

'Whirlwind on Wheels' crusaded to make trails
and parks accessible to all. Page 5

The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON PORTOLA

JULY 11, 2007 www.AlmanacNews.com | VOL. 42 NO. 45



VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

INSPIRATION BEGINS AT HOME

Menlo Park textile designer explores
lines and colors of local gardens

Page 14



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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

Staying cool

Four-year-old Hannah Drucker hitches a ride on the back of her dad, Marc, at Burgess Pool on Friday, July 6.

Atherton

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Menlo Park

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■ Homefield Advantage takes July Fourth Little League showdown as pitcher hurls perfect game. **Page 20**

On the cover

Textile designer Yaling Hou, who recently graduated from the Academy of Art University, created her award-winning line of paper products, "Lovely Garden," out of the scenery surrounding her Menlo Park apartment. Almanac photo by Veronica Weber. See story on **Page 14**.

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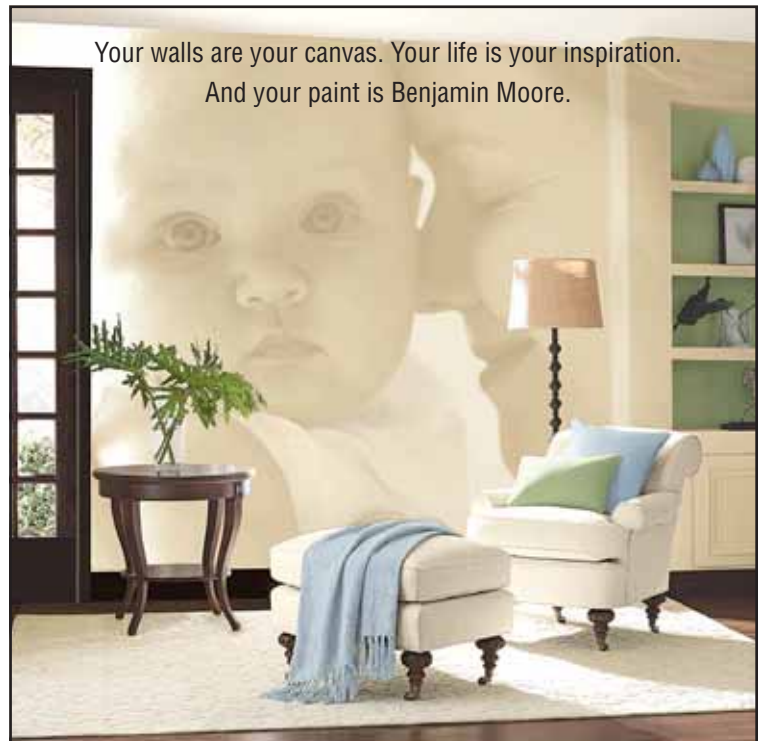
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Arranging on your own terms

Are you so intimidated by the "rules" of flower arranging that you deny yourself its pleasures? While it is true that cut flowers have traditionally been arranged in styles governed by rules, simple and spontaneous arrangements are no less beautiful or meaningful. Whether an arrangement is elaborate or simple, it can be decorative, meaningful, and expressive. The only thing that may make one arrangement better than another is its appropriateness to a particular setting or occasion. For instance, a tall arrangement of calla lilies is better suited to the formality of a foyer than the eat-in kitchen table. Otherwise, the simplicity of a few calla lilies in a tall crystal vase is no less legitimate than a formal arrangement.



At ROBERTS MARKET, our floral department is one of the best in the area, we urge you to come in whenever you need flowers, or help with floral arrangements. Our wine department is the most extensive in the area, more than most liquor stores. Don't forget fresh cut flowers from our floral department to grace your table.

HINT: The simplest arrangement is often the most effective because the eye is drawn to its uncomplicated beauty.

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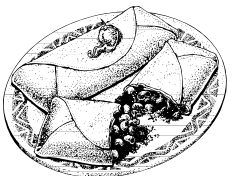
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MEAT/SEAFOOD

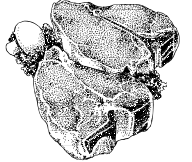

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Where's the fun in that?

Right smack between the face-painting booth and the bandstand at Menlo Park's Fourth of July carnival, there was ... an information booth on David Bohannon's proposed hotel complex?

It looked a little lonely at the booth when an Almanac reporter dropped by. To the right, people were swaying along to pop songs courtesy of the Cheeseballs, a retro cover band. To the left, a long line of sweating parents stood by little girls waiting to be painted and glittered into princesses.

Maybe if Mr. Bohannon's booth had offered some plastic prizes, like the other carnival booths that dotted Burgess Park were doing, it would have generated a little more foot traffic.

Put your money where your mouth is

What are Woodside's firefighter/paramedics willing to do to save the district's ambulance service? Give up about \$140,000 of their own salary, that's what.

The Woodside fire district is losing buckets of money on its contract to provide ambulance service, and may have to give it up for financial reasons. While fire officials are working hard to get a bigger reimbursement that will allow them to keep the ambulance running, Woodside fire's rank-and-file voted to give up the \$150 stipend they get for each shift on the ambulance, if it will save the service, said Peter Berger, chairman of the Woodside Fire Protection District Board of Directors.

Fire officials say they don't want to give up their ambulance because it provides faster service to residents of the district than the county's ambulance contractor, American Medical Response (AMR).

The real kitchen is too far away!

Coldwell Banker's recent survey of luxury homeowners identifies the amenities sought after by the fabulously well-housed. On top of the list are heated floors, with boat docks coming in second. In third place? Bedroom kitchens. Seriously, are studio apartments the new luxury lodging?

Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Grand jury blames manager for town's woes

By **Andrea Gemmet**

Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton is doing a good job of cleaning up problems in its building department, but the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury is blaming City Manager Jim Robinson for not preventing the situation in the first place.

While acknowledging that the town has made "substantial progress" in correcting various deficiencies in its building department, the July 3 report criticizes Mr. Robinson for a lack of supervision and not intervening in a case of serious employee misconduct, and charges him with failing to keep council

members informed of significant matters.

Mr. Robinson, who is out of the country on vacation, told the Almanac via e-mail: "The City Council will review the Civil Grand Jury Report and issue a response. It would be premature to respond at this time."

Three of Atherton's five council members came to Mr. Robinson's defense and told the Almanac they disagree with the grand jury's report.

The other two, Kathy McKeithen and Jerry Carlson, did not return phone calls seeking comment.

"(The grand jury) took credit for everything Atherton is already

doing (in the building department), and then they took cheap shots at the city manager," said Councilman Jim Janz.

Councilman Charles Marsala said he talked to Jim Robinson almost daily, including weekends, during 2006, when Mr. Marsala served as mayor. He said he logged about 500 e-mails to the city manager during the course of the year.

"Jim keeps us extremely in the loop on what's going on in the town," Mr. Marsala said. "How could (the grand jury) make that determination without calling last year's mayor and asking him?"

The civil grand jury is a watchdog group that investigates city

ATHERTON

and county governments, issues reports and makes recommendations. Although it's an arm of the courts, a civil grand jury cannot hand down criminal indictments, although it can recommend that a criminal grand jury do so.

Civil grand juries work in secret — anyone who has been interviewed by a grand jury is not allowed to discuss it, and the reports are the only publicly available information that result from their investigations.

See **GRAND JURY**, page 10

'Whirlwind on Wheels' crusaded to make trails, parks accessible to all

By **Marion Softky**

Almanac Staff Writer

Friends and admirers of Phyllis Cangemi will gather Saturday, July 14, to celebrate the life and work of the small, passionate, determined woman who overcame her own disability to help make nature, parks and open spaces in San Mateo County, California, and around the world accessible to others with disabilities.

Ms. Cangemi, who fought to save "The Hill" in Menlo Park before founding Whole Access, an organization dedicated to opening nature to people of all abilities, actually died over a year ago in December 2005. She was 59.

The celebration will take place from 2 to 4 p.m. at St. Bede's Episcopal Church, 2650 Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park. People will share their thoughts and memories about Phyllis and her untiring work on behalf of people with disabilities.

"Phyllis built a community of friends, neighbors and colleagues around the world who joined in her mission to preserve open space and make it accessible to all," said Debbie Wright of Menlo Park, her devoted companion and housemate over many years.

A cruel fate brought Phyllis Cangemi to Menlo Park in

1980. She grew up in Levittown on Long Island, where she learned to love nature in the fields and woods next to the subdivision. She married young and embarked on a promising future until 1976. Her husband was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease; within a year, Phyllis had it too.

The couple moved to California in 1980, he to Los Angeles to be with his family, she to Menlo Park to get treatment at Stanford.

Living in West Menlo with Ms. Wright, an old hiking buddy from New York, Ms. Cangemi was soon drawn into the fight to save a patch of open space at the head of Valparaiso Avenue from development.

While Ms. Wright knocked on doors and carried petitions, Ms. Cangemi manned the telephone from her bed, calling the likes of David Packard for support. "I became a telephone demon," she told the Almanac proudly in a 2001 interview.

As a result of the campaign, "The Hill" now has town houses at the top, but its steep face is a city park. "It increased public recognition of the importance of urban open space," she said.

In 1983, Ms. Cangemi attended the dedication of the Tanoak Whole Access Nature Trail in Memorial Park in her wheelchair — and got hooked.



Phyllis Cangemi enjoys a view of Alpine Road in the Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve in this photo by David Neville, which ran on the cover of the Almanac's Jan. 31, 2001, edition.

Pretty soon she was coordinating docents to show the trail, which had special audio messages for the blind, to groups with special needs. She organized workshops on designing trails for people with disabilities. She founded Whole Access to make nature more accessible to everybody, not just those with disabilities.

For the next 20 years Ms. Cangemi, increasingly frail but utterly determined, pursued her vision of making parks and other open space facilities accessible to everyone, not just the disabled, but moms with strollers, grandparents, the old and frail, the young and healthy.

Working out of a tiny house in Redwood City crammed with files and computers, Ms. Cangemi badgered park professionals into recognizing the

need for access and developing methods for improving the park experience for everybody.

She also recruited people to volunteer and support her projects. "It was just amazing the people she had working with her," said Ms. Wright. Among Ms. Cangemi's early achievements, the playground at Flood Park in Menlo Park, and the wheelchair trail around Alpine Pond in the Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve are still enjoyed by many.

"You don't go to a park for one thing," she told the Almanac. "When accessibility is incorporated into the system, everybody benefits — people with disabilities and people without disabilities."

Often called a "whirlwind on wheels" for her energy aboard

See **CANGEMI**, page 7



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During her stay at Packard Children's, Katie made new friends and set her sights on a future profession as an oncology nurse. And from what we've seen, she's got the drive to achieve anything she puts her mind to. Visit www.lpch.org for more information.

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Council to consider steps to deal with climate change

Legislators and other big-government types may be flummoxed when trying to fashion a workable agenda to address global warming, but volunteers from Portola Valley are ready to test some limits.

Recommendations from the town's Climate Protection Task Force are scheduled for discussion at the Wednesday, July 11, Town Council meeting at 8 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse. Among the topics for discussion:

■ Design guidelines that shift toward greenness and away from some neighbor-conscious restrictions such as low roof-reflectivity — a potential issue for roof-mounted solar panels.

■ Convincing a local gas station to sell bio-diesel and, echoing residents' recent bulk purchase of solar panels, convincing residents to bulk buy other green products such as double-paned windows.

■ A town-endorsed program

in which air travelers can buy credits to support green ventures so as to "offset" the jet's greenhouse gas emissions.

The task force proposes to sponsor informative and interactive green events, to devise a "carbon diet" for residents and businesses, and to advocate for carbon-free transportation.

Also on the council's agenda: the design of the backstop for the Town Center baseball field, moving up construction of the field so it can reopen in the spring of 2008 rather than 2009, and the video-taping of council meetings for the town's Web site.

County holds seminar for candidates; filing period opens

The San Mateo County elections office is holding a seminar for candidates for public office at 6 p.m. Monday, July 23, at the elections office at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo.

The seminars are designed to "demystify the mechanics of running for office," says the county Web site — www.shapethefuture.org — where you can get more information.

Candidates are encouraged to bring their campaign staff along. To RSVP or ask questions, e-mail Steve Dennison, the candidate filing officer, at

sdennison@smcare.org.

Filing period

The candidate filing period for the November 2007 election opens Monday, July 16, and ends at 5 p.m. Friday, Aug. 10.

Candidates for city and town councils, school boards and special districts must file during the period. If one or more incumbents chooses not to run, the filing period for that election is extended three working days to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 15.

To file in a municipal election, contact the city or town clerk

at your respective Town Hall: Atherton, Kathi Hamilton at 752-0529; Menlo Park, Silvia M. Vonderlinden at 330-6620; Portola Valley, Angela Howard at 851-1700, ext. 15; and Woodside, Janet Koelsch at 851-6790.

To file for a school district or special district election, make an appointment with the county elections office at 40 Tower Road in San Mateo. Call Steve Dennison at 312-5370 or send e-mail to sdennison@smcare.org.

For information on elections in San Mateo County, go to www.shapethefuture.org.

Celebrating the life of Phyllis Cangemi

CANGEMI

continued from page 5

her three-wheeled scooter, Ms. Cangemi carried her message far beyond San Mateo County, to park planners and designers around the country and beyond.

In Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park, Ms. Cangemi was a catalyst for a program that designed trails to maximize accessibility while protecting resources. "Making trails accessible also improves the experience for all and reduces maintenance," she said.

Despite failing health, Ms. Cangemi carried her message around the world. In 1992, she

spoke at the World Congress of National Parks and Protected Areas in Caracas, Venezuela, and later the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. She has visited Russia and inspired a similar organization there.

Ms. Cangemi also earned a host of awards. She was inducted into the San Mateo County Women's Hall of Fame in 1993. In 2001 she won the MAGIC Heroes Award from the Avant! Foundation. "Due to Phyllis' work thousands of trails, parks, pools and playgrounds are enjoyed by all," the citation reads. "Literally the world is a better place because of her efforts."

Rep. Anna Eshoo wrote in support of the nomination,

"Through sheer determination, she has bettered the lives of thousands of individuals with disabilities."

Ms. Cangemi is survived by her brothers, Mark Brecher of Ossining, New York; Ronald Brecher of New York City; and Howard Brecher in Germany.

Friends suggest donations to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 1700 South El Camino Real, Suite 300, San Mateo, CA 94402; or the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, 1029 J Street, Suite 120, Sacramento, CA 95814. ■

■ INFORMATION

For information, call Ms. Wright at 327-1565.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



What Sellers Should Do For Buyers

Q: I am selling my house and although the property is being sold "As-Is" the buyer is asking me to take care of a few repairs that were discovered after the contract was signed. Am I obliged to do this? I want to do the right thing for the buyers because they made a strong offer and have allowed me to remain in the property for a few weeks after escrow closes at no charge. What would you advise?

A: If property defects or malfunctions are discovered after the contract is signed, the seller should issue a new Transfer Disclosure Statement (TDS) disclosing the problem. The buyer has a three day right of rescission based on this new information. Usually the buyer will not rescind the contract based on a new TDS but will ask the seller to fix the problem or renegotiate the contract

terms. The best thing for you to do in this case is to repair the problem or if this is not feasible, to credit the buyer an amount appropriate for them to fix it.

Presently in the San Francisco Mid-Peninsula area, we are experiencing a seller's market. This means that the seller holds all of the cards and the buyer holds few or none. But even though sellers are in control of the market, they would do well to extend every courtesy to the buyer of their property. This is the essence of a good transaction. If all parties feel that they got something out of the deal, they are usually much happier. If there are minor items to fix, the seller should do so, even though they may not be required to fix them. This makes the buyer feel that they are getting something and are not being taken advantage of. There will likely be fewer problems after close of escrow if the buyer feels satisfied that his/her needs were met.

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



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The Almanac/David Boyce

The **J Building** multi-use room at Menlo-Atherton High School, left, is scheduled to come down soon. Replacing it will be a performing arts center, right, that seats 483 and may cost \$28 million.

M-A to demolish old J Building in August

■ It's the first step to building a new performing arts center.

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

It's been maybe 50 years since sunshine warmed the earth under the cavernous multi-use room at the intersection of Middlefield Road and Ravenswood Avenue on the campus of Menlo-Atherton High School.

Critters under the old J Building are likely to be feeling the heat soon. Work has finally begun on a new performing arts center, which will be built on the site.

A crew is now removing materials such as asbestos from the building, Assistant Superintendent Ed LaVigne told the Almanac. A demolition crew will take over, probably the first week in August, to tear the building down.

In its place, the Sequoia Union High School District plans a 31,000-square-foot, 483-seat, \$28 million theater, scheduled to open in mid-2009 and featuring a swooping exterior design that is likely to turn heads.

The city of Menlo Park will share in its use, having agreed to contribute \$2.6 million, about 9 percent of the cost. The rest of the money is coming from \$88 million in construction bond funds approved by district voters in 2001.

Angles and slopes

The M-A project got off to a celebrated start in June of 2005 when a design-competition jury gave the nod to Culver City-based Hodgetts + Fung Design and Architecture. The firm's past work includes a canopy for the Hollywood Bowl and an 18,000-seat amphitheater for the Minnesota Orchestra.

A scale model of the winning design is notable for its roof, a multi-level affair of several different angles and with downward sloping sections that seem to brush the ground.

Calling the design avant garde may not be out of place. It would seem to pass a test proposed to the competing architects in 2005 by then M-A vice principal and now Principal Matthew Zito: "This building has to be useful, but it also has to look good when you're driving by at 35 mph in your Mercedes."

At the original estimated construction cost of \$17 million, the design may have seemed a bargain. The new \$28 million figure reflects rising

costs for labor and sharp rises in costs of materials, notably steel and concrete, Mr. LaVigne said.

To contain costs while preserving the theater's practical and aesthetic values, the construction manager has been doing "value engineering."

Cuts include lowering the seat count to 483 from 500 and more use of concrete block walls instead of poured concrete, Mr. LaVigne said.

M-A's original plans called for an outer layer of copper on the roof that would have oxidized to verdigris. The new design is less dramatic: standing-seam metal at a savings of \$600,000 to \$700,000.

In keeping with a theatrical tradition, M-A's stage crew will raise and lower scenic backdrops using sandbags and elbow grease.

Crews don't break a sweat at this task at Woodside High School's two-year-old theater — a \$17 million, 500-seat venue that did not involve a design competition. A crew member can do the job with a mouse click from a laptop computer anywhere inside the theater.

Slow off the mark

Delays are seldom kind to a building's price. In following required procedures, the Sequoia district had to wait six months for the Division of the State Architect to approve the theater's engineering plans.

The interval delayed the J Building's demolition and may have raised costs by as much as \$2.8 million, Mr. LaVigne said — a guess, he added.

Nat Chauhan, a regional manager for the Division of the State Architect, said the Sequoia district changed its plans during the approval cycle, which then had to be restarted.

In regulating K-14 public school construction, the state architect's office requires districts to adhere to a separate building code called the Field Act. The Act's specifications are more rigorous than the uniform building code, particularly concerning a building's earthquake survivability.

When asked for an example of how the state changed the design, Mr. LaVigne noted the addition of 450 yards of concrete to the foundation at a cost of about \$100,000. The state saw the school's original specification as seismically unfit for M-A's soil conditions, he said.

Such rigor is unnecessary, he said. "Since new buildings (built to the uniform building code) are not falling down on regular people, I can only conclude that the uniform building code is sufficient." ■

Deal with school gives city access to theater

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO PARK

Locals should be able to enjoy and participate in Menlo Park-sponsored dance camps, theater classes, holiday concerts and other events in a spiffy new facility in about two years.

The Menlo Park City Council late last month approved a \$2.6 million payment toward the construction of Menlo-Atherton High School's new performing arts center, guaranteeing the city use of the \$28 million theater expected to be built by mid-2009.

Under a contract agreed upon by the City Council and Sequoia Union High School District, the city can hold up to 55 events a year for 50 years at the 483-seat theater, planned for the M-A campus in Atherton. After the district sets its events for the facility each year, Menlo Park will get top scheduling rights for city-sponsored programs and performances.

The council unanimously approved the contract on June 27.

"I give credit to prior councils and [high school district] board members who laid a foundation for this agreement," said Mayor Kelly Fergusson. "This will be an unparalleled community resource, and provide opportunity for so many of our youth and adults involved in performing arts."

The city opted to partner with the Sequoia district in 2001, after a crack was discovered in the ceiling of the old Burgess Theatre. Rather than pay to repair the 60-year-old theater — estimated to cost \$2.6 million — the council opted to put the money toward the new M-A theater.

Lawsuit settled?

Although a lawsuit has been filed by the town of Atherton

against the Sequoia district regarding the theater, the two parties have reached "an agreement in principle," said Menlo Park City Attorney Bill McClure.

In November, Atherton officials filed a lawsuit alleging that the district dodged an environmental impact report when it approved construction of the theater, but the town has been in talks with Sequoia district and Menlo Park officials since the suit was filed, and all parties say an agreement should be announced soon.

In the lawsuit, Atherton alleged the theater could increase traffic congestion, rainwater runoff and calls to the police department.

Contract details

Once the performing arts center is built, the city can use it up to six times when school is in session, and up to 24 times on school days after school hours.

During summer break, school vacations and weekends, the city is permitted to use the facility anytime from 7 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., unless the district has an event scheduled.

The city will pay custodial costs for city-sponsored events held at the center, but will not pay rent.

Other groups that might be interested in using the theater, such as the Menlo Players Guild, will have to pay a fixed rate set by the Sequoia district, said Mr. McClure. He noted that the city could donate a portion of its allotted 55 days to a third party, although he said the city will likely use all of its days.

Since the performing arts center will be built on school grounds, alcohol cannot be served at events or receptions. ■

Wednesday closing date for fair entries

The closing date to enter exhibits in the San Mateo County Fair is Wednesday, July 11. Residents of all counties in California and those from out-of-state are allowed to participate in the 3,000 exhibition categories, which range from wine making to photography.

Over \$75,000 in money and prizes will be awarded at the fair, which takes place Aug. 10-19. For more information about entering, go to www.sanmateocountyfair.com or call 574-3247.

■ NOTES

Reunion planned for USS Nimitz crews

Former crew members of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz are invited to indicate their interest in attending a reunion planned for June 2008 in Nashville, Tennessee.

To register, go to ussnimitz-association.org and click on "Reunion info" or contact Joe Brunner at (619) 466-2132 or waldoj@cox.net.

Post news and views on

TOWN SQUARE

www.AlmanacNews.com

Cyclist hospitalized after collision

By David Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

A woman cyclist suffered a fractured skull and facial trauma in a bike-versus-car accident June 30 on Alpine Road, west of Golden Oak Drive, in Portola Valley, according to the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

Fortunately, almost immediately after the accident, an emergency room physician from Stanford happened by, as did firefighters from the Woodside Fire Protection District, said San Mateo County Deputy Sheriff Eric Sakuma. The bicyclist, who was wear-

ing a helmet, was conscious and alert when taken to Stanford Hospital, said Deputy Sakuma, who has since visited her and reported that she has no memory of the accident.

Pending completion of an investigation, the Sheriff's Office has not released the name of either the cyclist, a 50-year-old Pacifica resident, or the driver, a 91-year-old Portola Valley resident.

The accident occurred around 11:20 a.m. when the cyclist, heading east on Alpine Road, attempted to pass her

cycling partners and moved across the white line separating the roadway from its shoulder, and into the traffic lane, Deputy Sakuma said. She collided with the passenger-side rear-view mirror of an eastbound 1998 gold Cadillac, he said.

The driver, who was traveling at about 35 mph, was not injured, nor were there any injuries to the half-dozen other cyclists in the group, he said.

Witnesses told police that the Cadillac driver had been tapping her horn to warn the cyclists of her approach, Deputy Sakuma said. The cyclists were not racing, he added. ■

Portola Valley schools spend \$15,000 a year per student

■ School board approves \$10.8 million budget.

By Marjorie Mader
Almanac Staff Writer

The Portola Valley School District starts its 2007-08 fiscal year on an upbeat note: a balanced \$10.8 million budget, a projected 7.35 percent growth in property taxes, a 5 percent raise for teachers, and \$2.1 million in reserves.

Enrollment, which has been stable for several years, is projected to grow to 711 students, an increase of 32 students over the previous school year. Projections show 335 students at Ormondale, a K-3 school, and 376 at Corte Madera, a grade 4-8 school.

"We've turned the corner on the number of fifth-graders leaving the district at the end of that year for private schools," said Superintendent Anne Campbell. This past school year, only six students transferred after fifth grade to private schools. Corte Madera will gain three new students when school starts Aug. 27.

The average yearly cost of a student's education in the two-school district is \$15,171.

The budget, prepared by Assistant Superintendent Tim

Hanretty, projects both revenue and expenditures increasing 5 percent — about \$507,250 — over the previous year's \$10.3 million final budget. The school board adopted the budget at its June 19 meeting.

Budget figures could change, Mr. Hanretty cautioned, subject to modifications due to actual property tax increases and finalization of the state budget for K-12 schools.

Portola Valley schools rely on local funding — property taxes, foundation contributions and parcel taxes — for 87 percent of the budget.

As a "basic aid" district, Portola Valley's keeps its property tax revenue because it significantly exceeds — by about \$3.6 million — the state funds the district would receive as a "revenue limit" district. That's the amount the district would need to raise to fund current program operations should basic-aid status disappear on a state-wide basis, Mr. Hanretty said.

The district receives 70 percent of its income from property tax revenue, about \$7.28 million; 8 percent (\$860,000) from the Portola Valley Schools Foundation; and 6 percent (\$650,000) from the district's annual parcel tax of

\$290 per parcel.

Other local income accounts for 12 percent of revenue. This includes reimbursements for special education services for neighboring districts; cost-sharing revenue for business office services for the Woodside School District; facility leases; and after-school sports fees.

Only 1 percent of the district's budget comes from the state and 2 percent from the federal government.

The largest chunk of budget dollars — 81 percent or \$8.7 million — pays for salaries and benefits of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The budget includes a 5 percent raise for teachers, and sets aside funds for salary and benefit increases for non-teaching personnel.

Added to the budget is one full-time teacher at Ormondale due to enrollment growth; a part-time curriculum specialist; funding for other curriculum consultants to be determined; and an additional \$64,490 for staff professional development.

The budget allocates \$425,893 to 11 initiatives, including technology; improving instructional approaches at both schools; and "Math Mastery" and "Written Language" programs.

Copies of the 2007-08 budget are available at the district office, located at Corte Madera School, 4575 Alpine Road in Portola Valley. ■

Nigerian artist to talk on environmental damage

Nigerian environmental artist Bright Ugochukwu Eke will present a free talk and slide show about his work Thursday, July 12, at 7 p.m., at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road.

Mr. Eke, whose art addresses the dire effects of industrialization and the abuses of water in Nigeria, is spending July at the Djerassi Resident Art-

ists Program west of Skyline above Woodside. He won his residency as a prize in the 2006 Dakar Biennial, a pan-African art exhibit held in Senegal in 2006.

Mr. Eke's work has been inspired by the physical pain of his early exposure to acid rain. He will discuss his current work, "The Chief's Garbage Chair,"

which he is currently creating at the Djerassi Foundation.

"The Chief's Garbage Chair" should be ready for viewing at the annual Open House/Open Studios on Sunday, July 29, from 1 to 5 p.m., at the SMIP Ranch. Reservations are required at \$25 each. For more information or reservations, call 747-1250; or go to djerassi.org.

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Grand jury blames manager

GRAND JURY

continued from page 5

In the past year, the town's building department has been the subject of a series of internal audits and at least one personnel investigation conducted by private investigator Lance Bayer. A second personnel investigation by attorney Mary Topliff was recently concluded, but City Attorney Marc Hynes would not disclose what department it involved.

The audits detailed sloppy procedures, poor record-keeping, and the failure to collect almost \$135,000 in excavation fees — although the fees became moot when the council subsequently abolished them and handed out refunds.

The building department reviews construction plans and issues permits for everything from solar panel installations to demolitions to building a brand new house. While the department brings in about \$2 million annually in fees, it's not a moneymaker for the town. By law, a building department can pay for itself through fees, but that money can't be used for other purposes.

As a result of the scrutiny, a series of reforms are being made

in the department, including adding staff, improving record-keeping and dividing up responsibilities. The Lance Bayer investigation did not turn up criminal wrongdoing, but resulted in at least one employee being disciplined on charges of favoritism, rude conduct and accepting gifts. She was eventually transferred out of the department.

City Attorney Hynes said he could not comment on whether a second building department employee had been disciplined, as the grand jury report contends.

The grand jury report charges that Mr. Robinson and former Building Official Mike Hood were aware of "serious employee misconduct," and said some of the incidents might not have occurred if the responsible managers had intervened earlier.

The grand jury report doesn't specify what type of misconduct occurred, only that "an impartial observer could reasonably conclude that disciplinary measures were justified and appropriate."

Mr. Hynes said he didn't know what misconduct was being referred to, and couldn't comment even if he did.

Mayor Alan Carlson, an employ-

ment attorney, said the city manager can't legally tell the council about disciplining town employees.

"There are statutory protections in the government code for public employees, to insulate them from political pressure from councils or legislatures," Mr. Carlson said. "The grand jury doesn't seem to get it."

Recommendations

The grand jury outlined four steps for Atherton officials to take: require the town manager to inform the council of all significant town matters; reconsider the policy of notifying neighbors of construction projects only under limited circumstances; create a written procedure for complaints; and inform the community of reforms made in the building department.

Councilman Janz said that only one recommendation is worth looking into: giving notice to neighbors when a substantial building project is proposed. Currently, neighbors are generally notified only if the builder needs a use permit or is seeking a variance from town rules.

The other recommendations are already in place, or, in the case of the complaint policy, is being put into place, said Mr. Janz.

Having the city manager keep the council informed "goes without saying," he said.

Mr. Janz disputed the report's one concrete example of Mr. Robinson's failure to communicate with the council — a 2001 meeting between the fire district and several Atherton officials that ended in an impasse. "He told us about the meeting with the fire district," Mr. Janz said.

Fire hazards?

Last week's grand jury report follows up on its interim report issued in February focusing on the building department's inadequacies in working with the Menlo Park Fire Protection District. The interim report questioned the fire safety of Atherton homes, because the town did not delegate building plan reviews to fire district inspectors.

The City Council disputed most of the assertions in the grand jury's February report, contending that the town's staff reviewed plans for safety.

Despite some initial fiery rhetoric, the council and fire district have been working closely together, and both sides declared that the start of a new era of cooperation has resulted from the grand jury's interim report.

While the grand jury apparently didn't like the tone of Atherton's response, it pronounced itself "pleased" with the town's substantial progress in remedying the building department's deficiencies.

"While the grand jury noted that the town gave a 40-some-odd page response it labeled as 'defiant,' nowhere do they characterize it as wrong," said Mayor Carlson.

Abatement notices

Besides the scrutiny of the grand jury, there's been other fallout to the building department's troubles. Atherton officials have targeted several building projects that allegedly violate town rules, halting construction and issuing abatement notices to correct major problems.

The council dropped its case against one, involving a Barry Lane home with a mansard roof; in another case, the owners of a home on Tallwood Court are suing the town.

In all of the cases, the projects were approved by the former building official, Mr. Hood, and later were determined to be illegal. The grand jury report outlines the dilemma facing Atherton, but doesn't recommend a solution.

"If the council attempts to force owners of nonconforming properties to comply with the zoning ordinances, litigation may result. If the council ignores the violations, future accusations of unfair treatment may surface," the report says.

The grand jury report is online at SanMateoCourt.org — click on "Grand Jury." ■

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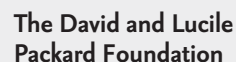
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A portable fan airs out baseboard molding and damp walls after a broken water pipe flooded four classrooms and a storage room.

The Almanac/
David Boyce

Water floods classrooms at La Entrada school

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Water damaged four classrooms and a storage room at La Entrada Middle School in Menlo Park on Thursday evening after an underground pipe joint came loose during construction work at the school and flooded the linoleum-tiled floors to a depth of about 4 inches.

A passing pedestrian spotted the water bubbling out from under the classroom doors at about 6:30 p.m. on July 5 and called 911, said Harold Schapelhouman, chief of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District.

Firefighters shut off the water, called Dee Brummett — La Entrada's principal until she retired July 1 — and began cleaning up.

At the time, Menlo Park firefighters were busy with grass fires in Palo Alto and East Palo Alto, but enough were available to make the La Entrada incident a "full first-alarm assignment," Chief Schapelhouman said.

The firefighters "worked so hard" with squeegees and mops, said Ms. Brummett. Immediate damage, she said, was limited to inconsequential paper that happened to be stored on the floor. Textbook-bearing cupboards, with bottom shelves about 5 inches

off the floor, just escaped.

The linoleum may have been soaking for four hours. A joint powers agreement called the San Mateo County Schools Insurance Group, which insures the Las Lomas school district, has engaged a "property restoration" company to dry out the classrooms and check for long-term impacts, said Joyce Massaro, the district's interim maintenance operations and transportation supervisor.

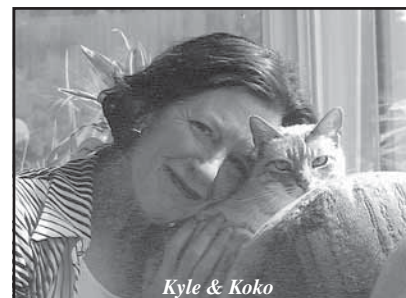
Landscape workers excavating a courtyard had turned the water back on at about 2:30 p.m. after repairing a 3/4-inch copper water pipe that they had not expected to be in that patch of ground, said Shawn Sanfilippo, a construction manager with San Mateo-based Callander Associates, a landscape architecture firm.

Unknown to the workers, a joint about 20 feet away from the repair point "somehow must have wiggled loose," Mr. Sanfilippo said. A properly soldered joint should not have failed like that, he added.

There are more courtyards to be renovated near classrooms with sinks that presumably have similar pipes supplying them. "Now we have to look at every courtyard," Mr. Sanfilippo said. ■

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Rebuilding water system: environmental report issued

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

The environmental count-down is under way for San Francisco's \$4.3 billion program to rebuild the antiquated system that carries water from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in Yosemite National Park across three earthquake faults to 2.4 million customers in four Bay Area counties.

The "draft program environmental impact report," just released by the San Francisco Planning Department, analyzes the environmental impacts of the 22 projects that make up the mammoth program; it presents alternatives, and suggests ways to mitigate those impacts. At five volumes and 3,100-plus pages, it contains massive amounts of information and analysis.

The draft report is available for public review and comment for 90 days. The Planning Department will hold five public hearings in September.

Separate environmental impact reports for individual projects will be prepared and released for public review after completion of hearings on the program report, said Maureen Barry, a communications officer with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

At present the San Francisco Water Department delivers an average of 265 million gallons per day to customers in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda counties. The delivery system includes some 280 miles of pipelines, 60 miles of tunnels, 11 reservoirs, five pump stations, and two water treatment plants.

The water supply improvement program, designed by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, includes 22 projects in the Bay Area and Central Valley to ensure that the Bay Area will continue to receive reliable, high-quality water through 2030. These projects should strengthen or replace obsolete or failing parts of the system, some of which are more than 100 years old, so that they can survive the next earthquake.

Major construction is expected to begin about 2009 and be complete by the end of 2014.

The 27 suburban water agencies that rely on San Francisco for their water will be studying the program environmental impact report carefully. "It is critically important for the health, safety and economic well-being of the water customers," said Art Jensen, general manager of the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency.

"If this earthquake-vulnerable system should rupture in the

next seismic event, up to 30 to 60 days without water could cause a human and economic disaster."

Big issue: growth

The water supply improvement program calls for accommodating the growth that is planned in the communities buying water from San Francisco. The average daily rate of water delivery, now at 265 million gallons, is projected to grow 13 percent to 300 million gallons in 2030.

A big question: Where does another 35 million gallons per day come from?

The program environmental impact report lays out several possibilities, many of them controversial. Additional water could be diverted from the Tuolumne River. Some, but probably not enough, water could be obtained through aggressive conservation and recy-

cling. The report also suggests using groundwater, and desalination — taking the salt out of sea or bay water — which is expensive and energy-consuming.

Another area covered in the report that could prove contentious is planning for a drought. The water supply improvement program proposes to limit the level of rationing during a drought to 20 percent across the system.

Local projects

The biggest local impact of the water system upgrade will be on hundreds of residents in East Palo Alto, Menlo Park and North Fair Oaks who live along or near the Hetch Hetchy right-of-way.

That right-of-way is slated to be dug up so that a new 60-inch pipe can be laid beside the two existing 60-inch pipes.

This pipe is part of the "reli-

ability upgrade" of the two Bay Division pipelines that carry water from Newark, under the Bay, and along the right-of-way to the Pulgas Water Temple on Canada Road, where the water enters Crystal Springs Reservoir.

For five miles under the Bay, the pipes, which date to the 1920s, will be replaced by a 10-foot tunnel. On the west side, the new pipe will supplement the existing pipes, and new connections will allow transfer of water between pipes in case of problems or for maintenance.

The other major Peninsula project will be widening Crystal Springs Dam and raising it to its historic level to increase the capacity of the lake.

The draft environmental impact reports on these projects should come out in September for a public review period and

local hearings, Ms. Barry said.

Information

The San Francisco Planning Department will hold a Peninsula public hearing on the draft program environmental impact report on Wednesday, Sept. 19, at 6:30 p.m. at Avenidas Senior Center, 450 Bryant St. in Palo Alto.

The draft report is available at the Menlo Park Library, 800 Alma St.; or online at www.sfgov.org/site/planning_index.asp?id=37672, scroll down to "Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Projects." More information is available at sfgov.org.

Comments may be submitted until Oct. 1 to the San Francisco Planning Department, Attention Paul Maltzer, 16509 Mission St., Suite 400, San Francisco, CA 94103; or by e-mail to wsip.peir.comments@gmail.com. ■

M-A alumna wins Fulbright grant

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo-Atherton High School graduate and Near East scholar Alexandra Kleinerman (M-A 1999) is on a fast track to the distant past. She is a recent recipient of a Fulbright grant that will take her to Germany to study education practices in ancient Iraq, then known as Sumeria.

Under the direction of Professor Konrad Volk of the University of Tübingen, Ms. Kleinerman will be reading and translating "fictional letters and other short compositions" from more than 100 clay tablets, said Amy Lunday of Johns Hopkins University, where Ms. Kleinerman, 25, is working toward a doctorate in Assyriology.

The clay tablets, now called the Sumerian Epistolary Miscellanies, were used around 1800 BCE to train Mesopotamian children

who already spoke Akkadian to read and write in the Sumerian language.

In its time, Sumerian was not spoken but used for literary and liturgical purposes, as was Latin in the Middle Ages, Ms. Kleinerman said.

"The scribal schools in Babylonia provide the first examples in human history of a curriculum used to teach a foreign language," she said. "Understanding the step-by-step progression with which school children learned Sumerian provides insight into how Mesopotamians understood the learning process in particular and their system of logical reasoning in general."

Ms. Kleinerman has a bachelor's degree in Near Eastern studies from Cornell University, where she graduated summa cum laude in 2003. She is the daughter of Aurel Kleinerman and Deborah Scheraga of Menlo Park. ■

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INSPIRATION BEGINS AT HOME

*Menlo Park textile
designer explores lines and
colors of local gardens*

By Natalie Jabbar
Special to the Almanac

Although 30-year-old textile designer Yaling Hou has lived in Menlo Park for only a year, the city’s natural beauty has become one of her greatest sources of artistic inspiration.

Ms. Hou, who was born in Taiwan, graduated in May from San Francisco’s Academy of Art with a bachelor of fine arts in applied textiles. She recently won the grand prize in the Surtex 2007 International Student Design Competition, which was judged by top professionals in the design industry.

Ms. Hou’s award-winning line — which includes gift boxes and bags, wrapping paper, photo albums, journals and note cards — was entitled, “Lovely Garden” and features simple yet elegant renderings of flowers and other striking foliage.

Ms. Hou’s designs, she says, stemmed from what met her eyes when she stepped outside of her Menlo Park apartment on Roble Avenue.

Carefully landscaped gardens appeared at every turn. Having only lived in large city environments before, Ms. Hou was surprised and invigorated by the greenery that surrounded her.

“I walked around and took pictures of beautiful flowers,” she says. “I drew from my pictures by hand, and then scanned my sketches into my computer to work on the layout and repeats of the patterns.”

Ms. Hou notes that during a one-week internship in New York, which was part of her grand prize, many design companies encouraged her to market her products after seeing the Lovely Garden line.

“Her design was definitely on trend and had a very good commercial appeal,” says Gina DeLuca, the show manager of Surtex. “Her designs speak for themselves.”

Ms. Hou’s designs quietly but powerfully tell a story through the interplay of lines and colors, the components of design that she says interest her most. As she reflects on her work, Ms. Hou remembers where this narrative first began.

Her first stitch

Yaling Hou’s love for design sparked two decades ago when she was a 10-year-old girl growing up in Taiwan. Her grandmother had just passed down an old foot-pedal sewing machine, but her mother showed no interest in using it. Young Yaling, however, was intrigued.

Her aunt, who was skilled at sewing and knitting, taught her how to sew, and the child began to spend more and more time at the machine. Her mother approved of Yaling’s somewhat surprising playmate.

“My mother didn’t want me to play outside because she thought it was too dangerous then,” Ms. Hou explains.

It was in these moments, she remembers — as her 10-year-old feet pressed down on the machine's pedal while she fashioned simple curtains and other basic projects with her small hands — that a love for design was being stitched into the fabric of her life.

Dreams put on hold

Ms. Hou's passion for design never waned as she grew older. She was forced to set that interest aside, however, as she went forth in higher education. She graduated from National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan with a B.A. in English in 1999.

She decided to officially pursue design; it had always been what she called her "side dream," but now she wanted to bring it to fruition. She came to the United States and enrolled in San Francisco's Academy of Art to study fashion design in the fall of 1999.

But after a semester, Ms. Hou decided that fashion wasn't the right fit for her at the time, so she switched to studying graphic design, another one of her blossoming interests. After she completed that semester, Ms. Hou left the Academy of Art altogether.

"Due to pressure from my family, I went to San Francisco State University to study for my master's degrees," she says.

She earned two master's degrees from SFSU — in English and in education — then returned to Taiwan, where she worked for a year. She married Masanori Suzuki, whom she had met while a student at SFSU, and they returned to California.

The couple eventually moved to Menlo Park.

"We both love living here and wonder why we didn't move here sooner," Ms. Hou says.

After moving back to California, Ms. Hou also decided to give design another try, enrolling at the Academy of Art once again.

"I learned to see things for what they are," she says. "I was older, calmer and not as affected by the fashion culture."

She chose to concentrate in applied textiles because it is the perfect marriage of her two interests: graphic design and fashion design.

This time around, Ms. Hou felt herself flourishing as a designer and hasn't turned back.

Designing her future

Since winning the Surtex award and graduating from the academy, Ms. Hou has been working toward developing a career as a textile designer. As of now, she is creating more pieces in order to expand her Lovely Garden collection into a complete, sellable line. She is calling her new company "Flowie" (pronounced flo-ee).

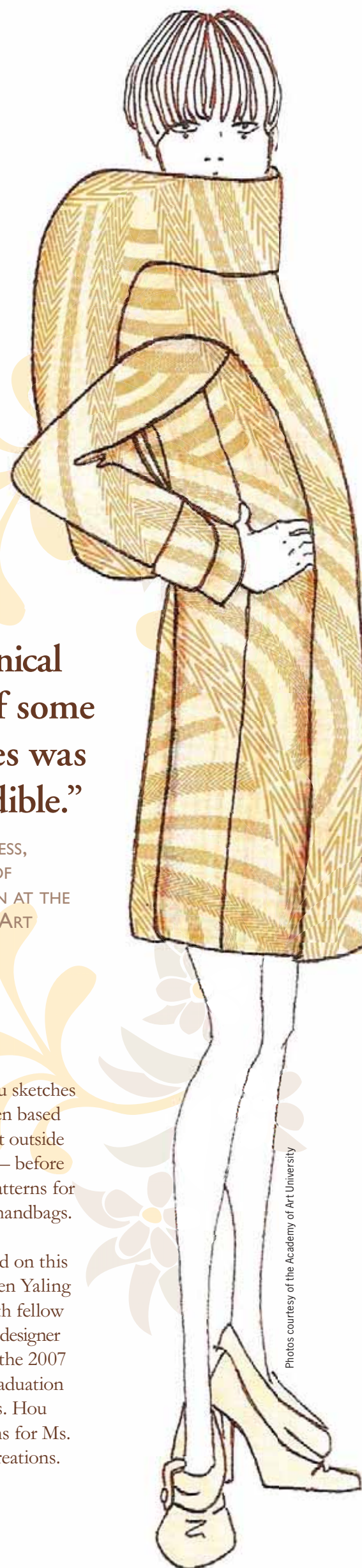
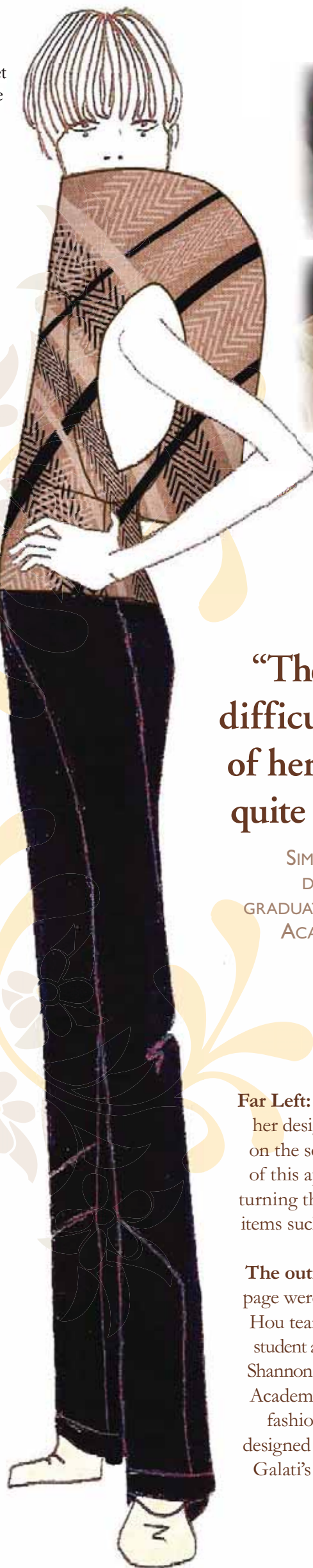
"It's a combination of flower and flow," she says. "I think it's interesting how these both come together."

Although flowers form the undercurrent of Ms. Hou's aesthetic, she says that she does not want to limit herself to one theme. Her portfolio spans a wide range of patterns, from the effortless floral prints of Lovely Garden to intricate, modern interpretations of Victorian designs.

Ms. Hou hopes to incorporate her various designs into an equally expansive range of products. She has designed everything from wedding invitations to children's bathing suits. Earlier this year, she collaborated on a clothing collection with Academy of Art fashion student Shannon Galati for their annual Spring Fashion Show. Ms. Galati designed the clothing, and Ms. Hou created the patterns for the fabric.

"The technical difficulty of some of her pieces was quite incredible," recalls Simon Ungless, the director of graduate fashion at the Academy of Art.

In addition, Ms. Hou was just chosen as a finalist in the SIMS Art & Exhibit Contest for an outfit she designed for



"The technical difficulty of some of her pieces was quite incredible."

SIMON UNGLESS,
DIRECTOR OF
GRADUATE FASHION AT THE
ACADEMY OF ART

Far Left: Yaling Hou sketches her designs — often based on the scenery right outside of this apartment — before turning them into patterns for items such as these handbags.

The outfits featured on this page were made when Yaling Hou teamed up with fellow student and fashion designer Shannon Galati for the 2007 Academy of Art graduation fashion show. Ms. Hou designed the patterns for Ms. Galati's clothing creations.

Photos courtesy of the Academy of Art University

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The Almanac/Veronica Weber

The flowers featured in Yaling's "Lovely Garden" collection were drawn from Menlo Park gardens. She is currently working on expanding this collection into a sellable line.

YALING HOU continued from page 15

her Maltese dog, Gucci.

For now, Ms. Hou says, she will focus on designing paper products — stationery, cards, journals and the like — as well as home and fashion accessories. At an interview with the Almanac, she was sporting one of her own creations: a white canvas bag printed with an understated yet eye-catching pattern of oversized, faded green flowers. And yes, it's washable.

"She's just one of those people who has the combination of all the things you need to succeed," says Rhona MacKenzie, the textile design coordinator at the Academy of Art. "She can adapt to anything."

As Ms. Hou works to adapt in the competitive world of design, there is no chance that she will forget her first significant muse.

"This is the best area I've lived in," Ms. Hou says. "Menlo Park will be my inspiration for more products to come." ■

"She's just one of those people who has the combination of all the things you need to succeed."

RHONA MACKENZIE, TEXTILE DESIGN COORDINATOR AT THE ACADEMY OF ART

INFORMATION

For more information about Yaling Hou's designs, visit www.yalinghou.com.

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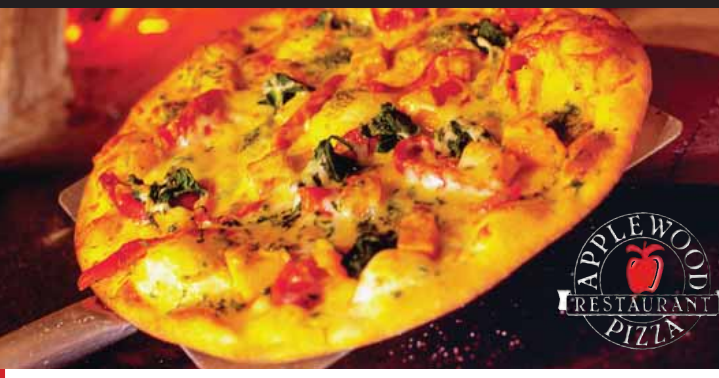
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County OKs \$1.65 billion budget, but draws on reserves

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

San Mateo County's \$1.65 billion budget reflects a strong local economy, but presents a long-term challenge as expenditures continue to outstrip revenues by \$25 million.

The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the 2007-08 fiscal year budget on June 27, after three days of fairly non-controversial hearings.

The new budget boosts drug and alcohol services, reduces overtime in the Sheriff's Office, and strengthens a program to provide health insurance to all children in the county.

In his opening remarks, County Manager John Maltbie warned of the growing structural deficit, and cited long-term challenges, such as jail overcrowding, rising costs to provide health care to the uninsured, and uncertain funding sources.

Revisions to the budget Mr. Maltbie submitted in May include a new \$705,532 state grant to help treat 35 mentally-ill women in jail.

Overall, the new budget represents a 3.1 percent spending

increase in funding for health care, social services, parks, law enforcement, public works, and other county programs. The county will add 85 new positions for a total of 5,802 employees.

County support also increased 3 percent for some community-based organizations, which provide services such as counseling, low-income housing, and nutrition programs.

"Hard work lies ahead," warned Supervisor Rich Gordon. "We cannot afford our current levels of expenditures in years to come for those who do not have health insurance and for those who are in our jail. We must find alternatives to guarantee a healthy and safe community."

The board agreed to explore ways to reduce the structural deficit, which is partly caused by increases in salaries and benefits, which have increased 28 percent since 2004, according to Mr. Maltbie.

The budget allocates \$559 million for health care; \$223 million for social services; \$270 million for criminal justice, including the Sheriff's Office, and probation; \$230 million for commu-

nity services such as parks, public works, planning and libraries; and \$84 million for administration, including human resources, information technology and fiscal functions.

To cut costs, the Medical Center will close one of two long-term care units and relocate the patients to other county facilities. The center still runs a \$72 million deficit, which is drawn from the county general fund.

New group to study Menlo Park Bayfront restoration

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

For people interested in the future of the salt ponds separating Menlo Park from San Francisco Bay, a new group is forming to advise the multiple agencies planning for restoration, public access, and flood control for thousands of acres ringing the Bay.

The Ravenswood Working Group will hold its first meeting Wednesday, July 11, from 2 to 5 p.m. at the Onetta Harris Community Center, 100 Terminal Ave. in Belle Haven.

Other new programs for the next fiscal year include a study of the needs of the county's aging population; a project to engage youth in mapping county trails and parks using a geographical information system; evaluating homeless services on the Coastside; efforts to enroll eligible residents for food stamps; working with business to promote take-back programs for fluorescent lights and other

hard-to-dispose-of items; and a study to find a new location for the firing range at Coyote Point Park, which is used for training police officers.

The board will hold another hearing and adopt its final budget in September when it knows how much money will be coming from the state.

The county budget can be viewed online at co.sanmateo.ca.us/budget. ■

The 1,572 acres of salt ponds on either side of the approach to the Dumbarton Bridge, between Bayfront Park and the East Palo Alto line, were acquired by the federal government in 2003 and are now part of the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

The new working group will provide the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project with public input from local agencies and interest groups on the Ravenswood section of the massive project to restore former salt ponds to active marshland. It will also advise the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on its South

Bay Shoreline Study, which is looking at the safety of levees and possible flooding.

The Ravenswood group will include representatives of cities from Redwood City to Palo Alto, as well as other interested public agencies and groups. For starters, Councilman Heyward Robinson and Public Works Director Kent Steffens will represent Menlo Park where the salt ponds lie.

The public is invited. For information, call Eileen McLaughlin of Wildlife Stewards at 408-257-7599; or go to southbayrestoration.org, or southbayshoreline.org. ■

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Council to weigh in on Dumbarton Rail

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

With tensions rising over the Dumbarton Rail project, the Menlo Park City Council is set to weigh in on the issue.

At their July 10 meeting, council members are expected to sign off on a letter of questions and concerns about the proposed train system that would run across the Dumbarton rail bridge to connect Menlo Park and Redwood City to the East Bay.

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

The train system could be up and running by 2012, and calls for 12 commuter trains (six in the morning and six at night) to run through several Menlo Park neighborhoods, including Suburban Park, Belle Haven, and Lorelei Manor.

The big decision before the council is how strong of a message to send to the Dumbarton Rail Corridor Project Policy Advisory Committee — a group of public officials assisting Caltrain in planning the project.

Regional leaders and environmental groups are encouraging Bay Area cities to support the project, but Menlo Park residents have major qualms with the potential noise, vibration, and environmental impacts of diesel passenger trains and freight trains running near their homes.

Scoping session on Bohannon project

The Menlo Park City Council will take another round of public comment on David Bohannon's plans to build a hotel and office complex.

Author gives talk on Colma history

Local author and Colma History Museum docent Michael Smookler will talk about his latest book, "Colma," at the San Mateo County History Museum's historic Courtroom A from 11 a.m. to noon. Saturday, July 28.

His book features photographs spanning Colma's history from 1853 to today. There are pictures of old Colma businesses, Southern Pacific train routes, and famous people buried in Colma, including Joe DiMaggio, Wyatt Earp and William Randolph Hearst.

The history museum is at 2200 Broadway in Redwood City. For more information, call the museum office at 299-0104.

At its July 10 meeting, the council is asking members of the public to help define the scope of an environmental impact study that will

be conducted on Mr. Bohannon's plans to build 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, near the intersection of Marsh Road and U.S. 101.

The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center.

The council previously held a

scoping session during its June 19 meeting, but Mr. Bohannon's presentation didn't start until 11:30 p.m. He agreed to return and present his project at another scoping session on July 10 to allow for more public input. ■

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Homefield takes July 4th contest as pitcher hurls perfect game

By Colin Becht
Special to the Almanac



Pitcher Jack Larson of the Brix team, champions of the Menlo-Atherton Little League, pitched a complete game in the July Fourth championship game between the M-A Little League and Alpine/West Menlo Little League champions. He surrendered just three runs with only two of them earned, and held Homefield Advantage to five hits. Unfortunately for Larson, his Brix team was facing an even better pitcher that day.

Homefield's Mikey Diekroeger, 11, pitched a perfect game, leading his team to a 3-0 triumph over Brix in the classic Menlo Park showdown at Harrison Field in Burgess Park. Diekroeger didn't allow a single runner to reach base in any of the six innings of the game. He also struck out 10 of the 18 batters he faced.

"We just ran into a pitcher that was really dominant today," said Keith Newman, co-manager of Brix.

Nonetheless, Diekroeger remained modest after his amazing outing. "This is my best pitching performance ... but I couldn't have done it without my players in the field. They made about eight plays that saved the perfect game for me," he said.

Diekroeger added that catcher Colin Lockareff called all the pitches, making him instrumental in the victory.

Homefield first took the lead in the bottom of the first inning. Diekroeger aided his own cause, singling and then advancing to

third on a fielding error. He was able to score later on an RBI groundout by Zach Jones.

Homefield then added two insurance runs in the bottom of the fifth inning when Nick Lange connected for a two-run homer, driving in Travis Jones. Diekroeger then proceeded to strike out the side in the sixth inning sealing the perfect game and the championship.

"Both teams played relatively well. They just played a little better than our team," said Newman.

Being an 11-year-old, Diekroeger maintains one year of eligibility in Little League, and has big plans for that year.

"I just want to win another championship and this time win the Tournament of Champions," said Diekroeger, referring to the other postseason tournament. ■

Women's masters water polo booming at Burgess Pool

This was posted in the Sports category of Town Square (www.AlmanacNews.com) by Tim Burks, a Menlo Park resident, former college player, and husband of a Title 49ers team member.

Women's masters water polo is booming at Menlo Park's Burgess pool, home of the Title 49ers. The team is less than a year old, but the roster is growing and the players are improving.

Most players are in their 30s, 40s, or 50s, but some are younger, and one or two are in their 60s. A few played water polo in high school or college, but many had never played. Some swim masters, but many swam only for fun on hot summer days.

Practices are designed to be fun, teaching fundamentals and game situations. The coaches are Teresa Gorbett, a former All American player at UCSB, and Barbara Jones, a former U.S. national team player.

"Water polo is really good exer-

cise," says Cynthia Norris, who played tennis but lost interest. "I'm enjoying competing again. Plus, it's a great way to make new friends."

The Title 49ers took two teams to Irvine recently for the USWP masters national championships. They didn't win many games, but had fun, learned a lot, and got to play against several former Olympians and national team players. They even had three players make the all-tournament team: Claire Burks, Debi Sorch, and Cynthia Norris.

Our hometown team looks forward to sending a team to the masters world championships in Perth, Australia, in April 2008.

The Title 49ers are always looking for new players, regardless of age and experience level. Practices are Sunday mornings from 8-10, and Monday and Wednesday evenings from 7-8:30. For more info, contact Leslie at leslie@menloswim.com.

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Community

NEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY



Photo by Tom Gibbons

Stern Grove supporters

Among supporters of Stern Grove Festival's 70th season of admission-free concerts in San Francisco are, from left, Stephanie Harmon of Woodside, Gretchen Berggruen of San Francisco and Lynn McKinnon of Portola Valley. They attended a recent gala in Sigmund Stern Grove that raised some \$300,000 for the festival, said spokeswoman Monica Ware.

Cheeky Monkey toy store triples its space

By Natalie Jabbar
Special to the Almanac

Cheeky Monkey toy store in downtown Menlo Park is moving one block away to a new location at 640 Santa Cruz Ave., with triple the space, store owners Anna and Dexter Chow have announced.

The new store, which will open July 14, will have about 3,500 square feet, Ms. Chow said.

It will have a greater variety of toys, including the Playmobil line, an expanded science area, an arts and crafts section, and a new selection of Kumon edu-

■ BUSINESS

cational workbooks, she said. "Kids learn through play," Ms. Chow said. "We want to provide more tools for parents to use at home with their kids."

At the grand opening on Saturday, July 14, there will be a ribbon cutting at 10 a.m., music at 11 a.m. by Mr. David, a popular local children's entertainer, as well as crafts and toy giveaways.

Cheeky Monkey will donate 10

percent of the purchase price of any item to a school mentioned by the customer at checkout, the Chows said.

The store will hold other celebratory events on most Saturdays from July 21 to Sept. 8. The Chows will also set up a bounce house for children at 5:30 p.m. during Menlo Park block parties on two Wednesdays — Aug. 1 and 15, when downtown Santa Cruz Avenue will be closed to auto traffic.

For more information, go to cheekymonkeytoys.com ■

Talk on 'Greening of Bay Area'

■ AROUND TOWN

Richard Walker, professor of geography at UC Berkeley, will discuss his new book, "The City in the Country: The Greening of the S.F. Bay Area," on Tuesday, July 17, from 6:30 to 9 p.m., at the Peninsula Conservation Center, 3921 E. Bayshore Road in Palo Alto.

Many of the people responsible for preserving the Bay and its wetlands, and the undeveloped hills of the Peninsula, will be there to discuss the history of conservation in the Bay Area with Prof. Walker, who chairs the California Studies Center, and others.

The event, sponsored by the Committee for Green Foothills, will start with a wine and cheese reception, followed by the presentation and discussion, and a book signing.

Admission is \$5 for members of Acterra, the Committee for Green Foothills, and the Sierra Club; and \$10 for the general public. RSVPs are requested; call Ellen Wilkinson at 962-9876, ext. 306; or send an e-mail to ellenw@acterra.org.

would come to town on a bicycle that had a stage attached to it and perform stories in serial form.

At the July 13 event, there will be crafts and an opportunity to explore the Japanese section of the exhibit, "Land of Opportunity: the Immigrant Experience in San Mateo County."

Admission to the performance is included in the museum's \$4 entrance fee. For more information, call 299-0104.

Older driver's class in Redwood City

Seniors who want to brush up on their driving skills can sign up for an Older Driver Traffic Safety Seminar on Thursday, July 12, from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at the Sequoia YMCA, 1445 Hudson St. in Redwood City.

"With teen and youth drivers out of school, the roads will be that much more crowded," said San Mateo County Supervisor Adrienne Tissier, who has been sponsoring the program for two years. "However, it's a myth that older drivers as a group are more unsafe than any other group. Actually, a national study has shown that older drivers are less likely to be involved in fatal collisions than drivers 16 to 24."

Supervisor Tissier added that the greatest risk for senior drivers is to themselves; older people don't recover as fast, she noted.

Another older drivers class will be held Thursday, Aug. 9, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., in San Mateo at Central Park.

For information, or to register, call Supervisor Tissier's office at 363-4572.

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Sacred Heart Prep graduates 113

Sacred Heart Preparatory's Class of 2007 received diplomas June 7 after a round of celebrations that included a Mass, honors convocation and the traditional "Alumni Pinning Ceremony," welcoming the graduates into the Sacred Heart Schools Alumni Association.

Commencement began with a procession of trustees, faculty and the 113 graduates marching to a stage set up for an outdoor ceremony on the Atherton campus.

Principal Richard Dioli, the master of ceremonies, introduced seniors Alisa Healy and Caroline Lewis, who sang the national anthem. Director of Schools Joseph Ciancaglini welcomed the students, parents and guests.

Hannah Doyle and Chelsea Evans gave the valedictorians' speeches, and Douglas Hosking delivered the salutatory address.

The Rev. Robert B. Lawton, the 14th president of Loyola Marymount University, gave the graduation address.

Dr. Ciancaglini, Mr. Dioli and Board Chair Mindy Rogers presented the graduates with their diplomas.

The graduates

A-B Rebecca Rachel Abbe, Hannah Elizabeth Adams, Jonathan Tze-Xiang Ang, Michelle Marie Benevento, Sugeily Wendoly Benitez, Travis Robert Benson, Jennifer Nicole Bernard, Kevin Thomas Bocci, Lauren Marie Boyle, Ryan Stewart Burton
C Michelle Ann Carey, Samantha Marie Carr, Gregory David Casciaro, Samuel Ethan Chaknova, Audrey Sue-Yan Chau, Lauren Marie Ciardella, Charlene Elizabeth Clea, Bryant William Cobb, Gregory John Colligan, Matthew John Connor, Mary Eileen Coyne, Kimberly Elizabeth Culpan, Braden Kent Currier
D-E Alyssa Jade Dacay, Melissa Kathleen Davison, Adam Henry Davison, Maura

SCHOOLS

Jayne DeBattista, William Nathaniel Derwin, Kevin Matthew Diefendorf, Caitlin Jessica Elizabeth DiFede, Hannah Shea Doyle, Brendan Thomas Duffy, Jerome Alexander Duluk, Chelsea Marie Evans
F-H Nathan Kameron Flores-Maxfield, Matthew Yeley Frederick, Oliver Hans Gordon, Grant Gramalia, Claire Elizabeth Habig, Marie Katherine Hamilton, Julie Ann Harper, Nicholas George Harstrick, Alisa Rose Healy, Lauren Leigh Hemington, Eric Daniel Hjelm, Dwight William Hobbs, Douglas Prescott Hosking, Tyler Andrew Hyland
J-L Peter Jeffrey Innes, Kevin Scott Izuca, Janisa Renee Jones, Mirza Ivan Klis, Tristan Henry Krautkramer, Jun Michael Kristofferson, Laura Elisabeth Kruberg, Robert Scott La Rue, Natasha Marie Lahlouh, Adam Richard Leao, Caroline Elizabeth Lewis
M-N Maria Alexandra Christina Rufino Maceda, Michael Stephen Mahoney, Michele Nicole Martin, Megan Marie Maurano, David Edward McCall, Jason James

McCarrick, Kevin Michael McFarland, Michael Peter McMahon, Andrea Claire Mobley, Patrick Raymond Murphy, Alexandra Marie Hasbun Nazari
O-P Caitlin Michelle O'Holleran, Andrew Peter Olivier, Larisse-Ann Yee Ortiz-Luis, Katherine Alexandra Paschal, John Carlyle Paton, Anna Louise Paustenbach, Weston Reed Payne, Kerrie Anne Perata, David Andrew Phillips, Katherine Marie Plough, Grace Kennedy Pluinage, Megan Anne Putnam
R Sarah Ann Rames, Kyle Matthew Ramey, Christina Vinette Ramsay, Anthony Evan Riesch, Nathalie Yannick Rochester, Samantha Rousseau Rosekrans, William Morrow Rowan, Benjamin Guy Rudolph, John Frederick Runkel IV
S-T Marc Andre Sallaberry, Kimberly Hannah Selling, Michael Benjamin Sember, Daniel Mason Smith, Austin Craig Stahley, Kramer Kyle Straube, John Wesley Strohm, Kathryn Alysse Sutherland, Clinton James Trahant
V-W Cristiana Catherine Giannini Valinoti, William Barrett Van Alstyne, Garrett Jeffrey Van Zanten, Nicole Anne Villeneuve,



Samantha Carr of Atherton receives her Sacred Heart Prep diploma. Others in the picture are, from left, Director of Schools Joseph J. Ciancaglini, Board Chair Mindy Rogers and Principal Richard A. Dioli.

Adriana S. Vogt, Alexandra Noel Walters, Jeffrey Anthony Wang, Nicollette Andrea Warner, Gregory Mark Wegman, Diana

Catherine Weitzel, Stephanie Isabella Whaley, Avery Allen Wood, Molly Katherine Wozniak.

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Community college executive retires

Georgi La Berge, executive director of the San Mateo County Community Colleges Foundation, retired June 30 after six years of leading fundraising efforts for scholarships and college grants for College of San Mateo, Canada College in Woodside, and Skyline College in San Bruno.

A search is on for her successor. Working with the board of directors, she said, the foundation raised its assets from \$4.5 million to \$9.7 million and "nearly doubled our number of donors."

During her tenure, the foundation gave \$1.6 million in scholarship awards and \$2.9 million in grants for college programs and services.

Ms. LaBerge said she plans to continue volunteer activities and travel with her husband, who does humanitarian work in this country and abroad.

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Women who debuted at the 47th Peninsula Ball, a fund-raiser for the nonprofit Family and Children Services.

Forty women debut at Peninsula charity ball

Forty young women made their debut at the 47th Peninsula Ball at Palo Alto's Crowne Plaza Cabana Hotel on June 16. All recent high school graduates, the women were

presented to friends and family and danced the traditional first dance with their fathers.

Beth Martin of Palo Alto and Nicole Patton of Atherton were

ball chairmen. Sonia Shepard McLellan of Atherton, a long-time ball supporter and former chairman, was the honorary chairman.

Proceeds from the Peninsula Ball go to the nonprofit Family and Children Services to assist families in crisis in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Proceeds from the previous 46 balls have contributed more than \$3 million dollars to the charity.

Debs and their escorts and guests danced the night away to the music of the Robert Vickers Orchestra.

The debutantes in the Almanac circulation area by city of residence are:

■**Atherton:** Safia Abbasi, Samantha Carr, Kelly Chang, Lauren Goehner, Kristen Hiller, Natasha Hobbs, Adrienne Joy, Laura Michelson, Catherine McDonnell, Laura Olson, Grace Pluvinaige, Katherine Riddle, Alexandra Shepard, Nicole Villeneuve.

■**Menlo Park:** Gwen Baldwin, Megan Burmeister, Elizabeth Englert, Lauren Duncan, Kathryn Sutherland, Sofia Virani, Jessica Welton, Alexandra Zamaria.

■**Woodside:** Augusta Loomis, Suzanne Quist, Katherine Schoebel, Caroline Stirn.

■**Portola Valley:** Laura Kruberg, Melissa Seipp.

Selby Education Foundation seeks gifts

The wish list at Atherton's Selby Lane School includes five laptop computers, a label maker, 10 used DVD players, 60 white board markers and a selection of roll-on paints.

The Selby Education Foundation, the fundraising group for the K-8 school, is seeking a total of \$10,000 in tax-deductible donations in cash, gift certificates or stock to address the school's material needs. To see the complete wish list, go to www.selbyeducationfoundation.org/fund.html.

Selby Lane School is located at 170 Selby Lane in Atherton but is part of the Redwood

Mid-Pen High graduates 43

SCHOOLS

Thirty-seven seniors at Mid-Peninsula High School in Menlo Park received their diplomas during graduation ceremonies June 2 at the school's campus on Willow Road.

Jason Blumenthal, producer of the recent box-office hit "The Pursuit of Happiness," gave the graduation address. His work in film development and production with Mandalay Entertainment, Sony Pictures and Escape Artists, has produced such Hollywood hits as "I Know What You Did Last Summer," "Donnie Brasco" and "Deep End of the Ocean."

A graduate of Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Communication, Mr. Blumenthal is in pre-production on several films, including "Diary" with Jennifer Aniston and "Nautical" to be directed by Stephen Hopkins.

Christen O'Neil, a graduate of Mid-Peninsula in the Class of 2004 and now attending the University of San Francisco, returned to give a graduation address.

Student speakers were graduating seniors: Kevin Buiocchi, Hannah Griggs, Claire Lazar, Aaron Schwartzman, and Daniel Wadleigh.

Aletha L. Coleman, chair of the school's board of trustees,

and Head of School Douglas C. Thompson, Ph.D., awarded the diplomas.

Mid-Peninsula High School, a private school with 130 students from communities throughout the Bay Area, is designed for students with academic potential who can benefit from a smaller environment and a flexible, individually focused academic program.

Mid-Peninsula graduates

A-G Alexander Perez Azar, Daniel H. Behrens, Kevin M. Buiocchi, Katherine Elizabeth Callan, Anne Gabrielle Capitant, Brian Cardoza, Carlos Contreras, Jr., John E. Coyne, Yoanna Fierros, Christopher James Govers, Edward Bruce Grady, Jr., Hannah Marguerite Griggs

H-M John L. Harrison, Gregory T. Hinman, Colin E. Jackson, Samantha Jenson, Jessica Brittany Kanter, Gabrielle Alexandra Kasley, Lauren Lambert, Claire Elizabeth Lazar, Daniel A. Lazarus, Kristen Anne Lee, Lauren E. Mackevich, Galen Brett Mark-Griffin, Grant L. Miller

O-W Drew Oliver, Katharine Anne Pritchard, Diana Lynn Reisman, David Richanbach, Paul Rusch, Angelica Rose Schiebold, Aaron Jacob Schwartzman, Anna Marie Serrone, Ross Vartain, Miriam Vejar, Daniel Kenjiro Wadleigh, Brian M. Warren

NOTES

New director of child support services

Iliana Rodriguez, a 19-year veteran with San Mateo County, has been appointed director of the county's Department of Child Support Services.

For the last six months Ms. Rodriguez has served as interim director of the department that helps collect some \$30 million a year in court-ordered child support payments and health insurance. It serves about 19,000 children a year, and handles about 14,000 cases.

"Iliana has done a wonderful job assisting families in what can potentially be a stressful environ-

ment," said County Manager John Maltbie who made the appointment, which was confirmed by the Board of Supervisors June 26.

For more information, go to www.smcdecs.com, or call 866-366-8221.

Award for combating domestic violence

The Domestic Violence Council and the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors are seeking nominees for the 2007 Barbara Hammerman Award for law enforcement officers combating domestic violence.

The award was established in 2005 in honor of San Mateo police Lt. Barbara Hammerman, who served with the police department for 21 years and on the attorney general's Commission on Domestic Violence, later helping to develop San Mateo County's domestic violence protocol.

Lt. Hammerman died Dec. 31, 2006, after battling brain cancer.

The deadline for nominations is July 16, and the award recipient will be announced in October. For applications, guidelines or more information, contact Honora Miller at the Domestic Violence Council at 363-4872 or hmiller@co.sanmateo.ca.us.



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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

Residential burglary report: Two guns stolen, first block of Deodora Drive, July 5.

MENLO PARK

Theft report: Computer stolen from classroom, 300 block of Sheridan Drive, June 29.

Auto theft report: Golf clubs stolen, 300 block of Concord Drive, July 2.

Residential burglary report: Property stolen, 1400 block of Almanor Avenue, July 2.

Auto burglary report: Property stolen, 1000 block of El Camino Real, June 28.

Domestic abuse reports

■ Arrest made, 200 block of Madera

Avenue, July 6.

■ Report taken, 400 block of Laurel Street, July 6.

■ Report taken, June 30.

■ Report taken, June 29.

Fraud reports

■ Identity theft, 800 block of Oak Grove Avenue, July 3.

■ Unauthorized credit card charges, 1100 block of N. Lemon Avenue, July 1.

WOODSIDE

Fraud report Unauthorized charges on checking account, 700 block of Portola Road, June 29.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Assault report Man, 19, leaves party with two friends, is confronted by uninvited guests and is stabbed in right arm, Alpine Road and Westridge Drive, July 1.

■ COLLEGE GRADS

■ **Tiffany D. Chow** of Portola Valley received a bachelor of arts degree in art and media studies from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. She earned departmental honors in media studies at graduation. She is the daughter of Calvin Chow and Julie Victorian-Chow.

■ **Claire C. Conger** of Woodside graduated cum laude with a bachelor of arts degree in biology, theater and dance from Colby College in Waterville, Maine. She is the daughter of Guy and Laura Conger.

Underdog Bulls top Muckdogs

The Bulls of the Menlo-Atherton AAA Little League marched from early season bottom-dwellers to division champions by defeating the mighty Muckdogs, 8-5, in a thrilling

extra-inning game June 17 at Burgess Field. For the whole story, check the posting in the Sports category of Town Square (www.almanacnews.com) by Bulls coach Mike Kardos.



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FEES DUE FOR GARBAGE, RECYCLING MATERIAL AND, PLANT MATERIAL COLLECTION FOR FISCAL YEAR 2007-2008

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California, will hold a Public Hearing to consider the report of the City Manager to place unpaid fees due for garbage, recycling material, and plant material collection services for Fiscal Year July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008, on the San Mateo County property tax rolls, pursuant to Sections 7.06.040 and 7.06.050 of the Menlo Park Municipal Code.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said City Council will hold the aforementioned Public Hearing to consider this report in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, Civic Center - 701 Laurel Street, at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, the 17th day of July, 2007, or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that "If you challenge this matter in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the Public Hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the Hearing".

DATED: June 28, 2007
/s/ SILVIA M. VONDERLINDEN, City Clerk
Published in THE COUNTRY ALMANAC on July 4, 11, 2007.

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Voluntary subscriptions are available for delivery to homes in Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside at \$30 per year or \$50 for 2 years. Subscriptions by businesses or residents outside the area are \$50 for one year and \$80 for two years.



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

All views must include a home address and contact phone number. Published letters will also appear on the Almanac Web site, www.AlmanacNews.com, and occasionally on the Almanac's Town Square forum.

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Time to move past building department mess

When it comes to the myriad problems discovered in the Atherton Building Department, it's hard not to play a game of "What if?"

Plagued by a host of well-documented deficiencies, ranging from employee misconduct and questionable interpretations of building rules, to laughably outdated computer software and messy record-keeping, Atherton's busy little building department was ripe for reforms.

So, what if? What if someone had done something sooner? What if the city manager had kept the department on a tighter leash?

What if the pace of demolitions and new construction in Atherton

hadn't been so frenetic? What if the City Council had focused its scrutiny of complaints about the building department sooner rather than later?

The July 3 report by the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury places the blame squarely on the shoulders of City Manager Jim Robinson. There's no denying that Mr. Robinson, as the head of town staff, is ultimately responsible for the actions of his employees. He's at the top of the food chain, answerable only to the City Council.

Mr. Robinson, according to the grand jury, failed to keep the council informed and to provide adequate supervision over the building department.

It's a little tough for anyone outside the grand jury to assess Mr. Robinson's handling of personnel issues. The grand jury has access to confidential information that the public and the press do not have. Council members have leapt to his defense, denying that Mr. Robinson in any way shirked his managerial duties or failed to keep them informed of town business.

It's an interesting exercise, but ultimately pointless. Mr. Robinson, after a long career as a public employee, is retiring this summer. Former building official Mike Hood retired a little over a year ago.

The real question should be: How can Atherton move for-

ward? The grand jury pointed out, and rightly so, that the town has made substantial progress in remedying the building department's problems.

However, there are lingering issues that won't be resolved so easily.

Currently, there are a handful of building projects in town that are caught up in a messy limbo — projects that were approved under the building department's old regime that don't stand up to the current level of scrutiny. A structure built under an expired permit, a basement that may be too far above the ground to be considered a basement, an attic that isn't really an attic — and there could be more. Town officials are attempting to force these projects into compliance, and, unsurprisingly, the outraged builders are lining up lawyers to fight the town.

The grand jury summed up the City Council's "dilemma" neatly: "If the council attempts to force owners of nonconforming properties to comply with the zoning ordinances, litigation may result. If the council ignores the violations, future accusations of unfair treatment may surface," the report says.

Unless the council wishes the town to remain mired in litigation and recriminations for years to come, it should consider creating an amnesty program for builders who, in good faith, relied on the building permits they were issued by Atherton, even if they were later found to violate town regulations. The amnesty period could cover the 11-year tenure of Mr. Hood, and include only buildings that do not present a safety hazard.

In this way, town officials can explicitly identify undesirable building practices, and still avoid creating a precedent for future builders to exploit. Builders will be able to complete their projects without having to demolish or deconstruct homes that are substantially complete, and they won't be punished for the town's internal strife.

Of course, the town must move quickly to close loopholes in its building regulations and clarify how future building officials interpret zoning codes. Otherwise, future councils are sure to face similar imbroglios.

EDITORIAL
The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS
Our readers write

In favor of some public trails open to dogs

Editor:

For the Portola Valley Town Council meeting on June 13, the (headline), "Council denies dog walkers access to rural trails," seemed to be a good description of the results of the meeting. I do not think any title which conceded that dog walkers have any claim to walk their animals on rural trails would have been satisfactory to Ms. Buyer.

Her bias is clearly stated in the last paragraph of her (June 27) letter: "One crux of this debate is whether Portola Valley should continue to offer an option for hikers who don't care for dogs..." Ms. Buyer lives in a county which prohibits dogs on all of its trails. Those few trails that are open to dogs are run by towns or other private organizations. It would be a shame to see all public trails closed to dogs, which seems to be where things are heading.

Narcinda Lerner
Stadler Drive, Woodside

Money must be invested in regional transit

Editor

As I live within one-half mile of the Caltrain tracks, I have trouble understanding how having six trains in the morning

and six trains in the evening, with occasional freight trains, is a hardship. If you live near train tracks, you should expect to have trains run on them.

Yes, I too would like to see the gold standard of green transit for the Dumbarton Rail corridor,

but the funding is not there.

Dumbarton Rail is a symptom of what happens when our infrastructure is neglected. The lack of funds for this project will mean that the most likely

See **LETTERS**, next page



Woodside collection of Jac Audiffred

Our Regional Heritage

The Neuman Brothers' fourth store in Woodside, in 1946. The store site, at 3015 Woodside Road, is now occupied by Roberts market.

Dumbarton Rail: Two opposing views

Heavy rail not the solution for regional transit needs

By Martin Engel

Usually, I disagree with Henry Riggs. And usually I agree with the editorial positions of the Almanac. This time, it's the other way around. (Editorial and guest editorial, July 4, 2007)

Mr. Riggs has it right. Heavy rail, as proposed by Caltrain/Dumbarton, is good for moving freight and bad for moving people. Heavy rail has become the hammer to which every people-moving problem looks like a nail. Caltrain is pushing for Dumbarton because they believe that they are competing with BART for rail dominance in the entire Bay Area. The various transit agencies are competing, each one saying that they can do it better. Financial resources available to one are therefore denied the others. It's a pointless zero-sum war of

transit empires.

The rail bureaucracy suffers from a malignant rail gene and egocentric shortsightedness. At the risk of repeating myself for the millionth time: Rail and transit are not the same. Equating one with the other is deceptive and misleading. Rail is one — and only one — modality of mass transit. Transit systems incorporate a large variety of modalities, including light rail, buses (both high speed and local), subways, shuttles, taxis, and yes, private cars.

The perpetual argument about rail being better than cars or buses (cheaper, less polluting, etc.) is a mindless discussion. The real and substantive issue is urban mass transit. What the Bay Area needs is an urban mass transit system built into an integrated network of mul-



GUEST
OPINION

multiple modalities. Rail is not the answer to everything. And heavy rail is the least appropriate technology for people moving. Bus-rapid-transit, light rail, shuttle and local buses (and adequate car parking at transit stations), all connected and run on coordinated schedules, managed by a single urban transit authority that is accountable to the government and to us, the taxpayers and

commuters. That needs to be the subject of discussion; not whether Dumbarton rail should go to Union City or Newark.

Frankly, everything about Dumbarton is counter-indicated and our own Public Works Director Kent Steffens and Mayor Fergusson have written a wonderful letter (staff report # 07-098) to the Dumbarton/Caltrain group specifying many of the problems and concerns that have not been yet explained.

Finally, the Almanac, like many newspapers, tends to consider the content of

press releases a source of factual data. When the Dumbarton people say the projected costs will be \$600 million, how do you know that is in fact the case? There are other cost estimates that suggest that a seismically appropriate new bridge alone will cost much more than the present \$600 million figure. Low balling construction costs is standard operating procedure for rail and other large infrastructure promoters. Will we ever learn? Bay Bridge Eastern Span: 2001 = \$2.6 billion; 2006 = \$6.3 billion. Boston Big Dig: 1985 = \$2.8 billion; 2006 = \$14.6 billion. Palo Alto Homer tunnel? Ditto.

This is NOT a NIMBY issue, the Almanac's allusion to the contrary notwithstanding. For all of us living in the Bay Area, the Bay Area is our backyard. And we want much better urban mass transit in our backyard than what Dumbarton has to offer.

Martin Engel is a resident of Stone Pine Lane in Menlo Park.

Rail project going forward; residents, city should have positive role in the process

By Steve Schmidt

Sorry for my suspicions but, have we not been down this road before?

Are the objections to the Dumbarton Rail project as being loud, dirty, heavy and yesterday's news another switch and bait game? After nearly 20 years of planning, finding funds and the local cities to sign on, could we give Dumbarton Rail a thumbs-up and develop improvements later? Apparently not in Menlo Park, according to letter-writer Henry Riggs.

Electrification on this line can be

added when the Caltrain line from San Francisco to San Jose is electrified. The issue of freight use is being settled now and yes, residents of Menlo Park need to be positively involved in the process.

This project is alive and well and is going forward with the support of San Mateo County. The county voters placed their trust in the project when they renewed Measure A in 2004. It's time for Menlo Park and its residents to accept the reality of this public transit system and work with the Dumbarton planners to find the practical mitigations that will ease their pain. Menlo Park does not have

the authority or power to stop this project.

It's not a matter of Caltrain or no train. It's a matter of getting the old Dumbarton Rail Bridge rebuilt and putting trains on the bridge that will help people get out of their cars. The money that has been earmarked for this project is for this project only. It's not perfect, but it is a beginning. To start over will mean starting over and yet another 20 years of congestion and pollution as people drive to/from the east side of the Bay. Perhaps this is the plan that Mr. Riggs has in mind. More study means doing nothing.

And for those who think that BART



GUEST
OPINION

will be our savior: In the suburbs, BART is an automobile-oriented system, requiring huge parking lots to satisfy ridership requirements for stations serving every third or fourth town. Even if Menlo Park was to be a BART stop, where would 3,000 cars park every day of the week? How ironic that fiscally conservative Menlo Park residents would fantasize about the extravagant BART system

that costs \$200 million per mile. Caltrain may be imperfect but, it works, and 34,000 daily riders can't be all wrong.

Steve Schmidt is a former Menlo Park mayor; he lives in the Willows neighborhood.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

approach will be what can be afforded now, and what can be incrementally added later. This is hardly a perfect solution.

It's time that voter-approved transit/transportation bond moneys at the state level stop being diverted by the governor for other projects. It's also time that our federal tax dollars be spent on reviving our ailing infrastructure, and not wasted on billions for Halliburton.

We need that money to invest in our regional transit systems so we can truly modernize, connect and "green" our transit, making it clean, efficient, inexpensive and rider-friendly with good signage.

Until then, we are left with pieces of the transit puzzle but not a unified, satisfying whole. As it

now stands, Dumbarton Rail is fighting for crumbs while we talk about being a "cool" city.

Elizabeth Lasensky
Fremont Street, Menlo Park

Thanks for article about Dr. Burt Brent

Editor:

Thanks for the wonderful front-page article of Dr. Burt Brent by Marion Softky, journalist, and Veronica Weber, photographer, in the June 27 issue of your newspaper.

It was so refreshing to read about a man who has dedicated his life to helping hundreds of kids to have normal lives through his ear surgeries, plus teaching young surgeons his methods.

His innovative surgeries will help thousands of youngsters with birth defective ears be grate-

ful for his efforts in the coming generations. Great coverage!

Lee Boucher
Portola Valley

Change riding rules so cyclists face traffic?

Editor:

The police report that shows Rodney Smith turned into a traffic lane and a car going 35 mph that was approaching him from the rear is glaring proof that if he had been riding FACING oncoming traffic he would be alive today because he would not turn in front of a car he could see was too close.

I have ridden a bike on Sand Hill and Portola Road for 40 years and it is easy to misjudge a car's speed and distance if one is using a rear-view mirror mounted on one's helmet or one mounted on your bike's handlebars because some of the

mirrors make the car look farther from you than it really is. You really need to turn your head around and look at the car and that is not a good solution either because one tends to pull the bike to the left into the car lane or weave around in the bike lane or off the shoulder.

For whatever reason Mr. Smith turned in front of the car it wouldn't have happened if he had been riding facing traffic. Let's change the riding rules. Talk to your representative and see if he or she can help. Too many people are getting killed and seriously injured and the solution is so simple.

Ron Wilson
Bear Paw, Portola Valley

Bill for secure elections a Trojan horse?

Editor

Although our congresswom-

an, Anna Eshoo, understands the need for a voter-verified paper trail in secure elections, she needs to be alerted that the upcoming bill, HR 811, known as the Holt Bill, which is supposed to make elections secure, is actually a Trojan horse. It contains poisonous provisions that will make elections less securely democratic. It maintains secrecy about the computer programs used and it creates a commission appointed by the president to rule over the national process.

While some advocates for verified elections have been hoodwinked, we need to stop this bill in its tracks until it does what it is supposed to do.

For more detail visit Black-boxvoting.org.

Gail Sredanovic
Menlo Park

OPEN SUNDAY 1:30 - 4:30 PM

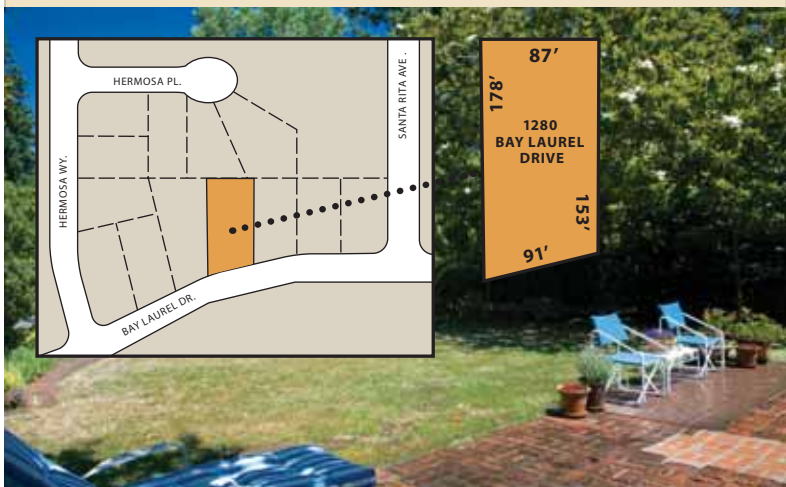


MENLO PARK

1280 Bay Laurel Drive

Delightful "country lane" setting just blocks from scenic footbridge access to Stanford University. Located in prime Central Menlo, just minutes from downtown shops and restaurants, this enviable property spans approximately one-third level acre with mature perimeter landscaping, plus lawn, roses, and magnolias. 3-bedroom, 2-bathroom home includes a wood-burning fireplace. Excellent Menlo Park schools.

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Recently remodeled 4-bedroom, 3-bathroom home offers approximately 2,780 square feet of living space including a living room with fireplace, formal dining room, granite-finished kitchen, family room/home theatre with fireplace and surround sound, master suite with marble bath including a steam shower, outdoor spa, and beautifully landscaped grounds. Sought-after Las Lomas schools.

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SOLD

31 Fairview Avenue, Atherton

New Bob Owen home and cabaña.

OFFERED AT \$10,900,000

PENDING SALE

642 Webster Street, Palo Alto

Completely remodeled, 4-bedroom, 4-bath vintage home.

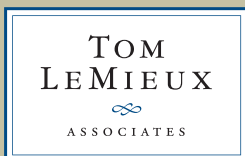
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PENDING SALE

21 Marymont Avenue, Atherton

1-year new, 5 bedrooms, pool, excellent Las Lomas school district.

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