

**ATHERTON: New group in uproar over excavation fee.  
Town suspends fee pending legal review. Page 5**

# The Almanac

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

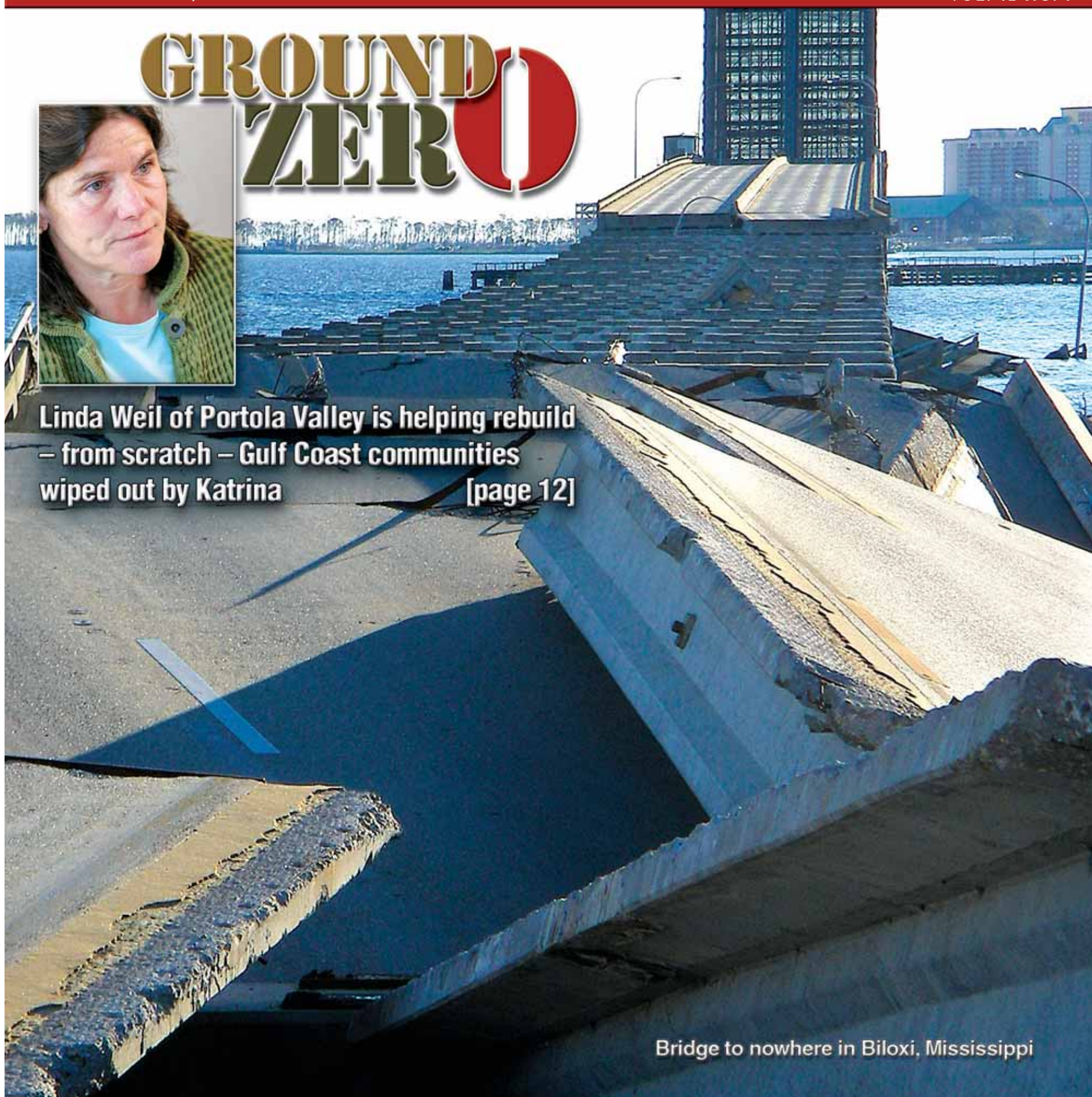
SEPTEMBER 6, 2006 [www.AlmanacNews.com](http://www.AlmanacNews.com)

VOL. 42 NO. 1

## GROUND ZERO



**Linda Weil of Portola Valley is helping rebuild  
– from scratch – Gulf Coast communities  
wiped out by Katrina [page 12]**



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# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT

### Fire truck parade

Sisters Emily and Sarah Pistorino of Menlo Park peek inside a fire engine that was part of a 20-truck caravan traveling to fire stations up and down the Peninsula. The girls, and their mother, Carol Pistorino, right, visited the Menlo Park Fire Protection



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

District headquarters on Middlefield Road on August 31 to see the fire engines when they stopped for a few minutes at the station. Also shown is Monika Perez of Palo Alto, holding grandson John Browning. The caravan was a fundraiser for the Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation.

### Atherton

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### On the cover

A year ago, Hurricane Katrina demolished the drawbridge between Ocean Springs and Biloxi along Mississippi's Gulf Coast, where Portola Valley resident and planning consultant Linda Weil subsequently spent nine months helping stricken communities reorganize and deal with the hurricane's sweeping devastation. Photo courtesy of Linda Weil. Story begins on **Page 12**.

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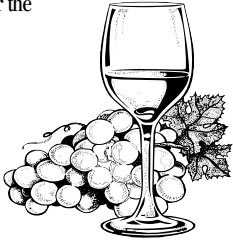
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*Hint: New Zealand's cool climate has helped it produce examples of Sauvignon Blanc that are equal to the best of Sancerre and Pouilly Fume.*

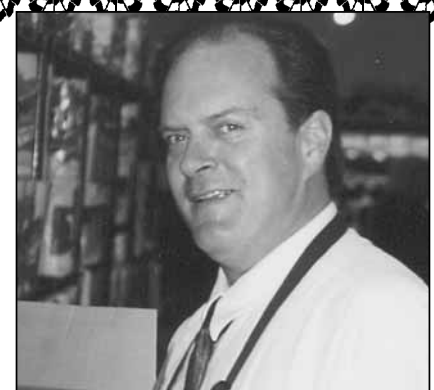


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# Local News

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## New group in uproar over excavation fee

■ Residents seek recall of councilwoman; town suspends fee pending legal review.

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

The Atherton Building Department's supporters are not happy. A group of residents and contractors is taking aim at Atherton officials over the town's excavation fee and their handling of the embattled building department, and the first target is City Council member

Kathy McKeithen.

Ms. McKeithen lobbied for the town's scrutiny of its building department, which is facing a major overhaul following probes of its practices and employees. City Council members have publicly decried the department's poor record keeping, sloppy practices and failure to collect almost \$135,000 in excavation fees.

Calling themselves Atherton

### ■ ATHERTON

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

Residents for Responsible Governance, group members have accused the town of unfair treatment of building department staff, and are calling Atherton's year-old excavation surcharge an illegal tax on construction.

Atherton officials are not currently collecting excavation fees,

pending a legal review.

About 60 people attended an August 31 meeting at the Atherton home of Jillian Manus-Salzman to air their concerns and announce a campaign to recall Ms. McKeithen from the City Council.

Ms. McKeithen told the Almanac that she thought the recall effort was a scare tactic, and that she did not think it would be successful.

"I've no idea on what basis they claim to recall me," she said. "What is unfair about trying to

City attorney won't disclose report on Atherton building department. **Page 15**

make a better system for everyone?"

People at the meeting alternately praised building department staff and complained about what they see as an erosion in its level of service since the departure of former building official Mike Hood, who

See **PROTEST**, page 8



The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

At the new Menlo Children's Center in the Civic Center, preschoolers play with Lego pieces. From left, they are Lester Kielstein, Lia Gemmet-Young, Jonathan Vengosh, and Pierre Beau De Lomenie.

## Sole private child care operator withdraws bid

■ Privatization debate put to rest unless a council member wants otherwise, says city staff.

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

The sole private child care provider being considered to operate Menlo Park's Burgess child care programs has withdrawn her bid to do so, making it likely that the city will continue to run the programs.

Vineeta Bhanderi, administrator and president of Pacifica-based Building Kidz, said she withdrew due to public opposition to privatizing the city's programs.

A divided City Council last spring voted to explore privatizing the programs, which are operated out of the newly remodeled Menlo Children's Center. Although a request for proposals was sent out to 29 potential providers, Ms. Bhanderi was the only private operator to submit a serious bid. The only other serious bid was from the city staff members who operate the existing programs.

Ms. Bhanderi notified the city of her decision in an August 30 e-mail to Assis-

tant City Manager Audrey Seymour.

"I like to take challenges in life, but I believe I am not prepared or have the means to deal with major transition issues with parents, staff and the community, specially when all three entities seem totally against it," Ms. Bhanderi wrote.

Ms. Bhanderi could not be reached for comment before the Almanac's deadline, on Friday, September 1.

"We're very happy," said Adela Velasquez, program coordinator for the Burgess programs, of staff's reaction to the news. "We hope the city keeps the programs."

"I'm cautiously happy," said parent Lara Hoyem. "I'm still left with a little

uncertainty (about) what the council will do next."

Representatives from city staff and Building Kidz were scheduled to be interviewed by the Child Care RFP Committee — a task force of parents, child care specialists and appointed officials — on September 6.

The committee was expected to then recommend one or the other to the council, which was scheduled to make a final decision October 3.

Unless a council member decides to reopen the privatization discussion, the

See **CHILD CARE**, page 21



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# Breiner: man of many talents

Sheldon Breiner will be honored by Portola Valley at 'Blues & Barbeque'

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

Geophysicist, explorer, entrepreneur, archaeologist, marathon runner, open space advocate, photographer — Sheldon Breiner has made his mark in each of these roles.

But it's for his contributions to preservation of open space and geologic safety that Portola Valley will be honoring Mr. Breiner at its annual "Blues & Barbeque" celebration at 6 p.m. Sunday, September 10, at Town Center.

Since Sheldon and Mimi Breiner and their two children moved to Portola Valley the year the town incorporated in 1964, he has been a passionate supporter of its trails and open spaces. He says he has run every trail in town and some that aren't trails.

"I love exploring," he says, chuckling about leaving trails and heading out cross-country. "I don't have many friends that like to run with me."

Mr. Breiner was also one of the founders of the Peninsula Open Space Trust, and served on its original board. "Our first big gift was Windy Hill," he says.

Mr. Breiner, a geophysicist who lives 300 feet from a trace of the fault in Portola Valley Ranch, has chaired the town's Geologic Safety Committee during the recent study of details of the San Andreas Fault.

"Shelly's the go-to guy on geotechnical issues, and we're in a rift valley," says Councilman Ted Driscoll.

The Breiners have braced their house to withstand an earthquake, and installed a seismograph in their basement.

Mayor Steve Toben notes, "He's a force of nature himself."

## Exploring

"I have always loved the outdoors," Mr. Breiner reflects. "Exploring has been a lifelong interest. I like challenges, puzzles, mysteries."

Mr. Breiner's love of exploring has taken him into deep science, from earthquake prediction to searching for minerals, lost submarines, and archaeological remains. He says he has visited more than 100 countries.

His love of challenge has spurred him into high-tech entrepreneurship. He founded his first company, Geometrics, in 1969. All told, he has started about five companies — "Two didn't work" — and now he's on the board of four companies, and principal of New Ventures West, an incubator for high-tech companies.

## Magnetic pioneer

Shelly Breiner learned hard work early, helping his immigrant parents run a bakery in St. Louis. He did everything from decorating bar mitzvah cakes to delivering bread on his way to school.

At Stanford on scholarship, he took up geophysics. "Geophysics is a field for people who love the outdoors," Mr. Breiner says. "I like discovering hidden signals and physical objects."

Mr. Breiner's master's thesis launched him on a career using magnetism as a tool. He soon got a job with Varian to find uses for its new ultra-sensitive magnetometer, which detects minute changes in the earth's magnetic field.

From three trailers on the Webb Ranch, Mr. Breiner developed techniques to analyze structures deep underground by measuring changes in magnetic field due to the mineral magnetite in some rocks. Jasper Ridge has a major magnetic anomaly under it; so does SLAC, he says.

**Sheldon Breiner** of Portola Valley with a 3,000-year-old Olmec head he found in the jungles of southern Mexico.



Soon Mr. Breiner became Mr. Find-it for the military, government agents, and mineral companies. He surveyed for — and discovered — oil in Iran and uranium in Australia. He's found sunken ships, tunnels in Vietnam, skiers buried by avalanches, and native American villages.

Mr. Breiner's doctoral thesis convinced him that magnetism may allow prediction of earthquakes. He set up arrays of detectors between San Francisco and Hollister to measure magnetic signals emitted when softened rock deep underground deforms as the Pacific plate moves relentlessly northwest at 2 inches a year along the San Andreas Fault.

## Indiana Jones

Most exciting have been Mr. Breiner's forays into archaeology. These have led to discovery of the ancient Greek city of Sybaris in Italy; a hundred massive Olmec heads in southern Mexico; and remains of a Spanish galleon that ran aground on the west coast of Mexico 430 years ago.

Mr. Breiner used his magnetometers to detect the remains of the Greek city famed for decadence and luxury, which has given us the words sybarite and sybaritic.

It was his expeditions to southern Mexico to expose ruins of the area's oldest civilization that earned Mr. Breiner the unofficial title of the Indiana Jones of Geophysics.

The magnetometers were very effective at detecting the basaltic rock of the giant Olmec heads. Over three seasons, the team made 50,000 measurements and found over 100 giant heads and other objects — including the were-jaguar that anchors the Olmec exhibit in the Anthropology Museum in Mexico City.

In recent years, Mr. Breiner has been collecting fragments of Ming China, terracotta and beeswax from a Spanish galleon, and looking for remains of the ship itself.

Mr. Breiner never seems to run out of energy and ideas. Now he's working on a novel, and is preparing a paper on why airplanes may disappear in the Bermuda Triangle.

For information, check [breiner.com/sheldon](http://breiner.com/sheldon). ■

## ■ INFORMATION

Portola Valley's "Blues & Barbeque" event will be held Sunday, September 10, from 2:30 to 7 p.m. at Town Center, 765 Portola Road. There will be activities for kids, music, line dance lessons, dinner and an auction. For prices and other information, call 851-1700, ext. 58. Also, you can go to [AlmanacNews.com](http://AlmanacNews.com), look for the August 30 issue, and under Arts & Entertainment, click on Sheldon Breiner.

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



### The Move to Greener Housing

**Q: Do you think that the California Assembly's passage of an agreement to cap greenhouse gas emissions will affect the home building industry?**

**A:** The legislation just passed by the California Assembly should spur incentives to greener technologies in many different parts of the economy. Home building will no doubt be just one of the industries that will be affected. Whenever a government writes new regulations that mean a change from the status quo, new and innovative technologies are often created to comply with the new rules. Mandates create a sure market and this is what is needed to spur devel-

opment of new products.

The move by the Assembly to curb greenhouse gases is about air quality. But a significant part of improving air quality will be to improve solar technology, which has not changed much in the past few decades. Solar energy could become an efficient, cost-effective means of heating and cooling homes and commercial buildings if it is better and more widely available. Use of this passive energy could go a long way towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

It isn't known at this time how many other benefits will follow this legislation but there could be many. It will be interesting to see what changes occur.

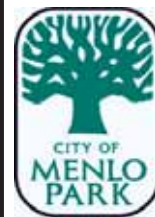
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## COMMERCIAL ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATE (CZOU)

NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 - 1:00 P.M.  
RECREATION CENTER FIRESIDE ROOM  
800 ALMA STREET, MENLO PARK

CZOU is a comprehensive update of the commercial use categories and regulations in the Zoning Ordinance. The overall goal is to create a clear and user-friendly document that aligns the City's fiscal, community, service, and land use goals.

This project does not include changes to any development regulations (such as floor area, setbacks, or height). However, the proposed revisions will affect commercial development in the City. Please join this meeting of the CZOU Working Group to learn more about the project and share your views.

For more information, please visit the project page: [http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev\\_cs.htm](http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_cs.htm)



# Menlo Park OKs Derry condo-commercial project

■ Council approves 135 condos, 22,525 square feet of commercial space near El Camino Real.

By **Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

A proposal for 135 for-sale condominiums and 22,525 square feet of commercial space for office and retail use between El Camino Real and the Menlo Park train station was approved 4-1 by the City Council on August 29.

Eight three- and four-story structures are planned for a 3.5-acre site near the intersection of Oak Grove Avenue and El Camino Real.

The Derry family, which owns the site, has partnered with the Foster City-based O'Brien Group in the project, which has been in the making for about three years.

Mayor Nicholas Jellins labeled final approval of the project "a great moment for the city of Menlo Park," noting that the project should be considered one of many steps taken to update and improve El Camino Real.

Councilman Andy Cohen opposed the proposal, arguing the project doesn't earmark sufficient space for retail uses, which would garner the city

## ■ MENLO PARK

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much-needed sales tax revenue. He also said the project would create significant traffic delays.

Retail is expected to occupy the first floor of the project — about 10,200 square feet — and the remaining commercial space is expected to house offices, according to city staff.

The project includes 341 at-grade and underground parking spaces.

The one- and two-bedroom condominiums range from 900 square feet to 1,300 square feet, and would sell for an estimated \$650,000 to \$850,000, "in today's market," said Jim Pollart, vice president of land acquisitions and planning for the O'Brien Group.

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

The city will collect an estimated \$5.7 million in fees associated with the project, including a \$4.3 million "in-lieu" fee for its lack of a park.

Once finished, the project is expected to provide the city an estimated \$130,000 a year in property and sales tax, Mr. Pollart said.

The O'Brien Group and the Derry family are also providing



Courtesy Steinberg Architects

**The Derry project**, which includes condos and commercial space, will replace existing businesses — including Foster's Freeze — along Oak Grove Avenue and Derry Lane.

funds to the city to construct a lighted crosswalk across Oak Grove Avenue.

The project is the second major development approved for the El Camino Real corridor in the past three weeks: A proposal by John Beltramo to build a 26,800-square-foot commercial building and 16 two-story townhouses near the intersection of Valparaiso Avenue and El Camino Real was approved by the council August 9.

## Higher density

In approving the project, the city amended the general plan, and changed the zoning of the site to allow about 39 residences per acre — more than twice what is intended for the site in

the city's general plan.

Six residents spoke against the project, arguing that because the council is considering proposals and amending the general plan on a "piecemeal basis," the city is failing to acknowledge the comprehensive effects — impacts on schools, traffic and infrastructure — that may result from high-density housing on El Camino Real.

"The potential [in the Derry project] is there, but it needs to fit the zoning," said Elias Blowie. "We're just changing the rules."

"El Camino Real can't support this kind of development, and the schools can't support this kind of development," said Chuck Bernstein. "There's no benefit at all."

Council members Kelly Fer-

gusson and Andy Cohen seconded many of the speakers' concerns, but Ms. Fergusson still voted in favor of the project.

"I'm going to support this project because it is beautiful, but I think we've sold out," she said.

## Foster's Freeze

Existing businesses on the site will be demolished to make way for the project, including Foster's Freeze, a local landmark and favorite ice cream and hamburger stop.

Mr. Pollart said the O'Brien Group and the Derry family are working with the owner to help the shop relocate to a new Menlo Park site.

Brady Gallagher, 13, of Menlo Park, said he and his brother, Nicky, 12, gathered about 800 signatures on a petition to save Foster's Freeze.

"We've shown the O'Brien Group how much Foster's means to the community," Brady said at the council meeting. "We weren't able to save the building ... but that's better than not having any Foster's at all."

Foster's Freeze opened in 1949, according to records checked by Frank Helfrich of the Menlo Park Historical Association.

Mr. Cohen said that because the developers aren't required to relocate Foster's Freeze, the store may "never show up on a [Menlo Park] property again." ■

# Group in uproar over excavation fee

## PROTEST

continued from page 5

retired unexpectedly on June 30.

"We do a lot of work in town," said Jim Chesler of Menlo Park-based Chesler Construction. "I'm here because I'm really upset with the way the town decimated what was probably the best building department I've worked with in 20 years."

Several people said Mr. Hood set the tone of the building department's accessible and customer-friendly philosophy, and they hoped it would continue under his successor.

Atherton Mayor Charles Marsala, who attended the meeting, asked for specific examples about delays in service by the building department. City Manager Jim Robinson later told the Almanac there have been no delays, with inspections occurring within 24 to 48 hours and plan checking continuing to have a four- to six-week turnaround time.

## Excavation fee

Atherton's excavation fee, a

surcharge of \$22 per cubic yard of off-haul meant to compensate the town for damage to the roads caused by dirt-laden trucks, went into effect in May 2005. An internal audit found the building department failed to charge about \$134,000 in excavation fees when the surcharge first took effect, although duplicitous developers were blamed in several of the cases.

"The off-haul (fee), I'm convinced, is illegal," said Carol Flaherty, an Atherton resident.

She said she is facing more than \$50,000 in excavation fees for a retaining wall, and a neighbor was being charged nearly \$100,000.

City Manager Robinson told the Almanac that until a legal review is completed, builders are being offered "standstill agreements" so that projects can go ahead without off-haul fee payment. The standstill agreement preserves the town's right to collect the fee later.

The legal review should be completed soon, and it will be discussed at the council's September 20 meeting, said Mayor Marsala.

He said he couldn't comment on whether the town would refund fees if the excavation charges were found to be illegal.

## Department staff

Lois English, the department's permit technician, said she was one of the targets of the personnel investigation, and told the group she was removed from her job on August 22.

"I was told a week ago that I no longer work in the building department," she said, adding that her new duties are to sell stamps at the town's post office counter and to "read the newspaper."

"I'm not allowed to handle mail or the computer, or anything," she said. "The person who was selling stamps is now doing my job."

Ms. English made public the letter of reprimand she got as a result of the personnel investigation, and said that none of its allegations is true.

The reprimand from City Manager Robinson, dated August 1, listed four types of violations of Atherton's code of

conduct and procedures: undermining the excavation user fee; selectively cooperating with staff members and contractors; rude and discourteous conduct; and accepting gifts.

"I've done nothing," Ms. English said. "I've served the town, and I love this town."

Mr. Robinson said he could not comment on the reprimand, and added that Ms. English's transfer was not a demotion but an organizational change. He said she now works in the city manager's office at the same salary and job classification, and that she does have access to e-mail.

## Vendetta claimed

Several people at the Atherton Residents for Responsible Governance meeting said they believe the shakeup in the building department was the result of a vendetta harbored by Councilwoman McKeithen.

"She doesn't like the building department," said Atherton resident Skip Law.

Mr. Law and his wife Linda are developers whose proposal to build condominium housing for seniors and a new City Hall near the Atherton's train station

was rejected by the council in January.

Ms. Manus-Salzman, a literary agent, said she is not a builder, but was so incensed by what was going on in town that she was spurred into action.

"I feel this woman (Ms. McKeithen) should resign," Ms. Manus-Salzman said. "I will ask personally for her resignation, and if not, will start a process of recall."

Contacted by phone after the meeting, Ms. McKeithen said, "I feel nothing personal about the building department. I've always felt, even before I was a council member, that things were being done improperly."

Ms. McKeithen said she was interested only in making sure that the building department operated under a fair and equitable system. She said she had no interest in going after building department staff, and pointed out that she has been vocal in her distress that the city hired a lawyer to conduct a personnel investigation, when she wanted an investigation of the department's practices.

"It's always been a factual, procedural issue for me," she said. ■

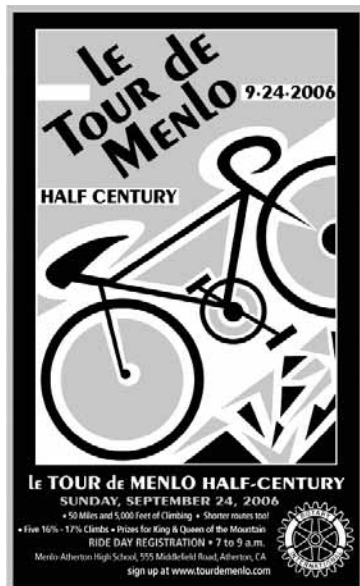


# Le Tour de Menlo rolls out Sept. 24

If climbing hills on two wheels is your passion, then this year's le Tour de Menlo on Sunday, September 24, is for you. With five climbs, adding up to 5,000 feet, this half-century (50 miles) will challenge the best bike riders over an urban course that also has an alternate route with fewer climbs.

The ride will start at 7 a.m. at Menlo-Atherton High School in Atherton, moving north to Redwood City, San Carlos, Belmont and Hillsborough in a series of hills that will include two timed climbs, with the best finishers qualifying for King and Queen of the Mountain. Prizes will be awarded to the two top finishers in this contest. Results will be posted on the ride's Web site.

The ride will be fully supported, with a major rest stop at the halfway point in Belmont. Drinks and snacks will be



available all morning, as well as SAG services. Route maps and instructions on how the climbs will be timed will be available at the start at Menlo-Atherton,

555 Middlefield Road in Atherton.

This year's Tour will benefit the scholarship and community service programs of the Rotary Club of Menlo Park, cosponsor of the ride, along with the Almanac, the community newspaper that serves Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside.

The ride's \$30 entry fee includes a T-shirt. The deadline for advanced entries is Friday, September 15, although late registration will be available for \$35 on the day of the event. For a slightly higher fee, riders can register online at TourdeMenlo.com, or download registration forms at the site and mail it directly to le Tour de Menlo, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Call Tom at 854-2626, ext. 222, for more information.

## Family Bike Ride honors Michelle Mazzei

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

Oak Knoll School's first Family Bike Ride takes off Sunday, September 17, and honors Michelle Mazzei, fourth-grade teacher who lost her life in a bicycle-car accident last October.

The bike ride is the culminating event in the Menlo Park K-5 school's Bike Safety Week (September 11-15), which includes safety assemblies, a bike rodeo, a parent education night, and the fitting students with bike helmets at school.

Students and their families will return to school Friday evening, September 15, for the annual Fall Family Fiesta, a prelude to the ride. They may register for the ride at the fiesta and also pick up T-shirts and water bottles.

Oak Knoll students, teachers and community members are invited to sign up for the ride, which starts at 8 a.m. Sunday, September 17, at Oak Knoll School, 1895 Oak Knoll Lane in Menlo Park. Participants may pick up a registration form at the school office.

Riders will pedal along the oak-shaded residential streets and follow the 1.5-mile loop one to four times. The route is the same one used for Oak Knoll School's annual Otter Run in June. A junior bike path for little children will be set up in the play area behind the classrooms.

"We want to definitely encourage Michelle's [students] to par-



Photo/Mazzei family

**Michael Mazzei**, an accomplished bicyclist and triathlete, will be honored at the Family Bike Ride on September 17.

ticipate and be in the first wave of riders," said Karen Clancy, one of the teachers organizing the event. The teachers have sent personal letters to each of Ms. Mazzei's former students during her nine years at Oak Knoll. She began her teaching career in the Menlo Park district at Encinal School, a year earlier, in August 1995.

"We also want to encourage families from the community who don't have students at Oak Knoll to participate in the safe, car-free family ride," said teacher Noelle Gonsalves, one of the organizers.

A bike parking lot will be set up in front of the school, and no cars will be able to park in the school lot.

After the ride, families can

park their bikes in the front lot and walk over to the lower play yard for treats and karaoke, performed by Oak Knoll students.

The registration fee of \$20 for adults and \$10 for children covers a T-shirt and water bottle.

All funds raised that are not used for the bike ride event will go to the Michelle Mazzei Fund for Environmental Education, established at the Palo Alto-based nonprofit Environmental Volunteers. This fund has raised \$18,000 for educational programs in Ms. Mazzei's memory.

For more information, check the school Web site: oakknollschool.org or contact Karen Clancy at kclancy@mpscd.org or Noelle Gonsalves at ngonsalves@mpscd.org. ■

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# Local public schools do well by state's testing standards

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

If the ability of students to score well on standardized tests is the measure of an education, local public high schools have made notable progress for a second straight year, and middle and elementary schools extended their long-running record of high performance.

The Department of Education's annual "academic performance index" scores for the past school year came out Thursday, August 31, and showed every school in the Menlo Park, Woodside, Portola Valley and Las Lomas school districts scoring well above the statewide target of 800 on a scale of 200 to 1,000.

Woodside and Menlo-Atherton high schools, each of which

serve about 2,000 students from a broad ethnic and economic demographic, have yet to meet the target, but are within sight of it. Woodside scored 736, advancing 16 points from last year, while M-A rose to 757 with its advance of 29 points.

Summit Preparatory (Charter) High School in Redwood City scored 851, a drop from 862. Summit enrolls about a quarter of its 375 students from the Almanac's circulation area and echoes, on a smaller scale, the demographics at M-A and Woodside.

While the news is generally good by the state's measure, two schools — M-A and Oak Knoll Elementary School in Menlo Park — did not meet federal standards of "adequate yearly progress" set by the No Child

Left Behind Act of 2001.

Oak Knoll missed the test participation rate target with its special education students, while M-A did not meet the graduation rate criterion. A school must graduate at least 82.9 percent of eligible students, or raise the rate by at least 0.1 percentage point from the previous year or 0.2 points over a two-year average.

A school or district either makes adequate progress or does not, based on meeting four targets: progress of at least one point in standardized test scores in English language arts and math, a minimum of 95 percent of eligible children "participating" in the tests, a minimum percentage who make above-average scores — a number that rises about

10 percentage points a year — and an acceptable percentage of students graduating.

M-A is in its fifth consecutive year of not meeting the No Child standard of adequate yearly progress. In 2004-05, the school missed the target for above-average performance. Five students categorized as learning the English language needed an above-average score on the English test, while seven more needed better math scores.

Last fall, to avoid federal sanctions, the Sequoia Union High School District — which includes M-A and Woodside — debuted mandatory English and math remedial classes for students who perform poorly on state tests.

To see results for individual schools, go to the Department of Education Web site at [cde.ca.gov](http://cde.ca.gov), click on the link for "Accountability Progress Reporting (APR)," and follow the links to "school reports." ■

## 'Conexions' to hold open house Friday

"Conexions" — the name of a new nonprofit organization made up of several groups formerly part of the Foundation for Global Community — will hold an open house at its new quarters Friday, September 8,

from 5 to 8 p.m. at 1023 Corporation Way, off Bayshore near San Antonio Road in Palo Alto.

Among participants in Conexions are Valley of Heart's Delight, Exploring a Sense of Place, and Walk through Time.

Meanwhile, the Peninsula Open Space Trust will take over the foundation's former site at 221 High Street in Palo Alto.

For information, call Executive Director Susan Stansbury at 938-9300, ext. 11, or go to [conexions.org](http://conexions.org).

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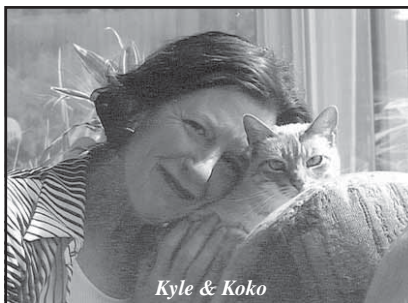
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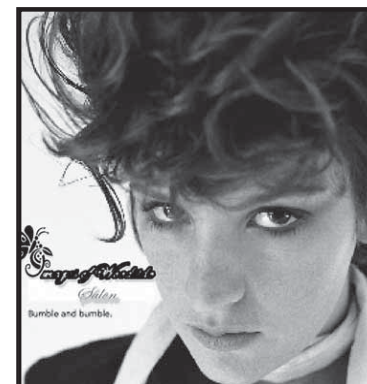
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# GROUND ZERO

A Portola Valley woman is helping rebuild — from scratch — Gulf Coast communities wiped out by Katrina

BY DAVID BOYCE, Almanac Staff Writer

**W**hen disaster strikes and creates multitudes of people in need, many of us respond with charitable donations, while others gather up useful items to send. A few put their home lives on hold and head out to offer, in person, what help they can.

It's been that kind of year — the kind where you put your home life on hold — for Portola Valley resident Linda Weil. Between November and the first days of August, she was on the ground on the Mississippi Gulf Coast in the wake of the destructive fury of Hurricane Katrina.

## COVER STORY

Working as a paid consultant, she focused on doing what she knows how to do best: helping people, through their local governments, make decisions about the future of their communities.

It's work still very much in progress, given the level of devastation that occurred a year ago.

The eye of the storm, packing 130-mph winds, missed New Orleans and came ashore August 29 in Hancock County, Mississippi. A surge of sea water estimated at 25 to 30 feet high charged through the seaside cities of Bay St. Louis and Waveland, leaving a high-water mark several miles inland.

Homes, businesses and buildings were

wiped away as if they'd never been there, Ms. Weil said, leaving neighborhoods of empty concrete slabs, nameless streets and trees denuded of leaves and re-foliated with debris.

A year later, many of those neighborhoods have changed only in that the debris is gone and the boats that survived are back in the water, she said. The communities, including their officials and decision makers, have been staggered by the cumulative loss of property- and sales-tax bases and damage to sewers, water lines, public buildings and other infrastructure.

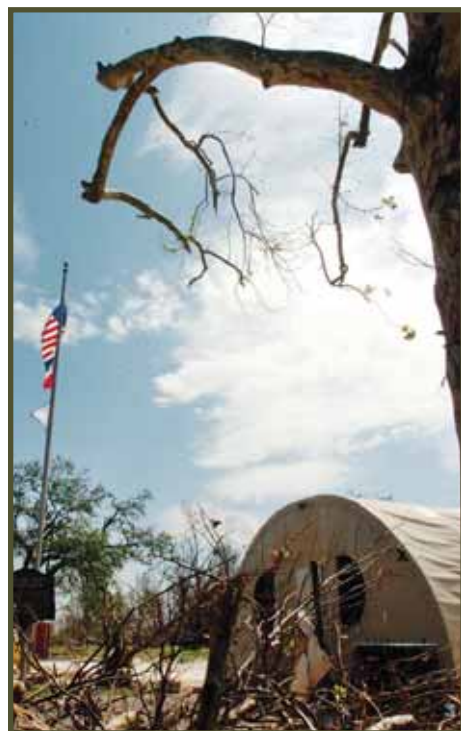
Ranking priorities has been everything, said Ms. Weil, whose background is in public administration. Which utility should be repaired first? Where are residents without homes going to live? In light of new flood-zone maps, should they move or rebuild? How do you jump-start the local economy? Which state and federal agencies have money to give? And how does one get it?

Coming up with answers for such questions after a natural disaster is a bit new for Ms. Weil, but is in keeping with a 20-year career of steering communities through controversial and difficult projects involving public and private interests.

(One such project is now under way in Portola Valley. During the spring of



Hurricane Katrina wiped away the City Hall of Waveland, Mississippi, leaving a flag pole, front stairs and a denuded tree as evidence of what once was. In the aftermath, city officials made do with a tent.



Courtesy of Sun Herald newspaper



Community planning consultant **Linda Weil**, on a break in her Portola Valley home, reviews a DVD catalog of the devastation in Mississippi. Below: **The eye of Hurricane Katrina** passed east of New Orleans and slammed ashore with a storm surge wave 25 feet to 30 feet high.

2004, Ms. Weil coordinated a series of community meetings meant to engage a divided public in shaping a new Town Center complex.)

She recently logged her ninth month in Mississippi, including six months in Hancock County on a subcontract to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, where her assignments were to assess community needs after the storm and help develop a long-term recovery plan.

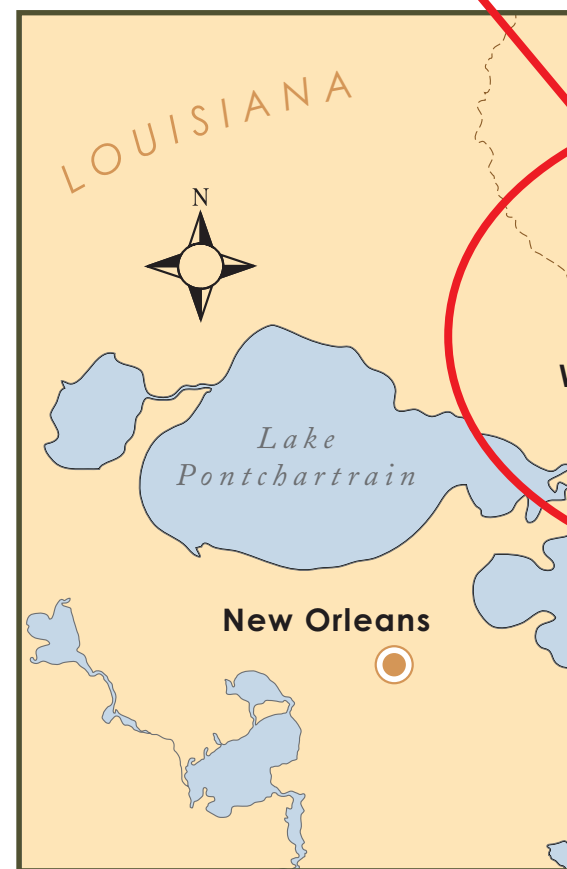
More recently, she worked with the nonprofit Living Cities to help the city of Biloxi develop a balanced rebuilding strategy amid the competing interests of hard-hit residents — Katrina destroyed or damaged 80 percent of Biloxi's housing — and the gambling industry, an important and growing element of the local economy.

The Almanac caught up with Ms. Weil in early July during a break at home in Portola Valley.

## Ready and willing

Ms. Weil went to Mississippi in November in response to an offer from FEMA via her employer, San Francisco-based CirclePoint Consulting, to be an agency liaison for the damaged communities in Hancock County at her current salary and benefits. The catch: She had to be there in 48 hours and stay for at least 90 days.

In accepting the job, she had to quickly find colleagues to take over her current



assignments and wrap up her life at home, including finding someone to care for her dog. Leaving on short notice "is a pretty tall order when you think about working (there) full time," she said.

Ms. Weil's background includes six





The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi

cataloging the destruction wrought by Hurricane Katrina in Gulf Coast towns in Waveland and Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, with winds of 130 mph and pushing



The Almanac/Gail Thoreson

years as an independent planning consultant in Wyoming, where she helped build community and legislative support for several large projects, including a 160-mile scenic highway and a 30-acre redevelopment project.

In the Bay Area, besides Portola Valley's Town Center, she's done community outreach involving desalinization plants, reservoir expansion, and redevelopment of the Oakland waterfront.

Ms. Weil, 50, has a master's degree in

public administration from the University of Southern California, and is trained in mediation. She served as a planning commissioner in Wyoming's Teton County in 2001.

### A fine mess

She recalled her arrival in southern Mississippi in a rental car. Nails littered the roads, traffic lights were out and debris festooned every tree, she said.

"It was as if someone went to a landfill, had picked up everything ... and strewn it over 70 miles of Mississippi coast, particularly in Hancock County," she said. "I will never forget, that at about month seven (February), I saw a boat on the water. It's so nice to see a boat on the water and not on land. ... It's nice to see signs of normalcy."

New Orleans got most of the press coverage, she said. "People don't realize that Mississippi was hit very hard and that Hancock County, in particular, is drowning in the disaster," she said. "They are financially drowning."

Her assessment resonated with that of Ryan LaFontaine, a beat reporter who covers Hancock County for the Sun Herald newspaper. He spoke with the Almanac in late July.

"More than half of the tax income in Hancock County was destroyed," he said. The county is expected to be short \$2 million for the 2005-06 budget year and \$15 million for 2006-07, he said.

## WAKE-UP CALL FOR EARTHQUAKE COUNTRY

Portola Valley resident and community planning veteran Linda Weil spent some nine months working along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc in the communities there.

Katrina's vast impact in Hancock County, with a population of 42,000 over 477 square miles, has her thinking about the consequences of a major earthquake in the San Francisco Bay Area, home to some 5.8 million people over 3,800 square miles.

"I am very anxious to see what the big quake is going to look like because we have so many people here," she said.

"It's going to be such a mess. It really frightens me."

In Mississippi, people are being forced to rethink where they live, whether they should rebuild, and what the level of danger is, given the new flood maps produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"Many local people think such steps are an extreme response, but scientists agree with FEMA's new maps," she said. "The insurance industry is sending a very strong message. The cost of insurance is going to be very high."

— David Boyce

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the worst, Mr. LaFontaine called the disaster a 10. "It's still 10," he added. "The same houses are gone, the same amount of trees are gone, the same buildings are gone. A whole section of businesses and restaurants are gone."

For blocks and blocks in the seaside city of Waveland, where Mr. LaFontaine lives, "there are no sheds, no houses, no anything," he said. "Just concrete driveways and slabs where houses used to be. Just streets."

Sewer and water lines remain unrepaired or temporary; some public employees, including police and firefighters, have sought work elsewhere; and some public buildings and their records are just gone, Mr. LaFontaine said. In Waveland,

only a staircase remains of the two-story Town Hall.

Grocery stores have not reopened, he said. A 24-hour WalMart, always crowded, is the only option for miles. The community is exquisitely attuned to the opening of a new restaurant, he said.

### Talking it through

In representing FEMA's Long Term Community Recovery program, Ms. Weil was a guide in understanding federal assistance options for overwhelmed elected officials and community decision makers.

"It was very frenetic, the first couple of months," she said. "I was shocked at how

*'It was as if someone went to a landfill, had picked up everything ... and strewn it over 70 miles of Mississippi coast.'*

LINDA WEIL

See **HURRICANE KATRINA**, next page





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*Mark Schmidt is an American Board of Opticianry and National Contact Lens Examiners Certified Optician licensed by the Medical Board of California.*



Courtesy of Sun Herald newspaper

**Eight months** after Hurricane Katrina, the Old Town section of Bay St. Louis, once swarming with bars and restaurants, was deserted.

### HURRICANE KATRINA

*continued from previous page*

many people were still in tents and didn't have emergency housing. (It) went on for months, and it was hard to believe. ... Logistics in this kind of situation (are) hugely important."

How to provide her guidance? Writing, whether by e-mail or in a report, was "ridiculous" given the time pressures, she said. She relied on talking.

She said she spent most of her days in meetings, and they ran the gamut. The head of a chamber of commerce wanted advice on finding funding to restart small businesses; recovery efforts were being duplicated, so she formed a group with the mission of avoiding that; city councils and the county Board of Supervisors needed advice on FEMA procedures; officials turned to her to explain new FEMA flood maps showing where it was OK to rebuild and where it was not.

"We were constantly in conversations having to do with infrastructure, housing, public services," she said.

"There is a real challenge with-in FEMA in that their programs that are helpful ... each of those programs is implemented in a stove-pipe way," she said. People working in one FEMA program, perhaps fearful of being misinformed, won't talk about another FEMA program, she said.

"There are not enough people

looking at the big picture and creating an atmosphere of cooperation," she said. "Everything is well-intentioned, but it turns into dysfunction at a certain point. I believe that, not everyone, but a lot of (FEMA) people suffer from that culture, that lack of cooperation and the desire to have complete control over their turf."

### Finding traction

Federal money is available to help rebuild, Ms. Weil said, but it's often delayed and, with the damage to the tax-base, local governments are hamstrung by their lack of matching funds — sometimes as little as 10 percent — to qualify for federal money.

"To have some financial stability for the next 12 to 14 months would be huge," she said. "It's a chicken-and-egg thing. To build homes, you need infrastructure. You need water and power. There are limited jobs. You need a home to stay in while you're working. ... This is so complicated. There are so many levels to it. You feel behind in every area. People want to rebuild. People want to repair. People want to come home."

Such desires are now complicated by new flood-zone maps, new construction guidelines for hurricane zones, and likely steep insurance rate increases, not to mention the prospect of mortgages for people who had been living in mortgage-free homes handed down over generations.

### ■ INFORMATION

To assist Hancock County in recovering from Hurricane Katrina, call or send e-mail to:

■ Tish Williams, Hancock Community Development Foundation, (228) 216-9048 or tish@hancockchamber.org.

■ Jenell Tompkins, Hancock County Disaster Recovery Fund, (228) 861-2197 or jvt@co.hancock.ms.us.

■ Buz Olsen, Bay St. Louis Katrina Relief Fund, (228) 493-2329 or stofbaystlouis@bellsouth.net.

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## How reliable are the feds in an emergency?

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The Federal Emergency Management Agency deserved the Congressional scrutiny it received after Hurricane Katrina, said Portola Valley resident Linda Weil, who has spent many months working in communities along the storm-ravaged Gulf Coast of Mississippi.

The agency, at least as represented in Mississippi, has "a fear-based culture" in which people are "constantly afraid"

of losing their jobs by straying beyond the narrow parameters of their job descriptions, she said.

"It inhibits coordination and communication, which is exactly what you don't want to do," she added.

"It was quite painful to hear people's stories about senior citizens who are on oxygen living in tents because of FEMA's inefficiency," she said. Trailers were late in coming, and if they did arrive on time, they were often broken in some way, she said.

"Peoples' lives were in the

hands of this organization that was operating in a highly inefficient way," she said. "That was painful to see because it could be different. It doesn't have to be that way. And it's the only game in town. You are a victim of that organization."

The experience reminded her of those she has had with emergency services in developing countries, she said.

FEMA has huge potential, she said. "It's filled with people who want to help with emergencies, but the structure does not allow them to do it." ■



# City attorney won't disclose report on building department

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton's city attorney is refusing to make public a report of an investigation into Atherton's troubled building department.

The Almanac on August 4 filed a public records request for the report, which was written by outside attorney Lance Bayer, who also conducted the investigation.

"Atherton residents need to know exactly what's going on in the town's building department,

## ATHERTON

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especially in light of recent revelations about employee discipline tied to the investigation," said Almanac Managing Editor Richard Hine.

Lois English, a building department employee, announced publicly on August 31 that she was a target of the investigation and she received a written reprimand August 1 from City

Manager Jim Robinson.

Ms. English denied all allegations in the reprimand, which included: accepting gifts; undermining the town's surcharge on excavation work; rude and discourteous conduct; and selectively cooperating with staff members and contractors.

In rejecting the Almanac's request on August 25, Atherton's city attorney said that releasing the report would violate the privacy of town employees and the confidentiality of those who provided information. City Attorney

Marc Hynes also said that Mr. Bayer's report is protected from disclosure as "attorney/client privileged communication."

Mr. Hynes cited other reasons, including employee privacy interests guaranteed by Article 1, Section 1 of the California Constitution, and exemptions in the government code that pertain to the discipline of public employees.

Jim Ewert, an authority on public records law who serves as the legal counsel to the California Newspaper Publishers Association, said the only argument cited by

Mr. Hynes that would hold up in court is attorney-client privilege.

However, he said, the Atherton City Council, as Mr. Bayer's client, could waive the privilege on a majority vote and make the report public.

"Generally in these types of cases an attempt is made by many cities to provide some documents or redacted versions of documents," said Mr. Ewert. "Even if portions are exempt from being disclosed, they're still required to redact those and provide (the public) with the remainder."

## Menlo Watch: Pool negotiations press on

The head of Menlo Park non-profit SOLO Aquatics said last week that he and Burgess Aquatics Center operator Tim Sheeper "continue to make progress" regarding SOLO's access to the

three-pool facility.

SOLO Chief Chris Hinshaw said he hopes to finalize a deal "very soon" and begin operating his group's fall programs at the

aquatics center.

SOLO is guaranteed access to the \$6.8 million publicly funded facility in the contract between the city and Mr. Sheeper's

for-profit organization, Menlo Swim and Sport LLC.

Mr. Sheeper said he expects an agreement will be reached before September 11 — a tentative date for SOLO to start using the aquatics center.

## Cancelled meeting

The Menlo Park City Council will not hold its regular meeting September 5, due to Labor Day weekend. Weekly council meetings are scheduled to resume September 12.

## Dog park near Ford Field?

The town of Portola Valley currently has no off-leash exercise areas for dogs. The question of whether to build a dog park in a meadow just east of the Ford Field baseball diamond is scheduled for public discussion at the next meeting of the Parks & Recreation Committee.

The committee meets at 7:30 p.m. Monday, September 18, at the Historic Schoolhouse at 765 Portola Road. The committee is seeking comments and suggestions. Send e-mail to [towncenter@portolavalley.net](mailto:towncenter@portolavalley.net).

The proposed park would be enclosed by a split-rail fence and would include a few benches, a water spigot and waste-handling facilities, according to a committee statement.

The notion of a dog park at this site was rejected by the town's Conservation Committee, in part because of its environmental impact on the meadow and its conspicuous location at the entrance to town.

The Trails & Paths Committee has received petitions both in favor of and opposed to using this site for a dog park, with each petition signed by about 120 people, said trails committee chair Ellen Vernazza.

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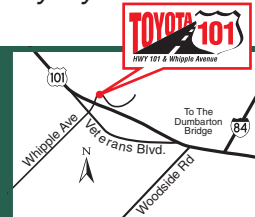
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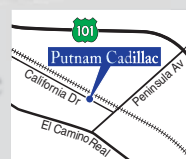
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## Howard Oliver, geophysicist

Howard Oliver, whose Menlo Park home was a showcase for rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias each spring, died August 28 in Palo Alto. He was 79.

Mr. Oliver grew up in Los Angeles. With degrees from the University of California at Berkeley and Harvard, and two years in the Office of Naval Research in Washington, D.C., Mr. Oliver arrived in Menlo Park in 1961. He began his lifelong career at the U.S. Geological Survey, studying gravity up and down the Western United States.

He instigated several studies by USGS of groundwater basins underlying Menlo Park and

### ■ OBITUARY



Howard Oliver

Atherton. The concern was the quantity and quality of groundwater, and whether too many wells might cause the land to sink.

Mr. Oliver was known for his interest in music, his garden, and the Sierra Mountains. "Whether packing his stand-up bass into the station wagon for a gig, arriving at a flower show with boxes of prize-winning blooms,

or leading trips into the Yosemite backcountry, he inspired others with his passion," says his daughter, Lauren Oliver.

As a teenager, Mr. Oliver played in jazz orchestras up and down the coast. He also made a brief appearance in the film "Song of the Open Road." It was actress Jane Powell's first movie and W.C. Fields' last. He would later recount stories of playing softball with Gary Cooper and learning how to juggle oranges from W.C. Fields on the studio lot, say family members.

Mr. Oliver was passionate about camellias and azaleas, according to Almanac writer and friend, Marion Softky. "When he outgrew his back yard in Menlo Park, he expanded to USGS and turned its campus into an arboretum for camellias, azaleas and rhododendron. He often won best of show at camellia shows," she says.

On his last trip to the mountains, he was accompanied by friends and family, according to Ms. Oliver.

He is survived by his wife, Betty; son William Oliver and daughter Lauren Oliver.

Memorials may be made to the Veterans Affairs Hospice Care Center at the Veterans Hospital, 3801 Miranda Ave., Unit 2C Hospice, Palo Alto, CA 94304.

## Animal cruelty charges sought against goat owners

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

### ■ PORTOLA VALLEY

The discovery of a corral of emaciated goats along Alpine Road on undeveloped land owned by Stanford University in Portola Valley has led the Peninsula Humane Society to seek animal-cruelty charges against the goats' owners.

The goats are owned by Scott Kulenguskey and Joy Richardson who run Pacifica-based Sustainable Solutions Land Management and Ecological Services, said Humane Society investigator Debi DeNardi. The company hires the goats out to land owners as a natural method of weed control.

The town of Portola Valley hired Sustainable Solutions to clear land in the Hayfields open space area on the north end of town in 2005, said Town Administrator Angela Howard.

Ms. DeNardi said she is preparing a report for the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office, which will determine whether to press charges.

Several attempts to get comments from the goats' owners were unsuccessful.

Ms. DeNardi said she learned of the goats' plight from equestrians

who board their horses near the undeveloped parcel at 3540 Alpine Road. On Saturday, August 26, she said she found about 50 "skinny" goats in "poor condition" inside two fenced pens. The goats had no access to water, hay or grain, and the pens were "too small," she said.

The goats had been penned for two days, Ms. DeNardi said she was told by Ms. Richardson. The goats' symptoms included coughing, nasal discharges, diarrhea, and hooves that should have been trimmed long ago, Ms. DeNardi said.

A dead goat was found inside a horse trailer there, along with a live goat and "a bucket of water with feces in it," Ms. DeNardi said. Two travel trailers nearby were filled with trash, she said.

Stanford spokesman Larry Horton confirmed that the university does own the property where the goats were penned.

The goats are now being cared for on a ranch in Calaveras County, Ms. DeNardi said.

Asked about the value of a diet of dry weeds, Ms. DeNardi said that weeds alone are not sufficient for a goat and that it also needs nutritional foods such as hay and grain. ■

## Futurist to speak at business breakfast

Richard Adler of the Institute for the Future in Menlo Park will discuss changes in the business and social climate over the next 20 years at a breakfast meeting of Samceda, a San Mateo County's business organization, on Thursday, September 7, from 8 to 9:30 a.m., at Dominic's at Poplar Creek, located at the Coyote Point golf course.

Mr. Adler, author of "Boomers: the Next 20 Years," will talk about how the growing population of aging baby boomers will affect everything from business to housing to health care.

The networking breakfast will also include Samceda's annual meeting. For information, or tickets at \$65 each, call Samceda at 345-8300, or go to samceda.org.

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# Tasting the real Old West

Willard Wyman talks about his novel, 'High Country,' at Kepler's bookstore

By Marion Softky  
Almanac Staff Writer

Willard Wyman of La Honda has lived the life and adventures he portrays in his novel "High Country."

Except he didn't quiet a frantic mule that didn't want to be shod by biting its ear, as his hero did on page 24. "I haven't bitten a mule's ear; that's an old myth," says Mr. Wyman. "They call it 'earring them down.'"

But Mr. Wyman has guided mule trains through white-out blizzards, forded storm-fed torrents, freed mules stuck in the mud, and miraculously avoided bears.

These experiences, plus a deep love of mountain wilderness, make his novel seem real and immediate. Its cast of men, mules, horses, and women — in that order — draw the reader into their harsh world.

"I used my own experiences and elaborated them," says Mr.

Wyman. "I invented people and stories about packing, and they took the book over."

"High Country" has won a rare two Spur awards from the Western Writers of America: for Best First Novel, and for Novel of the West for 2005. That puts it in company with the likes of Larry McMurtry's "Lonesome Dove" and Michael Blake's "Dances with Wolves."

Mr. Wyman will talk about "High Country" Tuesday, September 12, in a program called "A Visit to the Old West," beginning at 7:30 p.m., at Kepler's, 1010 El Camino Real, in Menlo Park. Mr. Wyman will follow Lloyd Zimpel's talk about his novel, "A Season of Fire and Ice."

Mr. Wyman taps an unlikely range of experiences in his writing. Son of a cavalry officer, he had a childhood that was full of horses. He's been a college and military athlete, a football coach and English teacher at Menlo School, an assistant dean



Photo by Peter Pennypacker

Willard Wyman of Skyline will discuss his book, "High Country," about packing in Montana and the High Sierra, at Kepler's bookstore on Tuesday, September 12, at 7:30 p.m.

at Stanford, English professor at Colby College in Maine, and headmaster at the private

Thacher School in Ojai, California, for 13 years, until he retired to write in 1993.

Bill Wyman became hooked on packing at 13. He was sent to a Montana ranch one summer when his father, later General Willard Gordon Wyman, was busy preparing U.S. troops for the invasion at Omaha Beach in Normandy, and his mother was having a nervous breakdown.

Even though he didn't bite a mule's ear like his protagonist, Ty Hardin, Bill Wyman soaked up the life and skills of a packer. "Packing has stayed in my life ever after," he says.

Ever since he finished Colby College, Mr. Wyman has interspersed pack trips in Montana and the Sierra Nevada with his growing commitment to education and English. With the late Wallace Stegner as his mentor, he earned a Ph.D. at Stanford.

Meanwhile, he became a dean of students and then special assistant to the president at Stanford during the tumultuous 60s when the campus was embroiled in protests. "I was assistant dean of students for riots," he says. "My job was to keep the university open."

About that time, Mr. Wyman was renting quarters from the

late Gerda Isenberg above La Honda. Later he bought property up there, and built a house on 80 acres adjacent to the site of what is now T.J. Rodgers' Clos de la Tech winery. "I just love that country," he says.

Mr. Wyman is divorced with two sons and three grandchildren. He still goes packing, taking friends into the Sierra, at least once a year.

And Mr. Wyman still loves mules. "Mules have passive wisdom," he says. "You make a deal with a mule, and it keeps it." ■

## Ukrainian talk

The Ukraine, too, has an environmental movement, and eight of the movement's leaders are set to meet at Menlo College in Atherton on Wednesday, September 6, to talk with American counterparts, discuss their projects and exchange ideas on working with the press and governments.

The public is invited to the free talk, sponsored by Acterra in Palo Alto and the Center for Safe Energy in Berkeley. The event begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Russell Center on the campus at 1000 El Camino Real. For more information, send e-mail to Larissa Keet at lkeet2@aol.com.



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# 30,000 books expected at book fair

■ Benefit for Menlo Park Library won't have auction this year.

The grounds surrounding the Menlo Park Library and City Council Chambers will be filled with some 30 tables stacked with more than 30,000 used books when the Friends of the Menlo Park Library hosts its 51st annual book fair on Saturday and Sunday, September 16 and 17.

The books — most of which

have been donated by Menlo Park residents — will range in price from 50 cents to \$2, Friends secretary Tim Goode said.

Though the book sale will run as usual, longtime book fair-goers will notice that one aspect of the event has changed this year: The book auction will not be held because the Friends

— a nonprofit group of volunteers who raise money for the library's collections and programs — decided there weren't enough auction-caliber books in the collection, Mr. Goode said. It is set to return at the 2007 fair.

"This is the second time in recent history that we canceled the auction," Mr. Goode said. "The last time we did that, the following auction was the best ever in quality

and profits."

He added that books that might normally have been auctioned off will still be available for purchase in the council chambers.

The fair will be open from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, and from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

Prices will be slashed on Sunday morning to encourage buyers, Mr. Goode said. All books will be sold at half price from 9:30

to 11:30 a.m. that day. Then, shoppers may purchase bags for

\$2 and fill them to the brim.

Any remaining books can be had for free after 1:30.

The sale benefits children's programs at the library, as well as its adult literacy program, "Project Read." Refreshments will be available at reasonable prices, Mr. Goode said.

The library is at 800 Alma St., near the intersection of Ravenswood Avenue and Laurel Street.

For more information, call Tim Goode

at 325-3001, or e-mail him at [timothygoode@comcast.net](mailto:timothygoode@comcast.net).



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# Ladera concert: music and 'guided imagery'

Soprano Betty Spamer of Ladera has teamed up with Latin/jazz guitarist Jeff Buenz to stage a wide-ranging concert Saturday, September 9, at Ladera Community Church, 3300 Alpine Road in Portola Valley.

Proceeds from the concert benefit the Bonny Institute, which has pioneered the use of guided imagery and music and will present a conference, "Music and Psyche at the Edges of Life," October 6-8 in Corte Madera. The institute has received a grant from the Ladera Community Church to support the conference and the work of guided imagery and music.

The musicians are borrowing the Irving Berlin tune "Say it with Music" for the concert's theme. Ms. Spamer sings from classical and Broadway songbooks, accompanied by Daniel Lockert on piano. Mr. Buenz will play works by his favorite composers, including Scott Joplin, George Gershwin, Cole Porter and several Latin musicians.

Ms. Spamer produces and performs benefit concerts for Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. She and Mr. Buenz met at Stanford Hospital, where Mr. Buenz is completing a residency as chaplain with the ministry of music. He has worked for the past five years using music in health care programs at Stanford Hospital, El Camino Hospital's Healing Arts Program and the Children's Hospital at Stanford.

Both performers say they use their music in the workplace and community to promote psychological growth, physical ease and spiritual support.

The concert begins at 4 p.m.; a

reception follows from 5 to 6 p.m. No reservations are needed. Tickets will be available at the door for a suggested tax-deductible dona-

tion of \$20.

For more information, contact Ms. Spamer at [bettyspamer@comcast.net](mailto:bettyspamer@comcast.net) or 854-3736.

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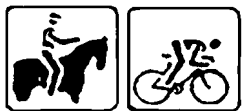
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# M-A seeks football rebound

By Jim Gallagher

Special to the Almanac

Coach Bob Sykes and his Menlo-Atherton coaching staff are eyeing a simple goal as they take over the Bears' 2006 football program: significant improvement over last season's lackluster 1-9 won-lost record.

No newcomer to Bay Area football, Sykes coached the Los Altos High varsity in 2003-04, and arrives on the Atherton campus after a year as an offensive coach at the University of Nevada-Reno.

He has inherited a tough task at M-A, but likes what he sees among seasoned veterans and some young talent from last year's highly regarded frosh-soph team.

"We have a lot of athletes," Sykes said after an exhausting practice last week. "They're providing speed, size and toughness."

The Bears will need plenty of all three to rebound from last season's disappointments against traditional Peninsula powers such as Aragon, Burlingame, Woodside and Terra Nova.

They launch the season on September 9 at 5:15 p.m. with a home game against Galileo of San Francisco.



Photo by Carien Veldpape

**New M-A football coach** Bob Sykes says that with a 45-man squad, he expects that depth will not be a problem.

When Sykes mentions size as a Bears commodity, he isn't kidding. Senior Jesse Fifita (6-3, 255) and junior Litani Moimoi (6-2, 260) are massive defensive ends, and Matt Mohr (6-5, 240) may be earning Division I college credentials as an offensive tackle. Siosaia Haatoa (6-0, 240) is a load at fullback and linebacker.

The skill positions appear well-manned with quarterback Troy McCabe, a 6-foot junior from last year's frosh-sophs, throwing to receivers such as Sam Knapp (6-3, 180); with running backs

Maurice Hanks (5-10, 180) and Efrain Ramirez (5-7, 165). Both are quick and aggressive cornerback defenders, as well.

A former quarterback at Arkansas for Coach Lou Holtz, Sykes runs a varied but balanced offense, utilizing a wing-T and a wide-open, three-receiver set on passing downs. With a 45-player squad, he expects, depth will not be a problem.

"We'll be disciplined," Sykes said, "and we plan to play exciting ball. It should be a lot of fun."

# Menlo's Mike Montgomery let go by Warriors

Former Stanford men's basketball coach Mike Montgomery, a resident of Menlo Park, has been replaced as head coach of the NBA's Golden State Warriors by former Warriors' coach Don Nelson.

Montgomery parted ways with the Warriors August 29 following a 68-96 record in two seasons with Golden State.

Montgomery posted back-to-back 34-48 records after being lured away from Stanford by Golden State vice president Chris Mullin two summers ago.

"Mike is a terrific basketball coach who has enjoyed a great deal of success throughout his career," Mullin said in a statement. "You would be challenged to find a better person with more character."

Nelson, 66, is the second-win-

**Mike Montgomery in 2003, coaching Stanford against Berkeley.**

Palo Alto Weekly/  
Norbert von der Groeben



ningest coach in NBA history and compiled a 277-260 record during his first go-around with Golden State.

The move to Golden State brings Nelson together again with Mullin and general manager Rod Higgins, two of his former players. It's also a costly reunion for the Warriors, who had to buy out Montgomery, who had \$5 million in salary due for the remainder of his four-year contract.

— Keith Peters, Palo Alto Weekly

## Locals compete at triathlon event

Two local athletes, Holly Nybo of Portola Valley and Robert Plant of Woodside, were among the frontrunners in their respective age groups at the 2006 Triathlon Age Group World Championships in Lausanne, Switzerland, on Saturday, September 2.

(Due to the holiday, the Almanac went to press September 1.)

Nybo was the runner-up in the 40-44 age group at the world competition last year in Honolulu, and finished first in her age group

See **TRIATHLON**, page 21

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# Private child care operator withdraws bid

## CHILD CARE

continued from page 5

programs will remain operated by city staff, said Ms. Seymour.

The push to privatize the Burgess programs was led by council members Mickie Winkler and Lee Duboc, who said the programs are too costly to the city. Mayor Nicholas Jellins supported the effort, which was green-lighted on a 3-2 vote.

Ms. Duboc said Ms. Bhanderi's withdrawal is "disappointing." She added that she would still like city staff to study how to cut the costs of the child care programs, but had no immediate plans to reignite the privatization debate.

## Opposition to privatization

Parents have forcefully defended the existing programs and teachers, and argued that there's not enough financial benefit to privatize the programs.

Their concerns were supported at the child care committee's August 23 meeting, when eight of

nine committee members ranked the city's proposal the top bid.

Committee members said the cost savings associated with privatization — estimated at \$73,000 by city staff — isn't enough to privatize the programs.

In April, city staff pegged potential savings at \$444,000, but didn't break down those costs for a closer analysis.

Committee members and parents also expressed concerns with the Building Kidz proposal, which called for replacing about 40 percent of the current staff and putting an academic emphasis on the current "play-based" curriculum.

Adding to parents' concerns, representatives from the Service Employees International Union Local 715, the union that represents city employees who operate the existing programs, revealed that Building Kidz has been cited for eight violations at its two child care sites over the last two years.

The Almanac confirmed the

violations with the Community Care Licensing Division office, the regional office of the state Department of Social Services.

## 'Sinister pattern'

Ms. Bhanderi's withdrawal came just one day after the council voted 3-2, at its August 29 meeting, to continue with the plan to interview potential providers.

Council members Winkler, Duboc and Jellins voted to forge ahead; council members Kelly Fergusson and Andy Cohen said the city should end the process and continue the city operation of the programs.

"[Ms. Winkler and Ms. Duboc] refused to listen to the parents," said Mr. Cohen after the meeting.

Ms. Duboc said there is a "sinister pattern" in Menlo Park of members of the community criticizing companies looking to establish private/public relationships in Menlo Park.

Ms. Bhanderi received four anonymous letters discouraging her bid, Ms. Seymour said. ■

## TRIATHLON

continued from page 20

at the 2003 world event in New Zealand. She was this year's U.S. champion in the 40-44 division at the U.S. Triathlon Age Group

Championships held in Smithville Lake, Missouri.

Plant finished second in the 60-64 age group at last year's world event, and third in 2004. He was fifth in his age group at the U.S. championships this year. ■

## OBITUARY

### Marget Zographos

Retired Menlo Park teacher

Marget Zographos, who taught 29 years in the Menlo Park City School District before retiring four years ago, is remembered by her colleagues for her dedication to her students and loyalty to her friends.

Ms. Zographos died of cancer August 8 in her Sunnyvale home. She was 64.

A native of Chicago, she graduated from Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio. She taught in an international school in Germany and an elementary school in Illinois for several years before coming to the Menlo Park district. She taught first grade for two years, then worked as a resource specialist.

Ms. Zographos helped stu-

dents with learning problems develop their skills, teaching at both Laurel and Encinal schools until her retirement in 2002.

"What I loved was being able to see the kids grow, feel good about themselves, and move on," she said during an interview with the Almanac after she retired.

She also took an active role in the Menlo Park Education Association, serving as president during the 1997-98 school year and co-president with Sue Peterson during the next school year.

Colleagues said Ms. Zographos was knowledgeable and insightful about a range of issues. She also was known for her love for the theater and dance.

She is survived by her sister, Nancy Hart.

Memorials may be made to Pathways Homecare and Hospice, 585 North Mary Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94085.

## 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

**Juvenile problem report:** Three boys rode up to woman on mini bikes as if aiming for her before screaming in her face and riding away, first block of Shearer Drive.

**Burglary report:** Items stolen from house that had been placed on market, 100 block of Fair Oaks Lane, August 25.

### MENLO PARK

**Grand theft report:** Laptop computer stolen from business, 2700 block of Sand Hill Road, August 28.

**Stolen vehicle report:** 1993 GMC Typhoon, 3700 block of Haven Avenue, August 28.

### Auto burglary reports:

■ Stereo equipment stolen, 200 block of O'Connor Street, August 28.

■ Wallet stolen from locked vehicle, 200 block of East O'Keefe Street, August 29.

### Fraud reports:

■ Money withdrawn falsely from bank account, 1000 block of Henderson Avenue, August 28.

■ Stolen check, 1800 block of White Oak Drive, August 28.

### WOODSIDE

**Property damage report:** Runaway dump truck crashed through garage and two interior rooms in house and hit parked vehicle in garage, 100 block of Stadler Drive, August 29.

**Mountain lion sighting report:** Homeowner said it was fairly far away and not an imminent threat, 3000 block of Woodside Road, August 28.

**Theft report:** Copper decorative leaves stolen from victim's front entrance gate, 100 block of Summer Hill Lane, August 25.

**Vandalism report:** Horse gate removed from hinges on horse easement trail, 500 block of Manzanita Way, August 26.

### WEST MENLO PARK

**Grand theft report:** Mountain bike and BMX bike with combined value of \$2,500-\$3,000 stolen from back yard, 1000 block of Camino a Los Cerros, August 26.

**Incident report:** Woman reported \$750 missing from behind pillows of her couch, 2000 block of Sand Hill Road, August 27.

# Ex-coach faces prison sentence

Guy Delmar Hayman, the former coach of the Woodside High School girls' varsity basketball team, pleaded no contest August 30 to a felony charge of lewd and lascivious conduct on a 14-year-old child, and a misdemeanor count of annoying or molesting a child under the age of 18, said prosecutor Gregory Devitt of the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office.

Mr. Hayman, 43, faces up to three years in prison, said Mr. Devitt. A sentencing hearing is set for November 15 in San Mateo County Superior Court.

Mr. Hayman, who was fired as

coach after his January 11 arrest by Redwood City police, is out of jail on a \$500,000 bail.

The molestation charges did not involve any girls on Woodside's varsity team, prosecutors said. Mr. Hayman coached at Woodside for seven or eight years, said Woodside High Principal Linda Common.

He initially pleaded not guilty in January to three felony counts of lewd acts with a girl, who was 14 when the molestation allegedly first occurred, and 41 misdemeanor counts of annoyance or molestation of the same girl.

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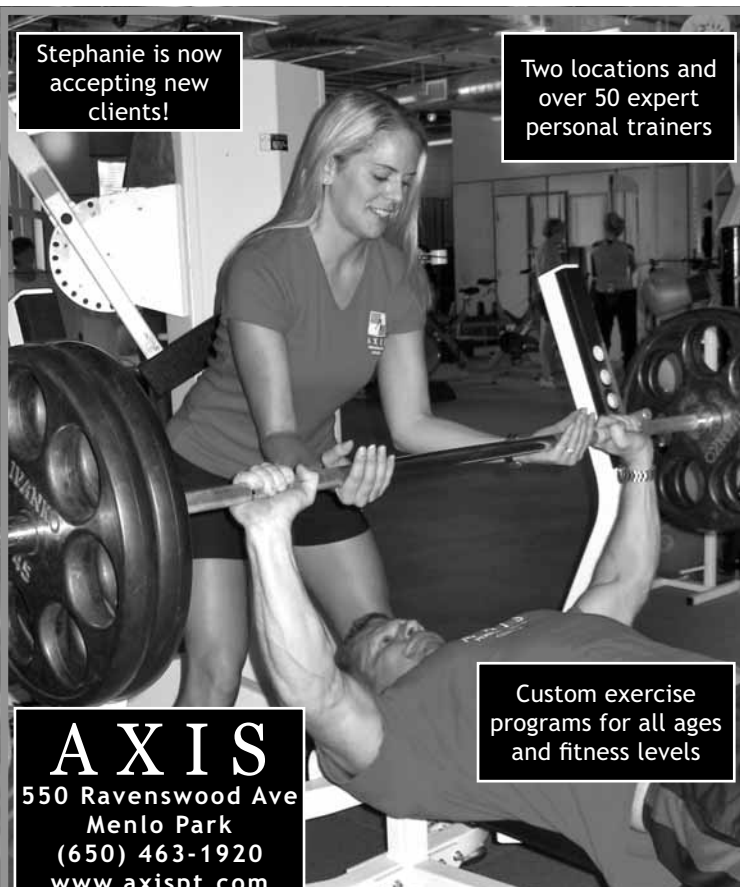
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# Viewpoint

Ideas, thoughts and opinions about local issues from people in our community. Edited by Tom Gibboney.

## Atherton stonewalls on report

An effort by the Almanac to make public Atherton's investigation of building department failures that cost the city more than \$145,000 hit a roadblock last week, when Town Attorney Marc Hynes refused to turn over a report on the matter that was prepared for the town.

The Almanac filed a Public Records Act request August 4, seeking release of the report, which was commissioned by the town and led to disciplinary action against at least one department worker. No other details of the report's findings have been disclosed.

### EDITORIAL

*The opinion of The Almanac*

In denying the Almanac's request to make the report public, Mr. Hynes cited the following reasons:

■ Matters in the report include

discipline of employees; those details will be contained in personnel files, which are exempt from public disclosure;

■ the privacy interest of public employees outweighs the public interest served by disclosure;

■ information in the report is covered by attorney-client privilege, due to the assignment of a "legal investigation ... regarding a confidential personnel matter" to attorney Lance Bayer; and

■ disclosure would violate the privacy interests of employees covered that is guaranteed in the California constitution.

Mr. Hynes suggested that the Almanac could pursue its claim in court, but rather than waste everyone's time and money to litigate this matter, we challenge City Council members to step up and override Mr. Hynes and release the report themselves.

As the client, all it takes is a majority vote of council members to waive the attorney-client privilege.

With the names and identifying information blacked out, privacy concerns will no longer apply. We see no compelling reason why town residents should not have the same information shared with the council by Mr. Hynes through Mr. Bayer's report.

As a result of the report, at least one employee received a letter or reprimand, which she made public last week at a meeting of people protesting the town's actions and its new fee, implemented in May 2005, for hauling dirt to and from building sites. It shows she was cited for not implementing the new fee in a timely manner, and for accepting gifts, as well as two other infractions.

The employee denied all of the allegations in the reprimand.

Who knows what other evidence of misdeeds by town employees is hidden away in this confidential report? How can Atherton residents not think that accepting gifts may just be the tip of the iceberg?

Town officials have said that the investigation has uncovered no criminal acts, which may be true, but the public should be told how the city manager and city attorney reached that conclusion.

As resident Jim Dobbie told the council in July: "The whole secrecy thing, in my mind, doesn't make sense. It's high time we got back to being squeaky clean. If something is wrong, we can deal with it, and if nothing is wrong, we can say it."

We urge residents to let their council members know that they want the report released, with the names redacted, if necessary. It is time for Atherton to clear the air on this matter, and move forward with more important city business.

### LETTERS

*Our readers write*

#### Domain name duel is no 'dirty trick'

*Editor:*

This letter is a rebuttal to a letter you published last week publicly accusing me of cybersquatting and violating the California Elections code by registering a domain name.

I did not cybersquat and I did not violate any code, state or federal. When Richard Cline, who is running for Menlo Park City Council, filed his candidate statement he listed a domain name, but didn't bother to register it.

To me, that's like visiting a house that's for sale, then deciding to have your mail delivered there, even though you don't own it. Of course, you wouldn't get your mail in that situation, so it would be a very foolish thing to do. Mr. Cline foolishly advertised a Web site he didn't own. Now his supporters are throwing around accusations of "dirty tricks."

The only dirty tricks here are the accusations. The California elections code is very clear. It prohibits pre-empting a Web site for the purpose of denying its use to a political candidate. When I registered the domain name in question, it was for



Menlo Park Historical Association

#### Our Regional Heritage

Ringwood, the 400-acre estate of San Francisco attorney John T. Doyle, was built in 1868 on Middlefield Road in Menlo Park. Mr. Doyle was said to have an extensive book collection, and often entertained neighbors, including Gertrude Atherton, on Ringwood's veranda.

the purpose of free speech — making the point that Mr. Cline doesn't follow through on things he starts. I never denied him the use of the Web site.

When I received a message from Mr. Cline asking me to turn over the domain to him, I did so the

very same day. Several days have passed since then, but Mr. Cline still hasn't posted any content on his Web site, so clearly the "denial of access" charge is ridiculous. He has total ownership of the domain, not just access to it, and he still hasn't done anything with

it. As of the date this letter was written, he hasn't even bothered to post the customary "under construction" sign on the site.

**Sue Kayton**  
Doris Drive, Menlo Park

See **LETTERS**, next page



## LETTERS

Continued from previous page

### Valley needs a weed abatement ordinance

Editor:

While most homes in Ladera and Portola Valley take good care to cut back weeds each year, there are exceptions.

An occasional property owner feels he can ignore the fire marshal and the Woodside Fire Protection District's recommendation to establish a fire break around their property lines. The problem is that the town of Portola Valley does not have a weed abatement ordinance, which would solve the problem: The town would contract for the fire break and bill the property owner.

I have a an owner-neighbor who refuses to do anything, and I have brush, low hanging branches and high weeds within 30 feet of my home. The suggestion for an ordinance has been made to the town. Fire prevention is much cheaper than fighting a fire. Wildfires do enormous damage each year.

**Gunther Steinberg**  
Lerida Court, Portola Valley

### A chuckle arrives every week

Editor:

Every week I laugh at your latest diatribe against the Menlo Park City Council majority.

What's next? Are you going to editorialize that George Bush is behind the privatization of the burgess pool and the child care center?

The citizens of this city have been well served by three hard-working council members, Mickie Winkler, Lee Duboc and Nicholas Jellins. In the case of Ms. Winkler and Ms. Duboc, they should be re-elected.

**Pat White**  
Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park

### Other alternatives for bike rides

Editor:

I really don't understand why anyone would cancel a bike ride when there are so many beautiful areas to hold one.

Woodside doesn't have a monopoly on beauty!

**Shirley Polich**  
Albion Avenue, Woodside

### Cyclists don't obey laws in Woodside

Editor:

I am pro-bicycle in general, but I do have to say that bikes in Woodside do not routinely follow the traffic laws.

Just sit at the corner of Portola

and Mountain Home roads sometime and watch how many bikes stop at the stop sign. In 19 years I've never seen a bike stop at that stop sign (and many others like it).

Bicyclists obey traffic laws that are convenient to them; it's as simple as that. Ask a bicyclist why they didn't stop at the Mountain Home stop sign and they'll say something about how it's uphill and since it's the right-hand side of the road nobody would cross their path anyway, blah blah blah.

That's like running a red light in my car because, after all, nobody was at the intersection but me. I'm sure the officer would agree that was a reasonable interpretation of the vehicle code and let me go without a ticket. Not so.

**Glenn Reid**  
Medway Road, Woodside

### What's up with the farmers' market?

Editor:

We recently happened to be in Los Altos on State Street at about 3.30 p.m. and noticed that the long block had been closed off to traffic.

Being a very curious individual, I decided to walk over and see what was going on. There on a sunny Thursday afternoon were farmers setting up their farm stalls with their veggies and fruit, the likes and quality which I have not seen in Menlo Park.

They were displaying their merchandise in a most attractive way, in some cases by color and in others by stacking their wares as though they were about to be graded by the store manager in the basement of Harrods of London. It was almost picture perfect.

Each farmer had cut and diced some of all of their products and they were making an effort to get the public to try them. Of course I know that this is a way by which to sell your wares. There were bakers with their fresh breads and baked goods, not one, but three different ones; there were the requisite tomato and strawberry farmers, but each had numerous different species, all looking better than the first appearance when arriving at the market.

There were ladies selling beautiful fresh fish, many varieties, packed in zip lock bags with ice to keep it fresh until we got it home and the flowers were fantastic. There were lots and lots of organic choices as well.

The variety rivaled that of the Ferry Building in San Francisco and for a moment I thought that I had been transported back to Apt, Carpentras, Avignon or Cannes (Provence) at one of their weekly markets. The street was packed with locals shopping

until they dropped. What a sight, especially for the farmers.

After doing my market shopping and making three trips to my car to unload my purchases, and being so astounded by the beauty, color, variety and reasonable prices, I had to ask numerous farmers, most of whom are Hispanic, why they did not come to the Menlo Park farmers market since there was no conflict with the Saturday morning market.

I was most disturbed to be told that the market is "controlled" by market managers in each town who decide who gets to sell at a particular market. If this is true, it seems that the folks who make the decisions about our market should look a little further and possibly encourage these farmers to participate in the Menlo Park market.

When the Menlo farmers' market was conceived, it was a great idea with good participation. I think that it has become a self-fulfilling prophecy that since the quality and quantity of the produce has diminished, the customers too have diminished and therefore we have fewer choices and less quality than that of, say, Los Altos. It would be wonderful to reach a little higher and get better quality. More merchants would mean better prices and more customers.

For me, however, I will have to make the short trip to Los Altos on Thursday afternoons from now on (or until the Menlo Park market improves substantially).

**Bill Mainzer**  
Bay Laurel Drive, Menlo Park

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