](http://atmostheatre.com); e-mail [reservations@atmostheatre.com](mailto:reservations@atmostheatre.com); or call 415-668-2879.

## Ex-Woodside High teacher reads at Kepler's

Former Woodside High School English teacher Kerry Wood has always loved words, participating in spelling bees as a child and delving into crossword puzzles as an adult.

Shortly after retiring from Woodside High in 1998, Mr. Wood began to apply his knowledge of the English language to his own writing, composing short stories and poems that he has

turned into a memoir, *Past Imperfect, Present Progressive*. He will read from the book at Kepler's on Tuesday, August 8 at 7:30 p.m.

The stories punctuate moments throughout his life, from his childhood during the late Depression and World War II to adulthood and seniority. Mr. Wood touches on his days as a student at Yale, a teacher of English as a secondary language in Istanbul, and his experience in the lowest ranks of the U.S. Army, among other things, according to a Kepler's press release.

He devotes one chapter to his experience as a teacher, and recounts his love for words in another.

Spelling bees and word games were "one of the few places that I

could really excel, as opposed to an athletic field," Mr. Wood said, adding that it he has found they can be a "gallant, heroic thing."

He said that he started to think of the book as a product in 2001, after working on the stories in a weekly writer's group.

Mr. Wood called the response to the book "heartwarming," saying that he has received e-mails and phone calls from students, strangers and old friends. One came from a boy who lived across the street whom he hadn't seen for over 40 years.

Mr. Wood has survived both prostate cancer and a stroke, and said that he hopes the book will appeal to other survivors, as well as teachers of English and language arts.



"Up and Over," an oil painting by Cyndra Bradford of Carmel, has been named the official artwork for the Menlo Charity Horse Show.

## Horse show artist named

Members of the Menlo Charity Horse Show committee have chosen artist Cyndra Bradford as the official artist of the 35th annual Menlo Charity Horse Show.

Benefiting the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the horse show will run August 8-13.

Ms. Bradford's painting, "Up and Over," was chosen because it reflects the event's excitement and beauty, says Grayson Martin, chairman of the art committee.

The painting will be featured on the show invitations, the cover of the premium book,

Charity horse show in Atherton attracts 650 horses, riders. **Page 33**

and on programs, T-shirts and posters. A print will be available for bid at the sponsors' dinner and auction August 11.

"Horses were always a passion for me," said Ms. Bradford, who owns Galerie Plein Aire in Carmel. "I drew them on everything as a child."

When she's not painting or working, she's out riding her Morgan gelding, Harley.

## Archimedes under the stars

"Archimedes: Ancient Text Revealed by X-Ray Vision" will be the topic of a free lecture under the stars on Thursday, August 3, at 7 p.m., on the grass outside the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford.

Uwe Bergmann of Menlo Park, a physicist at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, will describe how SLAC scientists are revealing original texts from the Greek mathematical genius, which were erased and written over in the 10th century.

Intense X-ray beams from the Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory can make the iron in the original ink glow, making it possible to decipher the underlying texts on the two ancient parchment documents.

The Cantor Arts Center and Cool Cafe will be open from 5 to 8 p.m. for people who want to browse or enjoy a \$12 organic buffet barbecue, either meat or veggie. Chairs will be provided, or people can bring their own chairs, blankets and picnics.



## ■ OBITUARIES

**Jerome W. Bettman**

Ophthalmologist

A celebration of the life of Jerome W. Bettman of Woodside will be held Sunday, August 13, at the Stanford Faculty Club.

Dr. Bettman, who served at various times in his career as chairman of the ophthalmology departments at the Stanford University School of Medicine and the California Pacific Medical Center, died July 7 at Stanford Medical Center. He was 97.

Born in San Francisco, he attended Lowell High School and went to the University of California at Berkeley for his undergraduate and medical school degrees. He did his residency in ophthalmology at Stanford.

In addition to having a private practice, Dr. Bettman served on the faculty at the University of California, San Francisco.

He taught many of the ophthalmologists on the West Coast during their residencies and in the basic science courses at Stanford. He was the author of many books and research papers.

A frequent expert witness in medical malpractice cases for both patients and doctors, he was an early advocate for medical ethics and making sure patients understood their options and gave informed consent, say family members.

During World War II, he provided ophthalmologic services to Japanese-Americans interned at Tule Lake. When an infectious disease, trachoma, which causes blindness, swept through the camp, he examined hundreds of patients and operated on 16 of them.

For many years, Dr. Bettman practiced medicine in San Francisco. The family moved to Woodside in 1968, about 10 years after Stanford moved its medical operations to Palo Alto. Dr. Bettman played a critical role in setting up the new Stanford hospital and medical school, serving as acting chairman. After the transition, he helped establish the ophthalmology program and Stanford's successor hospital in San Francisco, Pacific Medical Center.

Into his 90s he continued to go on rounds at Stanford and California Pacific Medical Center. He met with friends on a weekly basis to study Shakespeare and continued a 50-year tradition of attending the Shakespeare festival at Ashland, Oregon, for two weeks every year. He was a patron of the San Francisco Opera for 50 years.

He is survived by his daughter,



**Jerome Bettman**

Jean Dana of Saratoga, son Jerome W. Bettman Jr. of Albuquerque; five grandchildren; and five great-granddaughters. His wife, Amy Herz Bettman, died in 2000.

Memorials may be made to: The Jerry Bettman Memorial Fund, Pacific Vision Foundation, 2395 Sacramento St., second floor, San Francisco, CA 94115.

**George Dowley**

Securities executive

Longtime Menlo Park resident George Firth Dowley died July 26 after a brief illness. He was 76.

Mr. Dowley was born in Detroit. In 1945 his family moved to Los Altos and he attended Bellarmine Prep high school in San Jose. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, where he was a member of Delta Sigma Phi fraternity. A member of ROTC, upon graduation he was commissioned a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army.

Following a tour of duty in Korea, he returned to San Francisco in 1954, where he began a lifelong career in the securities industry.

In 1955 he met Charlene Bianchi and the two were married December 1, 1956, at St. Vincent de Paul Church in San Francisco. The couple settled first in San Francisco before moving to the Midpeninsula, where they raised their five sons and two daughters.

Mr. Dowley belonged to many clubs and organizations, including the San Francisco Bond Club, the World Trade Club, and the Merchants Exchange, where he served as president. He was also a member of the Serra Club, the Cogers, the Book Club of California, and was an avid supporter of the Golden

Crew of 1952, his graduating class at UC Berkeley.

Mr. Dowley possessed a prodigious memory and storytelling ability, say family members. He was also a voracious reader. Other lifelong interests were collecting rare books and coins, playing bridge, researching family genealogy, attending Cal football games, and listening to music of all eras.

Mr. Dowley is survived by his wife of nearly 50 years, Charlene; six children, Nora Dowley, Philip Dowley, Matthew Dowley, James Dowley, Thomas Dowley and Jane Paolucci; sister Margaret Cody of St. Clair Shores, Michigan; and 11 grandchildren. His son, Peter, predeceased him.

Services were held July 31 at Church of the Nativity. Donations may be made to Sacred Heart Nativity School, in care of the Rev. Peter Pabst, S.J., 310 Edwards Ave., San Jose, CA 95110.

## ■ POLICE CALLS

*This information is from the Atherton and Menlo Park police departments and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Under law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.*

**ATHERTON**

**Simple assault, battery report:** Two female students got into a fist-fight, Menlo-Atherton High School on Middlefield Road, July 25.

**Grand theft reports:**

■ Caterpillar construction loader, intersection of Park Lane and Santiago Avenue, July 24.

■ 18-speed bike valued at \$8,000 to \$9,000 taken from garage of residence, 100 block of Orchard Hills Street, July 27.

**Auto burglary report:** Window smashed and speakers stolen from locked vehicle, 100 block of James Avenue, July 20.

**Burglary report:** Residence broken into but nothing taken, 100 block of Tuscaloosa Avenue, July 28.

Attempted burglary report: 100 block of Faxon Forest, July 20.

**Elizabeth Lasensky bows out of Menlo Park council race**

## ■ ELECTION 2006

Menlo Park resident Elizabeth Lasensky, an outspoken critic of plans to develop Bayfront Park, said she's opted not to run for City Council.

Ms. Lasensky said in May that she intended to run for one of three open council seats.

She told the Almanac on July 31 that she has decided to focus her efforts on opposing an advisory ballot measure that asks residents if they want playing fields at the 160-acre park off Marsh Road.

Ms. Lasensky has been a critic of the current council majority of Nicholas Jellins, Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc.

The council majority's political

opponents — often referred to as "residentialists," — are looking to back a new set of candidates, but several potential candidates have expressed concern with overcrowding the ballot.

Ms. Lasensky would not say if another candidate asked her to bow out of the race.

She said she will support Parks and Recreation Commissioner Heyward Robinson if he decides to run for council.

Parks Commissioner Richard Cline and Transportation Commissioner John Boyle are the only people to take out candidate papers as of 1 p.m., July 31.

**MENLO PARK****Fraud reports:**

■ Identity theft, 1100 block of Pine Street, July 23.

■ Identity theft, 1000 block of Laurel Street, July 24.

**Stolen vehicle report:** 1100 block of O'Brien Drive, July 22.

**Grand theft reports:**

■ Digital camera taken from residence, 1300 block of Windermere Avenue, July 24.


■ Purse taken from business, 500 block of El Camino Real, July 27.

**Burglary reports:**

■ Money and miscellaneous items taken from business, 400 block of Bay Road, July 25.



■ Jewelry and digital camera taken from residence, 900 block of Harmon Avenue, July 27.

**Attempted burglary report:** 100 block of O'Keefe Street, July 27.



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## Time to plan for global warming

Global warming has become a drumbeat in the media: California's cooking — and burning; so are the U.S. and Europe. Droughts seem longer and drier; hurricanes are more frequent and fiercer. 2005 was the hottest year on record; so far, 2006 is hotter.

But an 11-day heat wave in the Bay Area? Eleven whole days without our summer fog to make us comfortable.

If not proof that global warming is real, that heat wave has given us a preview of what global warming will feel like. It has also gotten our attention.

**EDITORIAL**

*The opinion of The Almanac*

Maybe feeling drippy and uncomfortable will help spur us to take the actions needed to head off the far worse consequences that are predicted as global temperatures

rise, glaciers and ice caps melt, oceans warm and sea levels rise.

In this environmentally conscious area, lots of people and organizations are doing their bit. Many are putting solar cells on roofs, switching to fluorescent lights, driving Priuses, recycling, becoming carbon-neutral and building green. San Mateo County has committed to a policy that all its new government buildings will be green; Portola Valley's new Town Hall will be green.

But although they are essential, grass-roots measures are not enough. To slow or reverse the global trend, we need organized efforts at all levels of government: cities, counties, states, nations, the United Nations.

As we all know, these efforts are uneven. California and many local communities are doing far more than the country as a whole. The U.S. and Australia are the only developed countries that have refused to ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. It has been ratified by 164 nations.

What's needed is a sense of urgency to get the machinery of local governments in motion.

For communities, like ours, that front on bays or oceans, rising sea levels present the most immediate, scariest threat from global warming.

Depending on how fast ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica melt, sea levels could rise up to 20 feet or more — maybe in this century.

Anyone who is still skeptical about the threat should see Al Gore's movie, "An Inconvenient Truth"; read the book; or — better yet — listen to Al Gore himself. Mr. Gore does a powerful and persuasive job of

presenting the overwhelming scientific evidence for global warming and its potentially catastrophic effects. In several presentations on the Peninsula, he has received standing ovations from some of the most sophisticated audiences in the world.

His pictures and descriptions of the diminishing ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica leave little doubt that that ice is rapidly — no one knows how rapidly — being added to oceans. The rise could force the evacuation of more than 100 million people in China, India and Bangladesh, it demonstrated.

Such a rise in sea level could drown all of East Palo Alto, and substantial areas of Menlo Park, Atherton, Palo Alto and Redwood City, not to mention San Francisco and cities all around the Bay.

It's high time that these cities begin to incorporate these threats into their disaster planning.

They may also want to begin rethinking their approach to new developments proposed along the shore. In Redwood City, for example, Cargill is winding down salt production on 1,433 acres just northwest of Bayfront Park in Menlo Park. It is planning to replace those acres with some kind of development. It has sent more than 30,000 letters to residents of Redwood City asking them what they would like to see on the property.

Should any developer be allowed to build something that might wash away within decades? That question needs to be addressed.

Similarly, plans to restore marsh and wetlands in former salt ponds around the Bay might be useless if water levels rise.

Fortunately the regional Bay Conservation and Development Commission, which oversees development around the Bay, is conscious of these threats. It is seeking funding for a new round of studies to examine these issues in depth.

We applaud this study. We also urge all our cities to address the issues presented by global warming, particularly those that have real estate at risk.

Meanwhile, we need to raise awareness and a sense of urgency to combat these fearsome problems.

In one small but significant gesture, 47 California cities have individually ratified the Kyoto treaty on climate change. They include Palo Alto, San Mateo, San Bruno, Sunnyvale, San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland and San Jose.

Maybe our cities should join them.

**LETTERS**

*Our readers write*

### City manager addresses 'unfounded allegations'

*Editor:*

Uncharacteristically, I am inclined to respond to a letter written by Nancy Borgeson that was published in the July 26 edition of the Almanac. My hope is that by responding it serves our overarching goal of helping to increase awareness of city government activity.

I will not attempt to rebut the points made in Ms. Borgeson's letter, in which she accuses the City Council and me of "malpractice" because the minutes that are prepared for council meetings are backlogged. Instead, I offer the following:

First, all City Council meetings



Woodside Library Collection

### Our Regional Heritage

Members of the John Greer family of Woodside pose with their horses in this undated photo. The adobe building at right was built in 1840 near the corner of Kings Mountain and Woodside roads. It was destroyed in the 1906 earthquake. The carriage house at left was converted to a house by Joe Greer, nephew of John, and was torn down in 1980 by a new property owner.

See **LETTERS**, next page

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# A better way to find trustworthy council candidates

By John B. Lomax

Well, the Menlo Park silly season has begun again. Although, come to think of it, it didn't really stop after the last council election but only continued at a somewhat lower level.

We need to do something about finding and persuading trustworthy persons to run for these offices and then electing them, rather than the wannabe politicians who have permeated our City Council in recent years.

I started working in Menlo Park 51 years ago and have lived here for the past 26 years. Am I the only person left who remembers the years that Ira Bonde served as councilman and mayor? We need more persons of his caliber to volunteer for public service. Persons without a personal agenda. Persons with the wisdom and ability to successfully address the major problems of our city. Persons willing to work politely with the other council members in arriving at superior solutions.

How can I address the extant polarized partisan groups when they don't even have names? Yes, they have variously been called developers, residentialists,

NIMBYs and money grubbers, but only by the opposition. I think we should choose terms that are positive or at least neutral. Perhaps we can learn from the developing nations and use symbols instead of names. I'm going to select geometric shapes: a circle and a triangle to represent the opposing sides. (I would have used a square as one of them, but thought that might have negative connotations of representing my generation.)

Let us look for a moment at how our council election process has degenerated. One of the circles is unhappy with a recent council budget decision and he puts his name on the ballot. A triangle has a good idea about recreation fields that she wants to see implemented, so she submits her name for a position on the council. Other disgruntled circles and triangles with similar personal agendas also qualify to be on the fall ballot. The circles join together to run as a slate, so the triangles, not to be bested, do so too. The circles hold

neighborhood meetings, promising to reduce taxes (while promising city staff to improve their health plan). Triangles also hold neighborhood meetings and promise to reduce traffic and speeds (in the specific area of the meeting) while promoting new business centers for city income to help pay for new ball fields.

Each group is selling itself based on the self-interest of the particular voter group that it addresses, not the well-being of the city as a whole.

Is there a better way? I think there is. Let us look for it in two steps.

First, we need some unbiased, well respected, and distinguished members of our community, who are disinterested in politics, to recognize the need to choose and persuade qualified persons to run for council office. I've tried to think of public-spirited organizations that might do this and can come up with only our local churches. While even the churches might be slightly suspect of leaning toward red or blue in a national elec-

tion, they certainly have no ties to either the circles or the triangles. I propose that each church nominate one member to participate in a committee whose purpose is to choose prospective candidates and then to persuade them to volunteer for public service by placing their names on the forthcoming ballot.

The second step involves informing the electorate of the qualifications of these volunteers. Here we have examples of how this has worked successfully in the past. When I ran to become a director of the West Bay Sanitary District, I spent only \$5 on advertising; on running for re-election, I spent nothing. Both times the Almanac made strong recommendations in those elections that I believe the citizens accepted.

Perhaps the Almanac could name this proposed new slate of candidates "the virgins." The term implies purity, honor, integrity, resolution and, possibly, also an eagerness to move from the present condition into the future. ■

*Menlo Park resident John B. Lomax is a member of the West Bay Sanitary District Board of Directors.*



GUEST  
OPINION

## LETTERS

Continued from previous page

are televised live, with a rebroadcast and videotapes of every meeting available the following day for viewing or copying.

Second, all City Council meetings are video-streamed live via the city's Web site, and are available for viewing from the archive within 48 hours and at any time thereafter.

Third, the city manager's office includes the functions of the city clerk (a one-person office), and is responsible for numerous programmatic areas in addition to providing council support.

Fourth, City Council minutes serve to capture votes taken on agenda items and provide very succinct summaries of public comments and council deliberations.

Finally, the current backlog is not preferable, albeit not extraordinary, and staff is working assiduously to get caught up.

In closing, let me reiterate that staff does not take offense at constructive criticism. In fact, we value the feedback. What I personally take exception to, however, is when people make unfounded allegations that staff is not acting professionally, is pursuing some hidden agenda, acting with malicious intent or is not using its best efforts to serve the public at-large.

**David Boesch**

**Menlo Park city manager**

## Killer stripes

Editor:

(Regarding the July 26 article

about the Portola Valley bicyclist who was killed), an eyewitness reported the cyclist was a third of the way into the lane on Skyline Boulevard, where there was no shoulder, coming down a hill around a curve marked by a double yellow line. The driver of the errant vehicle, a lady 81 years of age, slightly veered around the cyclist and then, before she had passed him, immediately cut back into the lane striking the cyclist, who later died of his injuries. There was no oncoming traffic in the other lane.

While I can only go by this account, I would like to relate, hopefully for the future benefit of drivers and defenseless cyclists, my own experience many times in the past that could have resulted in a similar tragic ending.

I have been a long-distance runner for over 30 years, sometimes along rural, twisting roads in this area, including Skyline Boulevard. As a runner, I have the freedom to run while facing oncoming traffic. On narrow two-lane roads, particularly ones with a double yellow line and no shoulder — like the one (referred to) above — I never fail to make a quick study of an oncoming driver's immediate driving demeanor to ready myself to go off in the brush and await the passing of the vehicle. By "demeanor" I am referring to some drivers' absolute dedication to not going over the double yellow line, regardless of what hazards may lie ahead in the roadway. On many occasions, I'm glad I did so. Most often, it is an older driver, careful in her faithful attention to that pair of

"killer stripes."

**Sheldon Breiner  
Buckeye, Portola Valley**

## Bayfront play field advisory measure not justified

Editor:

We are perplexed about the idea of building playing fields at Bayfront Park at an estimated cost of \$10 to \$17 million when the city has a gap of \$1.85 million in the current year between expected income and spending and is considering asking us to vote on a utilities tax to cover just the deficit.

Furthermore, the figures in the staff report indicate that the city would still have a shortfall of several million dollars (best-case scenario) if Bayfront Park is the chosen site. Clearly, the city needs to prepare feasibility studies for a number of other sites. We have urged our council members to listen to the Parks & Recreation Commission's recommendation on the topic of site selection(s).

Considering the budget picture, we believe the idea of an advisory ballot measure, which will cost the city \$30,000, is not justified. The straw-vote approach, twanging emotional gut strings throughout the community with a project the city cannot afford at present, is simply unfair to Menlo Park residents.

We have urged the City Council to slow down and to put aside the ballot measure. We recommend that the council create a task force to look at the issue at hand — a shortage of play-

ing fields in our area — from a broader perspective: Bring in citizens from our neighboring cities to look at ideas for creating these desired recreational spaces on a collaborative basis.

Menlo Park residents can work with residents of other communities to find appropriate sites on which to build playing fields to be used by all of our children.

**Tate and Curtis Snyder  
Woodland Avenue, Menlo Park**

## Sheeper team has made Burgess swim center a 'gem'

Editor:

I am a senior in the community and have been swimming at Burgess Pool for some time. I swam in the old pool and am now a regular lap swimmer in the new facility.

I thought perhaps this new management might not appreciate older, slower swimmers, but I was wrong. From what I can see, all ages are welcomed and management has tried to meet the swim needs of all participants. This facility is first-rate and is run with such deference to all of us I feel like I am swimming at a private club. Burgess Pool is a community Gem!

It appears to me, that the Almanac is eager to point out alleged problems that have occurred. Perhaps the Almanac hasn't experienced Burgess Pool on a hot day to see the joy and fun the community is experiencing. I suggest Almanac publish some pictures of the Kiddies Pool when the weather is warm and it is jammed with mothers, children and grandparents having a wonderful time at very rea-

sonable prices. Let's give credit where credit is due. The Sheeper team is doing a great job. It's a plus for the community.

**Terry DeFelice  
Sharon Park Drive  
Menlo Park**

## Recent heat wave? You haven't seen anything yet

Editor:

So we think it has been hot? The effects of this weather are nothing compared with the global warming and climate change that will be causing sea level to rise 20 feet. Expect to see San Francisco Bay expand and cover a great deal of land around the Bay.

Instead of putting playing fields on Bayfront Park, perhaps we should be putting our energies into questions such as these: When the water rises, what will happen as buried toxic leachate flows into the Bay? And how do we respond to rising waters when they begin flooding homes, businesses, and highway 101?

Will we become environmentally conscious soon enough to take the action needed to avoid the otherwise inevitable catastrophes?

Perhaps it is time for the City Council to appoint a Commission on Climate Change composed of earth scientists, practical engineers, and people who love this beautiful blue planet.

For details, see Al Gore's movie, "An Inconvenient Truth," and pick up a copy of the book by the same title at Kepler's. Note the Bay maps on page 200 and 201.

**John Beverley Butcher  
Hedge Road, Menlo Park**

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