

**PORTOLA VALLEY'S** Jane Lodato tells what happened when a giant oak fell on her home Sunday. Page 17

# The Almanac

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

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DESTINATIONS:  
Venturing  
to India  
See Page 25**



## SEA LEVEL RISING

Projections show the Bay could rise three feet by 2100 — or sooner. Communities grapple with what to do.

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# Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

## FIRST SHOT



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

### A giant falls

A tree-removal company crew works Monday to haul away a giant oak tree, said to be the oldest living oak in the county, that crashed onto Jane Lodato's home on Wyndham Drive in Portola Valley the night before, partially collapsing the roof and an outside wall. See **Page 17**.

### Atherton

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■ Rainwater is welcome on roof of new theater at Woodside Priory. **Page 7**

### Community

■ Expressing "truths in verbal images" — poet barber Jym Marks to tell how he does it. **Page 20**

### Destinations

■ Venturing to India: Patty Cullen discovers joy of living in the Sri Ram orphanage. **Cover, Section 2**

### On the cover

A sea level rise of one meter could flood over 200 square miles of land (shown in blue) around San Francisco Bay by 2100 if no measures are taken to prevent it. The map is courtesy of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. See story on **Page 12**.

## CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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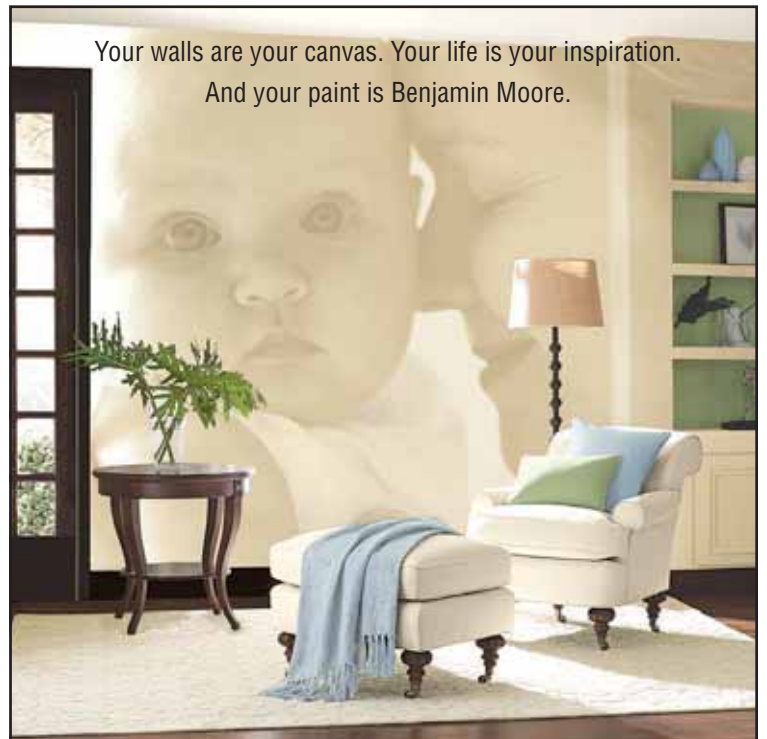
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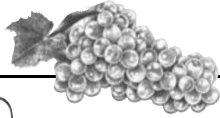
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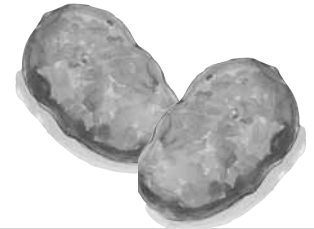
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## WINE

### Pinot Noir

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# Local News

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## Mail theft draws squad cars, dogs, spotter plane

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The possibility that an armed bandit was on the loose in Ladera near Interstate 280 and Alpine Road early Wednesday afternoon, Jan. 23, led to a large police response that included K-9 units and a spotter airplane.

Two men from the East Bay are now in San Mateo County jail on charges that include parole violations, resisting arrest and possession of stolen property in connection with the reported theft of outgoing mail from at least two residential mailboxes in Ladera, said Sgt. Linda Gibbons of the Sheriff's Office.

The arrested men are Drake Henry, 27, of Oakland; and James Thomas, 27, of Vallejo. Neither suspect was armed, nor were weapons located, Sgt. Gibbons said.

The incident began when sheriff's deputies responded to a 911 call made at 12:42 p.m. by a Ladera woman who reported seeing two men stealing the contents of mailboxes near La Mesa Drive and Conil Way, Sgt. Gibbons said.

Minutes later near Alpine Road and La Cuesta Drive, Deputy Rob Lawrence stopped a car with a license plate matching the caller's description, Sgt. Gibbons said. With the assistance of Deputy Brandon Hessel, they arrested Mr. Henry, the driver, but his pas-

senger, Mr. Thomas, escaped on foot across Alpine Road and into the ravine of Los Trancos Creek.

Reinforcements were called in because the deputies had reason to believe that the escaped man was armed, Sgt. Gibbons said. "When you call for Code 3 cover in this line of work, there's no time to chit chat," she said. "Everybody starts rolling that way, or everybody who's in a position to roll that way."

About 10 squad cars, some from Santa Clara County and some with police dogs, converged on an area south of Alpine Road and west of Interstate 280. An airplane from the Sheriff's Office air squadron arrived at the request of a sergeant on the scene, Sgt.

Gibbons said.

The search was called off after about an hour and a half, but restarted when a second 911 call at about 3:30 p.m. reported a man walking around in a field near the area, Sgt. Gibbons said.

The deputies reconvened around a culvert under I-280 and convinced the man who had sheltered in there to come out and surrender.

Residents should not put outgoing mail in home mailboxes, but instead take it to a postal service mailbox or post office, Sgt. Gibbons said. A mailbox with checks or other identifying information "creates a prime opportunity for thieves," she said. ■

## Menlo council takes on big topics: El Camino, rail grade separations

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

El Camino Real and the Caltrain tracks cut through the heart of Menlo Park, and both are expected to headline the Tuesday, Jan. 29, City Council meeting.

At 6 p.m., council members will meet with the El Camino Real/Downtown Visioning Process Oversight and Outreach Committee — a group of residents, developers and city officials advising the council in efforts to revamp the city's main thoroughfare.

The council will outline the guidelines and goals of the 18-person committee, which is responsible for helping a consultant and city

staff craft a plan to revamp properties along El Camino Real.

The meeting will be held in the Menlo Park Library at 800 Alma St.

Council members are scheduled to leave the meeting just before 7 p.m. to start their regular meeting in the council chambers.

### Grade separations

During the regular 7 p.m. meeting, council members are scheduled to hold a joint study session with Atherton city staff and council members regarding grade separations — separating the Caltrain tracks from the roadway, with overpasses or underpasses, at

intersections where roads cross the tracks.

Council members from both cities are expected to discuss the costs, impacts and feasibility of grade separations at local streets.

Four streets in Menlo Park cross the tracks: Ravenswood, Oak Grove, Glenwood and Encinal avenues. Two streets cross in Atherton: Watkins Avenue and Fair Oaks Lane.

Proponents of grade separations say allowing traffic, bicycles and pedestrians to pass over or under more heavily used tracks would

reduce traffic congestion and improve safety.

Critics say constructing grade separations will worsen congestion, be too costly, and severely impact nearby homes and busi-

nesses.

A key variable in the discussion is the proposed California High Speed Rail project, which would transport passengers from San Francisco to the Central Valley and Los Angeles — and back again — at maximum speeds of 220 miles per hour.

If approved, the project would require, and pay for, grade separations along the Caltrain line.

The project, estimated to cost more than \$40 billion by the state's high speed rail authority, depends on voter approval of a \$10 billion bond measure slated for the November ballot. ■



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

The century-old Mathisen red barn in Woodside after it "decided to lie down," in the words of Thalia Lubin, the town's History Committee chair.

## Century-old barn falls in Woodside

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

The severe storm that blew through the area a few weeks ago left calling cards all over the place, including downed trees, power outages and stressed umbrellas. One of its casualties in Woodside may have quietly succumbed to the elements after a century of standing up to them.

The Mathisen barn on town property near the intersection of Woodside and Whiskey Hill roads is now a pile of wood, said Town Manager Susan George in a Jan. 22 report to

the Town Council.

"I think that it just decided to lie down," History Committee chair Thalia Lubin told the Almanac.

The barn was about 15 feet high, may not have had a floor, and had room for maybe two horses, Ms. George said. A tree fell on it a couple of years ago, she said, adding: "What little structural integrity it had originally had long gone."

She said she noticed something amiss after a Jan. 4 expedition into town with the public works director to look for storm impacts. "Through the windshield wipers, as I

peered across the open meadow, I couldn't see the barn," she said.

The History Committee had overseen the restoration of the Mathisen farmhouse as a community museum, but "we hadn't gotten around to restoring the barn," Ms. Lubin said. "It was going to be a restoration project, but now it's a reconstruction."

Bulldozers will not be used to sort through the rubble, Ms. George told the council. A proposal on what to do with the remains may be forthcoming in a few months, she added. ■



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Almost nine years later, Kaelyn is fully recovered, working on a bachelor's degree and building on her dreams of interior design. Her battle with leukemia long behind her, Kaelyn is free to focus on the promise of her future. Visit [www.lpch.org](http://www.lpch.org) for more information.

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**Woodside Priory**  
students Nathaniel Rothrock and Maia Thielen rehearse a scene from "Bye Bye Birdie" at the school's new performing arts center.

Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

## Rainwater is welcome on roof of new theater at Woodside Priory

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Would-be critics attending the new theater at the Woodside Priory, a private coed grade 6-12 school in Portola Valley, may someday talk of performances that raise the roof, but such a metaphor could elicit a raised eyebrow or two among the cognoscenti. Indeed, a bird perched on the theater's roof during an opera may hear nothing song-like except the chirping of other birds.

The covering on the 9,000-square-foot roof includes six inches of plastic foam insulation, three inches of soil, and a top layer of green sedum, a common ground cover for sod roofs.

The structure, says Bob Klotovich of San Francisco-based Plant Construction, weighs 250,000 pounds. It's an environmental feature in that the soil filters and retains rainwater rather than adding it to the runoff that drains from most roofs.

The theater is the largest of three buildings in the Priory's new 16,000-square-foot, 400-seat, \$14 million performing arts complex designed by the architectural firm MKThink of San Francisco. The facilities were more or less ready to use on the first day of school last September, says school spokesman Sean Mclain Brown.

As is fitting for a student setting, the Priory also has a black-box theater for smaller performances, and it shares a roof with a set-design shop equipped with a variety of portable and stationary saws and a drill press.

A third building contains two

classrooms, two practice studios and a small room with a computer that transcribes performed music into sheet music.

In the current school year, the students have already staged "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and rehearsals are ongoing for "Bye-Bye Birdie," scheduled to open in the first week in March, Mr. Brown says. The public will be invited, he adds.

Mr. Brown says the school has also hosted several open-mike sessions for spoken word, singing and other talents, augmented by a new \$60,000 grand piano — a recent gift. Plans include three open-mike sessions per semester, he says.

More tangible artistic expressions will appear on the walls of the theater lobby, which will become a permanent gallery of student art, he says.

### A hardy frame

Is it safe to install a heavier-than-average roof on a building located along the San Andreas fault? The interior of the main theater includes a spacious span uncluttered by columns.

The roof beams are steel and cambered, meaning that they arch slightly upward toward the roof load, says Mr. Klotovich. "It's heavily braced," he adds. The theater itself is built around a frame of 61 steel piers that go 12 to 30 feet down into the clay, he says.

Asked how the building would do in an earthquake, architect Matt Pietras of MKThink replies: "Supremely well." The building meets California and Portola Valley building codes, he says. "If nothing else, this building may be more conservatively

designed than other buildings similarly designed."

Conservation of space is something of a rule inside. The 400 tiered and padded seats can be rolled out of sight like bleachers, leaving an open uncarpeted space of some 2,500 square feet.

The 1,300-square-foot stage includes a removable apron over an orchestra pit that seats 20 to 30 musicians, Mr. Pietras says. To reduce risk of injury to dancers' limbs and joints, both the stage floor and the floor of the black box theater are sprung — they give dancers a slight bounce.

In the backstage changing rooms is a flat-panel wall-mounted TV so actors can monitor the action on stage. The stage crew communicates with headsets and an intercom.

The control room has the latest equipment for controlling audio and lighting, technical director Keith Drotar says. With a handheld device, he can make adjustments from anywhere.

Not so sophisticated is the handling of backdrops that set the scene for a play or musical. Unlike the computer-controlled loft at Woodside High's theater, or the rope-and-pulley system expected to go in at Menlo-Atherton High, backdrops at the Priory are pushed in from the set-design shop, which is accessible through a pair of garage doors, one in each building.

Along with the sod roof on the theater, the complex's other environmental features include some recycled asphalt used as fill material, waterless urinals in the men's bathrooms, and carpeting and paints that are low emitters of volatile gases, Mr. Pietras says. ■



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### NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF FEBRUARY 11, 2008

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Planning Commission of the City of Menlo Park, California, is scheduled to review the following items:

#### PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

**Use Permit/Joseph A. Nunley/310 Pope St:** Request for a use permit to demolish an existing single-story, single-family residence and construct a new two-story, single-family residence on a substandard lot with regard to lot width in the R-1-U (Single-Family Urban) zoning district.

**Use Permit/Janet Moody/650 Cotton Street:** Request for a use permit to construct a new 1,649-square-foot accessory structure resulting in a total floor area of 2,631 square feet for all accessory structures on the property where a maximum of 790 square feet is allowed on the subject property located in the R-E (Residential Estate) zoning district.

**Use Permit/Phillip Patrick Wagner/165-A Constitution Drive:** Request for a use permit for a private recreational facility and associated massage services in an existing building in the M-2 (General Industrial) zoning district.

#### PUBLIC MEETING ITEMS

None.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that said Planning Commission will hold a public hearing on public hearing items in the Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, located at 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, on Monday, February 11, 2008, 7:00 p.m. or as near as possible thereafter, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon. If you challenge this item 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 public hearing.

Documents related to these items may be inspected by the public on weekdays between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Friday, with alternate Fridays closed, at the Department of Community Development, 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park. Please note that the items listed are only the agenda items that require a public hearing. Please call the Planning Division if there are any questions and/or for complete agenda information (650) 330-6702.

DATED: January 24, 2008

Deanna Chow, Senior Planner, Menlo Park Planning Commission  
Visit our Web site for Planning Commission public hearing, agenda, and staff report information: [www.menlopark.org](http://www.menlopark.org)  
Published in THE ALMANAC on January 30, 2008.

# Youth find a voice on public-access TV

By Megan Rawlins

Special to the Almanac

East Palo Alto once had the nation's highest per-capita murder rate, and while it no longer holds that distinction, 2007 could not be called a particularly good year.

According to news reports, on Dec. 8, two men were shot in separate incidents; on Dec. 3, a man was shot several times; Nov. 27, three men were shot, one killed in a McDonald's parking lot; Nov. 25, a suspect walked up to and shot two women; Oct. 21, a man was shot five times; Sept. 4, a man died in a fatal drive-by shooting; July 7, a young man was shot in the leg while walking; Jan. 21, two teenage boys were killed in front of an apartment building.

For many, these reports may seem abstract, but for Flora Piponi, this is her life; this is where she lives.

Flora recalls the shooting of two young women near Costano Elementary School in East Palo Alto. It was a quiet evening at home with her family in December 2006; shots were fired, lights flashed and the police came.

"A girl died," she recounts. "It's scary; I feel like I have to stay inside."

Flora doesn't stay inside, though. "I've learned that you have to get your voice out there," she insists. "If you want to make a change, you can't just sit at home; you have to speak up."

With the help of a video camera and a public-access television station, Flora and some of her fellow students are speaking up, getting their voices out there.

Flora, Raul Ibarra and Ana Rubio are among 110 Menlo-Atherton High School students — mostly from East Palo Alto and the Belle Haven neighborhood of Menlo Park — who participate in a program called New Voices for Youth. The program was started by the Leagues of Women Voters of South San Mateo County and Palo Alto in 2004 with a mission to encourage the civic engagement of local youth.

"It is an outreach project mod-

eled after historical examples where youth made a difference," says program director Lisa Frederikson Bohannon of Menlo Park, referring to the student-led civil rights movements of the 1960s.

Co-founded by Ms. Bohannon, Kathleen Weisenberg of Atherton, Sandy Eakins and Veronica Tincer of Palo Alto, and Gerry Felix of Redwood City, the program gives students an opportunity to find and express their voices through the medium of video.

They had the support of the Leagues of Women Voters (LWV) and the Palo Alto Media Center, a Midpeninsula nonprofit organization that helps community residents create and distribute local television programs.

At a Jan. 22 presentation at Menlo-Atherton High School, the LWV was awarded a \$15,000 "Excelerator" grant by the AT&T Foundation to support New Voices for Youth.

AT&T Excelerator grants are given for projects that, according to the foundation's Web site, "use technology to help nonprofit organizations build stronger communities." In 2007, the site says, 680 grants were given, totaling \$9 million.

## Crucial issues

Some 230 young people have been involved in New Voices for Youth since its inception. The program pairs with many local youth groups including the Menlo-Atherton Academy at Menlo-Atherton High School.

Acting as a school within a school, the Academy combines a technology-based curriculum with community values such as pride, good citizenry and responsibility. Academy students are predominantly from East Palo Alto and eastern Menlo Park.

Participating students are given 16 hours of video production training, according to the program's curriculum. They also are taught how to identify and research issues, how to find reliable sources, and how to organize information into a cohesive story to be told on television.

Upon completing the program, students will have produced 30-second and 60-second



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

**Chris Rubin**, a teacher at Menlo-Atherton High School, stands beside a projected movie created by some of his students involved in the New Voices for Youth program.

public service announcements, five-minute extended PSAs, and a 30-minute documentary.

Beginning in January 2007, Chris Rubin, the Academy's Web design and video teacher, added the New Voices for Youth program to his curriculum.

"The program seemed perfect for the Academy," says Mr. Rubin. "These kids are full of great ideas and have experience with issues that most people in this area don't. They are the perfect ones to bring these issues to light."

Beginning with this year's junior class, Academy students will go through the New Voices for Youth curriculum, producing the PSAs and the five-minute piece in the fall semester, and focusing on the longer documentary in the spring.

Each project is produced and edited by a team of four students and shown on local public-access stations in a regular rotation. Ms. Bohannon, Ms. Weisenberg and Mr. Rubin are also trying to organize an assembly, where M-A students and the community would have a chance to view the productions.

From inception to broadcast, these projects are designed as learning experiences. Students learn how to work in teams and make decisions; they work with

League of Women Voters mentors to conduct research and interviews; and finally, they create a narrative and present an argument to the public — not to mention the technology they have to master.

"Learning how to use the video camera and editing program was the most fun," says Raul Ibarra, an M-A student.

Flora Piponi concurs, adding that she appreciates the value of video as a mode of communication because it captures the attention of young people.

Students also gain confidence and self-esteem, says Mr. Rubin. "They learn that they can make a difference — that they can do whatever they want to do if they put the time and energy into it."

Students aren't the only ones learning. "I have learned more in the past year than in my whole life about these kids and their communities," says Mr. Rubin.

## Opening eyes

Flora, Raul and Ana were part of last year's junior class, the first Academy members to get a taste of the program.

Flora's documentary is on the effects of redevelopment in East Palo Alto. It points out the difference in violent-crime rates between the redeveloped areas of the city with newly paved streets

and public services and the older, less developed areas.

Raul's piece is about gang violence, which has been blamed for the Jan. 21, 2007, deaths of two teenage boys.

Ana's piece focuses on youth deaths and how the randomness of the crimes can destroy a family and community.

All three topics deal with violence, either indirectly or directly, and for a very good reason.

"It's what is happening," explains Ana. "We're trying to open the community's eyes."

"We all have known a victim," Raul adds. "Everyone is touched. We're telling people what's really going on; families have to live with this forever. You can't ignore it." ■

## INFORMATION

■ The half-hour programs are shown on rotation on public access television, Channel 28 in Atherton and Menlo Park, on these days and times: Mondays, 11:30 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Tuesdays, 3 a.m. and 11 p.m.; Wednesdays, 11:30 a.m. and 11 p.m.; Saturdays, 7 p.m.; and Sundays, 3 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

■ For more information on New Voices for Youth, go to: [www.newvoicesforyouth.org](http://www.newvoicesforyouth.org).

## Pharmaca drops plans for store in downtown Menlo Park

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

"Integrative pharmacy" chain Pharmaca has dropped plans to set up shop at the former Dal Baffo restaurant site in downtown Menlo Park.

The company, based in Boulder, Colorado, filed permit requests with the city's planning department in December to remodel the long-vacant building at 878 Santa Cruz Ave., but those plans are no more, said Steve Preston, Pharmaca's senior director of marketing, in an

e-mail to the Almanac.

Mr. Preston did not say if the company is still considering a Menlo Park store, and he did not return calls for further comment.

Sophie Lo, who owns the Dal Baffo site, would not disclose why the plans fell through, but said

Pharmaca made the decision.

She said she is in talks with several other "prospective businesses" interested in the site, including a restaurant.

Leasing the site has proven difficult. Last March, nationwide alcohol retailer BevMo gave up on plans to set up shop on the property. Local alcohol vendors, led

by Beltramo's Wines and Spirits and Draeger's campaigned against BevMo's move to Menlo Park.

In October, the building caught fire after a malfunctioning sensor meant to light a real estate sign on the roof of the building started an electrical fire.

"This property has had its challenges," Ms. Lo said with a laugh. ■

# Religious event ignites debate

■ Dispute erupts over 'Prayer and the Environment' lecture held in Menlo council chambers.

By **Rory Brown**  
Almanac Staff Writer

As the debate continues over whether it was appropriate for a religious event to be held in the Menlo Park City Council Chambers, the verdict is in from the city attorney: If you can pay the fee, and you don't plan on doing anything illegal, you can use the council chambers for an event — religious or not.

City Attorney Bill McClure talked to The Almanac on Jan. 25, defending the city's decision to allow the First Church of Christ, Scientist Menlo Park, to host a Jan. 24 lecture titled "Prayer and the Environment" in the council chambers, located at the Civic Center.

Mr. McClure said the city has no policy regarding who can or cannot use the council chambers, so the government facility must remain open to all organizations. As long as a group doesn't hold an event to commit, or conspire to commit, an illegal act, the city has no right to deny the use of the chambers, he said.

"The city can't discriminate on the basis of the message or beliefs, or the content of the speech of an organization," Mr. McClure said.

Local residents and nonprofits are charged \$125 per hour to use the chambers; non-local residents and nonprofits pay \$160 per hour, and businesses are charged \$190 per hour.

Past groups to use the chambers for events include local real estate groups, the Boy Scouts of America, and Kepler's Books and Magazines, Mr. McClure said.

## Church and state

The debate about the council chambers kicked off Jan. 15, when Menlo Park resident and frequent council watcher Martin Engel and his wife, Judith Orasanu, requested that the city withdraw permission for the church to use the chambers in order to ensure the separation of church and state.

"We do not believe that it is legal or appropriate to provide a venue in a public civic facility for a 'Prayer and Environment' presentation by any religious group, seemingly under the auspices of the Menlo Park city government," Mr. Engel and Ms. Orasanu wrote in a letter that was sent to council members and appeared in The Almanac last week.

The letter ignited a community debate about free speech and the

See guest opinion and letter to the editor from First Church of Christ, Scientist members on **Page 23**.

separation of church and state, including more than 60 comments in the Town Square forum on TheAlmanacOnline.com.

The letter also prompted a response from members of the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

"I don't think there's anything sacred or secular about the brick and mortar of that building," said Elizabeth Schwartz of Menlo Park, the church member who organized the Jan. 24 lecture. Ms. Schwartz said about 150 people attended the event.

Church member Gregory Conlon of Atherton, an attorney, sent a Jan. 24 letter to council members and the Almanac, emphasizing a point stressed by Mr. McClure: Closing the council chambers to religious groups would violate the free speech clause of the First Amendment.

## Drafting a policy

City Manager Glen Rojas said city staff is drafting a policy about the use of the council chambers to avoid future confusion about who can or can't use the facility.

A draft policy could go before the council as soon as next month, he said. ■

# Burgess Gym: remodel, expand, replace?

People who use Menlo Park's Burgess Gym, and the neighbors who live near it, are invited to weigh in on plans to build a new gym at several meetings this week.

The city wants to hear if interested parties want the existing gym remodeled and expanded, or the construction of an entirely new gym, according to Parks and Recreation Commission chair Nick Naclerio.

Gym users can give their input at two meetings — one at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 29, in the Burgess Recreation Center; and one at 1 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 31, in the gym. Neighbors are invited to a meeting at 7 p.m. on Jan. 31 in the Burgess Recreation Center.

## ■ BRIEFS

Construction of the gym is expected to begin in 2009.

## Local forums on senior housing

Menlo Park baby boomers and seniors are invited to take part in several senior housing forums, scheduled for Jan. 29 and 30.

The forums are part of efforts by the city's Housing Commission and housing and redevelopment division to figure out what type, and how much, senior housing the city needs.

The Jan. 29 meeting is scheduled to start at 2 p.m. in the

Fireside Room at the Burgess Recreation Center at 700 Alma St. The Jan. 30 meeting will start at 10 a.m. at the Little House activity center, at 800 Middle Ave.

Residents are also encouraged to participate in the city's online senior housing needs assessment survey, listed under "Items of Interest" at the city's Web site, MenloPark.org.

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## Four inches of rain measured in Menlo

During the recent storms, a total of 4.15 inches of rain fell in central Menlo Park as of Monday, Jan. 28, according to Cotton Street resident Bill Russ.

This latest set of storms brings the total from Mr. Russ' rain gauge to 12.6 inches, well ahead of last year at this time

when the total was just 4.3 inches. The normal seasonal total for the area, calculated between July 1 and June 30 every year, is 16 to 18 inches, Mr. Russ said.

More rain is likely over the next several days, according to the National Weather Service.

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# Atherton



## Please join us for a Town workshop

The Town of Atherton invites you to attend an interactive public workshop on the Zoning Code update that will benefit area residents. The Zoning Code provides regulations for all private lands, including building locations and their size.

**7 p.m. Wednesday, February 6**  
**Jennings Pavilion in Holbrook-Palmer Park**  
**150 Watkins Avenue**

The Zoning Code topics under discussion at this workshop include:

Simplifying home height measurements by allowing building height to mirror lot grades. This would also reduce hillside impacts.

Adjusting dormer codes to allow for French style homes, while also adhering to current zoning requirements. Dormers are often used to create usable space in attics by adding headroom and a window to the roof.

## For more information contact

Christopher Jordan, Planner  
at 866.828.6762 or  
cjordan@pmcworld.com  
or go to: [www.ci.atherton.ca.us](http://www.ci.atherton.ca.us)



# KEPLER'S FEATURED AUTHORS

Geraldine Brooks  
*People of the Book*

Tuesday, February 5,  
7:30 p.m.

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *March*, the journey of a rare illuminated prayer book through centuries of war, destruction, theft, loss, and love.



Dr. Andrew Fraknoi  
*Disney Wonderful World of Space*

Wednesday, February 15,  
7:30 p.m.

Bring your whole family for a wondrous tour of the planet Pluto. Young astronomers will get great tips on how to view the upcoming total eclipse of the moon on February 20th! You're sure to enjoy this unique and "heavenly" evening with Dr. Fraknoi as your guide.



## Don't miss these other exciting author events!

Dominique Renda and Brooks Anderson

*Swimming in Open Water*  
Monday, February 4, 7:30 p.m.

Bill Hayes

*The Anatomist: A True Story of Gray's Anatomy*  
Wednesday, February 6, 7:30 p.m.  
Introduction by Josh Spanogle, author and Stanford Med School resident

Rafiq Dossani

*India Arriving: How This Economic Powerhouse Is Redefining Global Business*  
Thursday, February 7, 7:30 p.m.

Richard Thompson Ford

*The Race Card: How Bluffing About Bias Makes Race Relations Worse*  
Tuesday, February 12, 7:30 p.m.

Irvin D. Yalom

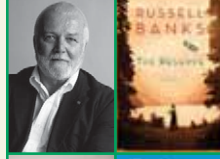
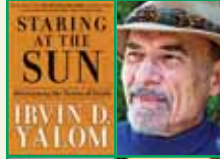
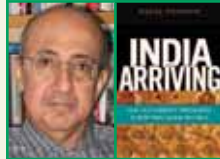
*Staring at the Sun: Overcoming the Terror of Death*  
Wednesday, February 13, 7:30 p.m.

Russell Banks

*The Reserve*  
Thursday, February 14, 7:30 p.m.  
A Valentine's Day Alternative

David Shields

*The Thing About Life Is That One Day You'll Be Dead*  
Tuesday, February 19, 7:30 p.m.



David Roche

*The Church of 80% Sincerity*  
Wednesday, February 20,  
7:30 p.m.

Philip L. Fradkin

*Wallace Stegner and the American West*  
Thursday, February 21, 7:30 p.m.

Natalie Goldberg

*Old Friend from Far Away: The Practice of Writing Memoir*  
Saturday, February 23, 2:00 p.m.

Kelly Corrigan

*The Middle Place*  
Tuesday, February 26, 7:30 p.m.

Janice Ross

*The San Francisco Ballet at Seventy-Five*  
Wednesday, February 27, 7:30 p.m.

Jack Bowen

*The Dream Weaver: One Boy's Journey Through the Landscape of Reality (Anniversary Edition); also A Journey Through the Landscape of Philosophy: A Reader*  
Thursday, February 28, 7:30 p.m.



## Kepler's Story Time every Sunday at 11:30 a.m.

February 3rd 100th Day of Kindergarten Party with Ashley Wolff 100 DAYS! HIP, HIP, HOORAY!

Our super special host, Ashley Wolff, will teach you how to make 100 Day Hats while you nibble on 100 Day Heavenly Hash and drink 100 Day Punch.

February 10th Story Time with Robin Preiss Glasser:

*Fancy Nancy: Bonjour Butterfly* Dust off your tiara and fluff up that tutu! We're throwing the biggest, pinkest, sparkly butterfly party in Menlo Park to help launch the newest Fancy Nancy title.

February 17th Story Time with Antoinette Portis: *Not a Stick*

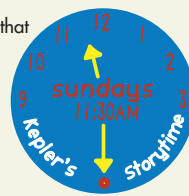
The creative mind behind *Not a Box* visits us to inspire more hours of fun with her newest title. All we need is a room full of fans ready to imagine...

February 24th Hugs and Kisses Story Time

Touching favorites will help to remind you that EVERY day is the perfect day to smother each other with hugs and kisses.

1010 El Camino Real, Menlo Park  
650-324-4321  
www.keplers.com

All events are at Kepler's unless otherwise noted.



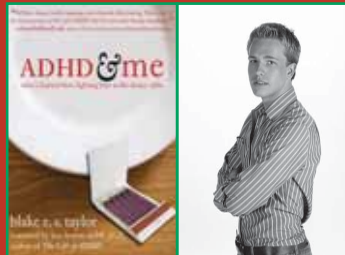
## Special Family Event!

Blake E. Taylor

*ADHD and Me: What I Learned from Lighting Fires at the Dinner Table*

Monday, February 25, 7:30 p.m.

Blake Taylor's memoir, written when he was 17, offers, for the first time, a young person's account of what it's like to live and grow up with this common condition. It will be an inspiration and companion to the millions of others like him who must find a way to thrive with a different perspective than many of us.



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## Library supporters

Bunny Dawson, left, and Jean Lane are honorary-chairs of the Friends of the Portola Valley Library's fundraising campaign.



Photo by Susan Thomas

## Friends launch fundraising to furnish new library

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

The Friends of the Portola Valley Library launches a fundraising campaign this week, seeking donations to provide furniture, fixtures and equipment for the new library under construction at the Town Center.

The goal is to raise a minimum of \$150,000 to supplement the limited funds provided by the San Mateo County Library System.

The new library, scheduled to open next fall, will be the "highest use building" on the Town Center campus, according to Friends board members. They said the additional funds are necessary to meet the community standards and the library's status with its patrons.

Library supporters Bunny Dawson and Jean Lane have stepped up to serve as honorary chairs of the Friends' effort to reach out to library patrons and other community members. The slogan is, "Fundraising with community vision, effort and values."

Information about the campaign, use of funds, and how to become a donor is described in an illustrated one-page letter being mailed this week to community members.

Contributions will help pro-

vide a living-room atmosphere for the new library with comfortable seating and tables and a new "Family Place," designed to meet the needs of families with size-appropriate furniture.

Technology at the library will receive a boost with the addition of state-of-the-art public access computers, printers, and wireless Internet access. Plans call for a new flexible "Learning Center" for tutoring, computer instruction and quiet study. There will be a larger space for story times, children's programs, adult programs, and more books, periodicals, CDs and DVDs.

All donors will be recognized in the new building.

Contributions are tax deductible as the Friends of the Portola Valley Library is a 501(c3) non-profit organization that is wholly independent of the Town/Portola Valley Community Fund.

Donations may be sent to Friends of the Portola Valley Library, 3130 Alpine Road, Suite 288, PMB 141, Portola Valley, CA 94028.

For more information, e-mail friends@fopvl.org or contact Friends President Jane Wilson at 854-1893. ■

## Karen Jordan corrects story

Karen Jordan, a former board member of the Portola Valley School District, says a story in the Jan. 23 issue of *The Almanac* incorrectly stated her reasons for applying for a two-year term on the board after deciding she would not seek re-election to a four-year term.

"I never stated and do not believe that 'board members should have children in the district,'" she said in an e-mail.

Ms. Jordan said it's irrelevant whether board members have children in the district and, in fact, board members without children

in the district bring "a diversity of perspectives that would contribute positively to the board."

She said she did not run for the four-year term because her children would start attending high school in the fall of 2009, and "I wanted to take the time and energy that I have volunteered (on the board) and apply it to my twins' high school experiences."

The two-year term, which would end in December 2009, after her children started high school, "fit with my desire to turn my energies to support their high school years," she said.

# Saga enters final chapters for Lawler Ranch Road land

By David Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

It's a wild world on the 92 acres of woodland, meadow and wetland just north of Sand Hill Road on the west side of Interstate 280. A recently certified environmental impact report noted some of the more distinguished inhabitants: California red-legged frogs, San Francisco dusky-footed wood rats, Congdon's tarplant, and slender-leaved pondweed.

But new cohabitation arrangements are ahead now that the Woodside Town Council has approved a plan to accommodate five single-family homes on five plots there. Lawler Ranch Road will be the access road for new residents as well as Jody and Roger Lawler, who live nearby and once owned the property.

The council was ruling on an appeal by the Lawlers of the Planning Commission's August 2007 endorsement of an environmental impact report and three development proposals for the property. A unanimous council rejected the appeal on the EIR and two of the proposals, and split 4-3 in rejecting the third.

The EIR — itself the result of an appeal by the Lawlers in 2004 — took years, in part because it had to consider the impact of houses even though this project concerns preparing land for construction, not the construction itself, said Assis-

tant Town Manager Hope Sullivan.

Plans to develop the topographically complex area have had a history of not working out because of the land's steep slopes and the sensitivity of plant and animal life.

About 80 percent of the land is constrained by required setbacks — from the freeway, from streams and ponds, and from buildings — property owner and Woodside resident Buno Pati told the council at its Jan. 22 meeting. Mr. Pati has worked out likely locations for one home on each parcel.

Two of the parcels are about 15 acres, two are about 22 acres, and one is 18 acres. A deed restriction will prevent further subdivision.

Mr. Pati will be making the lots "usable, valuable parcels that people would be proud to live in." Toward that end, he will be adjusting property lines, bridging some streams and changing the path of the access road — the one point of notable controversy.

Council members Carroll Ann Hodges and Sue Boynton extracted reassurances from Mr. Pati as to the need for equestrian access to each property, an amenity that Woodside officials tend to view as fundamental.

## Undeveloped history

The site was originally subdivided

## WOODSIDE

for 18 homes in the 1980s, and later rezoned after litigation to allow 12 homes, Mr. Pati said in recounting past efforts to develop the site. The property changed hands and the plans changed to nine homes.

In 1997, Phillips Brooks School bought the property, intending to build a 14-acre campus, but environmental issues and community objections led the school to drop its plans and sell to Woodside Developers LLC, where Mr. Pati is a principal.

Mr. Pati's current plan is four years old and is the "exact same project" the Planning Commission approved in 2004.

## A path not taken

To some, a "Jeep path" worn across land over decades would be the natural route to follow when the time comes to create a paved road.

Under the existing plan, this time-worn route will not serve as the access road for these five properties. That route would bisect two lots, Mr. Pati noted.

"I don't think any one of us would accept a road going through our yards," he told the council. Relocating the road to skirt the property lines would create a "better, safer and more private use of these properties," he said. "There's always going to be a tradeoff. This particular tradeoff was made to get a much more

usable piece of land."

The planned road alignment — endorsed on a 4-3 vote by the Town Council — departs from the Jeep path, takes a couple of sharp bends, rises and falls with the land, and would likely require retaining walls.

"That (realigned) road is a real big problem for us," said Ms. Lawler. In addressing the Planning Commission in 2004, she cited concerns about delays during construction, soil compaction around existing trees, and the unwelcome grading of hillsides.

Fentress Hall, chair of the Trails Committee, opposed the height of the resulting equestrian trails, while Virginia Dare, chair of the Open Space committee, objected to the number of trees to be cut.

On the council, members Peter Mason, Ms. Hodges and Dave Tanner opposed the realignment.

"We live in a town with a freeway running right through the middle of it. We got used to it," said Mr. Tanner.

"Do you think that a road with an 8-foot retaining wall on the uphill side and a 5-foot retaining wall on the downhill side is a rural road," asked Mr. Mason of Jeff Lea, a civil engineer working for Mr. Pati.

"In some uses, it is," Mr. Lea replied.

Later, Mr. Lea told the Almanac that the road would be about 600 feet east of the Lawlers' home, about 20 feet farther than originally planned. ■



## WHERE WE STAND

February 5, 2008 Election

### PROP 91 Transportation Funds **OPPOSE**

The League supports stable funding for transportation projects, but Prop 91 is not the way to provide it. Measures like this remove the flexibility that our representatives need in crafting state budgets, especially in difficult times. Even the proponents of Prop 91 urge a NO vote on this measure, recognizing that its aims were accomplished by Prop 1A of 2006.

### PROP 92 Community Colleges: Funding, Governance, Fees **OPPOSE**

Prop 92 locks in new constitutional provisions that would mandate increased spending on K-14 education without regard to the overall state budget situation. It provides no new revenues. The League respects supporters' desire for adequate, stable funding and improved governance in the community college system but can't support further restrictions on the state's ability to fund all the programs that serve Californian especially in tight budget times.

### PROP 93 Limits on Legislators' Terms in Office **NEUTRAL**

This initiative, by itself, makes relatively minor changes to the structure of legislative term limits. Without a package that includes reform of the redistricting process, it does not achieve meaningful improvement of the function of our state legislature.

### PROP 94 through 97 on amendments to Indian Gaming Compacts

Because League positions do not cover these issues, the League of Women Voters of California is taking no stand.

Paid ad by the League of Women Voters of Palo Alto and the League of Women Voters of South San Mateo County.

## Introducing our newest... Village Doctor!

**D**r. Sangani is a Board Certified Internist who comes to **The Village Doctor** after five years of thriving private practice in the Pacific Heights area of San Francisco. Her health care philosophy integrates physical, social, and mental health and she strives to provide individualized care for her patients' unique lifestyles.



Dr. Sangani has a strong background in preventive medicine and promoting **wellness** and education among her patients. In addition, she has extensive experience in **women's health** and chronic disease management.

With her years of practice, Dr. Sangani has cultivated strong relationships among the physician and patient community in the Bay Area. She was also named one of "America's Top Physicians" in 2006 by the Consumers Research Council of America. Please give The Village Doctor a call to schedule your introductory meeting: 650.851.4747.



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COVER STORY

# SEA LEVEL RISING



Almanac Graphic by Joanne Lee

**Bayfront lands** (shown in blue) on the Midpeninsula at risk of flooding by 2100 due to a one-meter rise in sea level. See details in the story. Local and regional agencies are starting to plan how to protect valuable property from rises in sea level that could be less — or more — than that shown here.

## A one-meter rise in sea level could have waters lapping past the Bayfront Expressway in Menlo Park. What are local communities doing?

**By Marion Softky**  
Almanac Staff Writer

In a stunning reversal, the slogan for San Francisco Bay may have changed from “Save the Bay” to “Save the Land.” For more than 100 years after

the Gold Rush, San Francisco Bay shrank by a third as new Californians diked and filled its shallow waters for farms, salt dumps, ports, airports, homes and businesses. Now the Bay is growing again. Rising temperatures are melting

miles-thick glaciers off the land masses of Antarctica and Greenland. Rising seas are nibbling at low-lying land — and what’s been built on it. What does this mean for the Bay Area? And what can be done about it?

On Dec. 4, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors heard a lively, powerful and ominous description of the problems of rising sea levels in the Bay Area. The speaker was Will Travis, executive director of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), a regional agency created in 1965 to protect the Bay. The good news, Mr. Travis said: “The Bay lost to filling would

once again become part of the Bay. The bad news: We have all kinds of expensive stuff on that land.”

Mr. Travis showed maps, prepared by BCDC, that showed what the Bay Area would look like if the sea rose by one meter — three feet. That rise could come by 2100 — or sooner, or later — according to studies by the California Climate Action Team, he said.

In San Mateo County, San Francisco Airport could be under water. In some areas of Palo Alto, water could lap beyond Bayshore Freeway; in Redwood City, it would come close to the freeway.

In Menlo Park, the map shows the Bay extending across Bayfront Expressway into Bohannon Industrial Park and Tyco Engineering. Highway 84 approaching the Dumbarton Bridge, parts of Sun Microsystems and Menlo Business Park are also shown in bright blue.

The regional sewage plant on the tip of Redwood Peninsula, and the former Marsh Road sewage plant, which is maintained to hold storm overflows, would need higher, stronger levees.

The maps should convey the message that climate change is not just about polar bears in Alaska and penguins in Antarctica, Mr. Travis stressed. “It will have a profound effect on our region, and it is something we must do something about now.”

“We can’t allow cities to go under water. We’re going to have to build lots of levees.”

“It’s a double challenge,” Mr. Travis added. “Levees have to be big and strong enough to withstand rising water — and to resist an earthquake.”

Government agencies are responding, Mr. Travis noted. Four regional agencies are working together to address climate change. The Bay Area Air Quality Maintenance District (BAAQMD), the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), and BCDC have created a Joint Policy Committee (JPC), which will coordinate efforts and prepare a New Bay Plan to meet the challenges of climate change — including rising seas.

“We can’t do it independently,” Mr. Travis said. “We have to work together. We are doing that.”

The county supervisors were

impressed by Mr. Travis’ presentation, which he has been taking around the Bay Area to rave reviews. He was in Palo Alto in December and Mountain View last week.

Supervisor Rich Gordon, who represents the county on BCDC, commented, “It’s scaring the hell out of a lot of people.”

### Is three feet enough?

Sea level has already started rising in San Francisco Bay. Mr. Travis showed a slide from the oldest tidal gauge in the country, at the Golden Gate; it showed the Bay rising six inches in the 20th century.

“We know that sea level is rising. We just don’t know how fast and how high the water will get,” Mr. Travis said.

Mr. Travis based his projections on the report of the California Climate Action Team. This looked at three scenarios leading to temperature increases between 3 and 10 degrees F. “If we’re effective at reducing greenhouse gas, maybe three degrees; if it’s business as usual, 10 degrees,” he said.

A three-degree temperature increase would raise sea level 5 to 7 inches by 2100, he said; business as usual would raise it one meter.

What about higher projections? We’ve all read and heard of studies that predict sea level rise of 20 or 40 or even hundreds of feet — far more than the one meter analyzed by BCDC.

Mr. Travis acknowledged the rise in sea level could be far higher than one meter. This projection reflects the expansion of water due to warming in the world’s oceans. It does not include water released by accelerated melting of ice caps in Greenland and Antarctica — which scientists say might add another five to seven meters — he said.

BCDC relies on official estimates from California and international groups. “We will wait until scientists reach conclusions. We won’t engage in debates,” Mr. Travis said.

### Challenges

Sea level rise is just one of the challenges that climate change is bringing to the Bay Area.

Another effect of global warming is more frequent, more intense storms, Mr. Travis said. “The kind of event we once had once a century will happen ten-times as often. We’ll have a surge-induced

flood every 10 years.”

Even today, the Midpeninsula endures occasional storms that overflow San Francisquito Creek, and flood low-lying areas near the Bay. Flood waters from the creek combine with a high tide and strong winds in a storm surge that can submerge approaches to the Dumbarton Bridge and vulnerable areas of East Palo Alto and Menlo Park.

Mr. Travis listed other challenges that will confront the Bay Area as thermometers creep up. More volatile weather will produce more heat, drought and wildfires. More rain will fall and less snow. “Water will rush into our rivers; it won’t be stored as snow in our mountains for free.

“Increased winter runoff will bring more fresh water into the Bay,” he said. “In summer you’ll see salt water creeping into the



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

Delta.” That’s where big pipes collect fresh water for Central and Southern California.

“We need new ways of using, moving, and storing water in California.”

“This is the biggest issue of our lives. Seventy percent of our precipitation is water and not snow,” responded Supervisor Mark Church. “Think water. The next eight years are critical.”

Mr. Travis warned: “We’re in much the same position as the captain of the Titanic. Once he looked up and saw the iceberg, it was too late to avoid the collision.

“Even if we shut off all the lights, parked all the cars, and mothballed all the power plants, there’s so much greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, it will continue to get warmer for the next three-to-four decades.”

So sea level will continue to rise, for a while at least, no matter what we do, Mr. Travis said. But we should get started.

### What needs to be done?

The BCDC map for the Midpeninsula Bayfront clear-

ly shows the challenges planners — from local to federal — will face.

They will have to decide what to do about each property or development threatened by rising seas.

Is the development or building valuable enough to be worth protecting it by expensive levees? If it is of low value, would it be more economical to relocate it or let it revert to the Bay?

The most contentious issues may focus on low-lying lands that are being planned for development. Like the 1,433 acres of former salt ponds owned by Cargill between Seaport Boulevard in Redwood City and Bayfront Park in Menlo Park.

“You’re going to have a front row seat to a drama that is going to play out in San Mateo County which confronts the

successful referendums blocking Bayfront developments. “The days of filling San Francisco Bay ended 30 years ago.”

Mr. Travis views tidal marshes as magic in countering climate change. They absorb water; they buffer floods; they allow lower levees; and they sequester carbon, he said.

“Tidal wetlands are actually adaptive to climate change; they mitigate it; they help prevent it.” Mr. Travis said. “It may be better to abandon plans than to allow development and face the costs of protecting it from flooding — which may be inevitable.”

Mr. Travis warned that the Bay he is endeavoring to restore will be different from the Bay that people remember.

“We have to stop thinking about restoring the Bay to what it was and protecting it the way

‘We can’t allow cities to go under water. We’re going to have to build lots of levees.’

Will Travis, executive director,  
Bay Conservation and Development Commission

issue of how do we build on the shoreline,” Mr. Travis told the supervisors.

Cargill and its partner, DMB Associates, want to develop the salt-crusted flatland for a mixture of uses, including housing, recreation and wetlands. DMB is conducting an elaborate outreach process to come up with a plan with a mix of uses that will meet the desires of Redwood City residents — and be proof against a potential referendum by opponents.

John Bruno, general manager for DMB Associates, said the company is prepared to comply with requirements imposed by city, state and federal agencies. “Our overall goal is to exceed the standards that are brought forward,” he said.

Former county planning commissioner Ralph Nobles of the Friends of Redwood City is passionate that this land should be restored to the Bay, from which it was diked in 1901, as wetlands.

“The salt ponds were first marsh, and that’s what they should return to,” said Mr. Nobles, who has led two suc-

cessful referendums blocking Bayfront developments. “The days of filling San Francisco Bay ended 30 years ago.”

### Local responses

Mr. Travis’ roving sermon is falling on receptive ears, certainly in San Mateo County.

“This is staggering in terms of what can and will happen if we don’t take steps,” said Adrienne Tissier, president of the Board of Supervisors.

It turns out that the county and many of its cities are taking steps. They are calculating their carbon footprint and taking steps to reduce it.

Supervisor Tissier listed

See **SEA LEVELS**, page 14

Rise of 3 Feet of sea level  
Almanac Graphic by Joanne Lee



# COVER STORY SEA LEVEL RISING

## SEA LEVELS

continued from page 13

some of her priorities to reduce emissions: electrifying Caltrain; concentrating development near transit; encouraging businesses to recycle and reduce waste; promoting energy-efficient buildings.

"The best way to avoid rising sea levels is to reduce emissions as swiftly as possible," she said.

Menlo Park is looking at protecting Bayfront development — businesses such as Tyco and Bohannon — from rising sea level. "That's really, really valuable industrial land," said Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson. "We call it the breadbasket of Menlo Park. That's where our sales tax base is."

Ms Fergusson also worries about increasing intensity of storms tied to flooding of San Francisquito Creek. "We have to deal with that now. The effect of sea level rise is a few years off," she said.

Two other agencies are involved in protecting Menlo Park and East Palo Alto from rising sea level and storm surges. The Joint Powers Authority (JPA) for San Francisquito Creek is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on flood control in the creek and levees around the Bayfront. "The creek project is expanding to include tidal flooding," said Cynthia D'Agosta, executive director of the JPA.

The Corps of Engineers, which will be key to any levee construction, is also adapting to the new threats of sea level rise and extreme storms. It is studying shoreline levees in connection with the massive federal project to restore salt ponds around the Bay to tidal marsh and managed wetlands.

"We have a niche role to make sure that perimeter levees don't allow Silicon Valley to be flooded," said Tom Kendall, chief of the Planning Branch for the San Francisco District.

### Obstacles

Mr. Travis remains an optimist even though major obstacles —



Almanac photo by Veronica Weber

government organization, laws, and cost — make a tough job tougher.

none of the regional agencies has the authority to block a subdivision. "We can't even say, 'You're a

damn fool, but at least you have to build a sea wall to protect it,'" Mr. Travis said.

"The cost is going to be enormous. But we need to do it," he said. "The cost of dealing with climate change is far less than waiting and dealing with its

ramifications later."

He said he believes the Bay Area has the wealth and talent and courage to deal with these problems.

"We need leadership to keep the Bay from reclaiming what was taken from it," Mr. Travis said. "We can provide leadership to meet this challenge around the world." ■

San Mateo County and many of its cities are calculating their carbon footprint and taking steps to reduce it.

"The Bay Area is the only place more balkanized than the Balkans," Mr. Travis said. He referred to the nine counties and 110 cities that make up the Bay Area. "Twenty-six cities front on San Francisco Bay," he said.

Another obstacle lies in the powers of different agencies. Control over land use lies with cities;






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The work of this Contract includes, but is not limited to, routine pruning, hazardous tree removal, pest control and storm damage cleanup of City trees within the City limits of Atherton. Bids must be for the price per crew hour for performing tree work, which shall be inclusive of equipment and travel. The budget set forth for this project will be a maximum of \$52,000 dollars.

Bids must be for the entire work, and shall be submitted in sealed envelopes clearly marked: "Bid of (Contractor) for TREE MAINTENANCE CONTRACT, Project No. 07-010", along with date and time of bid opening.

Specifications may be obtained at the Town of Atherton Public Works Department, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton CA 94027, for a non-refundable fee of \$10.00. Additional important information is contained in Town of Atherton Standard Specifications, which are available for an additional \$20.00. If shipping is requested, there will be an additional charge of \$10.00.

Bids must be accompanied by a bid security in the form of cash, a cashier's or certified check or bid bond for not less than ten percent (10%) of the amount of the bid, as a guarantee that the bidder, if awarded the Contract, will fulfill the terms of the bid. The Town of Atherton reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and/or to waive any irregularities therein.

Bidders are hereby notified that, pursuant to California Civil Code Sections 3247 and 3248 and Standard Specifications Section 3.02, the successful bidder will be required to provide payment and performance bonds in the amounts stated in Section 3.02 of the Standard Specifications.

Bidders are hereby notified that provisions of California Labor Code regarding prevailing wages are applicable to the work to be performed under this contract. Pursuant to Section 1773 et seq. the general prevailing wage rates have been determined by the Director of the California Department of Industrial Relations and appear in the California Prevailing Wage Rates. Copies are on file at the office of the City Engineer and are available to interested parties upon request. The successful bidder shall post a copy of the wage rates at the job site.

The Contractor may elect to receive 100 percent of payments due under the contract, without retention of any portion of the payment by the Town of Atherton, by depositing securities of equivalent value to the retention amount in accordance with the provisions of Section 22300 of the California Public Contracts Code.

The successful bidder must be licensed under the provisions of Chapter 9, Division 3, of the California Business and Professions Code to do the type of work contemplated in the project at the time the contract is awarded and shall be skilled and regularly engaged in the general class or type of work called for under the Contract. Failure of the bidder to obtain proper and adequate licensing for an award of the contract shall constitute a failure to execute the contract and result in the forfeiture of the bidder's bid security.

Each bidder shall submit with this bid a statement setting forth his/her/its experience and qualifications. The statement shall be made on the forms provided by the Town and must accompany each bid. The three lowest bidders will be required to submit subcontractor's experience and qualifications statements within 48 hours of the bid opening, on forms provided by the Town.

By submitting a bid in response to this advertisement for bids, the bidder shall be conclusively deemed to have read, understood and agreed with all of the information and materials contained in the bid documents, including but not limited to the construction contract, the standard specifications, the special provisions, the required nature and amount of insurance and the documentation evidencing said insurance.

Any questions regarding the project should be directed to the City Engineer, 91 Ashfield Road, Atherton, CA 94027, telephone (650) 752-0532, preferably no later than five days before bid opening. Requests for Information may be faxed to (650) 688-6539. Plan holder's lists may be obtained by calling (650) 752-0570.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Duncan L. Jones, P.E., City Engineer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Published in THE ALMANAC on January 23, 30, 2008.

## INFORMATION

More information on climate change can be found at these Web sites:

- [www.bcdc.ca.gov](http://www.bcdc.ca.gov); click on climate change
- [climatechange.ca.gov](http://climatechange.ca.gov)
- [epa.gov/climatechange](http://epa.gov/climatechange)
- [epa.gov/climatechange/kids](http://epa.gov/climatechange/kids)
- [unep.org/Themes/climatechange](http://unep.org/Themes/climatechange)

## Ex-biotech exec named to planning board

By David Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Following 20-minute interviews of six candidates who sought the one recently vacated seat on the Portola Valley Planning Commission, members of the Town Council discussed the candidates that most impressed them.

The one candidate named by all five council members, and the one appointed by Mayor Maryann Moise Derwin with council concurrence, was Denise M. Gilbert, a former executive for several biotechnology firms and a former Wall Street analyst in the field of biotech research.

Ms. Gilbert has a bachelor's degree in biology from Cornell University, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa, and a doctorate in cell and developmental biology from Harvard University.

### ■ PORTOLA VALLEY



Almanac photo by David Boyce

**Denise M. Gilbert** is a former Wall Street analyst in the field of biotech research.

She is a 14-year resident of the town and a member of the town's Trails and Paths Committee. She was a key participant in a recent ad hoc committee on the question of whether the rules should be changed to allow leashed dogs on the environmentally sensitive Coalmine Ridge trial

system.

Ms. Gilbert's appointment to the five-member commission is for four years, and her first session behind the dais will be on Wednesday, Feb. 6. She fills the seat of Ann Wengert, who was the only candidate in last year's Town Council election and was subsequently appointed to the council in December.

A principal focus for the Planning Commission will be the gradual introduction of green-building mandates for new homes.

The council also interviewed Craig Buchsbaum, a tax attorney with experience in green issues; Ron Walter, a retired power company executive; Karin Freitag Wick, an employment recruiter; Clay Wynter Baker, an architect specializing in "green" homes; and Stefan Unnasch, an alternative fuels consultant. ■

## Atherton holds public workshop on zoning issues

Most people don't spend much time thinking about zoning codes. At least, not until a next-door neighbor plans to build a daylight-blocking eyeshore, or a lovely set of remodeling plans get thrown out the window because the roofline's too high.

Atherton is offering residents a chance to weigh in on the town's zoning code, a set of regulations that control a building's size, height, setback and a myriad of other details.

An "interactive public workshop" on the town's update of its zoning code is set for 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, at the Jennings pavilion in Holbrook-Palmer Park, at 150 Watkins Ave.

Hot topics at the workshop include: simplifying home measurements and reducing hillside impacts; and changing rules about dormer windows to allow for French-style homes.

For information, call planner Christopher Jordan at 866-828-6762, send him an e-mail at [cjordan@pmcworld.com](mailto:cjordan@pmcworld.com), or go to the town's Web site at [www.ci.Atherton.ca.us](http://www.ci.Atherton.ca.us).

Additional meetings on zoning codes will be held at 7 p.m. on March 5 and April 9. The results of the community input will be presented to the Atherton General Plan Committee, Planning Commission, and City Council later this spring.

## Water tasted funny but was safe to drink, officials say

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Following a holiday weekend full of reports that local tap water tasted metallic and smelled like chlorine, officials say the water system should be back to normal, and local water was always safe to drink.

Tony Winnicker, director of communications at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission — which oversees water supplies to the Peninsula — said the odd taste and smell people were noticing in their tap water was due to water that was linger-

ing in the Hetch Hetchy system while it was shut down for several weeks of maintenance.

The system was restarted on Jan. 18, and that lingering water, although treated and safe to drink, "can have a certain taste and smell," Mr. Winnicker said. He noted that tap water will likely continue to appear white and cloudy through the end of January as air bubbles work their way through the system.

### No answers

The unpleasant smell and taste caused some alarm in the community, as they occurred over the

three-day Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend when city and state officials could not be reached for answers.

It turns out SFPUC officials faxed a warning to Menlo Park on Friday, Jan. 18, that informed the city of potential changes to the odor and taste of tap water, but city offices were closed that Friday as well as the three-day holiday weekend, said Virginia Parks, an assistant engineer in Menlo Park's public works department. That's why city officials didn't relay the information to the public and press until Tuesday, Jan. 22, she said. ■

## Simitian honored by League of Cities

State Sen. Joe Simitian was honored recently by the League of California Cities for his ongoing commitment to protecting local land use authority.

Sen. Simitian, along with nine

other state legislators, received an award for "outstanding leadership." They will be featured in the January issue of Western City magazine, according to the league.

"Sen. Simitian has long been

a friend to local government in the legislature," League Executive Director Chris McKenzie said. "In 2007, he stood out for his impressive conduct as chair of the Senate Environmental Quality Committee during a series of hearings on a controversial land use measure."

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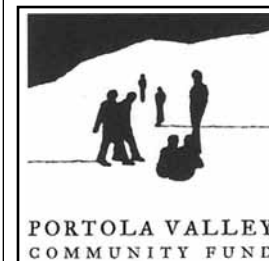
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Joe & Julie Zier  
Anonymous x 12



# Massive oak falls on Portola Valley home

A giant oak tree, said to be the oldest living oak in the county, crashed onto Jane Lodato's home on Wyndham Drive in Portola Valley at 8:30 p.m. Sunday, partially collapsing the roof and outside wall of the bathroom where she was taking a bath.

"The power went off. The house started shaking. It sounded like a bomb went off," says Ms. Lodato. Despite suffering cuts and abrasions, she dashed into the adjoining bedroom where her sleeping 8-year-old daughter, Sofia, was her first concern. The little girl and her dog, Coco, were unhurt. Grabbing a flashlight, Ms. Lodato raced upstairs for some clothing before help arrived.

The tree took out power and cable lines on the entire street. Across-the-street neighbor George Schiel called 911. Dodging fallen live wires, he came to the Lodatos' rescue, guiding them safely back to his house.

Two units from the Woodside Fire Protection District and another

See picture on Page 3.

from Menlo Park were quick to arrive. The firefighters went door to door to tell residents to stay inside while the live wires were down. PG&E crews worked through the night to restore power.

Stacey Gerber drove from Menlo Park to take Sofia and Coco back to her home while Ms. Lodato was taken to Stanford Hospital.

"Stacey couldn't get onto the street because of the fallen wires," Ms. Lodato says. "She waited outside in the pouring rain until the ambulance dropped off Sofia and Coco as they took me to the hospital."

Ms. Lodato was released from emergency care with a few stitches.

Despite her injuries, she says she feels fortunate she and her daughter are safe and that the tree didn't do further damage. "It could have taken out all three (adjacent) houses. I think we had a guardian angel watching over us," she says.

## 'Big damn hole' covered; sewer project almost done

The deep rectangular pit at the intersection of Los Trancos and Ramona roads that has been plaguing residents of rural Los Trancos Woods — dubbed the "big damn hole" by a nearby resident — was covered last week, before the latest downpours.

Tim Clayton, general manager of the West Bay Sanitary District, said the 28-foot-deep manhole was the "biggest and most difficult" part of the project to bring sewers to the former summer home community that has suffered from failing septic tanks.

The deep manhole will allow construction workers to bore a hole and thread an underground pipe casing to connect with the sewer line down Los Trancos Road. Trenches will still be dug up Los Trancos and Ramona roads to connect with the sewers that have already been installed,

Mr. Clayton said.

The contractor is installing the casing "so we don't have a 28-foot trench along neighborhood roads," Mr. Clayton said. "We haven't needed to close a road."

The actual sewer line will be threaded through the casing pipe later. The double pipe arrangement "makes it easier to repair and replace" the sewer lines, Mr. Clayton added.

The casing runs underground about 150 feet down Los Trancos Road, according to Rich Laureta of Freyer & Laureta. The 200-foot trench along Ramona Road is scheduled for this week, weather permitting, Mr. Laureta said in an email to Mr. Clayton.

The entire project should be over within 30 days — depending on the weather, Mr. Clayton said. "It should be over soon."

## Climate change Webcast in MP

The Menlo Park Green Ribbon Citizens' Committee is hosting a live screening of "The 2 percent solution" Webcast on Wednesday, Jan. 30 — the kickoff event for a nationwide teach-in about how to best address global warming.

The Webcast will be screened simultaneously at more than 1,500 venues across the country, and will start at 5 p.m. in the Menlo Park council chambers at the

Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets. People are encouraged to show up by 4:30 p.m. The live Webcast is not viewable from home computers, but it will be archived for public viewing at [www.FocusTheNation.org](http://www.FocusTheNation.org).

The event is labeled "The 2 percent solution" because the focus of the Webcast is how to cut 2 percent

See **GREEN**, page 21



CITY OF MENLO PARK  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

ENGINEERING DIVISION

NOTICE TO BIDDERS

FOR

### NEW SIDEWALKS PROJECT CENTRAL MENLO PARK PROJECT NO. 20-073

1. **BID OPENING.** The bidder shall complete and submit the blue copy of the Proposal to the City Council form that is inserted in the Contract Documents. No other copy of the Proposal Section will be accepted. Sealed bids, containing said blue copies of the completed Proposal Section, and subject to the conditions named herein and in the specifications for "**NEW SIDEWALKS PROJECT CENTRAL MENLO PARK**", addressed to the City of Menlo Park will be received at the office of the Engineering Division up to **2:00 p.m., Tuesday, February 5, 2008**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read.

2. **WORK DESCRIPTION.** The work to be done consists of clearing existing vegetation (including vines, shrubs, etc) and other debris to make room for new work; earthwork, including excavation and grading; installing new concrete sidewalk, driveways, curb and gutter, handicap ramps and catch basin modification. Other work includes thermoplastic pavement markings, asphalt concrete paving, and landscape irrigation; and as shown on the plans and described in the specifications with the title indicated in paragraph 1 above, and on file in the Office of the Senior Civil Engineer. Reference to said Plans and Specifications is hereby made for further particulars.

3. **WORKING DAYS.** The work under this Contract is to be completed in **forty (40)** working days.

4. **CONTRACTOR'S LICENSE.** A Class "**A**" or "**C8**" Contractor's License is required for this work. No bid will be accepted from a Contractor who has not been licensed according to Chapter 9, Division 3 of the Business and Professional Code.

5. **BID DEPOSIT.** A Bid Deposit equal to at least ten percent (10%) of the total amount of the bid shall be placed in the sealed Proposal. The Bid Deposit shall be in one of the following forms: cash, cashier's check or certified check payable to the City, or bidder's bond in favor of the City executed by an authorized surety company.

6. **PERFORMANCE BONDS.** Performance guaranty bonds as set forth in Section 2-3 of the Special Provisions will be required from the successful bidder.

7. **CITY'S RIGHT TO REJECT BIDS.** The right is reserved, as the interest of the City may require, to reject any or all bids, or to waive any informality or minor irregularity in the bids.

8. **GENERAL PREVAILING WAGE RATES.** The Council has ascertained the general prevailing rate of wages applicable to the work to be done. A tabulation of the various classifications of workpersons to be employed and the prevailing rate of wages applicable thereto is on file in the Office of the Senior Civil Engineer.

9. **OBTAINING THE PROJECT PLANS AND CONTRACT BOOK.** The Project Plans and the Contract Documents may be purchased at the Engineering Division upon payment of \$40.00 for each set. Project Plans and the Contract Book will be mailed to prospective bidders upon payment of \$40.00 plus \$10.00 for postage and handling.

10. **OBTAINING THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SPECIFICATIONS.** The State of California Department of Transportation Standard Specifications and Standard Plans may be purchased at the State of California Department of Transportation Publication Distribution Unit, 1900 Royal Oaks Drive, Sacramento, CA 95819; Telephone: (916) 445-3520; Fax: (916) 324-8997.

11. **WITHDRAWAL OF PROPOSALS.** Any bid may be withdrawn at any time prior to the time fixed in the public notice for the opening of bids only by written request for the withdrawal of the bid filed with the Senior Civil Engineer. The request shall be executed by the bidder or his/her duly authorized representative. The withdrawal of a bid does not prejudice the right of the bidder to file a new bid. Whether or not bids are opened exactly at the time fixed in the public notice for opening bids, a bid will not be received after that time nor may any bid be withdrawn after the time fixed in the public notice for opening of bids.

12. **RELIEF OF BIDDERS.** As stated in Public Contract Code Sections 5100 to 5108, inclusive (State Contract Act) concerning relief of bidders and in particular to the requirement therein, that if the bidder claims a mistake was made in his/her bid, the bidder shall give the Senior Civil Engineer written notice within five (5) days after the opening of the bids of the alleged mistake, specifying in the notice in detail how the mistake occurred.

13. **DISQUALIFICATION OF BIDDERS.** More than one Proposal from an individual, firm, partnership, corporation, or combination thereof under the same or different names will not be considered. Reasonable grounds for believing that any individual, firm, partnership, corporation or combination thereof is interested in more than one Proposal for the work contemplated may cause the rejection of all proposals in which such individual, firm, partnership, corporation or combination thereof is interested. If there is reason for believing that collusion exists among the bidders, any or all proposals may be rejected. Proposals in which the prices obviously are unbalanced may be rejected.

14. **PREVIOUS DISQUALIFICATION, REMOVAL OR OTHER PREVENTION OF BIDDING.** A bid may be rejected on the basis of a bidder, any officer of such bidder, or any employee of such bidder who has a proprietary interest in such bidder, having been disqualified, removed, or otherwise prevented from bidding on, or completing a federal, state, or local project because of a violation of law or a safety regulation.

15. **RESPONSIBILITY FOR VERIFYING CONTRACT ADDENDA.** All bidders shall verify if any addenda for this project have been issued by the City of Menlo Park. It is the bidder's responsibility to ensure that all requirements of Contract addenda are included in the bidder's Proposal.

16. **ESCROW FOR SECURITY DEPOSIT IN OF RETENTION.** Pursuant to Public Contract Code Section 22300, for monies earned by the Contractor and withheld by the City to ensure the performance of the Contract, the Contractor, may, at its option, choose to substitute securities meeting the requirements of said Public Contract Code Section 22300.

17. **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.** Each prime and subcontract bidder will be required to comply with the City of Menlo Park Affirmative Action Program as set forth in Council Resolution No. 2340. Guidelines and report forms are provided with the Contract Documents and shall be considered part of any Contract made pursuant thereto. The prime contractor and each subcontractor shall complete the City of Menlo Park Compliance Report and submit it with the bid proposal or within 48 hours of the bid opening if you are the lowest or second lowest bidder.

18. **MINORITY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM.** Prime contractors and subcontractors must submit their Minority Employment Program (MEP) to the Senior Civil Engineer with their bids or within 48 hours of the bid opening.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

KELLY M. SHERRY, City Clerk

Published in THE ALMANAC on January 23, 30, 2008.

# Schools

NEWS OF LOCAL SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS.

## Tense time for kindergarten signups in Menlo Park schools

■ Big changes include new boundaries, Spanish class.

By **Andrea Gemmet**  
Almanac Staff Writer

Signing up for kindergarten is an anxious time for most parents, and this year's

registration for the Menlo Park City School District is shaping up to be a particularly tense one. New attendance boundaries, the addition of kindergarten classes at Encinal, and a new Spanish

immersion class are adding new wrinkles to the process.

Priority registration for incoming kindergarteners runs from Feb. 1 to Feb. 29 at all three district elementary schools — Laurel, Oak Knoll and, for the first time, Encinal. All registrations received by the end of February will receive equal weight, said Superintendent Ken Ranella.

"You don't need to camp out the night before," Mr. Ranella said. "If you register at 5 p.m. on Feb. 29, you'll have the same status as if you registered Feb. 1."

Registrations received after Feb. 29 will be reviewed in the order received, he said. If one of the schools is oversubscribed, students will be transferred out of their home districts on a voluntary — or, if need be, involuntary — basis.

Registration packets are available at each school. Children must be age 5 by Dec. 2, 2008, in order to enroll. Proof of age and residency, and immunization records, are also required.

Along with the registration packets, parents will be able to apply for the brand-new Spanish immersion class that will be held at Encinal. A lottery will be held in March to select 20 children for the class; the district is looking for a 50-50 mix of fluent English and Spanish speakers.

Enrollment in Spanish immersion requires a six-year commit-

ment, and a mandatory parent meeting about the program is set for 7 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 25, at Encinal. Spanish speakers will have to demonstrate their fluency in an interview.

Mr. Ranella said that details about the curriculum should be hammered out by the end of March, and a teacher hired by April.

New attendance boundaries, approved by the school board on Jan. 15, carved away neighborhoods from Oak Knoll and Laurel in order to send incoming children to Encinal. Currently, children east of El Camino attend Laurel for kindergarten through second grade, and then go to Encinal for grades 3-5.

Starting with the upcoming school year, Encinal will phase in primary grades, becoming a full K-5 school by 2010.

Oak Knoll students whose homes now lie within the new Encinal attendance area, and their younger siblings, may still attend Oak Knoll, thanks to a "grandfathering" provision.

Oak Knoll school is holding a kindergarten orientation meeting at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 31, in the school library.

Dates haven't yet been set for kindergarten orientation meetings at Laurel and Encinal schools.

District officials are projecting that 294 children will enroll in kindergarten, Mr. Ranella said.

### Getting oriented to kindergarten

Oak Knoll elementary school is holding a kindergarten orientation meeting for incoming students at 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 31, in the school library.

At the meeting, expected to last about 90 minutes, Principal David Ackerman and the school's kindergarten teachers will try to explain "everything you ever wanted to know about starting kindergarten," he said. This includes details about the curriculum, skills children should have already acquired, and the registration process.

Oak Knoll is located at 1895 Oak Knoll Lane in Menlo Park. For information, call the school at 854-4433.

At 20 children per class, the district can comfortably accommodate 300 kindergartners. If enrollment exceeds projections, class sizes will go up.

Enrollment in the district is expected to rise sharply in the next few years. That projected increase has triggered the boundary changes as well as plans for major construction projects on the campuses. ■

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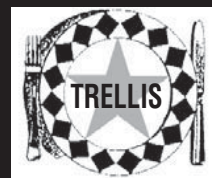
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### Correct e-mail address

In the Jan. 23 issue of The Almanac, in a story about the Peninsula College Fund, there was an error in the e-mail address for the founder of the non-profit fund. The correct e-mail address for Charles Schmuck is cschmuck@pacbell.net. You can use that to learn more about the nonprofit organization and how to get involved. You can also call Mr. Schmuck at 561-9534.

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## 40th Fillmore Trivia Hunt could be last

"This is it," says Robert Hunter, who is retiring after 40 years as the director and founder of the annual Friends of Millard Fillmore Trivia Hunt.

The hunt, open to all high school students from San Mateo County, takes place Feb. 1 to 4, beginning and ending at the Carmont High School Student Union.

Mr. Hunter started the trivia hunt in 1969 as a history teacher at Carmont High. He says if no

interested person steps forward, the hunt will cease.

"This will be my official swan song," he says.

The hunt starts the night of Feb. 1 when Mr. Hunter reads all 30 questions and tells students about five required items they must find. The students must turn in their answers, along with the five bring-in items, by 7 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 3. On Monday they meet back at Carmont to learn

which school won.

Teams from Woodside, Carmont, Castilleja, Gunn, Notre Dame and Palo Alto high schools are expected to take part in this year's hunt. Menlo Park attorney Chris Cobey is the new hunt judge.

Anyone interested in continuing and directing the hunt in 2009 should call Mr. Hunter at 325-4058 or e-mail roberts-hunter@comcast.net.

## Free homework help at Menlo Park Library

Menlo Park students never have to be stumped by a tough homework assignment again, says Michelle Barresse, youth services manager at the Menlo Park Library.

Students from fourth to 12th grade, and those taking introductory-level college courses, can turn to the library to get free help from qualified tutors.

Since mid-2006, the library has offered Live Homework Help, an online tutoring service from Tutor.com that connects students to tutors in math, science, social studies and English.

Students with a library card can connect with a tutor from

the library or from their home PC or Mac, from 1 to 10 p.m. seven days a week. Spanish-speaking tutors are available Sunday through Thursday from 1 to 7 p.m. to help students in all core subjects.

Live Homework Help is easy to use, says Ms. Barresse. Students go to the library's Web site — [www.MenloParkLibrary.org](http://www.MenloParkLibrary.org) — and click on the homework link near the top. They log in and enter their grade level and the subject they need help in. In a few minutes, students are connected to a tutor in the online classroom for one-on-one help.

Students and tutors can review

specific homework questions using features such as controlled chat, an interactive white board, and shared Web browsing. All tutors are certified teachers, college professors, graduate or college students, or professional tutors. Every tutor is certified by Tutor.com and has undergone a third-party background check.

The service is made possible by a state grant and the Friends of the Menlo Park Library. Tutor.com's Live Homework Help is now offered at more than 1,600 public libraries.

For more information, call Michelle Barresse of the Menlo Park Library at 330-2530.

## WHS teacher assault: Teen faces gang allegations

A preliminary hearing for a San Mateo teen charged with punching a Woodside High School teacher in the face in November was continued Jan. 23 after the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office added a special allegation of gang affiliation.

Lamarr Timmons, 19, is being charged with felony assault after he allegedly punched the teacher in the face, knocking out two of his teeth. Mr. Timmons had been "acting aggressively and swearing at everyone who walked by," according to a Sheriff's Office report, and the teacher was trying to calm him down.

In court, Deputy District Attorney Josh Stauffer presented

the defense with 271 pages of information relating to the new gang affiliation charges. Mr. Timmons is being represented by the private defender program, which requested that the preliminary hearing be postponed so the material could be reviewed.

Judge Stephen Hall granted the continuance and set a new preliminary hearing date for Feb. 8.

The incident occurred on Nov. 5 near the high school as the teacher was walking home shortly after school let out. The teacher's name is being withheld for his safety.

A two-month investigation involving numerous interviews with witnesses and cooperation

from the Woodside High School community led to Mr. Timmons' arrest. He was already in custody at the Maguire Correctional Facility on unrelated charges when he was charged with the crime, according to sheriff's deputies. He is being held on \$100,000 bail.

— Bay City News Service



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## USGS talk on mud eruptions in Indonesia

Geologist Thomas J. Casadevall will discuss "The Indonesian Mud Crisis: Long-lived mud eruption inundates housing and infrastructure" at a free public lecture at the U.S. Geological Survey on Thursday, Jan. 31, at 7 p.m. in Building 3 on the campus at 345 Middlefield Road in Menlo Park.

Since May 2006, an eruption of hot, dark mud has been dev-

astating 10 square kilometers of Indonesia, displacing more than 30,000 people and disrupting transportation, communications, an oil pipeline, farms and factories.

Back from a fact-finding visit, Dr. Casadevall will talk about geological, social, economic, and political issues linked to the mud extrusion. For information, call the Survey at 329-5000.

Inspirations

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**Victorious Penguins.**

Top row, from left, Coach Jim Kingman, Morgan Dressel and Coach Per Alftin; second row, Olivia Stangvik, Alexa Zangrillo, Elizabeth Putnam, Emily Glazer, Lauren McHugh, Elisa Merten, Celeste Stoker, Gianna Rosoti, Hayley Korman, Maddie Burger and Taira Hovden; ground, Annie Kingman and Christine Alftin. Not shown: Victoria Ellis.



## Woodside Penguins triumph at tourney

A parcel of penguins from Woodside fought their way to first place in a recent tournament, beating highlighters and gladiators, among others.

The AYSO Woodside girls under 12 team, known as the Tuxedo Penguins, traveled to Foster City on Dec. 8 to play against teams from AYSO Section 2, which includes the Pacific Northwest, Northern California and Northern Nevada.

To reach the tournament, the Woodside girls had to beat local teams from Palo Alto, Mountain View, Menlo Park, Los Altos and Sunnyvale.

### SPORTS

After triumphing in an area tournament on Dec. 1 and 2 with a 4-0 record, the Penguins were on their way to Foster City.

The AYSO Section 2 tournament victory gives the team the opportunity for further advancement at a Southern California tournament in March 2008.

To clench the tournament championship, the Penguins battled against the Gladiators from Brisbane, California. During a tough game, Annie Kingman and Olivia Stangvik scored goals, and with Maddie Burger in the goal, they beat Brisbane four goals to two.

## Expressing 'truths in verbal images'

Poet barber Jym Marks to tell how he does it

By Megan Rawlins

Special to the Almanac

Poet, musician, motivational speaker and barber extraordinaire Jym Marks will speak at the Menlo Park Library on Saturday, Feb. 2, at 11 a.m. as part of the library's Saturday Series. The event is free.

Mr. Marks is the owner of Markstyle Center, a barber shop and African American bookstore on Willow Road in Menlo Park. The combination of bookish prose and barber shop prattle creates an atmosphere of culture and camaraderie that is reflected in Mr. Marks's art.

Mr. Marks has published 10 books of poetry and many self-help books. His poetry is decidedly masculine, with an air of conversation and intimacy that one might expect to find in a barber shop.

He insists that he isn't a writer, instead calling himself "someone who writes." He describes his process as compiling observations then expressing "the truths in verbal images."

Mr. Marks condenses his observations into poems that reflect what is close to him. He writes about music, race, love, faith and personal growth. His poetry carries the anger, frustration, passion and joy appropriate to the subject and is laced with humor and aphorisms throughout.

Poet and Menlo Park barber, Jym Marks is also a jazz musician.



Humor is immensely important as a mode of communication, he insists. It allows him to speak the truth and reach a wider audience.

Mr. Marks brings this same passion, joy and humor to his music. He was a jazz drummer for many years, and few years ago he picked up his drumsticks again to re-form the Jym Marks Quintet. He performs regularly at the Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society in Half Moon Bay.

"Balancing everything and my music is fun but exhausting," Mr. Marks says, but he often finds inspiration for his writing from working with his band.

Mr. Marks travels the country with his lecture series, "Finding Your Own Sight," a theme revisited in his self-help books: "Seeing What You're Looking At," "Looking Beyond What You See" and "Now You See It."

It's about staying in focus and looking within; he explains, "In order to drive your life, you have to do it from within." He also believes that a person's power and strength must come from within.

"If you push me into a ditch, I can blame you for my situation, but I have to be the one to get myself out of the ditch," he insists.

Mr. Marks' talk at the library, titled, "We Did Not Create Our Circumstances," is based on this theme. The talk, which he calls a conversation, will speak to, and be in celebration of, Black History Month, which was originally established as Negro History Week by historian Carter Woodson in 1926 to raise awareness of the contributions of African Americans to the nation.

Black History Month is a "Never Forget" moment for Mr. Marks, after 300 years of slavery, survival and perseverance, he says, but the message of his philosophy is for everyone who is willing to listen.

The Menlo Park Library is at 800 Alma St. Free van service for Menlo Park seniors and people with disabilities is available.

To schedule transportation, or for more information about the program, contact Roberta Roth at 330-2525 or rlrth@menlopark.org. ■

## Local talk: Diverting Tuolumne River for tap water

"From Tuolumne to Your Tap" will be the subject of a talk by Peter Drekmeier on Wednesday, Jan. 30, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Acterra, 3921 E. Baayshore Road in Palo Alto.

Mr. Drekmeier, a councilman in Palo Alto and Bay Area program director for the Tuolumne River Trust, will talk about efforts to protect the wild and scenic Tuolumne from proposals to divert water for urban use as part of San Francisco's massive program to rebuild

its aging Hetch Hetchy water system to meet the needs of 2.4 million people in the Bay Area, including most of San Mateo County.

Mr. Drekmeier will argue that water conservation and recycling can substitute for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's proposals to divert flow from the popular river.

For information, call Acterra at 962-9876, ext. 346; or email peter@tuolumne.org, or go to Tuolumne.org.

## Serious About Your Kicks?



### MP Strikers Wants You!

Our class 1 Boys U13 soccer team is looking for talented and dedicated players to join us as we move towards the top tier of Northern California soccer clubs. Parent information sessions will be conducted during tryouts to provide an introduction to MP Strikers, an overview of parent participation that is required and expectations for class 1 teams.



**What:** Soccer Tryouts Class 1  
**When:** Sat/Sun February 9/10 & 16/17  
**Where:** Fair Oaks Elementary School – Sat  
 Sequoia High School Football Field – Sun  
**Time:** 2:30pm-4pm  
**Other:** Players must arrive prepared with cleats, shin guards and water.



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## OBITUARIES

**Jeffrey Matthew Scott**

Woodside fire district captain

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 23, at Canada College Theatre in Woodside for Jeffrey Matthew Scott, a captain in the Woodside Fire Protection District.

Capt. Scott suffered a heart attack Dec. 4 while swimming off Black Rock at Kaanapali Beach in Maui. He was 54.

Hired by the Woodside Fire Protection District in 1979, he was made acting captain in 1988 and became a full-time captain in 1995.

Mr. Scott, along with fellow Woodside firefighters, traveled to Africa in 1994 to help purify the water for the people in Rwanda.

In 2007 he put in place an emergency evacuation plan for the Woodside Highlands Community.

He started his firefighting career in 1975 by volunteering in the cities of Belmont and Burlingame.

In 1976 he worked for the U.S. Forest Service's Engine Company, where he joined the elite crew of the "Hot Shots."

Mr. Scott grew up in Burlingame. After graduating from Burlingame High School, he continued his education at College of San Mateo.

He started the Western Rocky Mountain Elks Foundation and served as chairman for three years. He also was a charter member of Safari International, and was an avid hunter in the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Mongolia.

Mr. Scott loved history, especially the periods of the Civil War and World War II. He traveled to Normandy, France, for the 50th anniversary of D-Day, and talked to many veterans, say family members. He and his wife, Sandy, were world travelers.

Mr. Scott was preceded in death by his father, Jack M. Scott, and brother Gregory C. Scott. He is survived by his wife, Sandra Scott of Boulder Creek; his mother, Elsie Scott of Burlingame; and

sister Darcy Fields of Pacifica.

Memorials in his name may be made to the Department of Veterans Affairs, 3801 Miranda Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94304, Attention: Volunteer Services.

**Viola White**

Community leader, volunteer

A celebration of the life of Viola "Vi" White will be held at 11 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 31, at Abundant Life Christian Fellowship, 2440 Leshorn St. in Mountain View.

Ms. White died Jan. 11 from complications of emphysema at age 83. A longtime resident of Menlo Park, she moved to Cupertino with her husband, Andrew White Jr., a Menlo Park physician, in 2004.

After living in Menlo Park for five years, the Whites moved to Menlo Oaks in 1963, where they were the first black family in the community, according to family members.

Ms. White was born in Houston, Texas. She graduated from Jack Yates High School at age 15. She attended Prairie View College and Houston College for Negroes (now Texas Southern University), and graduated from Howard University in Washington, D.C., on June 3, 1949. That same afternoon she married Andrew W. White Jr. after a seven-year courtship.

Ms. White worked as a secretary in a variety of offices, including those of the Library of Congress. She also worked in the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice. Cooking was one of Ms. White's many talents, say family members. Her best culinary creations were not from recipes, but the result of years of experience mixed with a "little of this and a little of that," her family says. Some of her specialties were okra and tomatoes, black-eyed peas, red beans and rice, and rainbow marble cake.

Ms. White was active in community, Christian and education panels and organizations, including the San Mateo County grand jury, the Sequoia Union

pioneer Van Jones are among those expected to speak on the one-hour Webcast.

Following the Webcast, members of the Green Ribbon Citizens' Committee will lead a discussion in the council chambers about what Menlo Park residents and businesses can do to address climate change.

For more information on the Webcast, and the larger "Focus the Nation" effort, go to [www.FocusTheNation.org](http://www.FocusTheNation.org).

High School District Human Relations Commission, Bible Study Fellowship, the League of Women Voters, and the Menlo-Atherton PTA. She was a consultant for the Race Desegregation Training Institute at Santa Clara University and discussion leader for a Great Books group.

Ms. White became a Christian in the late 1960s and "found the paradoxes in biblical theology endlessly fascinating and thought-provoking," say family members.

She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Dr. Andrew W. White; and daughters, Tamera White, Marlyns White, and Dr. Vaneida White.

Memorials may be made to City Team Ministries, 2304 Zanker Road, San Jose, CA 95131, [www.cityteam.org](http://www.cityteam.org); or Voice of Calvary Ministries, Inc., 1065 Pecan Park Circle, Jackson, MS 39209, [www.vocm.org](http://www.vocm.org).

**Lawrence Low**

Naval Warfare Research Center director

Lawrence J. Low, retired commander in the United States Navy, died Jan. 3 at his home in Woodside after a long illness. Mr. Low, a Woodside resident since 1959, was 86.

Mr. Low was born in Manhattan in 1921. He spent his childhood years in New York City and Paris, France. He earned a degree in mechanical engineering from the Stevens Institute of Technology. He was employed by



Lawrence Low

## POLICE CALLS

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

**ATHERTON****Burglary report:**

■ Television taken from student union building, 1000 block of El Camino Real, Jan. 18.

■ Construction site and plumber's truck broken into, 200 block of Atherton Ave., Jan. 24.

**Fraud report:** Fraudulent checks cashed, first block of Irving Ave., Jan. 24.

**MENLO PARK****Burglary reports:**

■ Vehicles broken into and items taken, 1000 block of Sonoma Ave. and 1000 block of Del Norte Ave., Jan. 18.

■ Forced entry of a storage container, Ravenswood Pier, Jan. 24.

**Stolen vehicle report:** Gold 1990 Toyota Camry stolen, 1300 block of Windermere Ave., Jan. 19.

**Fraud report:** Possible ID theft, 1000 block of Florence Lane, Jan. 18.

**Vandalism report:** ■ Two windows to residence broken, 300 block of Terminal Ave., Jan. 19.

■ Vehicle sprayed with paint, 800 block of Alma St., Jan. 19.

**Grand theft report:** Two laptops stolen, 900 block of Marsh Road, Jan. 22.

**Theft report:** \$300-\$400 of stamps stolen, 1000 Laurel St., Jan. 23.

**Battery and assault report:** Assault in which victim sustained head injury, 700 block of Laurel St., Jan. 22.

**PORTOLA VALLEY**

**Vandalism report:** Vehicle window smashed outside residence, 100 block of Russell Ave., Jan. 16.

**Theft report:** Hybrid HOV lane sticker taken from Toyota Prius, 100 block of Corte Madera Road, Jan. 17.

**Theft report:** Vehicle window smashed; wallet, bag and key taken; valued at \$770, Alpine Road and Willowbrook Drive, Jan. 22.

**WEST MENLO PARK**

**Arson report:** Suspicious fire at restaurant, 3000 block of Alameda de las Pulgas, Jan. 18.

**Theft report:** Stove and toilet stolen from construction site, 3000 block of Alameda de las Pulgas, Jan. 19.

**WOODSIDE**

**Burglary report:** Office and safe broken into; \$544 taken, Canada College, Jan. 17.

**Theft report:** DMV registration tag removed from rear plate of vehicle, 100 block of Marva Oaks Drive, Jan. 22.

the Curtiss Wright Aircraft company of Buffalo, New York, and later at Cornell Aero Lab, where he spent more than a decade in flight dynamics research for aircraft and guided missiles.

He moved to California after eight years of active naval service during World War II and the Korean War. He joined the Stanford Research Institute (now SRI International), where he directed the Naval Warfare Research Center and was involved with research directed toward improvement of combat analyses and war gaming tech-

niques, say family members. He retired in 1984.

He was a private pilot, aviation and automobile enthusiast, model airplane builder, artist and pianist. His hand-crafted scale models of vintage aircraft were once displayed at the Smithsonian Institution, according to his family.

Mr. Low is survived by his wife of 57 years, Mary; son Thomas Low of Belmont; a brother, Chester of Kansas; and three grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, 330 Distel Circle, Los Altos, CA 94022-1404.

**GREEN**

continued from page 17

of the planet's greenhouse gas emissions a year for the next 40 years.

The Webcast is the kickoff event for "Focus the Nation," a nationwide teach-in about curbing the effects of global warming scheduled for Jan. 31 at schools across the nation.

Stanford professor Stephen Schneider, sustainability expert Hunter Lovins, and green jobs

## MARY JANE GORDON WALSH

### MARCH 11, 1929—JANUARY 18, 2008



Mary Jane Walsh, a resident of Atherton, CA since 1969, died at home on Friday, January 18, at the age of 78.

Born Mary Jane Gordon in Queens, New York on March 11, 1929. Known to her friends and family as Jane, she married William Desmond Walsh, of New Haven, Connecticut in 1951 and after various residences in New York and Connecticut, moved to California in 1967.

After moving to the Bay area, Jane was continuously active on behalf of many philanthropic institutions including The American Ireland Fund, Parents' Hospital Association--Sonoma Developmental Center, The Peninsula Center for the Blind, whose annual fundraiser, the Vintage Affair, took place at her home for many years, the Neurosciences Research Institute of

La Jolla, California and the Hoover Institute at Stanford University.

In addition to raising her six children, Jane enjoyed vacationing with family and friends, playing bridge and spending time at her family vacation home in Lake Tahoe, CA. Jane was preceded in death by her father John Gordon, her mother Gertrude Gordon and her sister, Peggy Battenberg.

Jane will be dearly missed by her husband of 57 years, William; her children, Deborah Hirsch (Peter); Caroline Walsh; Michael Walsh (Barbara); Suzanne Tinsley (Ken); Tara Jane Arnold (Mark) and Peter Walsh, her sister Dorothy Zografis and her 11 grandchildren: Timothy and Rebecca Hirsch, Patrick, Riley, Kevin, Brian, Megan, Sean, and Molly Tinsley, Spencer and Maxwell Arnold.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, January 25th at 11am at St. Raymond Catholic Church; 1100 Santa Cruz Avenue; Menlo Park, CA 94025. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in Jane's memory to the Parents' Hospital Association--Sonoma Developmental Center, PO Box 122, Eldridge, CA 95431-0122.

PAID OBITUARY

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**Lifestyles Editor** Jane Knoerle

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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 web site, www.TheAlmanacOnline.com, and occasionally on the Town Square forum.

**TOWN SQUARE FORUM**

POST your views on the Town Square forum at www.TheAlmanacOnline.com

**EMAIL**

your views to: letters@AlmanacNews.com. Indicate if it is a letter to be published.

**MAIL**

or deliver to: Editor at the Almanac, 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

**CALL**

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

## Church and state in Menlo Park

A guest opinion on these pages last week suggesting that the city of Menlo Park was violating the separation of church and state by renting the City Council chambers to the Christian Science Church has set off a flood of discussion on the Almanac's Web site.

The op-ed writer, Martin Engel, often shares his opinions in our printed pages and in Town Square, at TheAlmanacOnline.com. And in this case he struck a nerve. In our opinion, Mr.

Engel failed to consider the protection for free speech that we have in this country. If public buildings owned by any government agency are made available to the public for a fee, as is the case in many communities, it would be extremely difficult for that community to discriminate among renters on the basis of religion, or any other message that might be presented or discussed. In the case of Menlo Park, City Attorney Bill McClure says that a nondiscrimination policy governs use of the council chambers, which means that the city cannot exclude anyone.

Mr. Engel argued in his op-ed piece that because the church advertised a lecture titled "Prayer and the Environment" that was to be held in the council chambers, there is an appearance that the city is endorsing the religion — a huge stretch in our opinion. The council chambers are available and have been used

by a variety of public groups over the years, ranging from the Almanac for a discussion of the Brown Act, to a City Council candidate forum sponsored by Linfield Oaks homeowners.

Using Mr. Engel's analogy, could the city be seen as endorsing the Almanac's editorial policy because the newspaper was holding an event in City Hall? Or was the city endorsing the agenda of the Linfield Oaks homeowners, who happened to sponsor a candidate debate in the chambers?

Without a doubt the city should reserve the right to bar speakers who plan to violate the law or bring harm to citizens in some way while using the chambers. But such a decision has yet to be taken as far as we know. And if that authority is ever invoked, it should be done only after extraordinary scrutiny.

Here is the short and complete text of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The city of Menlo Park is certainly not making law regarding the establishment or free exercise of religion by leasing the council chambers to a church for several hours. But if it attempted to somehow restrict users of the chambers from exercising their freedom of speech, it would violate the First Amendment. In our opinion, the city's nondiscrimination policy is the only option.

**EDITORIAL**  
The opinion of The Almanac

**LETTERS**  
Our readers write

### Mayor made right call on Dumbarton rail

Editor:

I'm pleased we have a Menlo Park mayor who is willing to both advocate for smart and useful transit and be critical of some proposed wasteful transportation projects.

Being "pro-transit" does not mean one rubber-stamps their approval of any and all transit projects. They must make sense for Menlo Park and the region at large.

The proposed Dumbarton Rail project is one such example. Not

only does this project hurt the environment by incorporating 19th century technology (heavy rail and diesel fuel), it doesn't serve the transit needs of residents on the Peninsula and will not address regional traffic problems or transit connectivity.

The traffic corridor it seeks

to improve is not in the Bay Area's top 10 most congested commutes, and from 2007 Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) data, is one of the least congested traffic corridors. There are also signifi-

See **LETTERS**, next page

### Our Regional Heritage

Between 35 and 40 students attended Menlo Park's Free Kindergarten in 1885. The program was funded by Jane Stanford, who helped establish the kindergarten movement in the U.S. and personally supported such schools in the Bay Area.

Menlo Park Historical Association



## LETTERS

Continued from previous page

cant environmental concerns with constructing this project through marsh restoration areas and neighborhoods. The very low numbers of cars it may one day eliminate from the road would not offset the damage this system would cause.

Yes, we need vast and sweeping improvements in regional transit, and I agree that 21st century thinking is in order, so let's not get stuck with antiquated piecemeal projects that lock down too many transit dollars for years to come.

**Katie Ferrick**  
Bay Road, Menlo Park

### Explaining the science in Christian Science

*Editor:*

It seems important to set the record straight in a couple of areas in regards to the guest opinion published last week about the Christian Science lecture "Prayer and the Environment."

First, the writers made the statement that Christian Science "opposes secular science." This is not accurate. The definition of science as used in the name Christian Science means "a system or method reconciling practical ends with spiritual laws" (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).

Countless individuals who study Christian Science are physicists, chemists, biologists, and astrophysicists. There is

## Free speech protected in council chambers

By Greg Conlon

The city of Menlo Park made the right decision by allowing the Christian Science Church to hold a lecture in its council chambers for two reasons.

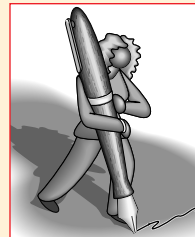
First, the establishment clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution is not being violated because allowing the lecture has only **incidental** benefit to the church.

The Supreme Court addresses the establishment clause in *Lamb's Chapel vs. Center Moriche Union School District* in a 1993 precedent-setting case. Here a school district allowed community and civic groups to use their public school facilities after hours, but denied a church use of the school for showing a religious film at a public meeting.

The court rejected the argument that it would be a violation of the establishment clause because the film was not shown during school hours, was not sponsored by the school, was open to the public, and there was no realistic danger that the community would think that the school district was endorsing religion, and any benefit to religion would have been incidental.

The same conclusion would apply when the

city of Menlo Park permits religious groups to use its chambers for a lecture that would not be given during business hours, not be sponsored by the City Council, would be open to the public and there would not be a realistic danger the



GUEST  
OPINION

community would think that the City Council was endorsing the religious views expressed. Therefore, any benefit to the church would be incidental and not a violation of the establishment clause.

The second reason the city made the right decision by allowing the lecture is it would be a violation of the free speech clause of the same First Amendment. This clause allows different types of speech in different venues — a public forum like streets, sidewalks and parks, a limited quasi public forum, like schools and government buildings that are thrown open to various community, civic or religious organizations and private non-public forums, like privately owned audito-

riums. The general rules for public forums and such quasi public forums dictate that the content of the speech must be neutral, and not restrictive to a particular viewpoint, including a religious viewpoint.

Therefore, the Supreme Court in *Lamb's Chapel* addressed the free speech clause and decided that if a school (a government building) is thrown open to public community or civic organizations it cannot exclude religious organizations from the same buildings, because it would be discriminating against a religious viewpoint.

The Menlo Park City Council has the right to restrict its chambers as a quasi-public forum. But if it allows any groups to use their chambers, either civic or community, it must allow religious groups and their viewpoints. For these reasons I encourage the City Council to continue its present policy of allowing the chambers to be open to all organizations.

**Greg Conlon lives in Atherton and is a member of the Church of Christ, Scientist in Menlo Park. He is also an attorney and practices exclusively in Washington, D.C.**

absolutely no antipathy to "secular science."

Second, there is case law to substantiate the use of public buildings by church-related organizations. It has been argued and won in the U.S. Supreme Court that use of public buildings cannot be restricted because of content of speech.

I am pleased that the city of Menlo Park did not violate federal law and restrict the use of the City Council chambers by any valid group or organization

because of content. Any thoughtful approach to solving the issues in the environment is welcome, but more important is the need of the city to be law-abiding.

**Elizabeth Crecelius Schwartz**  
Altschul Avenue, Menlo Park

### Committee said no on historic artifact ordinance

*Editor:*

Atherton's historic artifact ordinance came before the General Plan Committee in 2006. It

was vetoed by a 6-2 vote.

The City Council passed the ordinance 4-1 the next week although members of the General Plan Committee waited until midnight to speak against it.

It is a bad ordinance that leaves the town open to costly lawsuits and divisiveness between neighbors. I urge the formation of a voluntary Atherton historic foundation and creation of something bigger than ourselves. We need something that will unify and satisfy

all objectives of preserving the history of Atherton.

**Elizabeth Lewis**  
Alejandro Avenue, Atherton  
Member, General  
Plan Committee

### Keystone cop tactics in chase for mail thieves

*Editor:*

Why the massive law enforcement response to a report of suspected mail theft in the Ladera area last week, with possibly 20 police units, dogs, guns and aircraft?

Why were concerned residents told there was **no** danger when the reported reason for the huge response was that the suspects were armed, businesses were shut down, freeway traffic was impeded, and residents' own eyes belied that statement.

This level of response was an incredible waste of taxpayers' money. There are many questions that need to be asked about this incident: How could one suspect manage to completely evade the officer? How physically fit are sheriff's deputies? Why were residents and businesses not told what all the fuss was about? How did things get so out of control? Was the over-the-top response because the suspects were black in a predominantly white, affluent area?

The San Mateo County Sheriff's Office needs new leadership that can attend to the responsibilities of the position and not get involved in scandals

**Janet Davis**  
Alpine Road, Menlo Park

## Whom will we choose in the Feb. 5 primary?

By Trish Hooper

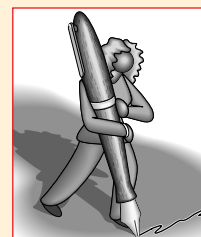
Most of us who never miss voting are used to thinking ahead to a June primary. Now we're faced with waking up on Feb. 5 ready to go to the polls with our minds made up. Made up on whom we want to be the next president of these not very United States.

It is safe to say that this country is in a bad mood. Most of us are discouraged, anxious, and frustrated over the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; the lack of enough votes in Congress to override the president's vetoes. We are discouraged with the inability of Congress to make fundamental changes in President Bush's demands for funding his wars.

It is against our principles to appear to be undercutting the troops fighting in danger every day. Then, just a few weeks ago, our anxieties over the economy took first place in our list of worries. So who will we vote for on Feb. 5 to replace President Bush?

For Republicans, the straight-talking Sen. John McCain has made a great comeback. But he does not think women should have reproductive rights. He has

never said how he would care for millions of unwanted, unplanned children should he campaign for compulsory childbirth and against *Roe vs. Wade*. That is a strong deterrent for many women who hope to see family planning available once again across the globe.



GUEST  
OPINION

For Democrats, voting for a new president has never been more challenging. Sen. Hillary Clinton is a seasoned, tried-under-fire politician, with her husband who was one of the most popular

presidents. But he was also one of the most reviled because of his sexual indiscretions. Many admire Hillary; many are wary of her not so straight talk on occasion; many will vote for her because of her years in the White House and knowing how things work. Many will vote for her because she is a woman, truly capable of becoming president.

Then there is Sen. Barack Obama, a voice

of fresh air with a strong clean wind blowing in back of him. A wind which is often composed of younger voters who want to get rid of the old stereotypes, who want to believe that new hope, new visions for this broken country are possible. They'd like to be part of the revival.

Barack Obama has campaigned with the emphasis on this hope, on the need for real changes that involve all of us, young and old. He speaks for diplomacy instead of war; he speaks of working together to bring unity to our country; he speaks to the heart of us, not just to our fears. He is articulate, talented, and has realistic views of what this country desperately needs now: change and vision.

And who knows? John Edwards is a vibrant campaigner, and he has made excellent points in his speeches. There's another good choice.

What will we do on Feb. 5? Whom will we choose? We don't know yet, but don't ever forget that one vote **does** count. Make sure it's yours and mine.

**Trish Hooper**  
lives on Portola Road in Portola Valley

# Property Showcase by HUGH CORNISH



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- One bedroom and full bath attached to the three-car garage
- On-site fruit orchard stretches out beyond swimming pool
- Pool house with two dressing rooms, each with a full bath
- Opportunity to build your dream home

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