

MENLO PARK: Race lawsuit, resignations
rock police department. Page 5



DESTINATIONS:
Tracking roots and
ruins in Yucatan.
Section 2

The Almanac

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

MAY 30, 2007

www.AlmanacNews.com

| VOL. 42 NO. 39

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— See page 12

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Almanac/Veronica Weber

Getting in character

Thing 1 and Thing 2, played by twins Julian and Steffan Salas, joke around before going onstage for a performance of "Seussical Jr." at La Entrada School in Menlo Park. More than 80 students in grades 4 through 8 participated in the production, which was performed three times — twice for other students on May 16 and 17 and for a packed audience of parents and friends on the evening of May 17.

Atherton

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On the cover

Tracy Harper gets into the music during a soul line dance party at the Menlo Park Senior Center on Saturday, May 19. Almanac photo by Veronica Weber. See **Page 12** for photos and a story.

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THE ALMANAC (ISSN 1097-3095 and USPS 459370) is published every Wednesday by Embarcadero Publishing Co., 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025-4455. Periodicals Postage Paid at Menlo Park, CA and at additional mailing offices. Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation for San Mateo County, the Almanac is delivered free to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside. Voluntary subscriptions for \$30 per year or \$50 per 2 years are welcome from residents of the above circulation area. Subscription rates for businesses and for residents of other communities is \$50 per year and \$80 for two years. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Almanac, P.O. Box 7008, Menlo Park, CA 94026-7008. Copyright ©2006 by Embarcadero Publishing Co., All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is strictly prohibited.

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See inside for more details on page 11!



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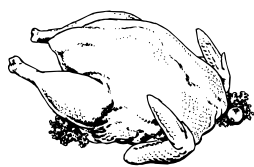
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## WINE

### Rosé Madness

Memorial Day marks the unofficial start of summer. I can think of no other type of wine appropriate to summer than rosé. The newly arrive '06s are worthy of excitement as they are crisp, clean and refreshing. Here are some recent arrivals:

|                                                                                       |                                                         |         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------|
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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## Portola Valley cyclist killed on Sand Hill

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Rodney Smith — a resident of Portola Valley who, with his wife Mary, was a major donor to the town's open-space preservation efforts — died Friday, May 25, while cycling on Sand Hill Road after being stuck by a car driven by an elderly Woodside man.

Mr. Smith, 67, was cycling on Sand Hill Road just west of Interstate 280 at about 9:40 a.m. when the accident occurred, the California Highway Patrol reported. Both vehicles were eastbound.

Medics from the Menlo Park and Woodside fire protection districts treated Mr. Smith at the scene, but he was pronounced dead at 10:05 a.m., the CHP said. The driver was not injured.

The San Mateo County Coroner's Office identified Mr. Smith as the victim.

Mr. Smith retired from positions as chief executive officer and president of San Jose-based Altera Corp., a maker of programmable computer chips, according to an archived version of the company's Web site.

In 2000, the Smiths gave \$1 million to the town's Open Space Fund in an effort to clean up litter in the town. Mr. Smith was responsible for the "no littering" signs that are at the entrances to the town, said Nancy Thompson, who has been on the Open Space Acquisition Advisory Committee since the late 1990s.

The CHP report did not include information such as whether Mr. Smith was wearing a helmet or the speed of the vehicles. The CHP is investigating the incident and is asking witnesses to call Officer McDonough at 369-6261.

Bay City News Service contributed to this report.



Rodney Smith

## Race lawsuit, resignations rock police department

■ Menlo Park: Black officers say they were discriminated against by Sgt. Ron Prickett. His attorney says allegations are "groundless."

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park Police Department is short-handed, and now there's an explanation why: Four officers have resigned over the past several weeks, and two of those cops are suing a Menlo

Park police sergeant and the city for racial discrimination.

Former Menlo Park officers Keith Butler and Joe Hinkston, both of whom are black, claim they were harassed and discriminated against on the job by Sgt. Ron Prickett, a 27-year veteran of the department, according to

a lawsuit filed with San Mateo County Superior Court.

Ken Clayton, a third black officer who quit the Menlo Park force in September 2005, is also a plaintiff in the suit.

An attorney representing Sgt. Prickett and the city says in a court document that they are being "erroneously sued." Cynthia O'Neill, a lawyer with the San Francisco-based firm, Liebert, Cassidy & Whitmore, says in a response to the

plaintiff's complaint that the claims are "frivolous, unreasonable and groundless."

A spokesperson from Liebert, Cassidy & Whitmore said in response to a reporter's inquiry that the defense had no comment on the lawsuit.

Mayor Kelly Fergusson deferred comment on the case to Police Chief Bruce Goitia, who said he "can't comment on pending litigation."

Wendy Bemis of San Francisco-based Bemis and Associates is representing the plaintiffs, and would not comment on the case.

In the lawsuit, the officers allege that Sgt. Prickett "cre-

See **LAWUIT**, page 8

## Residents call for action on crime spurt

By Rory Brown  
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park Police Chief Bruce Goitia had a simple message for residents calling for the city to do more to address a recent crime spurt: The force is doing all it can with a short-handed staff.

Some 100 people — most of whom live in the Willows neighborhood — packed a May 23 meeting to sound off about recent shootings in the Willows area, including a May 12 drive-by shooting at Arnold Way and Chester Street, and a March shooting of a 17-year-old East Palo Alto boy on Laurel Avenue.

The May 12 incident involved an East Palo Alto man in one car who shot at his sister in another car. The woman was not hurt.

Residents pointed to a lack of police presence, increased neighborhood traffic and poor response times as reasons why major crimes in the Willows increased from 2005 to 2006, but the citywide crime count decreased over the same period.

Chief Goitia noted that suspects in the recent Willows shootings have been arrested, but acknowledged that recent



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

Some 100 people packed the Fireside Room in the Menlo Park Burgess Recreation Center on May 23 to talk to police and city officials about recent shootings and other crimes in the Willows neighborhood.

budget cuts and the departures of senior officers have taken their toll on the department.

"If someone was shooting outside my front door, I would be as concerned as you are. ... We're staffing-challenged right now," Chief Goitia said. He noted that the city currently has 23 active patrol officers, but needs 30 to be fully staffed.

The department hired 15 new officers in 2006 and is looking to hire another 15 in 2007, although many will

likely be inexperienced officers directly out of the academy, Chief Goitia said. He noted the short-staffed force planned to send 12 officers to supervise Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's May 24 visit to Flood School — an announcement that sparked moans and laughter from the crowd.

"What I heard tonight is that we have a police department that is not well staffed," said Ken Gardener, a resident of west Menlo Park, where there

have been three shootings of unoccupied cars since May 15. "Public safety has to be the top priority of any city government."

Chief Goitia said he plans to ask the City Council for additional resources during the upcoming budget process, including a request for two motorcycle officers for traffic enforcement.

Many Willows residents' suggestions focused on instal-

See **WILLOWS**, page 8



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# Waiting for Condoleezza

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visits Menlo Park school

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

We're sequestered in a portable classroom with a gaggle of squirming seventh- and eighth-graders at James Flood Magnet School in Menlo Park. A half-dozen cameramen, a handful of photographers, some reporters and a couple of Secret Service agents clump together along the periphery. We're all waiting for Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to show up.

This photo op, destined to become a 30-second clip on the evening news of a smiling politician hobnobbing with a gaggle of plucky, underprivileged kids, has been days in the making for the Center for a New Generation, an afterschool academic enrichment program now run by the Boys & Girls Club.

The kids completed worksheets on Ms. Rice, made a timeline of her life, hand-painted an American flag. They've come up with questions, been coached on how to introduce themselves, and dressed in matching T-shirts.

The program, known as CNG by the kids, was co-founded by Woodside philanthropist Susan Ford Dorsey and Ms. Rice in 1991, a professor at Stanford University at the time. It's designed to help kids in the Ravenswood City School District gain the skills they'll need to successfully navigate high school, graduate, and, it's hoped, go onto college.

At the moment, these future achievers are a bunch of mildly bored kids stuck in a classroom with a bunch of increasingly squirmy media-types.

The kids rehearse their pre-approved questions, then collapse into their chairs. The girls fidget with the big, plastic bead necklaces that nearly all of them are wearing, trade seats, and reapply lip gloss.

Eventually, a motorcade carrying the secretary of state, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, and their respective entourages will arrive at the school, take a quick tour, and then sit down in this unlovely trailer for a brief Q&A with the students. At that point, the kids will sit up in their chairs, obedient and slightly nervous, as cameras roll and reporters lean in, but it's been a long wait. Two hours for the press, and at least half that long for the kids.

"Is this more boring or less boring than being back in class?" I ask a girl sitting nearby.

"Less boring," she says, twist-



Students from the Center for a New Generation in Menlo Park gather around Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, snapping pictures with their cell phones.

ing sideways so she can rest her cheek against the back of her chair and stare into space.

An hour meanders by. It's perpetually 1 p.m. according to the broken hour hand on the classroom clock, but out in the real world, it's close to 3:30 p.m. when we get the word. The motorcade has arrived. Condoleezza Rice is here at the school.

"Good afternoon, Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Downer," the kids chorus as the population in the room suddenly doubles and the press springs to attention.

The kids launch into their questions.

"What obstacles do you face in politics being an African-American woman?" asks eighth-grader Kimmera Wilson.

"It doesn't seem that there are any more obstacles," says Ms. Rice. "That I am African-American is just part of the package."

She explains the limitations they may face — those within themselves, and those within others — shouldn't stop them. When she devoted herself to studying the Soviet Union, she said, her parents could have asked her, "What in the world is a young black girl from Birmingham, Alabama, doing?" she told the students. "But they didn't. So don't let anyone set limitations on you."

Four of the kids' nine questions are fielded before time is up. Mr. Downer allows that Australia could learn about baseball from Americans, if they wanted to, and Americans could learn a little something about cricket from the Aussies.

Ms. Rice says she plans to return to California "as soon as possible" after she gets done with being secretary of state.

"I'll see some of you at Stanford

when I get back," she says.

Then, everyone crowds together for photos, and Mr. Downer hands out an Australian football before everyone troops out of the room.

There's more waiting, as a bunch of smaller children brandishing American and Australian flags assemble for the big send-off. Ms. Rice has disappeared in an adjacent classroom.

The Secret Service attempts to contain the press on a median island, but it's about as effective as sweeping back the tide. The flag-wielding children are slightly more tractable.

Also outside, waiting for the big send-off, is Clara Rice, the secretary of state's stepmother and former principal of Menlo Oaks School.

When the motorcade departs amid a flurry of flag-waving, a quartet of dressed-up CNG alumni, now all attending local private high schools on scholarships, admire photos of Ms. Rice on their cell phones. Three of the kids, Demetrius Hill, Martell Winn and Hugo Lopez, met with Ms. Rice in Washington, D.C., in 2005, and they compare notes on the visits. Back East, they got more face time than they did here.

"We didn't really get to talk to her," says Demetrius. "We got a little shout out."

Demetrius, 16, a sophomore at Sacred Heart School in Atherton, says he might not have done the private school application essays if not for the influence of his mentor at CNG.

"They have all kinds of extra-curricular activities to keep us out of trouble," he says, but then admits that he was never a trouble-making kid to begin with.

"My mother wouldn't tolerate that kind of behavior," he says. ■

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



### Tips for Buyers

**Q:** I have made offers on five properties but have been outbid each time. I am afraid I won't be able to buy a house at all. Do you have any tips on how to succeed in this market?

**A:** I know it is difficult for buyers right now in the strong mid-Peninsula market. Five unsuccessful offers is a lot to make and you should be able to draw some lessons from this experience. Here are some thoughts on what you can do to succeed.

Your minimum standards are probably too high for your budget. You need to make a few compromises or you will continue to be priced out of this market. Don't give in on the important qualities such as finding the community you like and the best school district for your children. But instead of a four bedroom

house, you may have to manage with three bedrooms or two bedrooms with a den and family room. Instead of a 10,000 square foot lot, you may have to live on a 5,000 square foot lot.

You may want to buy a house that is nicely updated and in move-in condition, but you may have to choose a house that is livable but in need of updating some time in the future. As long as the house meets your most important needs, this is a good compromise to make.

If you are not willing to be flexible you will continue to be frustrated and prices may increase to the point of being permanently beyond your reach. The market in this area has always been expensive but once you buy a property here, you begin to settle in and benefit from the high real estate values.

For answers to any questions you may have on real estate, you may e-mail me at [mcorman@apr.com](mailto:mcorman@apr.com) or call 462-1111, Alain Pinel Realtors. I also offer a free market analysis of your property.

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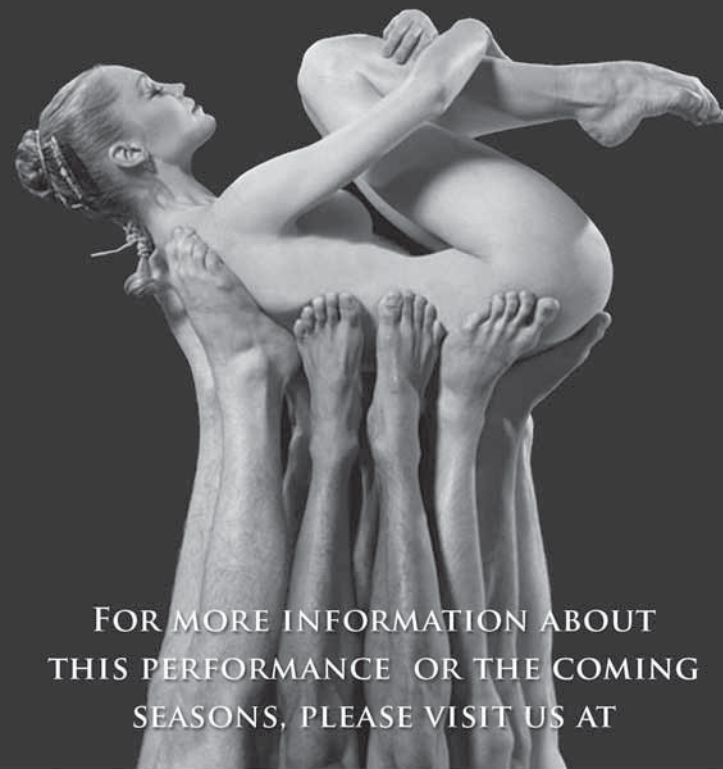
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# Driver gets 30 days and loss of license for killing cyclist

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

It's uncertain whether jail time will be ahead for the elderly woman whose car struck and killed Portola Valley resident Thomas Colby Maddox last summer as she passed him while he was cycling on Skyline Drive in Woodside.

Beverly Oaks, 82, of Redwood City pleaded guilty to misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter charges on May 22 and was sentenced by San Mateo County Criminal Court Commissioner Kathleen McKenna to 30 days in county jail and probation and loss of driving privileges for 18 months, said San Mateo County Deputy District Attorney Sean Dabel.

A misdemeanor charge in a vehicular manslaughter case is "pretty standard" when gross negligence, such as drunken driving, is not a factor, Mr. Dabel said.

Negligence was a factor in the July 12, 2006, accident. "There was a killing and there was a negligent act that caused it," that act in this case being an unsafe attempt to pass, Mr. Dabel said.

Ms. Oaks, who is out of custody, is scheduled to surrender at the jail on July 14, Mr. Dabel said. She will have the opportunity to apply for the San Mateo County Sheriff's Work Program, which allows people sentenced to jail to avoid time in a cell by doing various kinds of work, including office work.

Ms. Oaks originally pleaded

not guilty but changed her plea and avoided a jury trial scheduled for June 25. Her attorney represented her at the commissioner's hearing, Mr. Dabel said.

The Department of Motor Vehicles will determine whether Ms. Oaks is allowed to drive again, Mr. Dabel said. Her license was revoked after the accident; some of that time will count toward her penalty.

Mr. Maddox, 65, died July 15 in Stanford Hospital. He had lived in Portola Valley since 1969 and his two children had graduated from local schools, relatives said. He had taught economics at Foothill Community College, loved environmental causes and riding bicycles, and had taught himself carpentry, furniture making and knife making. ■



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

**Police Chief Bruce Goitia** told Menlo Park residents at a May 23 meeting that the short-staffed police department is doing all it can to address crime throughout the city, including the Willows neighborhood.

## Residents call for action

**WILLOWS**  
continued from page 5

ing speed bumps and closing streets to slow traffic flow, but Interim City Manager Kent Steffens said such measures would likely push heavy traffic elsewhere in the neighborhood.

Mayor Kelly Fergusson, a Willows resident, said the recent crime spurt "is not going to go by without action." City officials and neighbors have floated organizing a follow-up meeting to further discuss Willows crime, but no date was set.

### West Menlo crime

Mr. Gardener, who lives on Hermosa Way, was among the handful of west Menlo residents at the meeting who expressed concerns about a recent crime

spurt on the other side of town.

Since May 15, three empty parked cars have been shot west of El Camino Real — one on Crane Street, one on Hermosa Way, and another on Bay Laurel Drive.

Chief Goitia said police have no leads on the shootings, other than one witness account that the shooter was driving a "white older model vehicle." ■

### MEETING

Mary Gilles, who lives on Hermosa Way, said she is working with city officials and police to set up a meeting at Little House, at 800 Middle Ave. That meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 31, she said.

## \$2 million more for Town Center project

The quest for the last \$5 million in donations needed to complete funding for new \$20 million complex at Portola Valley's Town Center got a substantial boost last week.

Hasso Plattner, a resident and software entrepreneur, donated \$2 million from his nonprofit Hasso Plattner Foundation, said Beth Rabuczewski, co-chair of

the Portola Valley Community Fund.

The gift reflects Mr. Plattner's appreciation of the project's emphasis on environmentally sound building practices, both for their lower energy profile and their educational value, Ms. Rabuczewski said in announcing the gift at the May 23 meeting of the Portola Valley Town Council.

Because the foundation has its headquarters in Germany, the money won't be available until German tax authorities complete "a fairly significant amount of auditing" to ensure its use for a "nonprofit" purpose, she said.

Mr. Plattner is a co-founder of the business-software giant SAP AG and a yacht racer.

## Scoping meetings set for Bohannon project

Members of the public will get a chance to weigh in on David Bohannon's plans to build a hotel and office complex in Menlo Park at two June scoping sessions.

The sessions are scheduled for the Planning Commission's June 4 meeting and the City Council's June 19 meeting. Both meetings start at 7 p.m., and will be held in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and

Alma streets.

The purpose of scoping meetings is to determine the scope of the environmental impact study that will be conducted on the projects.

Mr. Bohannon is proposing an eight-story, 235-room hotel and about 695,000 square feet of office space at two sites totaling 15 acres in Bohannon Industrial Park.

A Marriott hotel and associated

athletic club, one office building, and a five-story parking garage are planned for 110-190 Independence Drive. The hotel could be up and running by 2009, Mr. Bohannon said.

Two more office buildings, two smaller parking garages and a 400-space parking lot are proposed for a site two blocks away at 101-155 Constitution Drive.

### LAWSUIT

continued from page 5

ated an intimidating, hostile, abusive, and offensive working environment" through a number of actions, including placing white-supremacist images in the workplace.

All three of the suing officers started working for the city in 2001, and reported directly to Sgt. Prickett when he was promoted from detective to patrol sergeant in July 2005.

In the lawsuit, the officers claim they were subjected to "severe and pervasive harassment and

discrimination on the basis of their race," and are suing the city and Sgt. Prickett for \$2 million in total damages. A jury trial is set for Sept. 10.

The three officers say former police chief Chris Boyd and former commander Mark Boettger "had knowledge of [Sgt. Prickett's] racist behavior prior to becoming a sergeant" but promoted him anyway.

According to the plaintiffs' complaint filed with San Mateo County Superior Court, the city conducted an internal investigation of the discrimination allegations, but not until after the

three officers filed their initial complaint with the county last October.

In 1991, Mr. Prickett was subject to a department investigation when he was accused by a fellow officer of using excessive force when making an arrest in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

The lawsuit lists several examples of alleged racial discrimination by Sgt. Prickett, including:

■ He "repeatedly displayed white supremacist images" in the workplace, including Aryan Nation images, as screensavers on his computer and on the department's mainframe computer, and

pointed out the images to the plaintiffs.

■ He ordered black officers to not use "slang" terminology on the job. When asked for a definition of slang, Sgt. Prickett said, "you know how you all talk."

■ He made derogatory and "disparaging comments regarding perceived African American qualities," such as how the officers walk and talk.

■ He attempted to block promotions and pay raises for the officers because they are black.

Officers Butler and Hinkston are two of four officers to resign within the past several weeks, and the identities of the other officers have not been disclosed by the city.

Glen Kramer, the city's person-

nel director, said it's the police department's policy to not disclose the names and ranks of departing officers, and the reasons given for their respective resignations.

Mayor Fergusson said three of the resigned officers have joined the San Ramon Police Department.

The four officers are the latest added to a growing list of officers to leave the department in recent years.

In 2005, eight officers — most of whom were veteran officers — left the force under Chief Boyd, raising questions about management, officer morale and declining experience within the department. ■

# Fire district, Atherton divvy up town's construction safety reviews

By Andrea Gemmet  
Almanac Staff Writer

If there's a fire at an Atherton house, firefighters want to know a few things before they arrive.

Can the fire engine fit through the gate and get down the driveway? Will the fire hose be long enough to stretch from the nearest hydrant all the way to the house? And will there be enough water flow to put out a fire?

That item was at the top of a long laundry list of issues facing the town of Atherton and the Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

The City Council and the fire district's Board of Directors hashed out a deal dividing responsibility for reviewing building plans at a lengthy joint meeting on May 21, but couldn't see eye to eye on a few other key topics.

At last week's meeting, a great deal of progress clearly was made in opening communication between the town and the fire district, delineating a process for reviewing building plans, and bringing to light firefighters' biggest concerns about Atherton homes — namely, basements.

However, it looks as if the fire district won't be reviewing the plans of any of the currently open building projects in town, contrary to a recommendation by the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury. The Feb. 7 grand jury report criticized Atherton for possibly allowing fire hazards by not having home construction plans reviewed for safety by the fire district, a charge Atherton officials adamantly refute.

Atherton's key objections to reviewing some 225 open permit files? The amount of time it would take, and the difficulty in getting property owners to change their plans when construction is already under way.

Fire officials did not see things the same way.

"We think it's solvable," said Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman. "What if we don't abate (a problem) and it's documented and we have a fire? The power is in our hands to make a decision to act or not act."

Mayor Alan Carlson pointed out that Menlo Park has only started allowing the fire district to review building plans for single-family homes as of May 1. And, since Menlo Park is not being asked to submit previously approved plans to the fire district, neither should Atherton.

## New rules

The fire district will review all plans for new homes and remodels

## IN AGREEMENT

At the May 21 joint meeting, the Atherton City Council and the Menlo Park Fire Protection District Board of Directors agreed to:

- Have the fire district review all plans for new homes and remodels of 50 percent or more to check for access for fire engines and adequate water flow for firefighting. Atherton's building department will continue to check plans for safety measures required by the California Building Code.
- Have the fire district review

plans that include home theaters, backup generators, basements or entry gates.

■ Establish quarterly meetings between Atherton's city manager and the fire chief.

■ Create an outreach program through the town's quarterly newsletter, the Athertonian, with regular articles from the fire chief and a voluntary survey to identify residents with special needs or properties with firefighting hazards.

of 50 percent or more to check for access for fire engines and adequate water flow for firefighting. They will continue to review all fire sprinkler plans, as they have for the past two years.

The fire district also will review plans that include home theaters, backup generators, basements or entry gates. Atherton's building department will continue to check for other safety measures required by the California Building Code.

Town and fire district officials are trying to correct a slipshod system for reviewing building plans that alarmed the civil grand jury and apparently led to at least a few projects slipping through the cracks.

Going forward, when the fire

you realize that the only way out is the way you just came in," he said. "If something goes wrong, you're done."

Mayor Carlson said he would like the council to review the town's sprinkler ordinance and close up loopholes that have allowed some basements to be built without sprinklers. Since the law passed, some homeowners have "jacked up" their houses and constructed a full basement underneath, he said. Such "remodels" are exempt from town regulations that call for all new basement construction of more than 250 square feet to include a fire suppression sprinkler system, he said.

Mr. Carlson said he would like to see any basement of any size, including underground equipment rooms, to have sprinkler systems.

"From a homeowner's standpoint, the basement is the last place you'd want to have a fire, because it will take the whole house," Mr. Carlson said.

District board member Peter Carpenter suggested creating a program of fire district inspections of existing homes to check for fire hazards, particularly basement conversions. The idea did not get much traction from council members, who predicted resistance from residents.

"You'd have five empty seats on the council," Councilwoman Kathy McKeithen said.

The council also wouldn't agree to inspections at the time of sale, another program proposed by Mr. Carpenter.

The two bodies committed to having quarterly meetings between the fire chief and the town's city manager to keep the lines of communication open.

"The council has liaisons to any number of obscure committees and commissions — I can't think of anything more important than the fire district," said City Manager Jim Robinson. ■

*'It's hard to imagine unless you're in a situation where you're crawling along the floor pulling a hose line through 2,000-degree heat and you realize that the only way out is the way you just came in.'*

CHIEF HAROLD SCHAPELHOUMAN  
ON THE NEED FOR TWO BASEMENT EXITS

district reviews plans, there will be a paper trail, and Atherton won't issue a permit until the fire district inspectors have signed off.

## Basements

Expansive, elaborate, and to some homeowners, absolutely essential, basements are a huge concern for the firefighters. They want to know which homes have them, whether they're occupied or just used for storage, and whether they have at least two exits.

Chief Schapelhouman said firefighters are especially worried about basements that have been illegally converted from storage to living space and have only one exit.

"It's hard to imagine unless you're in a situation where you're crawling along the floor pulling a hose line through 2,000-degree heat and



## NOTICE OF SCOPING SESSION FOR THE BOHANNON OFFICE/HOTEL MIXED- USE GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT AND REZONING PROJECT

### ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Division of the City of Menlo Park, California has scheduled two scoping meetings. At this meeting, members of the public will have an opportunity to comment on the issues to be analyzed in an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the following project:

**General Plan Amendment, Zoning Ordinance Amendment, Rezoning, Development Agreement, Architectural Control, Below Market Rate (BMR) Agreement, and Environmental Review/ Bohannon Development Company/101-155 Constitution Drive and 100-190 Independence Drive:**

1. General Plan Amendment to create a new Mixed-Use Commercial Business Park land use designation, which would allow research and development (R&D) facilities, offices, hotels/motels, health/fitness centers, cafes and restaurants, and related commercial uses. The maximum floor area ratio (FAR) would be set at 100% for offices, R&D, and related commercial facilities, 13.5% for health/fitness centers, cafes and restaurants, day care facilities, and related retail/community facilities, and 25% for hotels/motels (total maximum FAR of 138.5%);

2. General Plan Amendment to change the land use designation of the properties from Limited Industry to Mixed-Use Commercial Business Park;

3. Zoning Ordinance Amendment to create a new M-3 (Mixed-Use Commercial Business Park) zoning district to allow for uses and FAR as stated in the corresponding General Plan land use designation. In addition, the M-3 zoning district would permit a maximum building height of 140 feet and a maximum number of 235 hotel rooms, and would specify use-based off-street parking requirements;

4. Rezoning the properties from M-2 (General Industrial) to M-3 (Mixed-Use Commercial Business Park);

5. Architectural Control approval of specific project plans for the construction of new buildings with a total of 962,196 square feet of gross floor area (138.5% FAR) and a maximum building height of 140 feet (equating to eight stories);

- The Constitution Drive site would include two office buildings, two parking structures, and neighborhood-serving retail and community facility space;

- The Independence Drive site would include one office building, a 173,682-square foot, 231-room hotel, a 76,420-square-foot health/fitness center, a shared parking structure, and associated commercial space;

- The combined office gross floor area on the two sites would total 694,726 square feet.

6. BMR Agreement for the payment of in-lieu fees associated with the City's Below Market Rate Housing Program;

7. Development Agreement to guarantee development rights associated with the requested entitlements; and

8. Environmental Impact Report to analyze the potential environmental impacts of the proposal.

The scoping sessions will be held at the Menlo Park City Council Chambers, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on the following dates:

- **Planning Commission – Monday, June 4, 2007, 7:00 p.m.**
- **City Council – Tuesday, June 19, 2007, 7:00 p.m.**

The Planning Division is also accepting written comments on items to be included in the EIR. Please send written comments to **Thomas Rogers, Associate Planner, City of Menlo Park Community Development Department, Planning Division, 701 Laurel Street Menlo Park, CA, 94025 by June 25, 2007.**

The project application may be inspected by the public on weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with alternate Fridays closed, at the Department of Community Development, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park. **For more information, please contact Thomas Rogers at (650) 330-6722 or [throgers@menlopark.org](mailto:throgers@menlopark.org).** In addition, you can receive periodic updates regarding this project by subscribing to the project page on the City's website at: [http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev\\_iac.htm](http://www.menlopark.org/projects/comdev_iac.htm)

DATED: May 23, 2007

Deanna Chow, Senior Planner

Published in THE COUNTRY ALMANAC on May 30, 2007.

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# Should San Mateo County fire agencies be consolidated?

By Marion Softky  
Almanac Staff Writer

This summer promises a warm debate on the future organization of fire services in San Mateo County.

Board member Peter Carpenter of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District is pushing a major study of consolidating the 19 fire agencies in San Mateo County to create a single agency

that could manage fire protection and emergency response more cheaply and efficiently throughout the county.

At his request, the Menlo Park fire board May 15 asked the staff to study possibilities for consolidation. The staff will report back to the full board, probably in July, he said.

Mr. Carpenter cited two successful examples in Orange and Sacramento counties where consolidation has saved money and improved service. "This is a wonderful opportunity to get significant savings for citizens and improve service," he said.

Consolidation could eliminate fire chiefs, training chiefs and training facilities serving independent fire agencies, Mr. Carpenter argued. And it could allow better utilization of existing staff and facilities. "The only obstacle will be elected officials who don't want to lose power," he said.

Meanwhile, a review of the structure and service of fire districts in San Mateo County is under way by the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO). The agency is looking at agencies serving different sub-regions in the county, said LAFCO Executive Officer Martha Poyatos. The Woodside and Menlo Park fire districts should come up for review in June or July.

Fire protection in the county is provided by a mix of 19 agen-

cies: 12 city fire departments; six independent special districts with elected boards of directors; and San Mateo County in areas not served by a city or district. The county contracts with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to provide fire protection to these areas, mostly in the rural hills and Coastsides.

Meanwhile, fire agencies in the county are consolidating services on their own, Ms. Poyatos said. The Half Moon Bay and Pt. Montara fire districts are joining forces. And fire departments in Burlingame and Hillsborough, and in Pacifica, Daly City and Brisbane, have set up joint arrangements that eliminate some of these redundancies. Belmont and San Carlos also have a joint operating agreement.

At this point LAFCO does not have a budget for a comprehensive study, Ms. Poyatos said.

Because of the intricate technicalities of financing, governance, unions, facilities, and service, Ms. Poyatos suggested that consolidation might progress in stages rather than all at once.

In particular, consolidation would involve tricky reallocation of property tax revenue, she noted. "Consolidation of all fire agencies in one fell swoop is quite a leap," Ms. Poyatos said. ■

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## Woman killed in big-rig crash on 101

A female driver struck by debris from a jackknifed big-rig May 22 on U.S. 101 in Redwood City died later in the day after being airlifted to Stanford Medical Center, California Highway Patrol spokesman Officer Eric Parsons reported.

San Mateo County Coroner Robert Foucraut identified the woman as Indira Gagloeva, 37, of Mountain View.

Ms. Gagloeva was driving a sport utility vehicle in the fast lane of northbound U.S. 101 near Woodside Road at about 1 p.m. when a big-rig on the southbound side lost control and crashed into and partially over the center divide, scattering concrete debris, according to the CHP.

Some of the concrete chunks went through Gagloeva's windshield, striking her in the head, according to Parsons. Ms. Gagloeva's 12-year-old daughter was also in the car and suffered minor injuries.

The big-rig burst into flames, closing both directions of the highway. Both the truck driver and a passenger in the truck were uninjured and escaped before the truck caught fire. ■

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**Nikki Williams**, center, and fellow dancers step in sync late into a Saturday evening.



**Teacher Juanita Croft**, right, leads her students into the right steps as they learn a new dance routine.



Friends **Prudy Motley**, left, and **Dorothy Owens** use time in between the dances to catch up with one another.



# Soul Line Dancing

Photos and story by **VERONICA WEBER**

**O**n a Saturday night as large speakers blast Kool and the Gang's "Celebration," seniors eagerly get up from seats and join different lines to shuffle, shimmy and scoot across the linoleum floor at the Soul Line Dance Party at the Menlo Park Senior Center.

Instructor Juanita Croft shouts out the steps: "Touch back right, back left, in on the right twice, now sashay."

Most know the steps and joyfully glide and twist across the floor; a few others hang in the back of the room and try to imitate the moves.

As the music switches from R&B to hip-hop and oldies, Ms. Croft leads the group into the electric slide, the cha-cha slide, and numerous other choreographed dances.

For this group of 20 or so dancers, ranging in age from 50 to 90, soul line dancing

has become a passionate routine for staying healthy and leading active lives.

Ms. Croft, who noticed her own health benefits from the dancing, decided to share her new exercise regimen with seniors, and motivate them into a fun form of staying fit, she says.

After completing the adaptive fitness technician program at Foothill College in 2004, she started teaching at the East Palo Alto Senior Center.

Today she leads 90-minute classes four times a week throughout the Peninsula, specifically tailored to helping students who sometimes suffer from asthma, arthritis and muscle pain.

She has noticed her students have increased stamina and have lost weight, gained firmer muscles, and feel stronger.

Ruth Cossey, who doesn't let knee pain

stop her, attends the Monday afternoon classes at the Menlo Park Senior Center. "It's a great form of exercise and it helps you get your 10,000 steps a day," she says.

The dance classes have become a fun social gathering as well — one that doesn't require having a partner to dance with.

"I never sit down," says student Nancy Lindeman. "Who wants to be waiting around for a partner to ask you when you can just get up and dance anytime? It's very free spirited."

And Elouise Joseph, who has been dancing for two years, says it's not just about the exercise, but also the camaraderie among members of the group.

"I try to make it as fun as possible," says Ms. Croft. "I just love sharing (dancing) with others." ■



Menlo Park dance classes lead seniors into a fun and healthy lifestyle

Above: **Dancers**, from left, Katrina Austin, Lorraine Holmes and Juanita Brooks join the line during a party at the Menlo Park Senior Center.



## New principal named for La Entrada School

A new principal has been chosen to take the place of Dee Brummett, who retires from La Entrada Middle School in Menlo Park at the end of June.

Lawrance (Larry) Thomas, now the principal at Duveneck

Elementary School in Palo Alto, will take over at La Entrada at a date to be determined and well in advance of the start of the 2007-08 school year, said Lee Anderson, president of the Las Lomas Elementary School District Board of Trustees.

Mr. Thomas is leaving the Palo Alto School District after one year as principal at Duveneck, five years as principal at Terman Middle School, and a year each as assistant principal at Jordan Middle School and Gunn

High School, Mr. Anderson said.

Although the entire five-member Board of Trustees agreed to hire Mr. Thomas — at an annual salary “slightly higher than \$125,000” — the board is not likely

to make a formal vote on his appointment until the next regular meeting on June 12, Mr. Anderson said.

Mr. Thomas received a bachelor’s degree in biology from Rice University in 1989; a master’s degree in education from Stanford University in 1990; and an administration credential, Mr. Anderson said.

Earlier in his 17-year career, Mr. Thomas taught science at a middle school and high school in Lodi, and a middle school in Riverside.

**Lawrance (Larry) Thomas is now principal at Duveneck Elementary School in Palo Alto.**



The Almanac/David Boyce

## Moon over Menlo

Earth’s longtime globular pal shone brightly if impartially on Saturday night, May 19. In places on this planet where man-made lights are unknown or rare, this waxing quarter-moon is something of a mixed blessing: Night-stalking animals see better, but so do the creatures they’re chasing.

## Council approves downtown block parties

Two parties are heading to downtown Menlo Park this August.

The City Council voted 5-0 on May 22 to approve two city-funded block parties on Santa Cruz Avenue on two Wednesday nights, Aug. 1 and Aug. 15. Both parties will follow city-sponsored concerts at Fremont Park.

Mayor Kelly Fergusson — who proposed the idea several weeks ago — has yet to flush out the

### ■ MENLO PARK

details, but the city is expected to close Santa Cruz Avenue to traffic to allow people to eat, mingle and relax among downtown restaurants and shops.

An outdoor movie screening and live music have been floated as ideas to complement the festivities.

The events are expected to

cost the city \$11,000 in permits and police fees, said city staff.

Mayor Fergusson is the temporary chair of the event, but is looking to appoint a business owner or resident to serve as a permanent chair.

## Canceled meeting

The Menlo Park City Council will not hold its regular meeting on May 29 due to the Memorial Day holiday May 28. Regular meetings will resume June 5.

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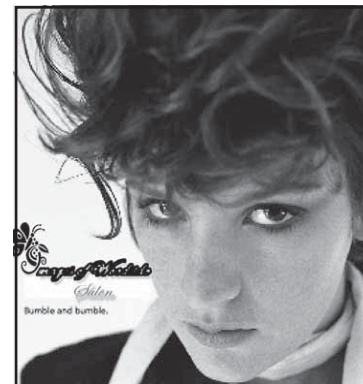
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# Community

NEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

## San Mateo County ups recycling

Residents and businesses in San Mateo County set new highs for recycling in 2006, according to a recent report of the South Bayside Waste Management Authority.

"Residents and businesses recycled record amounts of organic materials (yard trimmings from homes and food scraps from busi-

nesses) in 2006," said Kevin McCarthy, SBWMA executive director.

There was a 3 percent overall increase in recycling reported by Allied Waste. A significant part of that increase is due to improvement in diverting truckloads of construction and demolition material.

## Atherton's Connie Lurie gives \$10 million to teacher education at San Jose State

Philanthropist Connie L. Lurie of Atherton has given \$10 million to the College of Education at San Jose State University, the largest individual gift ever given to a college of education in the history of the 23 campus California State University system, the university said.

Ms. Lurie's gift will be used to establish endowments and create new programs for student and faculty development, including launching the university's first independent doctoral program in educational leadership for K-12 administrators, said Don W. Kassing, president of SJSU.

California State University trustees have changed the name of the college to the Connie L. Lurie College of Education.

The university, which is observing its sesquicentennial anniversary, was established in 1857 as a public institution to train teachers, Mr. Kassing said.

Born in San Jose, Ms. Lurie graduated from SJSU in 1964 with a bachelor's degree in elementary



Connie Lurie

education and psychology, and taught for six years in elementary schools on the Monterey Peninsula.

She has supported numerous programs at SJSU, including a permanent endowment for the Lurie Author-in-Residence Program. She also made a contribution to create the CME (Connect, Motivate and Educate) Society, which assists students who were once foster children.

She is married to Robert Lurie, chairman of the San Francisco real estate development firm, the Lurie Company, and former owner of the San Francisco Giants.

## HP garage now a U.S. landmark

Tourist buses regularly stop there for photo-ops, and now the property where Hewlett-Packard got its start is an official national landmark.

HP officials announced recently that the recently refurbished

garage at 367 Addison Ave., as well as a modest two-story house and shed, are listed by the U.S. National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places.

HP founders David Packard and William Hewlett tinkered

on the products that evolved into Hewlett-Packard Co., starting with an audio oscillator in 1938, a year before they officially founded Hewlett-Packard.

Mr. Hewlett and Mr. Packard lived for a time on the property. The company purchased the property in 2000 for a reported \$1.7 million.

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## KGO's Len Tillem & Michael Gilfix

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## GOP panel on fiscal responsibility

Former Menlo Park mayor and councilwoman, Mickie Winkler, will join a panel discussion in Menlo Park on Wednesday, May 30, on the topic: "What's Right and Wrong with How Our Cities are Spending Our Money?"

The program on spending and fiscal responsibility, organized by the South Peninsula Area Republican Coalition, will begin at 6:30 p.m. at the Little House activity center, 800 Middle Ave. in Menlo Park.

### NOTES

Other panelists are Jeff Ira, Dena Mossar, Don Wolfe and Diana Diamond.

Admission is \$12 for SPARC members and \$15 for others.

For more information or reservations, call 650-917-9125 or send an e-mail to reserve@sparcgop.org.

### Waste dropoff

On June 9, residents of Menlo Park, Atherton, Woodside, and Portola Valley can drop off hazardous waste, such as batteries and pool chemicals, at a special location in Redwood City.

Participants must make an appointment by calling 363-4718, or visiting [SMHealth.org/hhw/appt](http://SMHealth.org/hhw/appt). After making an appointment, participants will be given the location of the drop-off site.

### Gift to library

Kepler's Books has given \$2,095 to the Menlo Park Belle Haven Library. The funds were raised during the bookstore's "Magic of Reading" fundraiser held earlier this month, and the donation is the largest contribution the bookstore has ever given to the library, said Kepler's spokesperson Susan Lider.

## Before PV picnic, start with fun run

The annual Portola Valley town picnic begins at 11 a.m. Saturday, June 9, at Corte Madera Middle School at 4575 Alpine Road.

As usual, the fun race for all ages starts at 10 a.m. at the Alpine Inn at 3915 Alpine Road, with registration opening at 9 a.m. A race-day T-shirt comes with the \$10 per-person registration fee. Families can get a discount.

The race ends at Corte Madera school rather than the traditional picnic site at Town Cen-

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See **PICNIC**, page 19

# Et tu, Peninsula?

Midpeninsula Shakespeare Festival starts June 2 in Menlo Park

Menlo Players Guild in partnership with Festival Theatre Ensemble performs three classic plays for its ninth annual outdoor season at Midpeninsula High School in Menlo Park.

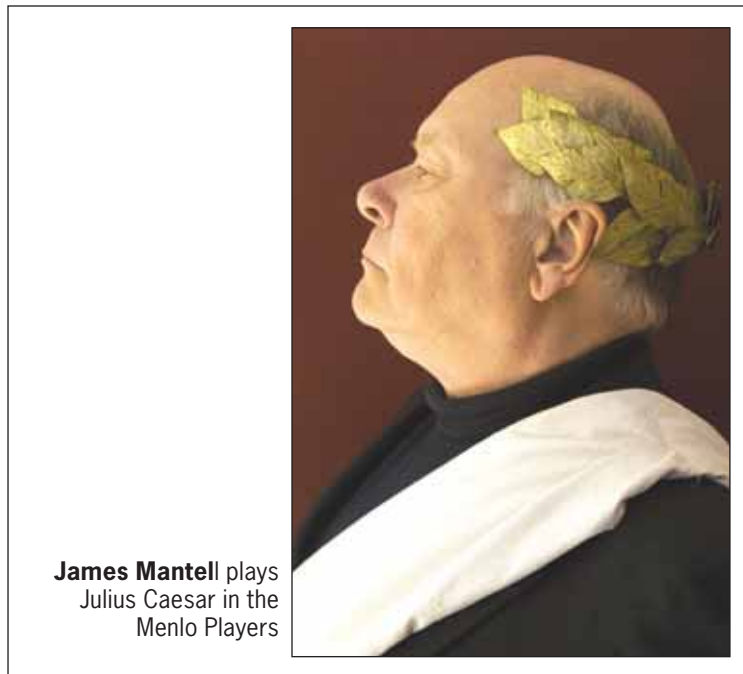
William Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar," will open the season with performances on June 2, 3, 10 and 22.

Directed by Festival Theatre Ensemble's Artistic Director, Bruce De Les Dernier, the play is a "timeless story of power politics, patriotism, and revenge," says producer Leslie Wright.

Mr. De Les Dernier will also direct Shakespeare's "Pericles, Prince of Tyre," on June 15, 16 and 24.

"Pericles charts the perpetual odyssey of a man driven by love and loss. Fairy-tale like in quality, the play is fueled by the rawest of human emotions," says Ms. Wright.

The director has chosen to stage "Pericles" in the classical



James Mantell plays Julius Caesar in the Menlo Players

storytelling style of the Arabian Nights.

On June 8, 9, 17 and 23, Amy Himes directs Moliere's "Tartuffe," the "rollicking" com-

edy of religious hypocrisy. This "fast-paced satire, translated into English verse by Richard Wilbur, has delighted audiences since the 17th century," Ms. Wright says.

Mid-Peninsula High School is located at 1340 Willow Road between U.S. 101 and Bayfront Expressway.

All shows begin at 8 p.m. and admission is free, but donations are accepted. Seating is provided, including wheelchair access. Playgoers are urged to dress warmly for these evening performances.

Call 322-3261 or go to www.menloplayersguild.org for more information.

Portola Valley Theatre Company are planning to put on skits on the theme of a perfect day. A teen dance is set for the multi-use room on campus that evening.

The committee encourages families to avoid using fossil fuel and instead walk, run or bike to the picnic, said Carolyn Rogers, chair of the Community Events Committee.

For more information, call Ms. Rogers at 303-7220.

## PICNIC

continued from page 18

ter, which is unavailable during re-construction.

Picnic entertainment is expected to include live music, a car show, carnival games and a barbecue lunch put on by Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts.

In a dramatic turn, middle-school students enrolled in the

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| CLASS                                                | DAY    | TIME                | INSTRUCTOR     | LOCATION                        | FEE          | STARTING DATE |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>YOGA FOR EVERYONE</b>                             |        |                     |                |                                 |              |               |
| 10 Weeks                                             | Mon    | 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM  |                | Independence Hall               | \$150        | June 4        |
| 10 Weeks                                             | Tues.  | 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM  | Carla Germano  | Wdse. Village Church Guild Hall | \$150        | June 5        |
| 10 Weeks                                             | Thurs. | 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM  |                | Wdse. Village Church Guild Hall | \$150        | June 7        |
| 10 Weeks                                             | Fri.   | 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM  |                | Independence Hall               | \$150        | June 8        |
| No Classes week of July 9                            |        |                     |                |                                 |              |               |
| Bring exercise mat and wear comfortable clothing     |        |                     |                |                                 |              |               |
| <b>LOW IMPACT AEROBICS &amp; JOYFLEX BODY TONING</b> |        |                     |                |                                 |              |               |
| 13 Weeks—No Classes Aug 31-Sep 14                    | Mon.   | 7:45 AM - 9:00 AM   | Joy Lopez      | Independence Hall               | \$357        | July 2        |
| Healthy Back, Cardio, Inner-Core Strengthening       | Fri.   | 7:45 AM - 9:00 AM   |                | Independence Hall               | \$22 drop in | July 6        |
| <b>MUSIC TOGETHER</b>                                |        |                     |                |                                 |              |               |
| 8 Weeks                                              | Tues.  | 8:30 AM - 9:15 AM   | Sean Mendelson | Wdse. Library                   | \$155        | July 10       |
| Ages 0-4 Years                                       | Tues.  | 9:15 AM - 10:00 AM  |                | Wdse. Library                   | \$155        | July 10       |
| Creative Classes For Children                        | Tues.  | 10:15 AM - 11:00 AM |                | Wdse. Library                   | \$155        | July 10       |

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Photo by Otak Jump

## The widow is merry — and rich

Courtney Ross is Hanna, the lead character in Franz Lehar's "The Merry Widow," staged by West Bay Opera Friday through Sunday, June 1-3. Performances are at the Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto. The production is directed by Yefim Maizel; Jindong Cai conducts the orchestra. For time and ticket information, call 424-9999, or log on at [wbopera.org](http://wbopera.org).

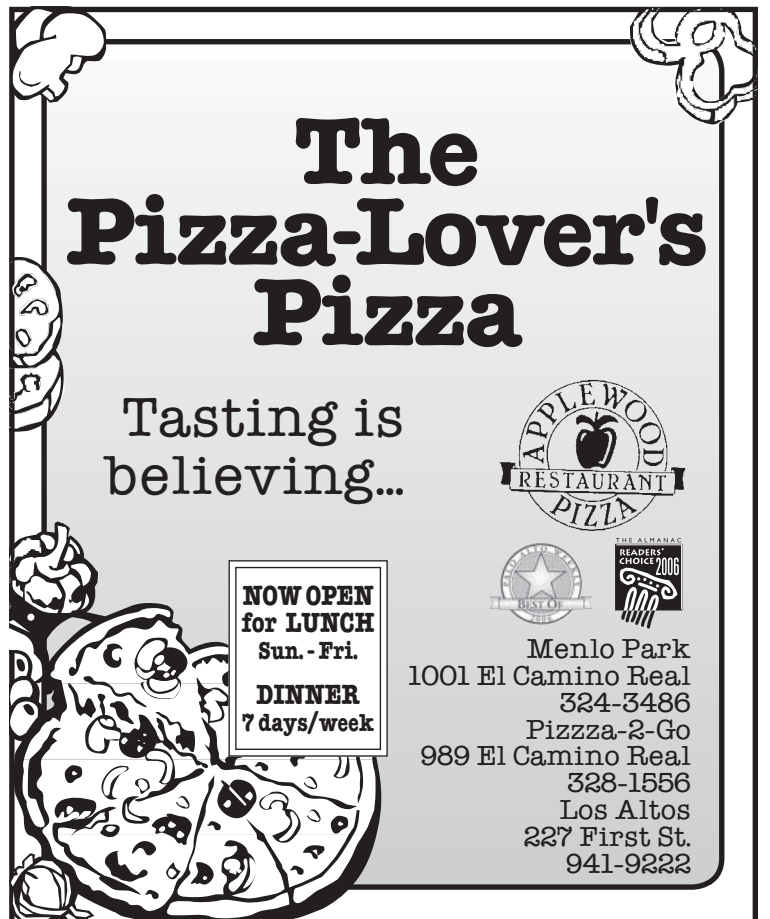
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■ POLICE CALLS

*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**

**Attempted burglary report:** Two window screens removed and damaged, 100 block of Kilroy Way, May 18.

**Auto burglary reports:**

- Window smashed and CDs stolen from car, 100 block of Wilburn Avenue, May 22.
- Car window smashed for second time within month, Southgate Street, May 17.
- Window broken and purse stolen from blue Jeep and recovered in garbage can near student parking lot, Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, May 22.

**Fraud report:** Fraud on bank account reported at police station, May 23.

**MENLO PARK**

**Burglary reports:**

- Someone entered home through back window, 1100 block of Henderson Avenue, May 18.
- Store fixtures stolen, 800 block of Middle Avenue, May 19.
- Construction tools stolen from work site, 1000 block of Ringwood Avenue, May 20.
- Property stolen from home, 1100 block of Bieber Avenue, May 21.
- Property stolen from residence, 200 block

of Terminal Avenue, May 22.

■ Window screens removed and windows damaged, 1100 block of Henderson Avenue, May 23.

■ Cash and jewelry stolen from ransacked home, 1300 block of Hollyburne Avenue, May 23.

■ Golf cart stolen, 1300 block of Willow Road, May 23.

**Grand theft report:** Jewelry stolen, 700 block of Ivy Drive, May 23.

**Robbery report:** Tools stolen, 200 block of Bay Road, May 23.

**Fraud reports:**

- Christopher Dizon, 24, of Oroville, arrested on charges of forgery, 600 block of Santa Cruz Avenue, May 21.
- Taxi driver paid with invalid credit card, reported at police station, May 22.

**WOODSIDE**

**Theft reports:**

- Front and rear bumper moldings worth \$900 stolen from car, Canada College at 4200 Farm Hill Boulevard, May 6.
- Post Office notified husband and wife of mail in stranger's possession, 100 block of Toyon Court, May 22.

**LADERA**

**Theft report:** Black Compaq laptop computer stolen from rear of unlocked vehicle in gas station parking lot, 200 block of LaQueta Drive, May 17.

## Girls say man approached them

In an echo of an incident on May 14, two girls said they were approached Thursday, May 24, in Menlo Park by a man driving a vehicle who tried to engage them in conversation about helping find his lost dog.

The girls said a gray-haired man driving a light blue, mid-sized vehicle encountered them at the intersection of Middle Avenue and Windsor Drive in Menlo Park, said Sgt. William Dixon of the Menlo Park Police Department.

When another motorist honked at the man to get moving or pull off the road, he drove away and the girls immediately went to a neighbor's house, police said.

On May 14, one of two men in a white van got out and approached a Hillview Middle School girl at the intersection of University Drive and Santa Cruz Avenue and talked with her.

Police are investigating both of these incidents and have said they will increase patrols, Sgt. Dixon said.

Police are asking anyone with information on this incident to call Sgt. Dixon at 330-6300 or the anonymous tip hotline at 330-6395.

## Blue moon hike, wildlife tracking

This week brings two opportunities to enjoy nature at the Pearson Arastradero Preserve in programs presented by the environmental group Acterra.

Astronomer Joe Jordan will explain why this month's full moon is really a blue moon on a hike on Thursday, May 31, from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Participants will start with a light vegetarian dinner prepared by local chef Laura Stec, and then break into smaller groups for the hike. The fee is \$25 per person.

Kids and their parents can learn to track wildlife and enter their findings into a hand-held "wildlife GPS" unit on Sunday, June 2, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., also at the Arastradero Preserve.

The \$10 fee includes a light lunch and drinks. The event, co-sponsored by the Reikes Center in Redwood City, is free to children under 5.

Participants will meet at the new solar-powered Gateway Stewardship Facility, adjacent to the Preserve parking lot on Arastradero Road.

For information or reservations call Sheri Lubin at 962-9876, ext. 347; or visit [www.acterra.org](http://www.acterra.org).

### Talk on deep-sea minerals

"Alchemy in the Abyss: Probing the mysteries of deep-ocean minerals" is the title of the free monthly lecture at the U.S. Geological Survey on Thursday, May 31, at 7 p.m., in Building 3 at 345 Middlefield Road in Menlo Park.

Marine geologist James R. Hein will talk about the potential for mining deep-sea resources such as sulfides from "black smokers" or "white smokers," manganese nod-

ules scattered around on the ocean floor, or cobalt-rich crusts on top of extinct sunken volcanoes.

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Published every Wednesday at

3525 Alameda de las Pulgas,

Menlo Park, CA 94025

(650) 854-2626

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The Almanac, established in September, 1965, is delivered each week to residents of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas of southern San Mateo County. The Almanac is qualified by decree of the Superior Court of San Mateo County to publish public notices of a governmental and legal nature, as stated in Decree No. 147530, issued November 9, 1969.

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## WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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**CALL** the Viewpoint desk at 854-2626, ext. 222.

# Suit, resignations dog police force

The Menlo Park Police Department appears to be in deep trouble, wracked by a shortage of sworn officers and the resignations of four more department personnel, and what is certain to be a debilitating discrimination lawsuit filed by three black officers naming Sgt. Ron Prickett.

City officials either declined to comment or were away due to the closure of city offices last Friday and Monday for the Memorial Day holiday, so it is impossible to say with certainty how the resignations and lawsuit will affect the department. But at least at this time, Sgt. Prickett remains on active duty.

Two of the four officers who resigned are among those who filed the lawsuit. Their departure leaves the city with a tremendous challenge to recruit new officers to a department that is significantly understaffed and apparently beset with internal dissension.

Police Chief Bruce Goitia has been lobbying for additional staff members for the department, which was hit in 2005 with a flood of resignations before Chief Chris Boyd resigned in January 2006 to take a similar position near Sacramento. In addition to the eight resignations in 2005, two other officers retired and a third was fired, for a loss of 11 sworn members in that year.

At a recent public meeting called by Mayor Kelly Fergusson after the recent spate of shootings in the Willows and west Menlo, the chief said he had only 23 patrol officers, down from a normal force of 30. The four recent resignations are apparently included in the chief's calculation.

The turmoil in the department is taking place while the city is engaged in a search for a new city manager, following the departure of David Boesch in February. Public Works Director Kent

## EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

Steffens is temporarily at the helm, but the leadership vacuum has to be a concern for City Council members, who need to become actively engaged in approving a budget that will pay to bring in new officers and restore confidence in the department. Several paths seem clear:

■ The council must determine what efforts were made to retain the three black officers who resigned. Was action taken immediately to investigate the matter? Would it have been possible to convince the officers to continue to serve while their lawsuit moves forward?

■ If possible, the council needs to find the root of the present debacle. Chief Boyd promoted Officer Prickett to sergeant before he resigned to take another job, and although Chief Goitia did not officially take over the department until May of last year, he has worked with Sgt. Prickett for nearly a year and had to be aware of the complaints against him.

■ Despite the personnel shortage, in our view it is extraordinary that Sgt. Prickett has not been relieved from duty during an internal investigation that apparently began some eight months ago, before the lawsuit was filed last October. Most departments would have suspended the charged officer with pay, especially in a racially sensitive case like this. The lawsuit claims that Sgt. Prickett placed racist Aryan Nation material on his computer's screen saver and on the department's mainframe computer.

The job ahead for the council will not be easy. But the difficulty the police department finds itself in will not go away. Action needs to be taken immediately to restore confidence in this team of men and women whom we depend on to keep the peace in the community. ■

## LETTERS

Our readers write

### Menlo needs to build big near transit

Editor:

Last week's cover story on Menlo Park gearing up to fight global warming while concurrently resisting higher-density, infill development by the train station and along El Camino Real, was written quite well, explaining why local environmental and community groups are supporting this type of development, while many neighborhood activists resist it. The city is certainly not alone in balking at increasing residential density.

Recently, Mayor Coralin Feierbach of Belmont refused to sign the U.S. Mayors' Climate Protection Agreement (which Mayor Kelly Fergusson and the Menlo Park City Council unanimously approved) because of the land-use clause in that agreement:

"Adopt and enforce land-use policies that reduce sprawl, preserve open space, and create compact, walkable urban communities."

We are hopeful that the city's 50-person task force that is studying how the city can reduce its carbon imprint will closely look at



Menlo Park Historical Association

## Our Regional Heritage

San Francisco banker Edward E. Eyre supervised construction of this 31-room mansion in what is now Atherton on the east side of County Road near the Fair Oaks train station. His son, Edward L. Eyre, married Florence Atherton and became the first mayor of Atherton when the town was created in 1923.

the issue of transit-oriented development. For every Mayor Feierbach, there are other Peninsula leaders, such as county supervisor

and SamTrans director Adrienne J. Tissier, who recently wrote in an op-ed in a local paper:

"The solutions to global warm-

ing are found in modern urban planning and zoning and three little words: transit-oriented

See **LETTERS**, next page

# After 25 years at M-A, Jim says good-bye

By Jim MacKenzie

It's time to say good-bye. It has been a long and, for the most part, enjoyable adventure, but there needs to be closure now. I will leave my Menlo-Atherton classroom for the last time in June.

The memories are numerous and poignant. My initial encounter with Menlo-Atherton High School dates back to the fall of 1957. My older brother, Dave, was the first of five MacKenzie boys to attend the school, and some of our family went to M-A to watch Dave play water polo in the newly constructed pool. Although these memories are distant, I can still recall how overwhelmed I was with this amazing school. The most impressive features were the immensity and the beauty of the campus. It was the beginning of a life-long relationship.

The next year I returned to M-A to play basketball in the spectacular Ayers gymnasium. My Oak Knoll team beat our major rivals, Hillview and Encinal, for the city championship (all the schools went through eighth grade at that time). I remember that after the game my Grandfather Roth congratulated me and commented on how fortunate we were to be able to play in such a fine facility. He told us that when he was growing up in Willits, they were still using peach-baskets for goals at their basketball games.

I was incredibly excited to enter Menlo-Atherton in the fall of 1959. It was not a disappointment. The four years I spent there were some of the happiest, most rewarding in my life. I received an outstanding education, met life-long friends, developed goals and an understanding of the

## PANEL OF CONTRIBUTORS

Jim MacKenzie Menlo-Atherton teacher

world that has served me well my entire life. For me, M-A was transforming.

I went to M-A with a reputation of being a jock. I looked forward to playing football and basketball and running track. By the end of my freshman year one of the M-A staff had taken an intense interest in me and changed my life dramatically. Water polo and swimming coach Bob Gaughran convinced me that my destiny lay in the waters of Northern California pools, and when Bob spoke, you listened. It was one of those choices you make in life that change everything. The challenge, the camaraderie, the tactics and the excitement consumed me. Suffice it to say that I had the great fortune to be recruited onto one of the finest high school aquatic teams ever assembled in the United States. There were literally dozens of All-Americans, a few Olympic gold medalists, some national record holders, and several undefeated teams, led by one of the most outstandingly brilliant coaches in scholastic history.

Menlo-Atherton has always been about more than the athletic program, although that focus was definitely my obsession while I was there. The classroom teachers, my culturally and racially diverse peers, and the extraordinarily supportive parent community made M-A special for me. These attributes have allowed thousands of other Menlo-Atherton alumni to enjoy very successful lives during the school's 55-year existence.

Bob Gaughran was not only my mentor, but a dear friend as well. He gave greater focus to my life. Bob wrote my recommendations, took me on college tours, set me up with "acceptable dates" and ultimately convinced me to attend his college alma

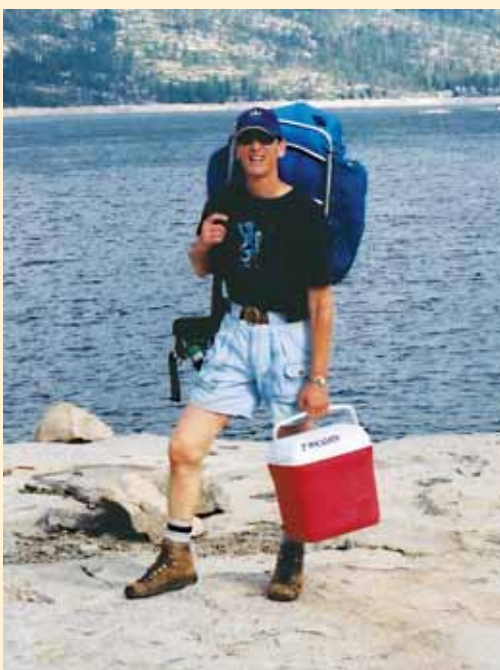


Photo courtesy of Jim MacKenzie

Jim MacKenzie on a camping trip during a recent vacation.

mater. His influence was second only to that of my wonderful parents.

It was hard to leave M-A, but just as I feel now, I was ready to move on. I majored in European history in college and had a desire to follow my grandfather into the legal profession. This all changed when I met Janet Hanbery, also an M-A alum. She was dating one of my fraternity brothers, but the M-A connec-

tion provided the commonality to make us inseparable within weeks of our first encounter. It's been over 40 years now and we still enjoy the M-A connection, as do our children, Ken ('88) and Jean ('89).

My life took a detour at the end of college and I was forced to make a decision about my future. After exploring my values, goals, capabilities and experiences, I decided that there was no better calling for me than a teaching career. I realized I would still have the opportunity to be argumentative with obstinate seniors and that no miscreant I could ever represent as an attorney would be any more challenging to deal with than high school freshmen. It was an ideal choice for me.

I started my career at San Carlos High School, having been recruited by a vice principal who had known me at M-A and wanted me to coach the aquatic teams. During my 13 years at San Carlos I put together teams that would challenge the best team in the league, Menlo-Atherton.

In 1982 San Carlos High was closed, and I had an opportunity to transfer. I didn't hesitate to choose to return to my alma mater. It was another of those really satisfying decisions that

had an immense impact on my life.

A quarter of a century later I feel I have fulfilled my obligation to give back to the school what it offered me as a student — a chance to learn, understand and mature. For the remainder of my life, I will be very proud to say that I was a Menlo-Atherton teacher.

There have been disappointments. Recently I polled my four senior Economics classes about the teaching profession. Unfortunately, of the 150 students who responded, only one professed a real interest in a teaching career. I can understand the reasoning. Low pay, constant meetings, an unforgiving bureaucracy, minimal prestige and frustration with the scrutiny and micro-management by people outside the profession tend to lead people to follow other pursuits.

Don't get me wrong, not everyone can be a successful educator. An effective teacher must be bright, articulate, caring, supportive, understanding, creative, patient, forgiving, charismatic and crazy about kids, and still able to control the chaos of the classroom. We are fortunate at Menlo-Atherton to have many outstanding teachers who fit that description. I only hope we can find more of these dedicated people to replenish the supply.

When people ask me what teaching is all about, I have a simple reply: "It's about making a difference, being able to inspire students to seek more fulfilling and rewarding lives." How do I know that? Bob Gaughran taught me that lesson many, many years ago.

Thank you, Bob.

development. Build well-designed, affordable housing within walking distance of efficient mass transit, and the air-fouling traffic jams will unclog themselves."

**Irvin Dawid, Loma Prieta Chapter, Sierra Club, Palo Alto**

## Turf fields would contaminate air for kids

Editor:

This is an open letter to the Woodside Elementary School Board regarding the installation of artificial turf on the school fields.

Some people say the entire physical universe was once a small ball of incredibly dense material that exploded and is currently expanding until one day in the

distant future it will implode upon itself and the whole process will begin again.

It's as if the universe is breathing. Everywhere you look in the physical world you will see that this macrocosmic breathing of the universe occurs in the microcosm. Each flower starts as a tiny bud, then opens, expands and then collapses upon itself — the universe breathing. Each organic being begins as a seed or egg, expands or grows, blossoms in its own way and then shrinks, implodes, its physical being dies — the universe breathing.

As human beings our breath is our connection to the infinite universe. Each child contains that infinite universe within his or her self. You breathe in goodness, you

breathe out love — the world is made whole because the whole world is within each one of us.

True sports are really not about competition or winning or frequency or number of games. It is about uniting ourselves with our higher self. When playing sports our children's breathing unifies them with the natural and spiritual world. This is why it is so important not to pollute the environment of their playing fields with unnatural, artificial, possibly harmful materials.

Artificial turf may seem useful on the surface but I'm sure if you would just look a little deeper you will see as I do that it is not good for your children or my grandchildren.

Please reconsider your decision

to renovate the Woodside Fields with artificial turf.

Playing time on the school fields is a sanctuary where children can step away from the rigors of the classroom. Playing time on the Woodside school fields has always been and should remain a special place where the children can unite themselves with the natural world. Please do not cover their space with rubber and plastic.

**Patrick Noonan  
Glenwood Avenue, Woodside**

## Concern about Town Center financing

Editor:

We would like to commend Portola Valley Councilman

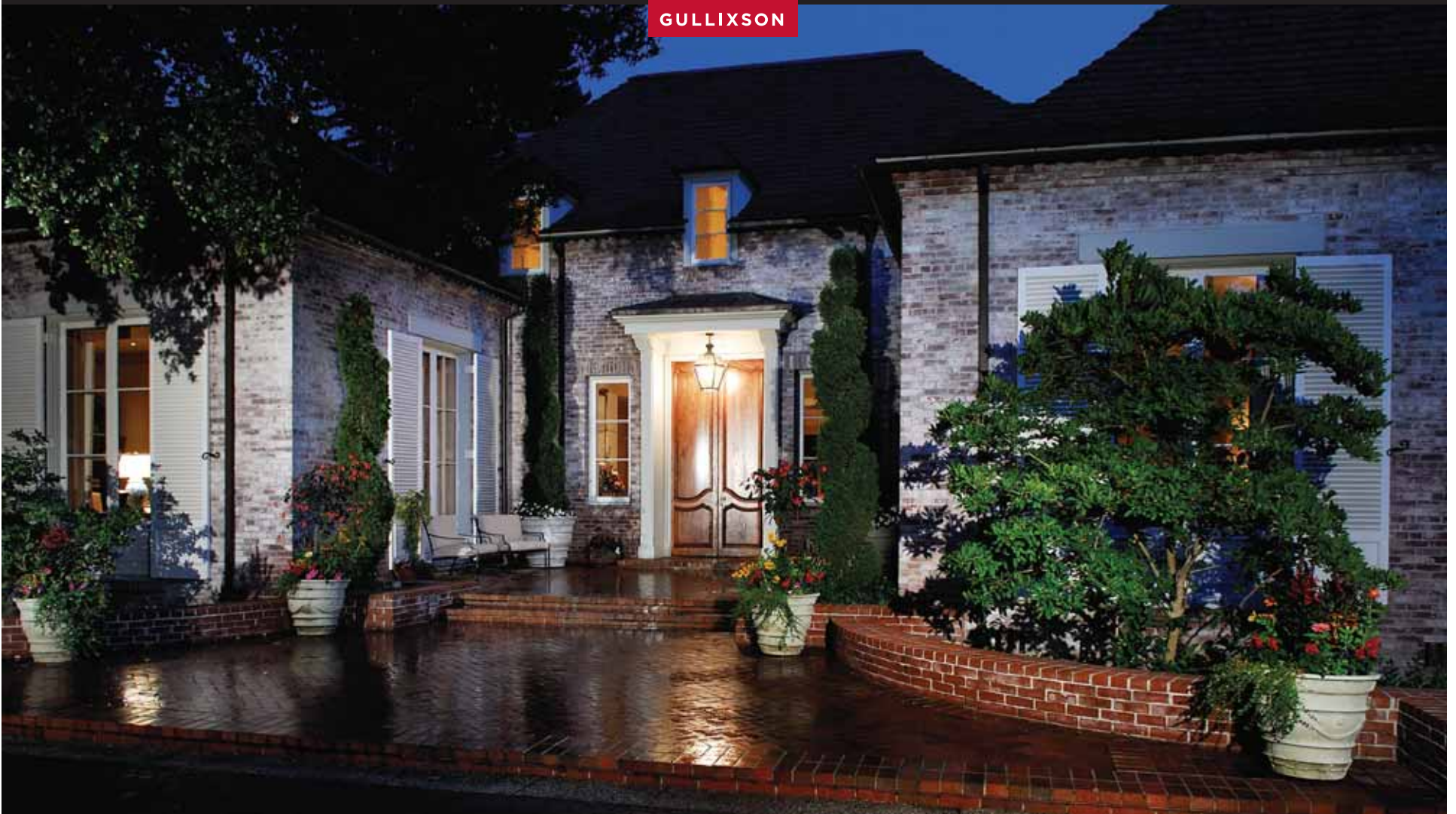
Richard Merk for publicly reaffirming his commitment to the Town Council's 2005 campaign promises concerning Town Center financing (Almanac letters, April 18).

Unfortunately, Mayor Ted Driscoll has chosen a different approach by trying to rationalize the promises away, as discussed in the Pro and Con piece April 11. Where we come from, a promise is a promise, and a person is only as good as his/her word.

We encourage other council members to stand up and follow Councilman's Merk's example.

**Charles Engles, WintercreekEd Wells, Naranja Way, Portola Valley**

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