

Whole Foods executive: We're not coming to Menlo Park. Page 5

The Almanac

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

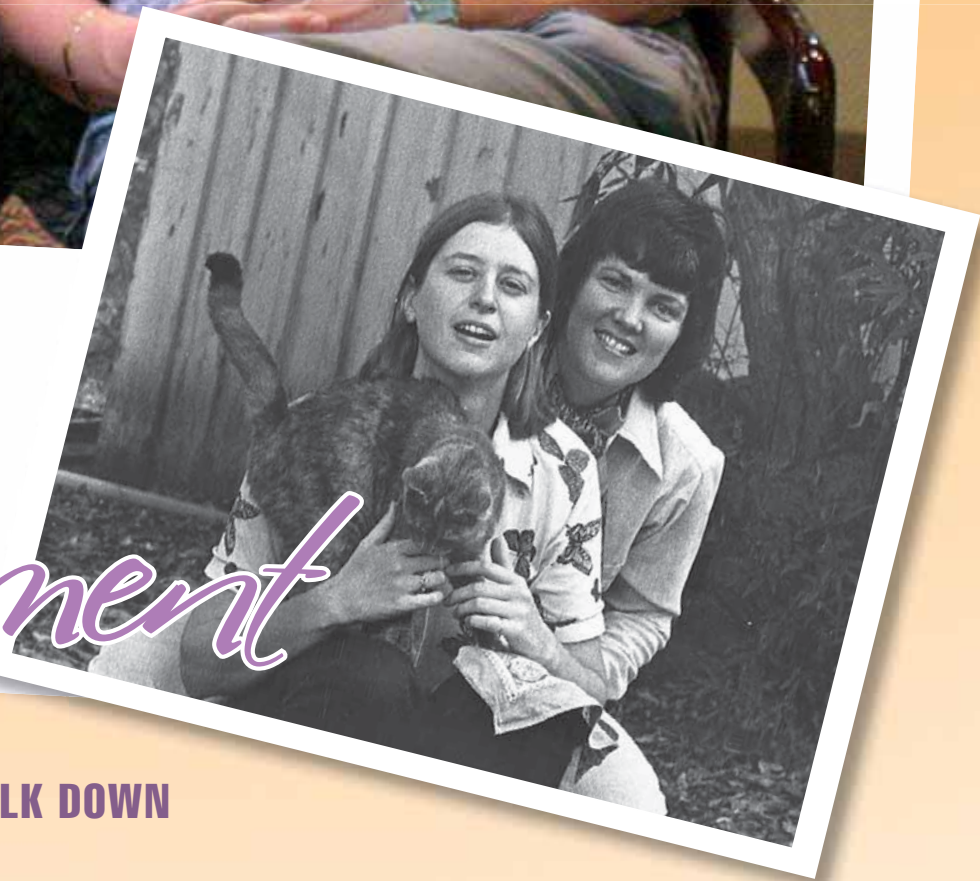
AUGUST 13, 2008

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VOL. 43 NO. 50



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**A LOCAL LESBIAN COUPLE PREPARES FOR A WALK DOWN THE AISLE AFTER HIGH COURT CLEARS THE WAY
PAGE 8**



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Jami Arami \$839,000

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Great Opportunity in the "Hidden Willows!" Lrg lot w/2 2BR/1BA ranch units.

Joe Carcione \$1,088,000

Great opportunity! 3BR/1BA home with lots of potential.

Silvina Gallelli \$495,000

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Katherine Clark Price upon request

HAYWARD

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Gary Mckae \$350,000

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Paul Skrabo \$4,400,000

PALO ALTO

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Charming 3BR/2BA home in sought after Midtown neighborhood location.

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PORTOLA VALLEY

Storybook Charm for this Country Cottage. Beautifully remodeled kitchen.

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Matt Shanks \$839,000

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Lilly Chow \$799,000

Charming 3BR/2BA home w/Studio/Office with separate entrance.

Vivian Vella \$658,000

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Dana Cappiello \$437,000

SAN JOSE

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Camille Eder \$788,000

SANTA CLARA

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Wendy Wu \$719,950

Best priced 1BR/1BA condo in Woodborough. Ground floor end unit. Remodeled kitchen.

Matt Shanks \$239,000

WOODSIDE

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Gary McKae \$4,987,345

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Dana Cappiello \$899,000



REDWOOD CITY – Don't miss this charming & authentic Spanish style home. Grand LR w/high, cathedral beam ceiling, inlaid hrdwd flrs, FR & custom arched windows. Large DR. Kitchen w/cozy breakfast rm adjoins deck & yard for easy entertaining.

Cathy McCarty \$1,179,000



REDWOOD CITY – Well preserved and renovated office building. Highly visible location. Zoned industrial restricted many uses for the owner user. 5 offices and common area and 5 off street parking spaces.

Matt Shanks \$875,000



REDWOOD CITY – Remodeled 3 Bedroom, 2-1/2 Bath, Tile and Hardwood Floors, New Landscaping.

Vivian Vella \$599,000



SAN CARLOS – Newly remodeled 4 bedroom 2.5 bath in San Carlos. Beautiful finishes include, granite, stainless appliances, natural stone and hardwood flooring throughout. Lovely master suite with double vanity.

Jami Arami \$1,195,000



SAN FRANCISCO – In the heart of South Beach this spacious 2BR condo has spectacular, absolutely unique views of both the Bay Bridge & the Bay itself. This corner, top floor unit has an entire curved wall of windows which accentuate the panorama.

Joe Carcione \$1,088,000

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

Call of the wild

Two young fawns and their mom trot along Ohlone Street in Portola Valley in late July.

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On the cover

Iris Harrell and Ann Benson sit together at Ladera Community Church, waiting to meet with the minister who will perform their marriage ceremony next month. After 30 years together, they reflect on how they met and are preparing for their wedding. Old photo courtesy of the couple; Almanac photo by Veronica Weber. Story on **Page 8**.

CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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Between a Rock and a Hard Place?

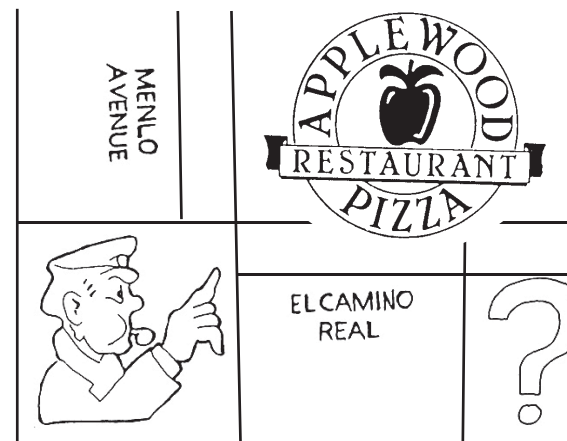


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Roberts Tip of the Week

Bananas About Plantains

You may have noticed them at your local produce market. If you grew up under the swaying palm trees of a Caribbean island, you may have eaten them for as far as you can remember. Plantains are on the verge of becoming well known throughout the U.S., as more and more people get a taste of the fruit that has long been a staple in other parts of the world. Plantains are often sold quite green, when they are virtually raw and inedible. It is only when they have ripened till almost black outside that the fruit turns sweet and banana-like. The most common way of fixing plantains in the Caribbean is sliced and fried in oil – a sort of plantain French fry. Other popular treatments include being paired with citrus fruits in sweet jams and relishes, or spiced with curry powder in chicken and fish dishes. Wherever they appear, a splash of rum seems to bring out the best in them!



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HINT: The dark-red bananas you may come across occasionally are probably fleshed plantain relative from Cuba.

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'06 Windy Oaks,
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'04 Mount Eden Vineyard,
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'06 Windy Oaks,
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Scenic seascapes showing seashore

Do you like to go to the beach? Do you like taking photos? Boy, does the California Coastal Commission have a contest for you!

Amateur shutterbugs are invited to enter the commission's 2008 photography contest by Aug. 22 with photos of: the "scenic coast;" the ways people use the coast; or coastal wildlife. Pictures must be taken from public places and wildlife must not be menaced in the pursuit of photo opportunities.

The prizes include two-night stays in either Sonoma or Orange county, or four tickets for a Hornblower yacht cruise.

For details, go to www.CoastForYou.org or call (800) 262-7848.

If you dislike photography and beaches, this item needn't be a total loss. If you enjoy tongue-twisters, try saying the headline five times fast.

He's a fire-starter

Kudos to the Riekes Center for Human Enhancement for livening up the latest downtown Menlo Park block party. In an unusual twist from the booths, bands and bounce houses, a young outdoorsman from the Riekes Center demonstrated how to spark a fire using tinder. An appreciative and slightly apprehensive crowd applauded when the ball of woody fluff burst into flames.

The Riekes Center offers a plethora of afterschool enrichment classes in topics ranging from nature and fitness to dance and music.

New faces at Woodside elementary

Incoming kindergarteners won't be the only fresh faces at Woodside elementary on the first day of school. It will be the first day of school for two newcomers, Principal Diana Abbati and Amy Rettberg, who's filling the newly created role of dean.

Ms. Abbati comes from Ross School in Marin County and Ms. Rettberg recently served at the Sycamore Valley School in Danville.

Local News

MENLO PARK | A THERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Whole Foods exec: We're not coming to Menlo Park

■ Grocery store has no interest in the former Cadillac site on El Camino Real.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

News that Whole Foods may open a store at the abandoned Cadillac dealership at 1300 El Camino Real in Menlo Park had potential shoppers intrigued and local businesses concerned.

It turns out the specialty grocery store's chances of actually moving to Menlo Park are slim to none.

David Lannon, president of Whole Foods' Northern California operation, said the specialty grocery store chain has "no interest" in moving to El Camino Real in Menlo Park, and he's unaware

of any talks to open a store at the former Cadillac site.

"We haven't talked about that location, and we'll never talk about that location — it'd be overkill to have a fourth store in that area," Mr. Lannon told The Almanac, referring to nearby store locations in Redwood City, Palo Alto and Los Altos. "If you go up El Camino Real one way or another, you run into one of our stores in a mile or so."

Mr. Lannon's comments run contrary to those of developer Jeff Warmoth, who told the City Council in August 2007 that his firm, San Mateo-based Sand Hill Property Co., was in talks to bring the grocery store to the

former Cadillac site.

Mr. Warmoth, who has built Whole Foods stores in Los Altos and Cupertino, said his firm was in talks with the specialty grocery store at one time, but has ceased those talks until the firm actually has an approved project to build.

Mr. Warmoth has proposed building a grocery store, restaurant, health and fitness club, underground and street-level parking and 58,000 square feet of office space on the 3.45-acre site. He said a grocery store may not end up being the major tenant if and when the project is approved, and noted another large retail store could fill the space.

Mr. Lannon's comments will no doubt be a relief to local business owners opposed to

Whole Foods moving to the site. Richard Draeger, co-owner of Draeger's market in downtown Menlo Park, previously told The Almanac his store could become "unfeasible" if Whole Foods moved to Menlo Park. An anonymous flier started appearing around town several weeks ago opposed to the grocery store's supposed plans to set up a Menlo Park store.

Clarification

In the Aug. 6 issue of The Almanac, the story "Anonymous flier targets Whole Foods' proposal for El Camino Real" said that Mr. Warmoth's project required a zoning amendment to accommodate taller buildings and fewer parking spaces, when the project would actually require a rezoning. ■

Public hearing on petition for charter school

A public hearing is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 13, on a petition to the Sequoia Union High School District to start a second four-year charter high school in the fall of 2009 that would be modeled on Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City.

The Sequoia district governing board meets at 4:30 p.m. in Carrington Hall on the campus of Sequoia High School at 1201 Brewster Ave. in Redwood City. The board may discuss the petition, but has not scheduled any action. A staff report and board recommendation is due Sept. 17, according to a district statement.

The June 24 petition is from the Summit Institute, a new nonprofit teacher training program started by former Summit Prep executive

See **SUMMIT**, page 13



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

You paint it, he sprays it

Menlo Park maintenance worker Nelson Gutierrez cleans graffiti off the bowl of the Burgess Park skate park on Aug. 7. Vandals tagged the skate park and some buildings on Santa Cruz Avenue sometime between 11:30 p.m. Aug. 6 and 4:30 a.m. Aug. 7, according to police reports.

Menlo Park election: Three file for two council seats

■ Rick Ciardella will challenge incumbents Cohen and Fergusson on Nov. 4.

By **Rory Brown**
Almanac Staff Writer

For a while, it looked as if incumbents Andy Cohen and Kelly Fergusson might not have any opposition in their bids for re-election to the Menlo

Park City Council, but thanks to local business owner Rick Ciardella, that won't be the case.

Mr. Ciardella, a local landscape architect who sits on the board of directors of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce, filed nomination papers with

the city clerk's office on Friday afternoon, Aug. 8, beating the 5 p.m. deadline, and pitting him against the incumbents in the Nov. 4 election.

Mr. Ciardella could not be immediately reached for comment.

Mayor Cohen and Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson have publicly declared support for one another's re-election bids,

and both incumbents filed their nomination papers on Aug. 7, according to Interim City Clerk Sherry Kelly.

Longtime West Bay Sanitary District board member Ronald Shepherd and Environmental Quality Commissioner Jeff Jahnke had taken out nomination papers, but neither filed

See **ELECTION**, page 13

Menlo Park and Atherton join high-speed rail standoff

■ Cities sign on to lawsuit against Pacheco Pass route; state officials confident it will be dismissed.

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park and Atherton officials don't want high-speed passenger trains zooming through town, but state officials say the local segment of the Caltrain corridor is a key to connecting Northern California and Southern California by train.

Now the court will have a say in the matter.

Both cities joined a group of environmental and rail nonprofits suing the California High Speed Rail Authority on the basis the authority picked an environmentally insensitive route in plans to connect San Francisco and Los Angeles with electric trains that would reach speeds up to 220 miles per hour. The trains would not stop in Menlo Park or Atherton, but a station is tentatively planned for either Palo Alto or Redwood City.

The lawsuit was filed Aug. 8 in Sacramento County Superior Court, and both city councils voted Aug. 5 in separate closed-session meetings to join the lawsuit. Neither city is required to help cover the costs of the suit, according to Atherton City Attorney Marc Hynes and Menlo Park City Manager Glen Rojas.

The lawsuit comes as high-speed rail supporters are trying to build momentum for Proposition 1, the \$9.95 billion ballot

measure that would provide the first wave of funding for the high-speed rail project, and is expected to be on the Nov. 4 ballot.

The lawsuit won't keep Proposition 1 off the ballot, but if successful, it could require the authority to conduct more strenuous environmental review, adding costs and delays to the estimated \$45 billion project.

Behind the lawsuit

The lawsuit is being spearheaded by environmental and rail nonprofit groups that were previous supporters of the high-speed train project, but have since become vocal critics of the rail authority's selection of the Pacheco Pass as the route to connect trains from the Central Valley to the Bay Area.

Under the Pacheco plan, high-speed trains would connect to Gilroy from the Central Valley and shoot up the Caltrain corridor to connect to San Francisco. That route would cut through sensitive wetland areas, encourage suburban sprawl and serve fewer riders than the Altamont Pass route, according to the suing nonprofits.

Under the Altamont plan, trains would continue north into the San Joaquin Valley before heading west and crossing a new bridge across the Bay to connect to the Caltrain line — a route that could still pass through portions of Menlo Park and Atherton or could bypass the cities entirely.

High-speed rail officials are standing by the environmental reports that say Pacheco

Pass is the best route.

"We are confident that the environmental work was done appropriately and the findings of that work are sound," said Dan Leavitt, deputy director for the high-speed rail authority. "We're confident the environmental documents will hold up against any lawsuit."

The nonprofits leading the lawsuit include the Planning and Conservation League, the Transportation Solutions Defense and Educational Fund, the California Rail Foundation and Bay Rail Alliance.

Local impacts

It's no secret that Menlo Park and Atherton officials are more concerned with the local impacts of grade separations than the regional concerns expressed by the nonprofits leading the lawsuit.

The project would require grade separations — building overpasses or underpasses to separate the tracks from the roadway at six local intersections — resulting in years-long construction impacts for homes and businesses located near the Caltrain tracks.

"It's about leverage," said Menlo Park Councilman Richard Cline. "This is not a position on high-speed rail, it's a stake in the ground for Menlo Park to have a voice."

While Atherton officials have long been opposed to high-speed trains zooming through town, the closed-session vote was the first action regarding the project taken by Menlo Park council members.

The sudden closed-session vote "surprised" Judge Quentin Kopp, chair of the

high-speed rail authority board, but he said the lawsuit "should be thrown out" and recent polling suggests the high-speed rail bond measure will pass in November and move forward as planned.

"I'm surprised that without any notice, Menlo Park apparently decided to join a lawsuit," a chuckling Judge Kopp told The Almanac. "I am confident the lawsuit will be rejected."

Menlo Park Councilman John Boyle, the lone council member of either city to vote against joining the lawsuit, said in Menlo Park's case, the city should study the potential impacts — positive and negative — of high-speed rail before signing on to a lawsuit regarding the project.

"It sure seems like the cart before the horse," Mr. Boyle said. "To take a position before the public even sees the pros and cons of if the issue — I don't think that's how we should do this."

The two councils' decision to join the lawsuit pleased local high-speed rail critics — many of whom own homes or businesses near the Caltrain tracks, and would be severely impacted by the construction and operation of a high-speed rail line in their respective backyards.

"I'm ecstatic as you can be about a lawsuit," said Felton Gables resident Russ Peterson, a former high-speed rail supporter who has become a critic of the project. "We're told there will be impacts and they'll be mitigated, but it's never really been defined what those impacts or mitigations are going to be." ■

McKeithen denies involvement in Johns case

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

■ ATHERTON

When the San Mateo County Civil Grand Jury admonished "at least one" Atherton City Council member for independently investigating complaints about ex-finance director John Johns, was its report referring to Kathy McKeithen?

The grand jury report, issued in July, doesn't name any names, but Ms. McKeithen and Charles Marsala are considered the council members most closely associated with events surrounding the investigation and firing of Mr. Johns last fall. Mr. Marsala has requested numerous documents concerning Mr. Johns, and Ms. McKeithen allegedly asked for the investigation to be dropped and questioned town staff about Mr. Johns, according to the former interim city manager, Wende Protzman.

Ms. McKeithen vehemently denies those charges.

Ms. McKeithen, who is running for reelection in November, said she asked a few questions of town staff early on, but has otherwise steered clear of the imbroglio.

"There's a fine line where due diligence as a council member ends and meddling begins," she said.

Mr. Johns has a wrongful termination lawsuit currently pending against the town. He allegedly engaged in bullying and other inappropriate behavior on the job, according to an investigation report by private attorney Mary Topliff. He was fired in October by Ms. Protzman.

Ms. Protzman said Ms. McKeithen questioned her and assistant finance director Paula Pierce about Mr. Johns' behavior, according to her sworn declaration filed in response to the lawsuit. Ms. Protzman also said that Ms. McKeithen made a statement that she took as a request to make the investigation go away.

Ms. McKeithen denied ever making such a statement, and said she doesn't know why Ms. Protzman would claim that she did.

"Never. Never," she told The Almanac, calling such a request "the most pointless thing imaginable."

As a member of the Atherton Finance Committee, Ms. McKeithen said she had been a supporter of the job Mr. Johns did as finance director.

"I don't know whether John Johns is innocent or guilty, and that's not my responsibility and it's not my business," Ms. McKeithen said. "I have no vested interest in seeing someone who might have been doing something wrong stay on (with the town), no matter how good a finance director he was. It's far better to get rid of him."

Ms. McKeithen said she only asked Ms. Pierce about Mr. Johns after she heard that Ms. Pierce had a problem with him.

"Paula Pierce and I have known each other for years, and for years she's said, 'John is one of the best people I've ever worked with.' I asked, not to investigate, but (because) I couldn't help but wonder if I had misjudged John," Ms. McKeithen said.

Ms. McKeithen said she did not ask Ms. Pierce any other questions and that she immediately notified Ms. Protzman. Other than filing her own court declaration after receiving a subpoena from Mr. Johns' attorney, she

hasn't spoken with any town employees about the situation, requested any documents or even opened the investigator's report on Mr. Johns, she said.

Ms. Protzman, now the deputy city manager of Solana Beach in Southern California, did not respond to requests for comment by the Almanac's press deadline.

Mr. Marsala, who has made public the information he gleaned from Mr. Johns' e-mails, cell phone records and town credit

Four run for council; deadline extended

Would-be Atherton council candidates have a few more days to make up their minds. The filing deadline for the Nov. 4 City Council election is extended to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 13.

The five-day extension in the filing period was triggered because incumbent Jim Janz is not running for re-election. The other incumbent, Kathy McKeithen, is running for a third term.

So far, there are four candidates in the race for two seats on the council. The most recent addition is Sam Goodman, a member

of the town's audit committee, who said he filed his papers on Monday, Aug. 11.

The other candidates are property management company co-owner Elizabeth Lewis, who was a candidate in Atherton's June special election, and former Atherton police chief and city manager Richard Moore.

One other person has taken out candidate papers but not yet filed them. Unlike San Mateo County and other local towns, Atherton does not release the names of people who have withdrawn candidate nomination papers.

Clark Kepler and Kelly White wed on 8/8/8

Aug. 8, with the magical numbers of 8/8/8, was a lucky day for hundreds of Bay Area wedding couples, including Kelly White and Clark Kepler, both of Menlo Park. Mr. Kepler is the owner of Kepler's bookstore, one of Menlo Park's best known businesses.

They were married Friday afternoon in an intimate wedding in the gardens of the home of Dr. William Dement

of Stanford and his wife Pat Dement. A reception followed.

This was the first marriage for both Ms. White and Mr. Kepler, who will both be celebrating 50th birthdays in the coming year. The bride wore a champagne-color silk charmeuse gown. Her mother, Audrey White, flew out from Amagansett, New York, for the nuptials.

The couple met three-and-a-half years ago at a yoga class in

Redwood City. "When I went in to Kepler's to special order a book, I left my card. It had my address and phone number and Clark called," recalls Ms. White.

For the past six years, the bride has been a professional organizer, helping people reduce clutter and get the best use from their home and offices.

A weekend getaway served as the couple's honeymoon.

Supes to create panel to investigate misconduct

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

More than a year after Sheriff Greg Munks was caught at a Las Vegas brothel — but not charged — San Mateo County supervisors will soon have a tool to investigate this or other kinds of misconduct by county elected officials.

On Aug. 5, the board unanimously introduced an ordinance to create an independent Citizens Review Panel to investigate future allegations of serious official misconduct by elected officials.

The supervisors plan to adopt the ordinance Aug. 12 and it would

go into effect in 30 days. When it does, the Board of Supervisors can appoint a review panel of three, five, or seven members with full authority to investigate allegations against one of the county's elected officials. The panel will have the power to subpoena witnesses and obtain documents.

After an investigation, the panel can recommend that the Board of Supervisors casts a vote of censure or "no confidence." It can also recommend that the board refer the case to law enforcement or a civil grand jury to seek removal of the official. It will be up to the supervisors to

decide what action to take.

Before the new ordinance takes effect, the board has no authority over other elected county officials, such as the sheriff, treasurer/tax collector, assessor or coroner. They can be removed from office only by three methods, according to County Counsel Michael Murphy: a recall vote of the electorate; a conviction for specified crimes; or an accusation by a civil grand jury of "willful or corrupt misconduct in office."

The panel, as suggested by supervisors Jerry Hill and Adrienne Tissier, will be made up of government professionals, such as retired judges, former county or city administrators, grand jury forepersons, or district attorneys.

Since the ordinance looks forward, not backward, the detention of Sheriff Munks at a Las Vegas brothel in April 2007 will not likely be investigated by this process. "We're looking at this prospectively, not retroactively," said Supervisor Hill. ■

Mayor calls another homeless confab

Menlo Park Mayor Andy Cohen is calling another community meeting on homelessness, this one focusing on the work of InnVision, which provides homeless services in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties.

The meeting will run from 7 to 10 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 14, in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

InnVision runs the Clara-Mateo Alliance homeless shelter at the Veterans Affairs campus in Menlo Park. The shelter is scheduled to close in the next year due to expansion and renovations planned for VA facilities.

Mayor Cohen said he wants the public to attend the meeting, ask questions, offer ideas, and get involved.

Block party

Menlo Park will hold the last of its downtown block parties for the summer on Wednesday, Aug. 20, from 6 to 9:30 p.m. on downtown Santa Cruz Avenue. There will be live bands, food, children's activities, and nonprofit booths.

Meetings canceled

The Menlo Park City Council will not hold regular meetings on Aug. 12 or Aug. 19, and the Parks and Recreation Commission will

■ MENLO WATCH

not meet on Aug. 20. Council meetings will resume Aug. 26, and the parks commission is tentatively scheduled to resume its monthly meetings starting Sept. 17.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



Low Offers

Dear Gloria,

Our home has been on the market for over two months. We did have an offer early on but it was considerably below our asking price. Our agent is saying that the market is telling us what our price should be. Do you agree with that? And if so, is the price supposed to be that of the low offer or how do we now know what the right price is?

Madeline K.

Dear Madeline,

Your agent is absolutely right — the market has spoken to you if your house has been on the MLS and exposed to the public and still isn't selling. And there is an old adage that "your first offer is your best offer". Why is that? Because the party making the first offer will put their best foot forward since the property is new on the market and presumably they really want

the house. It is understandable that you might be reluctant to respond to an offer that is less than asking, especially when it is just on the market. And sellers have a difficult time being objective about their own house. But try to look at it from the buyer's point of view. They have heard all the bad news that's out there and know that they are in the drivers seat. If you won't sell your house to them at what they perceive to be the right price, the one down the street will. And even though these are not the best of times, if your house were properly priced, it would have sold. Ask your agent to review with you what has happened in the market since your house went on multiple. That will tell you what other houses in your neighborhood have sold for and what has come on as competition for you. The housing prices are not in an upward trend so do not make the mistake of following the market down. Get ahead of the market and reprice your house appropriately.

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



NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING CITY OF MENLO PARK PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING OF AUGUST 25, 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/Michael Henkin/330 August Circle: Request for a use permit for excavation into a required rear yard setback for a lightwell associated with a basement in the R-1-S (Residential Single-Family Suburban) zoning district. The lightwell would encroach a maximum of 7.3 feet into the required rear yard.

Use Permit/Farhad Ashrafi/611 College Avenue: 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. As part of this development, the following three heritage trees are proposed for removal: A Hollywood juniper on the right side of the property with a 18-inch diameter at breast height (DBH) in good condition, a Hollywood juniper on the right side of the property with a 15-inch DBH in good condition, and a Hollywood juniper in the middle of the property with a 15-inch DBH in poor condition.

Use Permit and Variance/Roger Kohler/1066 Pine Street:

Request for a use permit to demolish a single-story, single-family residence and detached garage and construct two new two-story, single-family residences on a substandard lot with regard to lot width in the R-3 (Apartment) zoning district. In addition, a request for a variance to reduce the required separation between the main buildings on the subject lot and the main building on the adjacent right side property from 20 feet to 14 feet, nine inches.

As part of this development, the following heritage tree is proposed for removal: a redwood in the rear yard with a 16-inch diameter at breast height (DBH) in good condition.

PUBLIC MEETING ITEMS

Review of Substantial Conformance/145 El Camino Real:

Review of an existing commercial building for substantial conformance with earlier City approvals with regard to exterior color.

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, August 25 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.

The project file may be viewed 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 call the Planning Division if there are any questions and/or for complete agenda information (650) 330-6702.

Si usted necesita más información sobre este proyecto, por favor llame al 650-330-6702, y pregunte por un asistente que hable español.

DATED: August 7, 2008

PUBLISHED: August 13, 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

Published in THE ALMANAC on August 13, 2008.



A 30 YEAR Engagement

A LOCAL LESBIAN COUPLE PREPARES FOR A WALK DOWN THE AISLE AFTER HIGH COURT CLEARS THE WAY

STORY BY SELENA SIMMONS-DUFFIN

PHOTOS BY VERONICA WEBER

It's a cool Tuesday afternoon in late July, and out the window, the sun washes over the blond hills of Portola Valley. Iris Harrell and Ann Benson sit on their living room couch, chatting, sipping apple juice, waiting. In the kitchen, the caterers prepare deviled eggs, Black Forest ham palmiers, and skewers of fresh mozzarella with tortellini.

Downstairs, their outfits hang in the closet: elegant, flowing pants with matching jackets. Iris, well known on the Peninsula as founder of Harrell Remodeling, even bought heels to gain those last few inches on Ann's 6-foot height. Tucked away in the women's desks, RSVPs are collecting.

After almost 30 years together, Iris and Ann are preparing to get married. On Sept. 7, they will marry at Ladera Community Church, and then their home will fill with more than 150 guests for the wedding reception. There will be music, hors d'oeuvres, chatting. "We'll have a spread on the large table, and then servers coming through the guests," says Sandy Throne, the couple's wedding coordinator.

Soon, the caterers are ready with their samples. Ann and Iris move around the kitchen, tasting from each platter, delighting in the presentation and the flavors. Iris asks for wheat bread on the cocktail sandwiches. They try the iced tea.

By the end of the afternoon, the reception menu is set. That leaves only the meeting with the minister who will marry them — the last task after many weeks preparing for the wedding. They're almost ready.

'In our lifetime'

"We've always said, in our lifetime we'd like to be able to get mar-



Ann and Iris, clockwise from upper left, in 1979, soon after they first met; relaxing in their Portola Valley home; tasting samples and talking with owner Peggy Welch and executive chef Kevin Kerciu of A Tasteful Affair, the caterer for the wedding reception; Ann adjusts one of Iris' wedding outfit options during a Macy's shopping spree; the Rev. Alfred Williams of Ladera Community Church meets with the couple; this "It's a Joy" logo decorated the couple's wedding invitations.

ried. In our lifetime," Ann says. Now they finally can: This past May, the California Supreme Court ruled that gay couples could marry.

They were married once before. In 2004, when San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom ordered the city to start issuing marriage licenses to gay couples, they were among the 4,000 couples who dropped everything to rush to the city hall. They waited in line two days before getting married. Ann said she found it so moving, she cried the whole way through.

A year later, the state Supreme Court ruled that the mayor had overstepped his authority, and all of those marriages were annulled.

This time, with the Supreme Court squarely behind the marriages, they're hoping they can *stay* married.

"The legal ramifications are really important," Iris says. "I get nervous — Ann has been in the hospital twice, and fortunately it's been here, and it was serious. If I'd been in Alabama, I'm not sure they would have let me in."

With the backing of the Supreme Court, the legal issues are much clearer than they were in 2004. But in November, Proposition 8 is on the ballot to redefine marriage in California as between a man and a woman. The couple set the

date for September in case the initiative passes and same-sex couples can't marry after November.

"The fact that we haven't really been allowed to have our full civil rights is something that you learn to live with, but you always chafe at the bit," Iris says. "I'm hoping that Californians are really up to ... do the right thing by us." Polls in mid-July showed the opposition to Proposition 8 with a narrow lead.

Legal status, though important, is only a part of the decision to have a wedding. "We've done the 'go to the courthouse' thing. ... We just wanted to celebrate this," Ann says.

People are flying in from all over — from Los Angeles to Reno to Fort Worth. Their wedding will be the first time the couple has celebrated their relationship with their families. The women's brothers will walk them down the aisle, and each will say that their family blesses the relationship. For Iris, "There's something very profound about announcing that publicly."

At first sight

As they prepare for an event to celebrate their relationship, with help from family and friends, they both have come a long way from home.

"I came out at 18," says Ann. "It was in the '60s, and in the

South." If parents or neighbors found out you were gay, "the least that you'd get is kicked out of college, and maybe out of your own family. And that still happens. But also, it was not unusual for you to be committed and have electroshock, if not lobotomy — I'm not kidding. This is what happened.

"There was no community — you thought you were the only one, and you're just as homophobic as anybody, because that's how you were raised. That's our legacy, and you have to undo that for yourself. Which gives me a lot of compassion for straight people who really don't get it, because that's how I was raised, too. I didn't get it either until I came out. And then, for me, it was totally natural. It's who I was."

A few states away, in Virginia and North Carolina, Iris was going through her own struggle. "When I realized I was gay, I thought, 'If God made me this way, then why is everybody so upset?' I haven't changed, I'm not immoral, I'm still the nice, responsible moral person that they knew. ... It's like, what changed?"

"It made me start questioning everything. What else have I been told that's a lie?"

This spiritual questioning continued as Iris went on to earn a master's degree in education, and traveled from Virginia to the Navajo Reservation in Arizona to work as a school teacher there.

Meanwhile, she spent her evenings writing songs, and left the reservation to form a band a year and a half later. After five years on the road, the band broke up, and so did Iris and her girlfriend. "My business and my personal life fell apart at the same time," she says.

She called a lesbian couple she had met in Arizona who were living in Fort Worth, Texas. They invited her to come live with them while she recovered.

"They were incredibly comforting and nurturing," she says. "They told me I would meet a Texan woman and I would be happy for the rest of my life.

"And you know what? They were right!"

Two months after moving to Fort Worth, in the spring of 1979, Iris went to sing at a coffee house along with local lesbian performers. Her clothing was covered in glitter and sequins, the result of her traveling with the band for so many years. She put on some makeup, and feather earrings dangled through her long hair. "I looked like a lounge singer," Iris recalls, laughing. "Most people [there] didn't look like that — they had blue work shirts on."

"She didn't look like *anybody* else there," Ann says. "She was beautiful. I thought, 'As soon as she figures out where she is, I'm going to be so embarrassed for her because she's obviously straight.' She never got embarrassed, so I never got embarrassed."

Iris was far from embarrassed — she was watching Ann on stage, singing Hank Williams and yodeling. "I was like, 'Whoa, she's for me.'"

"She's a fool for Hank Williams," Ann says. After the show, Iris went up to Ann. "She asked if we wanted to sing something together the next time we did something like this," Ann says. Iris assumed there would be a next time.

There would be. For the next seven years, they lived in Dallas together. There, in their house, Ann gave Iris an electric drill to hang up pots and pans, and Iris fell in love with construction. She got her contracting license, took design classes, and started her own business doing small jobs for friends and neighbors.

But the two women knew that Dallas wasn't the ideal place to settle permanently.

"When we were in Dallas, on Saturday night when we would go out [to] restaurants, people would drop their forks and stop talking when we walked in ... they knew that two dykes had arrived," Iris says. "And that gets old. That really gets old. To get looked at like you're from Mars."

"It makes you feel kind of unsafe, too," Ann says.

In the summer, when it was too hot for Iris to do remodeling work, they would go on vacation. "Wherever we went I would say, 'We could move here.' Minneapolis, Washington, D.C., *wherever*," Ann recalls. "And she would just kind of laugh it off and say, 'Oh you don't really mean that, ha ha.' Then we'd go home for another year.

"So one year we took a train across the desert to L.A. and rented a car and went up Highway 1 until we got to Marin,"

See **ENGAGEMENT**, next page



Ann calls to tell her mom that she and Iris are in line to pick up their marriage license at the San Mateo County Clerk's office. Below, left, Iris fills in information at the computer kiosk at the county clerk's office, and at right, the couple heads over to pick up a marriage license.



ENGAGEMENT

Continued from previous page

she continues. "And in Marin, we had to buy sweats because it was cold in August." After years of living in Texas, Ann was tired of hot weather. This was the place.

"I said, 'We could move here,'" Ann says. "She still laughed and then she looked at me and said, 'If you really, really, *really* want to do it. ...' I was back here in two weeks with a resume."

Moving West

In 1985, they made the move to California, and bought a home in Whisky Gulch, Menlo Park. After the move, Iris also began her life's work of building and remodeling other people's homes. She founded Harrell Remodeling, and opened an office in Menlo Park that same year. Ann came into the company doing human relations and finance.

For seven years after that, they fell in love with the Peninsula,

and the company grew. But on a trip to inspect the home of some friends in Portola Valley, Iris was captivated by the deer, the woods, the quiet. "We'd been living here seven years and I had never seen this area," Iris recalls. "I was like, 'Wow, Ann, we should look at moving here.' We actually spent New Year's up here with those friends and were walking the hillside. That convinced her. A week later, this house came on the market."

When they moved in the winter of 1992, their home in Portola Valley Ranch had 10 bedrooms, one and a half bathrooms, and no kitchen — it had been the developer's offices, and they had put up walls wherever they needed them.

The couple did some remodeling when they first moved in, but never got around to fixing it up the way they wanted.

While Harrell Remodeling moved to a bigger office in Mountain View, grew to 47 employees, and found customers

all over the Bay Area, Ann and Iris' home still had a temporary kitchen. Finally, they decided to make it into exactly the home they wanted.

Now, after two years with workers in the house all the time, the remodel is complete, and they have it to themselves. Ann retired last December, and the firm is moving to employee ownership — a way to pass on the company to the next generation.

"I don't have dreams of going and spending three months in Europe," Iris says. "I don't live to be somewhere else. I love being here with Ann and experiencing our home."

Going to the chapel

It's a hot Thursday afternoon, two days after tasting the fresh mozzarella and cocktail sandwiches, and Iris and Ann are at the final frontier of pre-wedding preparation: They're meeting the minister.

For everyone in the small, dim room at Ladera Commu-

nity Church, the wedding will be a first. The Rev. Alfred Williams has never married a same-sex couple. Ann and Iris have never had a wedding. They meet today to decide the wording of the service, and get to know each other a bit.

They talk, the afternoon draws on as they discuss their histories, their plans. They talk about the questionnaire that the Rev. Williams gave them to fill out — over a hundred questions asking things such as: What are the roles around the house? If you could change one thing about your partner, what would it be?

And the all-important: Do you think that marriage will change your commitment to each other?

"If it changes it might be because our family might change for the good, going through a wedding with us," Ann says. "And that will change us."

"When you are affirmed by society, that's an important moment; a serious, wonderful, moving thing."

But, she says, "maybe you don't know until you go through it." ▀

The ongoing legal battle over same-sex marriage

On May 15, the California Supreme Court ruled that limiting the status of marriage to heterosexual couples was a violation of the California Constitution.

In the majority opinion, Chief Justice Robert George wrote, "In view of the substance and significance of the fundamental right to form a family relationship, the California Constitution properly must be interpreted to guarantee this basic civil right to all Californians, whether gay or heterosexual, and to same-sex couples as well as to opposite-sex couples." The ruling went into effect on June 16.

What it means

All couples can now be married in California, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender or residence. Same-sex couples who were wed legally elsewhere are now recognized as married in California. The ruling affects only civil marriage, and has no effect on religious ceremonies.

Domestic partnerships still exist — if two people who had domestic partnership marry, they can retain both statuses for travel to states that recognize domestic partnerships but not marriage.

The ruling has no effect on the federal level, so same-sex couples married in California must file separately for federal taxes, and do not receive federal spousal benefits.

The November ballot

Proposition 8 is an initiative on the Nov. 4 ballot that would amend the California Constitution to state: "Only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

The initiative was certified for the ballot two months before the Supreme Court's ruling. If it passes, the legal status of same-sex couples married legally after the court ruling would probably be settled in court, although California Attorney General Jerry Brown told the San Francisco Chronicle, "I believe that marriages that have been entered into subsequent to the (May 15) Supreme Court opinion will be recognized by the California Supreme Court."

At The Almanac's press time on Aug. 11, the most recent poll was a July 18 Field Poll, which found that 51 percent of surveyed voters planned to vote against the proposition, while 42 percent said they would vote to approve it.

Town to open new library, Town Hall in September

September will mark the opening of Portola Valley's new Town Hall and new public library, both at Town Center at 765 Portola Road.

For the past three years, staff and visitors have been making do at temporary locations for both facilities, and both will close soon so that operations can be moved to the new permanent buildings.

Library

The last day of business for the temporary library at Corte Madera middle school at 4575 Alpine Road will be Tuesday, Aug. 19. The library will close at 7 p.m. Checked out materials will be due back at the permanent library on Monday, Sept. 22.

The new library is set to open at noon on Monday, Sept. 15.

In the interim, to renew library materials, go to www.smcl.org and log in to your account, or call 638-0399.

Public libraries in Woodside,

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Menlo Park and elsewhere in San Mateo County will accept materials to be returned to Portola Valley.

Portola Valley patrons with items on reserve may pick them up after Aug. 19 at the Woodside library at 3140 Woodside Road.

Town Hall

The newly built Town Hall at 765 Portola Road in Portola Valley is set to open on at 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Sept. 9.

To allow staff the time to pack and unpack, and movers the time to haul the boxes from the temporary Town Hall to the new one, town offices will close at 1 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 4, so that staff can prepare for the movers.

During the interval, residents wanting to report non-safety-related emergencies should call 279-4466.

Fire hazards, alcohol ban on agenda

The Portola Valley Town Council is scheduled to discuss an updated fire-hazard map showing the locations of flammable vegetation in town. The meeting, on Wednesday, Aug. 13, starts at 8 p.m. in the Historic Schoolhouse at 765 Portola Road.

The consultant who prepared this updated map presented a similar map when the council was considering sending comments to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection last spring.

That map raised concerns

among the council members and some Portola Valley residents about fire insurance rates. This updated map is separate from that earlier effort, said Town Planner George Mader in a staff report.

The council is also scheduled to consider a proposal to ban consumption of alcohol at playing fields. The Parks & Recreation Committee opposes such a step, but it's the law in most California cities, said Assistant Town Manager Janet McDougall in a staff report.

Dr. Chancellor joins Village Doctor

Dr. F. Marland Chancellor III has joined the Village Doctor practice in Woodside after almost six years of medical practice with the Palo Alto Medical Foundation.

Dr. Chancellor, whose specialty is family medicine, is the fourth physician to join the Village Doctor group since its inception in 2004. He has a background in preventive medicine for children and adults and extensive experience in adolescent health care and sports medicine.

Dr. Chancellor was raised in Palo Alto and graduated from Palo Alto High School and Yale University. He is a graduate of Ohio State University's College of Medicine and Public Health. He completed his internship and family medicine residency at UCLA's Pomona Valley Hospital Medical Center.

Dr. Chancellor resides in Palo Alto with his wife and three daughters.

■ CORRECTION

The story on the performing arts center under construction at Menlo-Atherton High School in the Aug. 6 issue of *The Almanac* mistakenly put the date of the theater open house as Sept. 19. The event is scheduled for Sunday, Sept. 21, between 3 and 5 p.m. at 555 Middlefield Road in Atherton.

The story also said that the theater's current cost estimate of \$32 million is 36 percent higher than the original \$18 million. The estimate is actually 78 percent above the original.

■ BIRTHS

Menlo Park

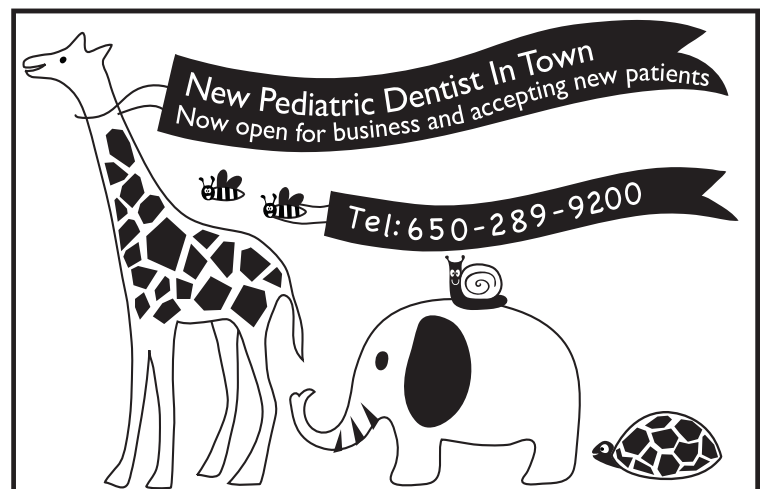
■ Alice Pan and Nils Forslin, a daughter, July 22, 2008, at Sequoia Hospital.

■ Tara and Ryan Roussel, a son, Aug. 1, at Sequoia Hospital.



THE ALMANAC ONLINE DELIVERS 24/7.

CHECK THE COMMUNITY CALENDAR FOR SPECIAL EVENTS
TheAlmanacOnline.com



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LUCILE PACKARD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH UNIVERSITY
Provided by Lucile Packard Children's Hospital

Your Child's Health University

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

- * **SIBLING PREPARATION**
Designed for children two years of age and older, this class prepares siblings for the emotional and physical realities of the arrival of a newborn.
- Saturday, September 6
- * **ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR PARENTS**
Does your child have difficulty focusing, paying attention or sitting still? If so, your child could have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The Child Psychiatry Clinic at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital is offering ways for parents of children (ages 5-12) with ADHD to help their children improve behavior and function more independently. If interested, please call (650) 723-5511.
- Tuesdays, September 9 – November 11
- * **INFANT MASSAGE**
Learn the techniques of infant massage to relax and soothe a baby, to relieve the temporary discomforts of gas and soreness of vaccination sites, and to stimulate a baby as he or she grows into an active child.
- Thursdays, September 11 – October 2
- * **NEWBORN CARE 101**
Often touted as our "most fun" class, this interactive program teaches the specifics of newborn care, including bathing, temperature-taking, changing diapers, swaddling, soothing techniques and more. Infant doll models are used to allow for hands-on practice.
- Saturday, September 13

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

LUCILE PACKARD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

CALL TODAY TO SIGN UP FOR CLASSES (650) 723-4600



What you need to know about Kitchen and Bath Remodels

Learn the facts and how-to's of the remodeling process. Designed especially for homeowners, this class will cover the step-by-step details, decisions and considerations that are part of transforming a home into the special place you've always wanted (including how to live through a remodel).

Topics will include:

- Making the decision to remodel ■ Inspections
- Choosing an architect, designer and contractor
- The design process ■ Budgeting ■ Materials ■ Floor plans
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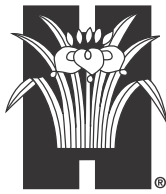
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Shooter gets 110 years in attempted murder case

A long term behind bars is in store for Manuel Enraíne Moreno, an East Palo Alto man convicted by a jury of premeditated attempted murder for a gang-related shooting of a teen pedestrian in Menlo Park in March 2007.

Judge John Grandsaert of the San Mateo County Superior Court sentenced Mr. Moreno, 27, on Aug. 1 to 110 years to life in state prison, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe in an Aug. 4 report.

The shooting was an unprovoked attack done "just to execute a hit" on a member of an opposing gang, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

The victim, who was not identified because he was a juvenile, spent a week in a hospital and survived his injuries — two shots in the back and three in

the legs, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

At the time of the shooting, the victim was accompanied by a juvenile companion, but Mr. Wagstaffe's report makes no mention of any injuries to the companion.

This case was a second strike against Mr. Moreno, who had a prior residential burglary conviction, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Mr. Moreno was also convicted of discharging a semi-automatic handgun resulting in great bodily injury. His sentence included a \$220 restitution fine, \$20 court security fine, registration as a gang member and genetic marker testing.

Mr. Moreno rejected a plea bargain that would have guaranteed a prison stay of 14 years, and instead asked for a jury trial, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

Atherton complaint triggers inspection

An employee complaint brought an inspector from the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health out to Atherton's town offices recently.

The Cal/OSHA inspector made a surprise visit and wanted to review safety policies and procedures, said City Manager Jerry Gruber. The inspector wouldn't reveal the nature of the complaint or who made it, he said.

"The nice thing is, if there are areas that need to be worked on, they help you work on them," Mr. Gruber said.

The need to replace Atherton's police station and administrative

offices is an increasingly frequent topic of conversation among town officials. The building and public works departments are located in a rundown trailer along the Caltrain tracks right of way, and another trailer behind the police department houses its detectives.

A new committee has been formed to solicit private funding to build a replacement and pitch the plan to the public.

The inspector didn't make it across the street to the building and public works trailer, but expressed his intention to do so upon his return visit, Mr. Gruber said.

Ano Nuevo State Reserve seeks docents

Ano Nuevo State Reserve, on the beach south of Half Moon Bay, is seeking volunteers to join its docent training program.

The new docent training class will begin in early September and run through early Decem-

ber. Volunteers have a choice of Wednesday or Saturday classes.

Classes are limited to 30 people. Those interested in volunteering should respond by Wednesday, Aug. 27, by calling the volunteer coordinating office at 879-2025.

The Village Doctor Welcomes Dr. Marland Chancellor!



PHOTO: RIO COSTANTINI



F. MARLAND CHANCELLOR, III, MD
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Dr. Marland Chancellor is a board-certified family medicine physician who joined The Village Doctor after five-and-a-half years at the highly respected Palo Alto Medical Foundation, where he provided comprehensive care to families and individuals of all ages. In his practice, Dr. Chancellor stresses attention to each person's physical, mental, and spiritual health, with an emphasis on wellness, which he believes encompasses much more than just the absence of disease.

Dr. Chancellor was raised in Palo Alto, obtained a B.A. degree from Yale and an M.D. degree from Ohio State University, and then completed his family medicine residency training at UCLA. He practices the full spectrum of family medicine, and when not caring for his adult and pediatric patients he enjoys time with his wife and three young daughters.



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OBITUARIES

Note: Obituaries are based on information provided by families and mortuaries.

Bettie Alexander Steiger

Pioneer in development of information technology industry

Bettie Alexander Steiger, a leader in the information technology industry, died Aug. 3 at her Menlo Park home. She was 74.

Ms. Steiger was named the first marketing and technology transfer officer at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center in 1990, when she and her husband moved to Menlo Park from McLean, Virginia, to accept the position.

Born in Spirit Lake, Idaho, she received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Washington State University. She met her future husband, Donald Steiger, while they were students at the university. They married in 1956. She became a military wife as her husband embarked on his career as an officer in the U.S. Army.

The couple moved 19 times during Mr. Steiger's service career, returning from Pakistan to settle in McLean, Virginia, in 1973.

Ms. Steiger re-entered the work force that year and later became a founding employee of Source Telecomputing Corp. in McClean, first as director of its travel chan-



Bettie Alexander Steiger

nel and, later, as director of database development and vice president of information resources and corporate relations.

In 1982 she joined the Gartner Group as a vice president to form its Videotext Technology group. She held executive positions in several information technology-related organizations, including executive director and CEO of the Association of Image and Information Management in Silver Springs, Maryland.

After Ms. Steiger retired from Xerox in 1998, she formed Steiger Associates as an industry consultant and Power Image Marketing as a vehicle to mentor young women executives. She also was a corporate director of Wall Data Inc. and B-Linked.com.

She was a founder and board member of the International Museum of Women in San Francisco and active in the Women's Forum West. Ms. Steiger was named woman of the year by Washington State University in 2003 and received the university's alumni achievement award in 1988. She was a member of Pi Beta Phi sorority. Ms. Steiger also attended the advancement management program of Harvard Business School.

Survivors include her husband, Don, of Menlo Park; son, Craig Steiger of Novato; daughter Ann Steiger of Washington, D.C.; two sisters, two brothers, and three grandchildren.

A celebration of the life of Bettie Steiger will be held at 2 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 25, at the Thomas Fogarty Winery, 19501 Skyline Blvd. in Woodside. Memorials may be made to cancer, lung or Parkinson's disease research or to

a charity of choice.

Linda Bray Kennelly

Hair stylist

A memorial service is set for 4 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 16, at 140 Cherokee Way in Portola Valley for Linda Bray Kennelly, a graduate of Portola Valley School and Woodside High School and a longtime hair stylist in Menlo Park. Ms. Kennelly, 46, died of pancreatic cancer on Saturday, Aug. 9.

Linda came to Portola Valley at the age of 4 and was in the last class to graduate from the eighth grade at Portola Valley School before the school closed, relatives said. She graduated from Woodside High School in 1980.

She worked as a stylist at The Hair Place in West Menlo Park and Ambience on Oak Grove Avenue, relatives said. When she retired in 2002, Ms. Bray moved to Bandon, Oregon, and married Bob Kennelly.

"Linda will be remembered for her enthusiasm and joyful approach to life," relatives said. While in Silicon Valley, she enjoyed membership in Svea Lodge, a Scandinavian-American fraternal organization in San Jose, and trips to Sveadal, a resort in Morgan Hill.

Ms. Kennelly is survived by her husband, Bob; her brother, Michael Bray; her first husband Geff Smith; step-daughters Hannah and Alia Kennelly and Kim Duell; step-son Derek Smith; and two grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her parents, Larry and Marie Bray.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to a cancer support group.

SUMMIT

continued from page 5

director Diane Tavenner. Summit Prep is typically oversubscribed, with 3.25 applications for each freshman seat, Ms. Tavenner said.

On a related topic, the Sequoia district is required to make upfront payments to Summit Prep of about \$7,400 per student per year regardless of whether the students live in the district.

The home districts of nonresident charter students are supposed to reimburse the Sequoia district for a substantial portion of those costs, but are apparently reluctant to do so. The board will discuss a potential loss of \$150,000 in unreimbursed funds. ■

Alameda roadwork stalls traffic

The stretch of Alameda de las Pulgas that runs through Atherton isn't the bumpiest bit of road in the Midpeninsula, and Atherton officials aim to keep it that way.

From Monday, Aug. 11, through Thursday, Aug. 14, motorists can expect delays and one-way traffic controls due to the town's resurfacing project, said Duncan Jones, Atherton's public works director.

The cape seal project will add a top layer of heated asphalt emulsion

to fill in cracks and waterproof the roadway, extending its life.

The first phase of the project backed up traffic along the much-used north-south thoroughfare on Wednesday morning, Aug. 6.

"It took three or four hours to get done, and there were 10 minute delays in each direction," Mr. Jones said.

The project area stretches from Camino al Lago to Stockbridge Avenue, he said.

annual downtown Menlo Park street fair sponsored by the chamber of commerce.

Mr. Ciardella's Menlo Park firm, Ciardella Associates, helped plan and design the Trees for Menlo project to plant trees along El Camino Real. The firm has also been hired to help design Menlo Square, Willow Oaks Field, and facilities at Menlo-Atherton High School, according to the Ciardella Associates Web site. ■

ELECTION

continued from page 5

papers by the Aug. 8 deadline, Ms. Kelly said.

Rick Ciardella

Mr. Ciardella is a former chairman of the board of the Menlo Park Chamber of Commerce, and currently serves as the board's secretary. He served as chairman of this year's Connoisseur's Marketplace, the

POLICE CALLS

ATHERTON

Assault reports:

■ Man struck construction co-worker with crowbar, 200 block of Atherton Ave., Aug. 1.

■ Woman assaulted upon trying to collect wages from employer, first block of Monte Vista Ave., Aug. 3.

Residential burglary reports:

■ Bathroom window screen pried in burglary attempt, first block of Mulberry Lane, Aug. 2.

■ House broken into, 100 block of Selby Lane, Aug. 3.

■ Window found smashed and doors open, first block of McCormick Lane, Aug. 4.

MENLO PARK

Auto burglary reports:

■ Truck broken into and bicycle, CD changer and camera stolen, 700 block of Arnold Way, July 31.

■ An iPod music player stolen, 200 block of Constitution Ave., Aug. 1.

■ Shattered car window, 1700 block of Stonepine Lane, Aug. 4.

Residential burglary reports:

■ Window smashed and jewelry stolen, 100 block of Bay Road, July 31.

■ Storage trailer damaged at construction site, 2800 block of Sand Hill Road, Aug. 2.

■ Purse and house keys stolen, 1200 block of Trinity Drive, Aug. 4.

■ Commercial burglary reports: Cash stolen, Belle Haven swimming pool at 100 Terminal Ave., Aug. 1.

■ Stolen vehicle report: Black 1987 Buick Regal stolen, 4000 block of Campbell Ave., Aug. 1.

■ Child protective services report: 700 block of Ivy Drive, Aug. 6.

PORTOLA VALLEY

■ Residential burglary report: Liquor box valued at \$250 stolen from unlocked apartment, 500 block of Portola Road, Aug. 1.

WEST MENLO PARK

■ Auto burglary report: Window smashed and GPS device valued at \$500 stolen, 2000 block of Valparaiso Ave., July 30.

Menlo Park names new city clerk

Margaret Roberts, the city clerk of Davis, will start as Menlo Park's new city clerk on Aug. 18, City manager Glen Rojas said.

The city has been in search of a new city clerk since Silvia Vonderlinden resigned last November to take the same

position in Redwood City. Interim City Clerk Sherry Kelly will stay with the city to help Ms. Roberts during the upcoming election season, Mr. Rojas said.

Before becoming the Davis city clerk, Ms. Roberts held the same position in Rio Vista, Mr. Rojas said.

WILLIAM F. CRAVEN

William F. Craven died on August 2, 2008, succumbing to cancer. He was at home with his family by his side.

He was born and raised in Richmond, California, and then attended UC Berkeley, where he earned BS and MS degrees in electrical engineering.

After college, Bill began a 37-year career at Hewlett Packard. He started as an engineer, and prior to his retirement served as a Vice President of the company and General Manager of the Components Group.

He enjoyed ten years of retirement, during which his favorite pursuits were fly fishing, duck hunting, sailing, skiing, genealogy, and spending time with his grandchildren.

He is survived by his loving wife of 49 years, Kay Craven; daughter Kendra Craven and her husband David Lattin; son Mark Craven and his wife Susan Goral; grandchildren Chloe and Will Lattin, and Owen and Kelly Craven; and sister Rey Monson.

Memorial contributions may be made to the UC Berkeley, Engineering Fund (208 McLaughlin Hall, #1722, Berkeley, CA 94720) or the Menlo Park Presbyterian Church Ethiopian Initiative (950 Santa Cruz Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025).

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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.

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

Can cities stop a juggernaut?

It was a no-brainer for the Menlo Park and Atherton city councils to join a cost-free lawsuit challenging the route chosen for the high-speed rail project that will be on this November's state ballot. What local resident wants the impact of 220-mph-trains in his or her backyard?

The two cities have made no secret of their strong opposition to the project, which would require grade separations that would rip up Menlo Park's downtown and create gigantic intrusions into several Atherton neighborhoods. Menlo Park council member Kelly Fergusson backed taking a strong stance for the city's interests, saying the city has seen no indications that the high-speed rail authority has even considered the concerns of Peninsula communities. "We've been shown no respect," she said.

But whether either community or the ad hoc group formed by Menlo Park residents can stop approval of the \$9.95 billion bond issue is open to question, given that recent polling suggests the bond measure will pass. Opponents say that result was a fluke, but given the smooth green sales pitch for high-speed rail, which is playing especially well among young Californians, we wonder if this juggernaut can be stopped.

Joining the lawsuit by a group of nonprofits may not cost anything for Menlo Park and Atherton, but it also won't remove the measure from the November ballot. If successful, the suit's only impact would be to force the state to conduct more extensive environmental studies if voters approve the project on Nov. 4. Such studies could be a nuisance, but if high-speed rail is approved statewide, we doubt that additional environmental studies would knock it off the rails.

Even more problematic is the thinking in some Peninsula com-

munities that an Altamont Pass route, as advocated by the lawsuit, would alleviate any impact from the high-speed trains. Possibly, but most maps show that either route would provide San Jose-to-San Francisco service, which would create the same impact as trains coming over Pacheco Pass through Gilroy and San Jose.

There is no doubt that conversion of Caltrain's Peninsula rail corridor to carry high-speed trains would create a tremendous disruption of downtown and residential areas in Menlo Park and Atherton, as well as many other cities up and down the line. The grade separations required at Ravenswood, Oak Grove, Glenwood and Encinal avenues in Menlo Park and, Watkins Avenue and Fair Oaks Lane in Atherton would cut huge gashes in these areas.

Unfortunately, unless voters learn more about this costly project and act responsibly in a year when the state is facing huge deficits, the \$9.95 billion start for the project could win acceptance based on the popular green sales pitch that electric trains could lower the state's carbon footprint. These are powerful arguments when airlines are sinking under tremendous increases in fuel costs, and prices at the gas pump exceed \$4 a gallon.

Last week it appeared that legislation to update the high-speed rail measure on the ballot was headed for the governor's desk, but it was unclear if he would sign it, given his pledge not to sign any bills until the Legislature passed a budget. Proponents of the rail plan said Gov. Schwarzenegger would come through, since his own staff helped with the revision of the old bond measure, which was written in 2002.

But regardless of whether the rail bond measure is updated, it now appears that opponents are fighting an uphill battle against a well-financed group of high-speed rail advocates, who see thousands of construction jobs, millions of dollars worth of increased business and a lower carbon footprint from the project. Such a supportive coalition could run over Menlo Park and Atherton opponents without even blinking.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

When your neighbor is a mansion

Editor:

Many residents of this very pleasant locale we call home have noticed a declining quality of life. Much of this lies outside our control, such as traffic problems, air and water quality, economic difficulties and population density.

However, we live in communities where our neighbors and their actions have direct and daily consequences on our quality of life. At the same time, in this country we value independence, individuality and privacy. The balance of these forces determines the personality of where we live.

Population and building pressures have long been an issue in the desirable peninsula area. Some localities have had influence via regulations and restrictions for the greater good. This letter is prompted by an outdated lack of interest by our local county government and individuals who have taken advantage of this.

North Fair Oaks has been described as a quiet, eclectic neigh-

borhood with a country feel. This is due to ample native vegetation including heritage oaks, and a variety of quaint small houses peacefully coexisting. This has recently been giving out to the pursuit of materialism in the building of monster homes on tiny lots.

Since county codes allow lot coverage of greater than 50 percent (Menlo Park is 35 percent) some individuals have built structures to the maximum, ignoring the impact on neighbors. Furthermore, the lack of respect for neighborhood esthetics and scale, not to mention the environment at large, is concerning.

As I live directly across from one of these new monuments to greed, I am very disappointed. Now a 2,662-square-foot (2,665-square-foot maximum on a parcel of 5,000 square feet) structure with two 9-foot ceilings with rows and rows of windows towers over its 900-square-foot neighbors on the 800 block of 17th Avenue.

The light, wind and sky are blocked, replaced by 28-foot walls and large towering dormer windows. Many folks are passive, feeling that nothing can be done



Menlo Park Historical Association

Our Regional Heritage

Uniformed girls attending Convent of the Sacred Heart in Atherton were photographed in 1912. The school, along Valparaiso Avenue, opened in 1898. Classes were taught by semi-cloistered French nuns who walked silently through the corridors at least an arm's length away from any student. In 1984, the institution became coeducational and changed its name to Sacred Heart Schools.

since it is legal. I disagree.

Societies are not held together by laws but by common standards of behavior, values and beliefs. While police enforcement may subdue the extremes, the first line of defense in a

society is social pressure. What can and should be done is to talk with your neighbors and get to know them. Discuss the changes and plans in the neighborhood.

See **LETTERS**, next page

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

Let them know that we are interconnected and positive or negative actions affect us all. People are less likely to act this way if they had some social awareness of their actions.

The standards of behavior are not controversial. Treat others as you would like to be treated and treat them with respect. I am not advocating ostracizing people. Neighbors have the right and perhaps the obligation to express themselves. Those who don't subscribe to these basic tenets of decency should be acknowledged appropriately. Ultimately we are all responsible for our actions that affect the environment and community in which we live.

Neil Adler
17th Avenue, Menlo Park

Al's Nursery very much alive after founder's passing

Editor:

Congratulations on your fine feature by Marjorie Mader on the recent passing of Al Bertschinger, the founder of Al's Nursery, truly a Portola Valley institution.

My only concern was the article's emphasis on the nursery's past, as if it were gone with

Residentialist states his bottom line

By Martin Engel

We are approaching the election season and have two seats to fill on the Menlo Park City Council. So, it is time to let the three candidates for these jobs know what we voters want, since they are supposed to represent us in our government.

"Residentialist" is a term that has fallen out of favor. The term describes a Menlo Park resident who is dedicated to preserving the small town, residential quality-of-life that characterizes this city. I believe that if we grew by several thousand more, we would no longer have the look and feel of that small town. For us residentialists, it's a matter of livability.

Therefore, to all you candidates who wish to represent me and want my vote, I pretty much oppose population growth and am perturbed if it is imposed on us. I don't want our "small town" to become a "big town." If I had wanted to live in a big town, I would have moved there.

"We must grow; growth is inevitable," we are told. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) assigns us a number of

new houses. Sorry, I don't agree with that. A city ought to be able to control its own destiny and not have it driven by outside political, economic or self-aggrandizing forces.

Attention, present and future council members. I, for one, oppose the push toward greater urbanization, for whatever reason. High-density housing and traffic-oriented development (TOD) housing on or near El Camino are good examples of a bad idea. If commercial/industrial development must take place, scale is critical. For me, less is more. What happens, far too often, is the intrusion of development that draws on Menlo Park's resources and ends up making problems in our city worse, not reducing them.

You see, I'm not against all development. I'm in favor of careful, thoughtful, beneficial development. I'm in favor of development being "rule-governed," based on vision, policy, and a clear strategy prior to any project approvals. These should not be improvised case by case with constant compromises that don't benefit the city.

I don't want a new "high-rise city" crowding the Bayfront. I don't want Stanford to

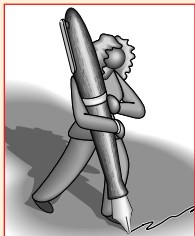
change Menlo Park into the new medical Welsh Road by building big, fat office blocks along El Camino. That's not the Menlo Park in which I choose to live. I'm against the constant "exceptions," the non-conforming zoning variances, the persistent improvised amending and gaming of the city's general plan in the interests of a seemingly endless series of developers maximizing their bottom line at the city's expense.

I don't want the Caltrain corridor to become the Berlin Wall, separating east and west Menlo Park even further and more definitively. That's another form of development I oppose.

El Camino should not become ever more a through-traffic flyway. It too is a city divider. The Downtown Vision plan needs to physically heal the rail and street fault lines, and our council representatives can and should take leadership in that effort.

Those of us who are residentialists must vote to guide our city away from self-serving developers and housing promoters in order to keep it the way we want it. It seems to be a persistent struggle. It's worth it.

Martin Engel lives on Stone Pine Lane in Menlo Park.



GUEST OPINION

Al. I think uninformed readers should be reminded that Al's Nursery is still a family-owned, full-service nursery and that the beautiful stock is still impeccable and Al's daughter, Karin, and her

husband, John, still take incredible care of the plants and trees.

They also willingly and generously offer excellent advice and help to their customers. I think it's very important for residents

to know that Al's is still a vibrant, beautiful nursery in the heart of Portola Valley, and we should do our best to continue to support

this family-owned institution.

Paul D. Williams
Santa Maria Avenue,
Portola Valley

Walsh Road residents not required to clear buffer

By Gil Davis

Im not so sure I can successfully sue you if a wildfire ignites your house and then sends embers that burn down my home, as I theorized last week.

Why are you possibly off the hook? Because you're not currently required by state law to create and maintain a 100-foot clearing of trees and large shrubs around your home and other buildings, said Deputy State Fire Marshal Ernylee Chamlee. "Of course, you're welcome to create that buffer zone on your own."

"Right now, the only areas where the 100-foot buffer is lawfully required is a new construction site or on rural properties now designated as "state responsibility areas," she said.

But tree trimmers may still be knocking on Walsh Road doors. Here's why.

"In coming months incorporated cities will be holding public hearings to consider adopting the

state's "ignition resistance" regulations," Ms. Chamlee said. "If Atherton adopts those new state regulations, then Walsh Road and other tree-rich areas may be forced by law to clear or trim trees to create a 100-foot clearing around their structures."

Fire Chief Harold Schapelhouman said the Menlo Park Fire Protection District has mostly moderate and some high-fire threat zones.

"We are not a state responsibility area but rather a municipal fire protection district. Thus, Public Resource Code Section 4291-4299

would not apply to us; rather, the California Fire Code and Title 19 apply," he said.

The town of Atherton could ask that parts of west Atherton be classified as "severe," but I would anticipate that would be very controversial and difficult since, according to the fire chief, the restrictions placed on residents would be significant

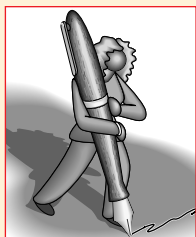
and would have an almost immediate impact.

One additional way Walsh Road and other Atherton areas may be forced to create "ignition resistance" could come from state officials who are annually required to review certain land areas for possible stricter regulation, Ms. Chamlee said. But the other Walsh Road problem seems headed for an early solution. For the last few months, Menlo Park fire district director Peter Carpenter pointed out that this canyon's single entry might well get clogged during a wildfire as people from 185 houses attempt to escape using their cars.

It soon became clear that Atherton and the fire district were working hard to open the canyon's "dead ends" so that escaping people could walk or drive to other neighborhoods to evade an oncoming wildfire.

Resources: Fire hazard severity zone maps for San Mateo County areas are ready to download at: http://www.fire.ca.gov/fire_prevention/fhsz_maps/fhsz_maps_sanmateo.php and http://www.cnps.org/cnps/conservation/conference/2007/chamlee_fire_prevention.pdf

Gil Davis is an area writer and former resident of Atherton.



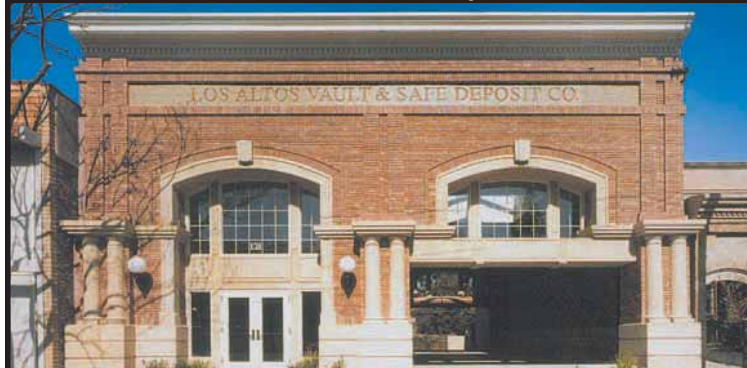
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