

A NEW BOOK AND A MOVIE for
Menlo Park author Jeanne DuPrau. Page 7

The Almanac

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

OCTOBER 1, 2008

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>> **'...BUT WHAT I
REALLY WANT
TO DO IS PRODUCE'**

Local filmmaker, 16, has been
making movies for half his life
PAGE 13



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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Marjorie Mader/The Almanac

Going, going, gone

A big rig at the Portola Valley Town Center moves a portable building that served as part of the temporary Town Hall for the past four years. The portable, plus two others, were shipped to a storage site in Menlo Park, and will be moved later to Redwood City to serve as a new teen center for the Boys & Girls Clubs' Mervin G. Morris Clubhouse. Portola Valley has a new Town Center complex and doesn't need the portables anymore. "We're delighted the portable buildings are going to such a good use and a worthwhile organization," said Janet McDougall, assistant town administrator.

Atherton

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Menlo Park

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Portola Valley

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High-speed rail

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People

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Food & Drink

- Good to the core: Local trees are laden with apples, and farmers are bringing a range of varieties to market. **Cover, Section 2**

On the cover

Atherton resident David Harris, 16, has written and directed several short films, but he dreams of a future as a movie producer. His latest effort, a short film about a hypochondriac who works at a funeral home, has won several awards at film festivals. Photo by Veronica Weber. See story, **Page 13**.



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Wine

DELICIOUS RED BLENDS

As Syrah has grown in popularity, so too have proprietary blends modeled after the blends of the southern Rhone Valley. This experimentation has led to many unique and special wines, many of which are price friendly. Here are a few examples from the cutting edge of domestic wine production.

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2004 Spencer Roloson, "Palaterra", California

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Roberts Tip of the Week White Varietal Comparison Tasting

To get a better handle on the differences between white wine varietals, organize a tasting session with several chilled bottles of Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, and Riesling. Pour glasses about half-full with each wine, and observe the color of each. Typically, the Sauvignon Blanc will be the color of straw with greenish tinges, the Chardonnay will exhibit a deeper greenish-gold, the Riesling will be pale gold. As for aroma, the Sauvignon Blanc will be delicate and herbal, the Chardonnay will smell buttery and toasty, and the Riesling will be fruity. Tasting will reveal the Sauvignon Blanc to be light, dry, and crisp; the Riesling will tend toward fruitiness; and the Chardonnay will be rich and full-bodied.

At ROBERTS MARKET, we can offer you tips and advice on how to properly test wine. If you are interested in learning more about wine, and wine tasting techniques, come speak to our wine experts. We are happy to share this information with our valued customers. Our wine department is the most extensive in the area, more than most liquor stores. We are proud to also offer a wide variety of foods from all over the world. We are your source for specialty foods, including Indian, Asian, European, and other specialties.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | ATHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Noise from the neighbors: Let's talk, says town

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

Noise from the neighbors and what to do about it will be the focus of one or more community workshops, perhaps a series of Saturday morning coffees, as the town of Portola Valley grapples with an update to the noise element of the general plan and a new noise ordinance.

The Town Council commissioned a report on this topic by Town Planner George Mader and reviewed that report (available at tinyurl.com/PVnoise) at its Sept. 24 meeting.

"A major source of objectionable noise" is weekend construction, permitted now for residents and their families, but being done by workers thought to be posing as family members, Mr. Mader said.

The town consciously protects its stargazing-friendly darkness at night and its reputation for environmental sensibility. Why not do the same for noise, he asked. "Somehow, that's got to become more of an ethic than it is."

While a date for a workshop has not yet been decided, the discussion at the meeting hinted at the issues, and the debates, that it might turn up.

Barking dogs, for example. "Many

homeowners don't know that their dogs bark when they're gone," Mr. Mader said. "Dogs left alone in a house for a long period of time can go pretty wild in terms of barking."

Planning Manager Leslie Lambert, who handles noise complaints because the town has no code enforcement officer, said she gets dog-related calls daily. They're often about the same dogs, but from different neighbors who may have waited months before deciding to complain, she said.

"I think there are worse things than barking dogs. We are rural. Dogs bark," said resident Marianne Plunder, who added that her dog "doesn't bark."

Early morning noises are another sore point for neighbors of The Sequoias retirement community. Several spoke at the meeting.

Grove Drive resident Clair Jernick told the council that a piece of machinery at The Sequoias wakes her every day at 5:15 a.m. She's been on the site at that time to witness it, she said, and noted that she's talking with Sequoias officials about it. "It's a very, very slow pro-

See **NOISE**, page 8

Woodside rejects new wildfire risk labels

■ Tougher building codes could be coming.

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

Attention will be paid in Woodside to the issue of new homes designed to prevent the spread of wildfire, but not so much that it might increase scrutiny by insurance companies.

The Town Council voted Sept. 23 to keep the formal list of "very high fire hazard severity zones" to what it approved in June: Emerald Hills and neighborhoods west of Kings Mountain Road and along and around Old La Honda Road.

The council unanimously rejected a map prepared by Fire Marshal Denise Enea of the Woodside Fire Protection District that would have expanded the list to include Woodside Glens, Greer Road east of Huddart Park, Moore Road, and

a few other areas.

The council asked staff to come back with recommendations that could expand the number of parcels governed by a building code that requires the use of fire-inhibiting materials and landscaping on new homes.

Ms. Enea said that in coming up with her map, she weighed water supply, accessibility for firefighting vehicles, and topography, all of which can affect getting to a fire and putting it out. These are neighborhoods "where we feel the fire could get away from us very, very easily," she said.

The 40 residents who packed Independence Hall, while apparently open to Ms. Enea's concerns, said they wanted nothing to do

See **FIRE**, page 8

MP, Atherton councils urge residents to oppose Prop 1-A, the high-speed rail measure

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

Just vote no. That's the message from Menlo Park and Atherton city council members regarding Proposition 1A, the high-speed rail bond measure on the Nov. 4 ballot.

In separate meetings, the councils passed resolutions opposed to the \$9.95 billion bond measure, which would provide the first stage of funding to build a high-speed passenger train to connect San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Under the current plan, high-speed trains would use the Caltrain corridor to shoot up and down the Peninsula — a route both councils strongly oppose due to potential impacts on homes and businesses located near the train tracks.

The Atherton council voted 4-0 to oppose Proposition 1A, following a Sept. 24 high-speed rail study session.

The Menlo Park council voted 3-1, with John Boyle opposed, at its Sept. 23 meeting, to oppose the bond measure.

The mayors of both towns — Jim Janz of Atherton and Andy Cohen of Menlo Park — did not vote because they live within 500 feet of the Caltrain tracks.

"I oppose [Proposition 1A] because of the impacts to Menlo Park," said Menlo Park Councilman Richard Cline. He noted the potential construction, aesthetic, and property-value impacts of running the estimated \$45 billion train through the Caltrain corridor. That helped make his opposition the "easiest decision" he's made as a council member, he said.

"I suspect that high-speed rail, as presently planned ... has a very high probability of being a financial disaster," said Atherton Councilman Jim Dobbie. He questioned the budget and ridership projections of the high-speed rail system — concerns echoed by several residents at the Sept. 24 study session. "I can see no reason why I would ever consider voting for the high-speed rail project," Mr. Dobbie said.

But Menlo Park Councilman John Boyle, the lone councilman in the two cities not opposed to the bond measure, said the opposition to the project is "shortsighted."

"I think we're missing the big picture," Mr. Boyle said, pointing to the potential environmental benefits and congestion relief that high-speed rail could provide statewide. He noted that Menlo Park, Atherton and other cities along the proposed route would have a chance to weigh in on the specifics of the plan if and when the bond measure passes. ■

Around the world — with mom

Woodside mom and son compete in TV's 'Amazing Race'

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

This spring, Dallas Imbimbo took time off from college to go on a whirlwind, all-expenses-paid trip around the world with his mother, Toni. The Woodside pair is one of 13 teams competing on the reality show "The Amazing Race" for a chance to win \$1 million.

The race is over, but who won is a tightly guarded secret that won't be revealed until the last episode airs. The show started on Sunday, Sept. 28, and airs on CBS at 8 p.m. Episodes can also be seen online at www.CBS.com.

The Amazing Race, now in its 13th season, combines skill and teamwork with dumb luck in a multi-stage race across five continents in 23 days.

A strong team might ace the physical challenges but

be undone by a bad sense of direction or an unhelpful airline reservation agent. Other pitfalls in the race may include intra-team bickering, language barriers, flight delays, uncooperative livestock, and defective rental cars.

Previous winners of The Amazing Race include Dallas' former schoolmate at Woodside Elementary, Tyler MacNiven.

Dallas, 22, is finishing up a bachelor's degree in communications and psychology at U.C. Davis. He says he didn't do a



Property of CBS Broadcasting Inc.

Dallas Imbimbo and his mom, Toni, competed in TV's "Amazing Race" around the world.

whole lot of preparation for The Amazing Race's open audition, which took place the day after his birthday in December.

See **RACE**, page 8

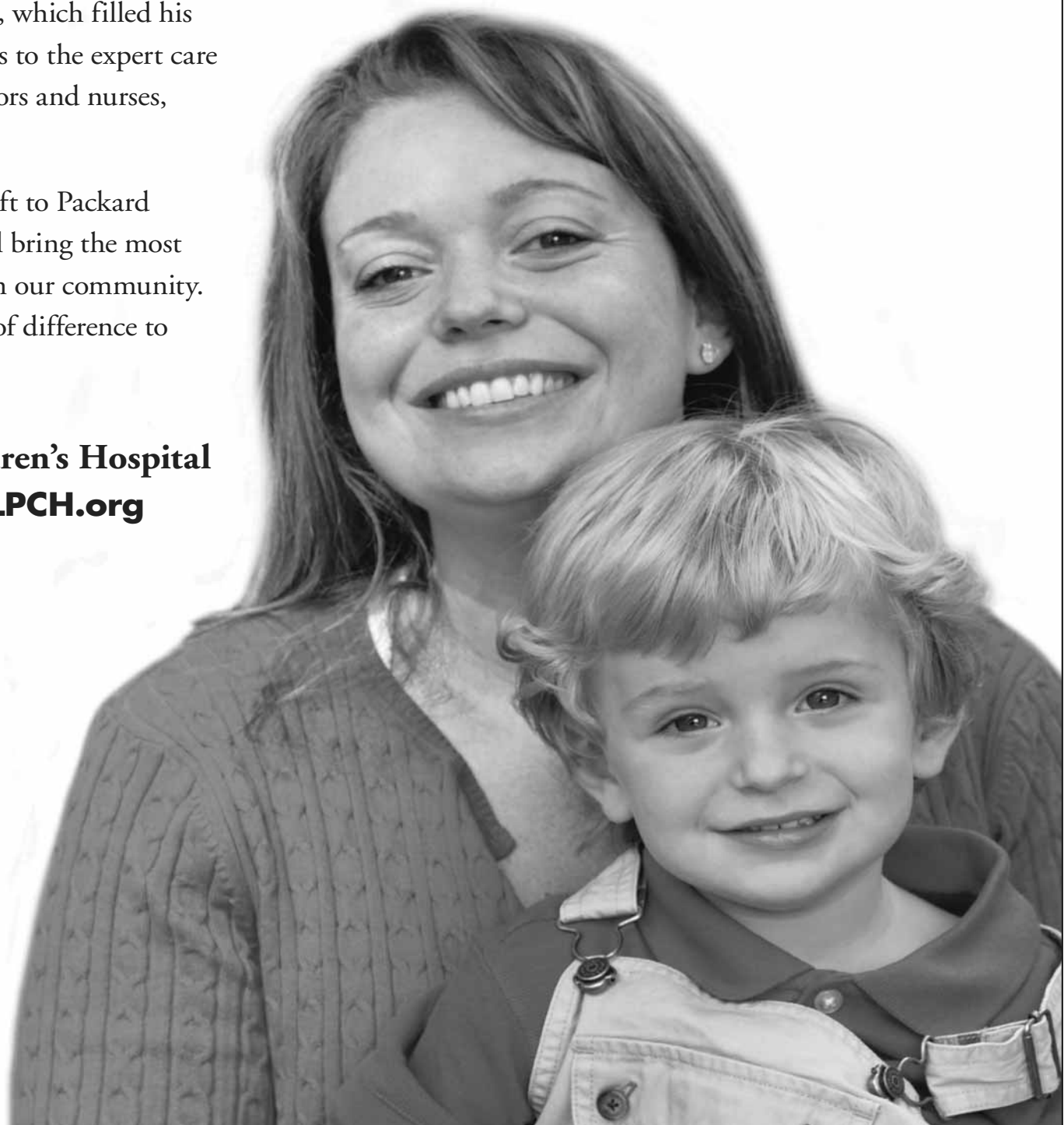
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PEOPLE

A new book and a movie for author Jeanne DuPrau

By Jane Knoerle
Almanac Lifestyles Editor

These are busy times for Menlo Park author Jeanne DuPrau. Her newest book, "The Diamond of Darkhold: The Fourth Book of Ember" (Random House Children's Books), has just been released. And, a movie adapted from her first book in the Ember series, "The City of Ember," hits theaters nationwide Oct. 10.

Ms. DuPrau will talk about and sign copies of her latest book at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 3, at the Menlo Park Library.

The Ember series recounts two children's adventures in a fictional, underground city created after a catastrophic event alters life on Earth. In the conclusion of the series, "The Diamond of Darkhold," readers will learn if Lina and Doon can bring light to a world that is always in darkness.

"I wanted to come back to the original setting. The fourth book takes up where the second book left off," says Ms. DuPrau.

As to the "The City of Ember" film, Ms. DuPrau has seen some clips, but not the entire feature. She did not write the screenplay, and says that, at first, she was upset over changes that were made in her original story. But, she adds, "as time went on, I saw the reasons for them."

She says the film depiction of the underground city "is amazing" and Lina, as played by Saoirse Ronan, "is the star." Saoirse is known for her role in the recent film "Atonement." The "Diamond of Darkhold" also stars Bill Murray and Tim Robbins.

So far, there are no plans for a red carpet movie premiere, says Ms. DuPrau.

Always a writer

Jeanne DuPrau says she's "always been a writer." Her mother kept everything she wrote, including a story, complete with illustrations, about Frosty the Snowman, written at age 5.

She wrote, she says, "because that was what I was good at"



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

Menlo Park author Jeanne DuPrau wrote, she says, 'because that was what I was good at' in elementary school, junior high, and at Woodside High School, where she graduated in 1962.

in elementary school, junior high, and at Woodside High School, where she graduated in 1962. She recalls her Woodside English teacher, Kenan Neese, encouraging her talent.

Ms. DuPrau worked in the corporate world (Addison-Wesley and Apple) until 1989, when she decided to freelance. "I really thought of myself as a nonfiction writer, although I've always loved reading fiction." She has written four novels and six nonfiction books.

Her first novel for children, "The City of Ember," was origi-

nally written in the late 1980s. She put the manuscript aside, but after the success of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, she went back to it. Inspired by the Potter series, she rewrote her book to make the characters more active

In an interview with The Almanac in June 2003, she said, "My book was way too slow and everyone was way too passive." The article continues, "So, she got to work on rewriting her book, applying what she learned from reading Rowling, and came up with a dynamic book that, much to her surprise, was quickly snatched up by a publisher."

These days Ms. DuPrau is taking a break from writing. "I just needed not to be writing," she says. She tends her garden, has her dog, Ethan, for company, and keeps busy answering e-mails from her many fans, who range in age from 7 to 80.

As for future books? "Well, I do have an idea in my head," she says with a smile. ■

■ INFORMATION

Jeanne DuPrau of Menlo Park will read from her newest book, "The Diamond of Darkhold: The Fourth Book of Ember," at 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 3, at the Menlo Park Library, 800 Alma St., Menlo Park. The free event is co-sponsored by Kepler's bookstore, and is open to the public. For information, call 330-2530.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



Notes for Buyers

Q: With the present turmoil in the financial markets, should I wait a few months to see what happens before buying property?

A: The bailout of Wall Street banks and firms now being decided by the U.S. Congress is historic in its scope and meaning. Anyone who is in the market to buy a home right now is wondering whether it is prudent to wait until more is known about the effect this bailout will have on the economy. Many buyers will wait and see but some will see this as an opportunity to buy good properties at favorable prices.

Ask yourself some questions: how long will you stay in this property? How stable is your employment? Is the property a good value? Does it meet the needs of you and your family? If you plan to stay in a property for at least five to seven years, your source of income is stable, the price of the property seems very good, and the home accommodates your needs, you should feel comfortable going ahead with the purchase. Be sure that the loan you obtain has good terms that you can meet now and in the future. This is the checklist that can guide you to a prudent decision.

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

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ATHERTON COUNCIL

I am running for the Atherton Town Council because of **my concerns for public safety, leadership, maintenance of good financial balance, and response to the will of the community.**

The Council must provide good leadership as well as wise oversight, for which my past experience uniquely qualifies me.

As your elected Councilperson my priorities will be to:

- Provide leadership and oversight; include the continuing improvement of the existing financial practices, while delivering desired services in balance with the Town's ability to generate revenues.
- Ensure that Public Safety meets the expectations of our citizens. Our police services are an indispensable asset in reducing crime, enforcing traffic laws, and assisting with ordinance compliance. Because of my background, I know what it takes to provide an environment that maximizes police resources.
- Enhance the Town disaster preparedness by working in conjunction with the community and the fire district. During my career as both Police Chief & Town Manager, I have attended many FEMA training programs. Presently, I am on the Town's Disaster Preparedness Committee.
- Preserve the rural and countrified environment established by the Town founders even as we address the community's ever-changing requirements.
- Make town services more user-friendly and less complicated for people wanting to realize their dreams of living in Atherton.
- As a former Little League Manager, I see the need for the council to facilitate playing field usage agreements between our private & public schools and youth sporting groups. More recreational areas are needed for our youth, and working together with the town this objective can be obtained.

In the course of this campaign and, when elected, during my tenure on the Council, I promise to walk the neighborhoods, talk with you, and listen to you.

Thank you for your vote!
Dick Moore, Retired Police Chief
www.VoteChiefMoore.com

View this web-site for more information

Woodside rejects new wildfire risk labels

FIRE

continued from page 5

with labels of “very high risk” that would require disclosure in real estate transactions.

“It seems like this designation is being sought in order to adjust building codes,” one resident said. “Why not change the codes without this re-designation? Are we now facing the prospect of redlining?”

Resident Richard Draeger, owner of the Draeger’s Supermarket chain, sounded a similar note: “I think the financial harm that’s going to be wrought on homeowners in these areas is going to be significant.”

In previous stories on this topic, insurance company spokespeople have said they create and maintain their own fire-risk maps.

“The whole county is pretty much being inundated with people losing their homeowners insurance,” Ms. Enea said. In an interview, she said that the residents she is referring to, including herself, had policies that were not renewed but usually had little trouble finding another insurer.

Council responds

“It seems that there’s no good that comes from these designa-

tions whatsoever,” Councilman Dave Burow said, then recommended applying the tougher building codes for new homes in areas beyond the currently designated neighborhoods.

“Of course, it’s going to take many years,” he added. “It will probably end up protecting our children and not ourselves.”

In a scene reminiscent of solo performances within a jazz group, Mr. Burow’s comment and those of the six other council members who spoke before and after him were greeted with rounds of applause.

Councilman Peter Mason: “I am totally in favor of not doing the designation, though we should be applying the (tougher building code) throughout the town.”

Councilwoman Sue Boynton: “I would like to see the town continue on its path to create a town-wide culture and code that will get us out of this issue and get underwriters to come into town and compete for our business.”

Ms. Enea, too, was applauded after receiving praise from Mayor Ron Romines for a job well done.

“The town is going in the right direction with ignition resistance,” Ms. Enea said in reply. “I think we’re really on the right track here.” ■

RACE

continued from page 5

“I was still a little bit drunk, and hung over,” he admits. “I was just thinking that it would make my mom happy. If we get it, we get it.”

His mom, a big fan of the show, was immediately certain they’d make the cut, although they had to wait a month to find out, Dallas says. To prepare, Toni got a trainer and Dallas, already athletic, focused on getting in shape to do a lot of running.

Dallas says he knew he’d be in charge of navigating for the team, although just before he left for the race, his sense of direction failed him when he evaded a traffic jam in Sacramento by taking the back roads.

“I got lost for an hour and a half, and I was only about five minutes away from where I needed to be, but besides that instance, I have a great sense of direction,” he says. “My mom, on the other hand, she couldn’t tell you where left is.”

The duo’s previous foreign travel experience wasn’t very good, he says.

“We had gone to Italy and Greece together, back when I was 17, and after that I never wanted to travel with my mom again,” Dallas says. “I think we saw every inch of Italy in six days. I like to go at my own pace, and let things happen.”

This time around, Dallas says, he was hoping that travel would help him establish a more adult relationship with his mom.

“We ended up being able to become great friends after this,” he says. “We talk all the time now.”

He now appreciates the tough job his mom had raising him as a single parent, Dallas says.

“When I was 14, 15 and 16, my mom was the bad guy. She had to do the hard stuff, the stuff that wasn’t fun, but had to be done,” he says. “It took me until I was away at college to realize that.”

While he can’t reveal any details from the race itself, Dallas did say that he and his mom got along with some of the teams, but clashed with others.

“We won’t stand for people treating people badly,” Dallas says. “It’s a race, but we’re not going to sacrifice our character. At the end of the day, money doesn’t buy you anything.” ■



Photo illustration courtesy of the Woodside Landscape Committee

This bronze mare and foal would find a home on Woodside’s Village Hill, as shown in this photo illustration, if backers can raise the money to buy it.

Residents want statue on Village Hill

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

■ WOODSIDE

Woodside, a town that takes pride in a horse trail system that includes wilderness paths and downtown hitching posts, is on the way to having an equine statue on Village Hill, a publicly owned slope along Woodside Road that blooms with thousands of daffodils in the spring.

The seven-member Town Council voted unanimously at its Sept. 23 meeting to approve the installation of “Spring & Sprite,” a bronze sculpture of a mare and a foal.

The bronzes are a limited casting by Colorado-based sculptor Veryl Goodnight and are “slightly larger-than-life,” according to Phyrne Osborne, spokeswoman for the Woodside Landscape Committee, the informal group that planted the daffodils and whose stated goal is “to beautify town-owned areas.”

“The horse is what sets Woodside apart from neighboring towns like Atherton and Menlo Park,” she said to the council. “The horse is part of our heritage and history.”

This gift to the town would be paid for from

the pockets of donors. The price: \$102,000 plus delivery and installation charges, Ms. Osborne said in an interview. A fundraising campaign is set to launch at the town’s annual Day of the Horse celebration, which occurs Oct. 11 this year.

The council’s approval follows its May decision to give the committee the go-ahead to search for a sculptor. The council asked the town’s Architecture and Site Review Board to recommend where on Village Hill the statues should go and what vegetation should surround them.

The ASRB should have been consulted earlier in the project, board chair Karen Rongey-Connor said in a phone interview. Public art, and equine statues in particular, can bring out passions, and addressing them is within the purview of the ASRB, she said. “There is a protocol. That’s why we’re here.”

One potential point of provocation — whether the statue would include a rider and whether that rider would be sitting on a western saddle or an English one — was settled in May when the council recommended a riderless horse.

For more on Ms. Goodnight’s work, go to www.verylgoodnight.com. ■

NOISE

continued from page 5

cess,” she added.

Councilman Steve Toben, an experienced mediator who would likely chair the workshop(s), said talking it through, as Ms. Jernick is trying to do, is the recommended approach. The council asked Ms. Lambert to look into Ms. Jernick’s complaint.

Former mayor Jon Silver recommended “singling out” leaf blowers for special consideration, echoing sentiments expressed minutes earlier by resident Bernie Bayuk.

Someone mentioned chainsaws. “I like using my chainsaw on the weekend and would be very upset about not using it,” Ms. Plunder said. ■

Lovins to speak in Portola Valley

Wasting no time, the town of Portola Valley breaks in its brand new and notably green community hall on Monday, Oct. 13, with a talk by Amory Lovins, notable speaker on environmental topics, particularly those concerning saving energy while reducing costs, and the cofounder and chief scientist at the Rocky Mountain Institute in Colorado.

The event runs from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at 765 Portola Road and is free and open to the public, no reservations required. Limited parking is available at Town Center and Christ Episcopal Church next door, and the town encourages bicycling and carpooling.

Mr. Lovins’ talk inaugurates “Pioneers of Sustainability,” the town’s new green speaker series. This event is sponsored by the town, Friends of Sausal Creek, and the Holland/Yates family.

For more information, contact Brandi de Garmeaux, the town’s sustainability and resource efficiency coordinator, at 851-1700, ext. 222.



Another electric car company may come to Menlo Park

■ ZAP! is in talks to open a dealership on El Camino Real.

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

Tesla Motors' days as the only electric car dealership in Menlo Park may be numbered.

ZAP!, a Santa Rosa-based electric vehicle company, is in talks with the city to open a dealership at 550 El Camino Real — the site of the abandoned Buick/Cadillac/GMC dealership.

Menlo Park Business Development Manager David Johnson said the city has been in talks with ZAP! since late 2007.

"This fulfills our mission to have the lights on and people occupying these buildings while we go through the visioning process for El Camino Real," said Mr. Johnson. He noted that ZAP! would likely be a short-term tenant — similar to Tesla Motors, which opened a showroom in June at the vacant Anderson Chevrolet dealership at 300 El Camino Real.

Dan Reuter, president and CEO of Ethical Approach, the company that handles distribution for ZAP!, said the electric car company is "very interested" in opening a Menlo Park dealership, but put the odds of a Menlo



Photo courtesy ZAP!

The ZAP! Xebra sedan is listed at \$11,700. ZAP! is considering opening a Menlo Park dealership.

Park dealership actually getting built at "about a 50/50 chance." He said the main building on the 550 El Camino Real lot needs about \$60,000 of repairs, and the automaker still has to work out details of the potential dealership with Stanford University, which owns the land.

About ZAP!

Judging by the specs of ZAP! vehicles, they aren't intended to hit the freeways, like the trendy Tesla Roadster.

The company's three-wheeled, zero-emissions Xebra sedans and trucks have max speeds of

40 miles per hour, and can travel just 25 miles on a single charge.

But the ZAP! vehicles are significantly cheaper than the \$109,000 Roadster. The Xebra sedan is listed at \$11,700, and the truck costs \$12,500, according to the ZAP! Web site.

The company also has a \$32,500 three-wheeled sports car called the Alias set for a 2009 release, and a \$60,000 sports utility vehicle called the Zap-X set for 2010, according to the Web site. Those two models can travel for longer distances per battery charge, and can hit higher speeds.

Candidate forums set for Atherton, Menlo Park

Local voters mark your calendars: Candidate forums for local city council races are just around the corner.

The four candidates running for two seats on the Atherton City Council will face off Thursday, Oct. 2, forum hosted by the League of Women Voters. The debate is scheduled to run from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the Pavilion at

■ MENLO WATCH

Holbrook-Palmer Park, at 150 Watkins Ave.

The candidates — David Henig, incumbent Kathy McKee, Richard Moore and Elizabeth Lewis — will be given time for opening and closing statements, and will field questions from a moderator.

Menlo Park

A Menlo Park City Council forum, also hosted by the League of Women Voters, is set for Wednesday, Oct. 8. The forum will feature the three council candidates — Rick Ciardella and incumbents Andy Cohen and Kelly Fergusson — and is scheduled to run from 7:30 to 9 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center, between Laurel and Alma streets.

Both forums will be taped and later broadcast on cable channel 27, and online via the Palo Alto-based Media Center's Web site, www.CommunityMediaCenter.net. The forums will not be broadcast live.

Meeting on Hillview school rebuild

What's the latest on plans for the rebuilding of the Hillview Middle School campus? Menlo Park City School District officials are holding a community meeting on the schematic design plans for the school at 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 2, in the multipurpose room, 1100 Elder Ave. at Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park.

The district is expecting a surge in enrollment in

the coming years, and plans to expand classroom and other facilities on the campus accordingly. The schematic plan includes the campus layout, the site plan and architectural renderings.

The school board is set to vote on the adoption of the schematic design later in October, followed by public review of the project's draft environmental impact report.

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	Serapi 12 X 15	~~19,500~~	7,399
	Oushak 12 X 18	~~27,800~~	10,899
	Haj Jalili 14 X 24	~~42,500~~	13,855
Area Rug	Kazak 2 X 3	~~1,100~~	299
	Malayer 3 X 5	~~1,850~~	455
	Kerman 4 X 6	~~2,750~~	799
	Modern 5 X 8	~~2,290~~	988
	Gabbeh 6 X 9	~~2,650~~	1,049
Hall Runner	Sultanabad 2.6 X 6	~~1,250~~	399
	Tabriz 2.6 X 8	~~1,890~~	749
	Bakhtiari 2.6 X 10	~~2,450~~	1,099
	Sarouk 2.6 X 12	~~2,950~~	1,244
	Oushak 2.6 X 14	~~3,220~~	1,450
	Nain 2.6 X 16	~~3,850~~	1,799

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Ivan is off to work.

But he'll be back after his summer job at a global management consulting firm to mentor kids like young Chase at the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Peninsula. Ivan Martinez, 18, returns because the Club helped *him* beat the Opportunity Gap that defeats so many kids in his neighborhood. Caring staff and volunteers coached Ivan in academics and in life skills, and now he's a sophomore at San Jose State University. Most of all, Ivan says, the Club inspired him to expect more of himself. That's why we know Ivan will earn his college degree and that one day he'll be off to work at his dream career in music production.



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M-A football team wins after losing head coach

■ Sykes resigns, but Bears bounce back with 24-23 victory over Leigh.

By Keith Peters

Palo Alto Weekly

The Menlo-Atherton football team, which lost its coach on Thursday, won a game on Friday when place-kicker Eric Stanske booted an 18-yard field goal with 10 seconds to play to lift the Bears to a 24-22 non-league victory over host Leigh.

M-A head coach Bob Sykes, who guided the Bears to the Central Coast Section Large School Division finals last season, resigned on Thursday.

The team was informed of Sykes' resignation during a team dinner at the Mohr household.

Menlo-Atherton parent Ted Knapp, whose son Sam is a starting wide receiver, said the news did not come as a big surprise.

"Most of the boys sensed something wasn't right because of his (Sykes') absence at practice," Ted Knapp said. "He (Sykes) was sort of AWOL (absent without leave). That sort of got people wondering."

Knapp said Sykes showed up at only one practice Wednesday, Sept. 24, and that was for about only 10 minutes. He was gone on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Menlo-Atherton athletic director Pam Wimberly said there were several "indications" throughout the year that things weren't going well as needed for all parties.

"The one thing that Coach Sykes did by his absence was prepare the

■ SPORTS

For more sports news, check TheAlmanacOnline.com.

coaches," Knapp said. "They had to step up during the week."

Sykes reportedly had missed practices for two weeks.

Wimberly said there were no hard feelings on either side and that former M-A coach Ben Parks would return to the team and oversee the program. Former assistant Phillip Brown, who took over as head coach for Friday's game, evidently will remain in that position.

"He did a great job of channeling every distraction into production," Knapp said.

Wimberly said a search for a new head coach will begin following the season.

Parks coached football and wrestling during his 30-year career at M-A. He is currently the wrestling coach at Sequoia.

Despite the announcement of Sykes' leaving, Knapp said the players responded well.

"As young boys can be, they were resilient," Knapp said. "The kids just moved on."

That was evident Friday night in San Jose as the Bears overcame a late deficit to win.

Senior running back Vaughn Smith ran for 174 yards on 20

See **BEARS**, page 12

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Re-Elect KATHY McKEITHEN
Atherton Town Council
VOTE FOR KATHY ON NOV. 4

KATHY has served on the Atherton Town Council for the last 8 years and would like to continue to represent you for the next 4 years.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Helped to increase the Town's Reserve Fund from \$4.5 million to \$9.3 million
- Oversaw 7 consecutive "clean audits"
- Worked to revitalize the Building Department and make it more efficient and equitable
- Encouraged environmental and structural upgrades to the Atherton Drainage Channel
- Assisted Neighbors in resolving quality of life issues
- Established and funded the Town's Citizen Emergency Program

CURRENT PROJECTS:

- All Parcel Tax Funds to be used for capital improvements
- Litigation costs be limited to \$25,000 unless specifically authorized
- The budget be balanced without reducing services, especially police services
- Safe transportation routes related to the Encinal School expansion
- Future alternatives to the Parcel Tax
- Limiting potential noise increases from revised flight paths
- Increasing Residents' use and enjoyment of Holbrook-Palmer Park

QUALIFICATIONS:

- Elected Atherton Town Council November, 2000 and has served two four-year terms. Served as Atherton Mayor 2004
- Atherton resident 24 years
- Two children attended Menlo Park schools and graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School
- Practiced law 1975-1982
- Graduate Smith College, B.A. and Columbia Law School, J. D.

PRIORITIES:

- Residents' Concerns, first
- Continued improvement of the Town's financial condition and management
- Opposing High Speed Rail in Atherton
- Supporting critical drainage improvements throughout Atherton
- Ensuring that we're all comfortable, safe and proud to live in Atherton

KATHY McKEITHEN has the education and professional training and experience; has worked with 7 other Council Members and 3 Town Managers; knows the Town employees and the "ins and outs" of getting things done; has the tenacity and work ethic to make sure your needs are addressed; and most importantly, wants to represent you for another 4 years.

VOTE FOR KATHY ON NOV. 4

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Community Health Education Programs

October 2008

Events and Lectures

Heart Failure Update
Tuesday, October 7, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Lynette Lissin, M.D., *PAMF Cardiology*

Dr. Lissin will discuss the diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, a condition that affects nearly 5 million Americans of all ages and is the most common reason a patient over the age of 65 is admitted to the hospital.

Hearst Center for Health Education, Level 3, Jamplis Building, Palo Alto Medical Foundation, 795 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. **RSVP to 650-853-4873.**

Celiac Disease: Highlights of Diagnosis and Treatment
Thursday, October 30, 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Claribel Taylor, M.D., *PAMF Gastroenterology*

Join us for a presentation on celiac disease, its common symptoms and how it is diagnosed. You will learn tips on following a gluten-free diet.

Classes

Moving Through Pregnancy, Mondays, October 6 – 20, 7 – 9 p.m.
A three-session program covers a variety of topics related to pregnancy, including nutrition, exercise, infant care and safety.

Advance Directives, Tuesday, October 7, 10 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
PAMF's specially trained volunteers will provide advice and answer questions about the advance health care directive. No cost.

Learning About Heart Failure, Wednesday, October 8, 2:30 – 4 p.m., and Friday, October 24, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
This class, taught by a cardiology nurse practitioner, discusses medications used in treatment, dietary requirements, weight monitoring, self-care, activity guidelines, and symptom recognition and reporting, and more.

What You Need to Know About Warfarin, Wednesday, October 15, 2 – 4 p.m.
A PAMF pharmacist will discuss what warfarin is, why you are taking it and how you can help yourself.

Support Groups

Cancer (1st & 3rd Tuesdays) • **Diabetes** (1st Wednesday) • **Multiple Sclerosis** (2nd & 4th Mondays) • **Sleep Apnea** (1st Thursday) • **Alcohol and Drug Education** (Every Tuesday) • **Healing Imagery for Cancer Patients** (October 15 & 29)

For information on class fees and to register, call the Education Division at 650-853-2960.



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WEDDING

Kueny-Lichtman

Dr. Rachel Kueny and Sarah Ann Lichtman were married Aug. 16 at the Menlo Park home of Dr. Kueny's mother, Brielle Johnck. The bride's stepfather, former Menlo Park mayor Stephen M. Schmidt, officiated at the wedding.

Dr. Kueny is the daughter of Brielle Johnck of Menlo Park and Richard S. Kueny of Northampton, Massachusetts. She attended Castilleja and completed high school at the Hotchkiss School in Lakeville, Connecticut. She is a graduate of Stanford University, and received her medical degree from the State University of New York Downstate College of Medicine in Brooklyn, New York. Dr. Kueny is a third-year emergency medicine resident at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn.

Ms. Lichtman is the daughter of Dr. Celia S. Lichtman of Brooklyn, New York, and the late Arthur Lichtman. She is a graduate of Vassar College. A candidate for a doc-



Dr. Rachel Kueny and Sarah Ann Lichtman were wed Aug. 16 in Menlo Park.

torate in 20th century decorative arts and design at Bard Graduate Center in New York City, she is an assistant professor of design history in the department of art and design studies at Parsons The New School for Design in New York.

The couple, who originally affirmed their partnership in New York City in August 2004, have been together for 15 years and are the parents of toddler Noah Kueny-Lichtman. They own Astro-Turf, an antiques shop in Brooklyn specializing in 1950s and 1960s furniture and objects.

What's future of Spanish program?

A study session on the future of Spanish language instruction at Woodside Elementary School is the topic of a special board meeting set for 4 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 2, in the Wildcats Room, 3195 Woodside Road in Woodside.

The grades K-8 school temporarily suspended its Spanish program this year, following the resignation of its teacher. Now, school board members are con-

BRIEFS

sidering every aspect of the program — how Spanish is taught, at what age, and what students are expected to accomplish by the time they graduate.

Following a presentation on objectives and best practices, the meeting will be open for public comment. Any action on the Spanish program will occur at a future board meeting.

Forum on "City of Ideas"

Architect, developer and urban planner Robert S. Davis will kick off the sixth season of "The Forum at Redwood City: A Continuing Conversation on City Design," on Thursday, Oct. 2, from 6 to 7:45 p.m. at The Little Fox Theatre, 2209 Broadway in Redwood City.

In "The City of Ideas," Mr. Davis will explore the meaning of the

Renaissance concept, and its lessons for people redesigning cities now to be more functional, livable and elegant.

The Forum at Redwood City is held the first Thursday of every month from October through May. Admission is \$10.

For more information, call Dan Zack of the City of Redwood City at 780-7363 or dzack@redwoodcity.org; or go to redwoodcity.org/forum.

BEARS

continued from page 10

carries and scored a touchdown on a 52-yard run to help spark the Bears (2-1), who also got a solid effort from quarterback Turner Baty, who completed 12 of 25 passes for 203 yards. Rod Nash caught four passes for 60 yards and one touchdown. Sam Knapp had three receptions for 51 yards and a score.

Leigh scored late in the game and added a two-point con-

version for a 22-21 lead. Baty, a junior in his first season as the starting quarterback, calmly rallied the Bears. Taking over on his own 37 following the kickoff, Baty fired a strike to Russell Perkins, who completed a 55-yard play down to the Leigh 8. Stanske booted the game-winner three plays later.

Menlo-Atherton will play host to Seaside on Saturday, Oct. 4, in a non-league game at 2 p.m.



>> '...BUT WHAT I REALLY WANT TO DO IS PRODUCE'

Local filmmaker, 16, has been making movies for half his life



Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

>> “To see my movie on the big screen is really satisfying, the applause is ... awesome.”

- DAVID HARRIS

By **Andrea Gemmet**

Almanac Staff Writer

For his short movie “Johnny Goner,” David Harris had the cameras, the crew, the professional actors flown in from Hollywood, the location at a Redwood City mortuary, the insurance policies and even the caterer. But being only 16 years old, finding transportation wasn’t always easy.

“I’d had my license for four days when we shot (the movie),” says David, now a junior at Menlo School in Atherton, with wry humor. “I did drive myself to and from the set. Other than that, I pleaded with my mommy to give me free rides.”

David, an Atherton resident, says he’s been making movies for half his life, if you count his first effort at age 8, goofing around with his family’s video camera in the backyard. “It was ... not so good,” he says of his first film.

He’s improved a lot since then. David has been writing, directing and producing a number of short films, attending summer filmmaking camps and most recently, spending seven weeks over the summer as a full-time student in the University of Southern California’s cinematic arts department.

His 20-minute movie “Johnny Goner” is currently making its festival run, winning acclaim for its young producer and director, and picking up several awards. A coming of age story about a young hypochondriac who works in a funeral home, it was written by David’s fellow Menlo student, 17-year-old

Jenny Jaffe, who’s now in college.

“She asked me to make it, and I was so enthusiastic because it’s so unique,” David says.

The high-definition digital movie took nine months and cost \$7,000 to make, and was mostly financed through David’s freelance job filming weddings, bar mitzvahs and school plays, he says.

A true student effort

Determined to make it a true student film, David decided that every key player in the making of the film would have to be under age 18 — actors excluded, of course.

“I just wanted to make it with no school backing me,” he says. “I wanted to see if I could do it, and not rely on a phone call saying I’m from USC, and then the dean calls somebody, who call somebody else, and makes it happen.”

Plus, having such a youthful crew makes it unique in terms of marketing the movie, says David.

It’s clear that David’s got a precocious grasp of every aspect of the movie-making process, from promotional Web sites and press kits to budgeting and wheedling discounts and free help.

Squashing the stereotypical Hollywood aspiration voiced by everyone from movie stars to production assistants — “... but what I really want to do is direct” — David’s got a different goal.

“I really want to be a producer,” he says, acknowledging that most people don’t rec-

ognize the creativity involved in producing films, thinking that the job entails little more than pushing paper around and dealing with money.

But David, who walked into Redwood Chapel funeral home and convinced its manager to let a bunch of teens use it as a movie location, and who turned a Hollywood equipment rental company’s 15 percent student discount into a 75 percent discount, obviously thrives on the behind-the-scenes challenges that go into making a movie.

“I don’t hear that that often, but if (producing) is what he decides to focus on, he will be very successful,” says veteran TV and film director Alan Myerson, who taught the directing course David took at USC this summer. “He has an attractive personality, and he gets people to do stuff for him.”

David was the youngest person in the class, and it showed in his choice of material, says Mr. Myerson, offering his former student a small critique.

“He’s very clever, exceedingly clever in conceiving and executing the films he makes,” Mr. Myerson says. “I wish he’d make films that are a little more substantial, with more of a personal emotional connection.”

However, he said he has no doubt that David’s choice of material will mature in time.

“He’s very young, but obviously very ambitious and skilled,” Mr. Myerson says. “The

See **DAVID HARRIS**, page 14

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ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTORS



Steve Lewis is President of Lewis & Mathews Investment Management in Menlo Park. He is a college professor, investment counselor, Value Line award winner, financial author and has appeared on national radio and television. He is a past officer of the S.C. International Association of Financial planners and served on the National Academy Advisory Board. He has written for Money magazine and Dow Jones's Barron's.



Jim Curran is a veteran of over 25 Years on Wall Street. He is President of Curran & Lewis Investment Management, Inc., in Menlo Park, a Wealth Manager Magazine top Wealth Management firm. He is Chief Portfolio Manager, and specializes in investment advice for individual investors, companies, and their officers. He is an accomplished and dynamic college and business lecturer.



Debbie Peri, vice President of Curran & Lewis, is an expert in retirement planning, portfolio analysis and investment management. She is a Certified Financial planner™ and a member of the Financial Planning Association and Financial Planning Forum. She was a Certified Public Accountant with Ernst & Young, has lectured extensively at the college level, and is a published investment author.

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Photo by Veronica Weber/The Almanac

David Harris, a junior at Menlo School in Atherton, just finished producing and directing a coming-of-age film shot in a Redwood City funeral home.

DAVID HARRIS

continued from page 13

name David Harris will not be unknown to many people in the next 10 years. I expect him to be very successful.”

‘Johnny Goner’

While the \$7,000 he spent making “Johnny Goner” strikes some people as being high for a short digital film, David says he budgeted very carefully to make the most of his money. He gave up using film stock in order to fly out actors from Los Angeles, he says.

His volunteer crew was largely made up of friends, many from the Riekes Center in Menlo Park, he says. The screenwriter’s mother, Eve Jaffe, served as caterer. There was one major area of savings, though.

“To my surprise, professional actors work for students for free,” David says.

Actors like the chance to add to their audition reels, work with the next generation of upcoming directors and to occasionally escape the Tinseltown bureaucracy that accompanies the paying roles, David explains. He and screenwriter Jenny were delighted with the actors they found, he says.

His father accompanied him to auditions in LA, he says. “We had an agreement that I would call him Peter, because it would seem weird if I called him Dad during the casting,” David says.

To heighten his aura of professionalism, David says he always wore a suit to the auditions and didn’t disclose his age unless asked.

“Most of my time went into producing the film,” he says. “I had to find a balance between, ‘I’m a professional, you can trust

me’ and, ‘I’m a student, you should help me.’”

He’d never been in a funeral home before, but he quickly realized that the Redwood Chapel location would play a big part in preparing his actors for their roles, he says.

“It smells. It has such a heavy, tangible atmosphere,” he says. “I decided not to bring my actors in before we shot.”

Some directors rely on a prop or some other cue to help actors, “but in my case, it was a smell,” David says. “It was impossible not to be in character when you were there.”

The film was shot in one of the two chapels while funerals were going on in the other one, David says.

“Redwood Chapel was so supportive,” he says.

Manager Don lo Barbera says the experience was a positive one.

“He just walked in my office one day and presented me with the idea, and I thought it was pretty good,” Mr. lo Barbera says. After checking to make sure David’s project was legitimate and being provided insurance against damages, he gave the go-ahead, he says. He’s pleased with the end result, too.

“I thought (the movie) was great. It was neat just to watch it,” Mr. lo Barbera says. “Obviously, I was looking at the background the whole time. It was weird seeing my funeral home in a movie.”

“Johnny Goner” is David’s entry into the quirky coming-of-age drama genre, but his other short films have run the gamut, from romantic comedy to a suspense film about a school shooting. His latest work, “Jimmy’s Construction,” is about an aspiring balloon artist who’s pressured to go into the family construction business, he says.

“It’s completely in contrast to my father and family, who have completely endorsed me since I was 8,” he says. “I couldn’t have asked for more supportive family.”

While some of David’s previous films can be viewed on his Web site, www.BlackShadowFilms.com, “Johnny Goner” currently is only showing at film festivals. Once it’s off the festival circuit, David says he hopes to find distribution for it.

In August, “Johnny Goner” won the award for best drama, high school division, at BestFest America in La Jolla. Another short film of his, “Heart Attack,” won best high school comedy at the festival, and David won special recognition for outstanding filmmaking. “Johnny Goner” also won first place in the high school short film category at this October’s Berks Movie Madness Film Festival in Reading, Pennsylvania.

“To see my movie on the big screen is really satisfying,” David says, searching for words to describe the experience. “The applause is ... awesome.”

Despite finding success at such a young age, David says his future as a filmmaker is hardly set in stone. Sure, he’d like to go to college at USC and spend his time making films, doing the kind of homework that he currently does for fun, once his schoolwork is finished. On the other hand, the things he’s learned making movies could easily translate into other careers, he says, with an earnestness that might ease the mind of a worried parent or guidance counselor.

“My middle school application on my proudest accomplishment was all about making my first (real) film,” David says. “It’s funny, I feel like that’s going to be my college application, as well.” ■

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Elizabeth Lewis



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- ✓ Maintain and upgrade town buildings and facilities as needed
- ✓ Preserve and maintain our Town heritage and artifacts
- ✓ Improve resident communications, involvement, Council accountability
- ✓ Term Limits for Council members
- ✓ Youth sports, community outreach and respect for our residents and taxpayers

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Alan Carlson - Former Atherton Mayor
Chris Cobey - Former Atherton Mayor
Didi Fisher - Former Atherton Mayor
John Fisher - Former Atherton Mayor

ATHERTON COMMUNITY LEADERS

Bob Brennan - Retired Atherton Chief of Police
Peter Carpenter - Menlo Park Fire Dist Dir/ & ACIL
Virginia Chang Kiraly - Member California Commission for Economic Development
Rob Faisant - Retired Atherton City Attorney
Valerie Gardner - Environmental Programs Committee
Betsy Glikbarg - Member Public Safety Committee
William Grindley - Planning Commission
Bill Grove - Member ACIL & Disaster Preparedness Comm
Todd Beardsley - Member General Plan Committee
Rose Hau - Former Member General Plan and Planning Comm
Jim Massey - Former Chair Parks & Rec Comm
James Ransohoff, Jr. - Former Member General Plan and Planning Comm
Sheri Shenk - Past President Friends of the Library
Mervin Morris - Founder, Mervyn's

PARTIAL LIST OF ATHERTON NEIGHBORS FOR ELIZABETH LEWIS

Faraj Aalaei	Mel Kerwin
Jennifer Acheson	Terri Kerwin
Maryann Ackley	Charlie King
Steve Ackley	Leslie King
Susan Akbarpour	Arthur Krakower
Bianca Alexander	Jean Krakower
Manie Alexander	Vivian Kral
Mary Alexander	Eric Larson
Colleen Anderson	Philip Larson
Grant Anderson	James Law
Brian Avery	Linda Law
Tracey Avery	Dave Levison
Laurie Bassin	Sandy Levison
Rich Bassin	Ian Lewis
Inna Beardsley	Joe Lewis
Steve Bird	Bob Loarie
Susan Bird	Connie Loarie
Larry Briscoe	Cynthia Lovewell
Pat Briscoe	John Lovewell
Henry Bullock	Linda Lynch
Terri Bullock	Judy Massey
Brian Cairney	Sharon Meers
Jane Carpenter	Antoinette Michael
Jim Carruthers, Jr.	Bob Mondin
Noreen Carruthers, Jr.	Janis Mondin
Courtney Charney	Bonnie Morey
Michael Charney	Herb Morey
Dolly Colby	Joe Morey
Tom Colby	Jeff Morris
Joe Comartin	Missy Morris
Natalie Comartin	Tom O'Dowd
Mark Davis	Danielle Donahue Paye
Patty Davis	John Paye
Carol Del Secco	Bob Proctor
Clay Del Secco	Virginia Proctor
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Carolyn Fearmster	Nancy Sterling
Scott Fearmster	Phil Taylor
Carol Flaherty	Robin Taylor
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Dave Fried	John Thibault
Meg Fried	Stella Tsai
Tom Glikbarg	Yao Tsai
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Nancy Grove	Steve Warner
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Manuel Henriquez	Terri Watters
David Herron	Katherine Wise
Rhoda Herron	Jeff Wise
James Heslin	Brenda Woodson
William Hoy	Wade Woodson
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Ann Kaplan	Margaret Worthing
Diane Kelvie	Mike Yaeger
Patrick Kelvie	Newt Yaeger
Georgenne Kerwin	Pam Yaeger

Ex-official seeks records on candidate, councilman, staff

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton's former finance director John Johns is seeking an array of e-mails, memos and other documents in three California Public Records Act requests.

A the end of September, Mr. Johns filed requests for records on City Council candidate Elizabeth Lewis' home construction project, police department expense accounts, Councilman Charles Marsala's investigation of Mr. Johns, and all communications between the former police chief, former interim city manager, and two other town staffers — among other things.

It's the latest salvo in the municipal drama that started with the audits of Atherton's busy building department in 2006, and has

been punctuated by lawsuits, civil grand jury investigations and the departure of high-level staff.

Mr. Johns alleges that his firing in October 2007 was in retaliation for digging up information on problems in the building department.

"What motivated me to file the ... request was that I felt Charles Marsala had made one statement too many that I consider to be derogatory in nature," Mr. Johns told The Almanac.

Mr. Johns took issue with Mr. Marsala's recent comments praising City Attorney Marc Hynes for "putting Mr. Johns on the defensive" by asking the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office to investigate Mr. Johns for allegedly using town time and resources for his outside consulting jobs.

The district attorney's office

■ ATHERTON

declined to press charges, but while the investigation was ongoing this spring, Mr. Johns was forced to withdraw his wrongful termination lawsuit or risk incriminating himself in the criminal investigation.

Mr. Johns re-filed the lawsuit in June, alleging that his civil rights were violated, but withdrew it in August.

"I would hope that Councilman Marsala learns to be more judicious with his comments to the press, and by doing so, he's less likely to jeopardize his own career," Mr. Johns said.

Mr. Marsala objected to Mr. Johns' claim that he launched his own investigation into Mr. Johns' conduct at the same time that the town was doing its personnel investigation.

"I don't know if I did an investigation. I requested his credit card charges, which we should be looking at anyway, and then some purchase orders," Mr. Marsala said. "I backed those up with a couple of e-mails. I didn't interview any people."

Mr. Marsala said he's concerned

by the scope of Mr. Johns' records request, and questions how he knows of the existence of some of the documents he is requesting.

"I feel it's a ploy to have the town encumber a huge expense (filling the records request) in order to seek a settlement from us," Mr. Marsala said.

Candidate's house

Ms. Lewis, the council candidate, said she was shocked to learn that permits and documents associated with the construction of her home were part of Mr. Johns' records request.

"I can only suspect that, in some way, he's trying to dig something up to discredit me or slander me, because I'm running for town council," she said.

Ms. Lewis said she was unaware of any problems regarding the tear-down of most of her old house at the corner of Alejandra and Emilie avenues.

"We built a house according to all zoning and building code regulations that the town of Atherton required us to," she said. "Mike Wasmann, who's now the head building official, was our regular inspector and he signed off on all the building permits."

Mr. Wasmann confirmed to The Almanac that he's unaware of any problems or questions regarding Ms. Lewis' building project. Calculating fees and checking for zoning issues would have been handled by then-building official Mike Hood, he said.

Mr. Johns said he discovered apparent discrepancies in the building department's electronic permit records, having to do with the permit extension, scope of the work and features of the residence.

"Perhaps these apparent anomalies are nothing more than harmless technical violations or shoddy record-keeping on the part of the Building Department," he said in an e-mail to Ms. Lewis that he forwarded to The Almanac.

It's not the first time the legality of completed home construction projects have been questioned. Similar allegations were made about remodeling projects done by council members Marsala and Jim Janz, and an anonymous letter to the Planning Commission in July 2007 made public the fact that a portion of former Councilman Alan Carlson's roof peak was 7 inches over the town's height limit. ■

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City manager gets bonus

By Rory Brown

Almanac Staff Writer

■ MENLO WATCH

Menlo Park City Council members must be satisfied with the job City Manager Glen Rojas is doing in the city's top post.

Council members voted unanimously on Sept. 23 to grant Mr. Rojas a \$4,000 bonus, and extend his contract one additional year, through July 31, 2011.

The vote was taken as part of the council's consent calendar.

Top managers and department heads are eligible for annual bonuses of up to \$5,000, according to a report by City Attorney Bill McClure.

Mr. Rojas, city manager since August 2007, has a base salary of \$220,434.

Engaging in the community

Menlo Park Community Engagement Manager Cherise Brandell will be among the speakers at a community engagement conference on Saturday, Oct. 4, at Avenidas, the senior

center in Palo Alto.

The conference, titled "Making Change Happen," will run from 9:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. at Avenidas headquarters at 450 Bryant St. in Palo Alto. Registration is \$15 and includes a continental breakfast.

The conference aims to encourage people to get involved in their communities through various means, including philanthropy, environmental action, civic groups and politics.

Ms. Brandell, along with city employees from Palo Alto and Redwood City, will talk about opportunities for residents to get involved in city programs.

To register for the conference, call 289-5412, or go to Avenidas.org, and under "Announcements," click on the link to information about the conference.

No meeting

The Menlo Park City Council will not hold its regular meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 30. Meetings are scheduled to resume Oct. 7. ■

Atherton talk on chemical contaminants

Common chemical contaminants in the environment and how to avoid them is the topic of a lecture at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, Oct. 7, at the Menlo Circus Club in Atherton. Dr. Gina Solomon, associated clinical professor of medicine at UC San Francisco, is the speaker at

this health education seminar, sponsored by the Northern California Cancer Center.

Advance registration is required. The event fee is \$45, and includes lunch afterward. To reserve a spot, call (888) 315-5988 or e-mail education@nccc.org.

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City manager gets bonus

By Rory Brown
Almanac Staff Writer

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Schools get big boost from foundation grant

By Marjorie Mader

Almanac Staff Writer

With great appreciation, trustees of the Portola Valley School District accepted the Portola Valley Schools Foundation's grant of \$1,132,000 for the schools at their Sept. 23 meeting.

The grant, due to the foundation's fundraising efforts for 2008, provides almost 10 per cent of the district's budget for the 2008-09

school year, according to foundation co-presidents Jocelyn Swisher and Ken Hirsch.

Funds came from four sources: the foundation's annual campaign, \$850,000; endowment grants for teachers, \$134,204; accumulated excess funds, \$115,000; and eScrip purchases by families from area merchants, \$32,874. The eScrip money goes for classroom supplies at both schools: Ormondale (grades K-3) and Corte Madera (grades 4-8).

Earlier, when the district faced a possible budget shortfall for the 2008-09 fiscal year, the foundation stepped forward and provided \$165,000 from its reserves — above and beyond the annual campaign's goal of \$800,000. This additional money preserved programs such as art and physical education in grades 4 and 5; half the cost of staffing both school libraries; and lunch monitors.

"The district is incredibly blessed to have such a dedicated and energetic group, working on its behalf and is most appreciative of the foundation's continuing support," said Superintendent Anne Campbell at the meeting.

She and trustees also acknowledged the commitment and dedication of the retiring foundation co-presidents Cathy Carlson and Matt Miller. Their "inspirational leadership was pivotal in achieving this impressive accomplishment," said Ms. Campbell.

Campaign funds pay for art, physical education, science and Spanish at Ormondale; and music, drama and classroom aides at both schools.

At Corte Madera, the campaign funds 50 percent of the after-school sports program and reading support; and 25 percent of the cost of smaller classes.

"We hope to increase Portola Valley School District family participation rates from 72 to 80 percent and to raise \$825,000," said Leslie Lomond, campaign co-chair for the 2008-09 school year.

"Our theme is 'Together We Make a Difference' and we do," said Ms. Lomond.

Portola Valley appoints new planning commissioner

Portola Valley resident and civic volunteer Alexandra Von Feldt was appointed to the town's Planning Commission by the mayor and a consensus on the Town Council at the council's Sept. 24 meeting.

Ms. Von Feldt was the only applicant for the seat vacated in July by longtime commissioner Linda Elkind.

The Planning Commission addresses land-use and development policies; grants and oversees conditional use permits; reviews variance applications; receives appeals of ordinances having to do with zoning and subdivisions; and advises the Town Council on general plan issues. Its decisions may be

appealed to the Town Council.

The council spoke with Ms. Von Feldt for about 10 minutes before her appointment, but most of that time was occupied by praise for her years as a town volunteer.

She now leaves an empty seat on the Architecture & Site Control Commission, to which she was appointed in January 2007. Before that, she was a member of the town's Conservation Committee for two or three years, she said in an interview.

Ms. Von Feldt is also co-chair of the fundraising committee attempting to complete the private funding for the daylighting of Sausal Creek at Town Center.

She is married and the mother of three small children.

Sarah Palin visit postponed to Oct. 5

A planned fundraising visit on Sept. 25 to Woodside by Republican vice-presidential candidate and Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin has been cancelled. Instead, she is scheduled to come to the Bay Area for a fundraising brunch on Sunday, Oct. 5, at a location that has not yet been made public, said California Republican party spokesman Kevin Roberts.

Gov. Palin's original schedule had her coming to the Woodside estate of Tom Siebel, but expected attendance "had just swelled," requiring relocation to a convention center in San Jose, Mr. Roberts said. Then, the date was changed and the location has not been made public yet.

BRIEFS

A listing for the event at a hotel in Burlingame at www.cagop.org is out of date, Mr. Roberts said.

Olive Festival

The 11th Annual Arts & Olive Festival will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 5, at Canada College in Woodside. Admission and parking are free but a \$5 donation is requested to support the Canada College Student Scholarship Fund. The event features olives, olive oil, music and food. Canada College is at 4200 Farm Hill Blvd. For more information, call 306-3428 or go to www.olivefest.org.



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NOMINEES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the following persons have been nominated for the offices mentioned below to be filled at a General Municipal Election consolidated with the Presidential Election to be held in the Town of Atherton, on Tuesday, the 4th day of November, 2008, for the following offices:

OFFICE: Member of the Atherton City Council
(Two full-term seats expiring in November 2012)

David Henig
Elizabeth Lewis
Kathy McKeithen
Richard "Dick" Moore
Sam R. Goodman

/s/ Kathi Hamilton
Kathi Hamilton, City Elections Official

Please Note: Sam Goodman has withdrawn his candidacy.

Dated & Posted: Friday, September 26, 2008
In accordance with Election Code Section 12110

Published in THE ALMANAC on October 1, 2008.



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Authors, singer, fire chief pitch in for kids' library

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

Three free events for kids will bring book-readings, music, and a visit from the local fire chief aboard a vintage fire truck to the Menlo Park Library in October — all in support of a project to renovate the library's children's area.

Doreen Cronin and Betsy Lewin, authors of the popular Farmer Brown series, will read from their newest book in the series, "Thump, Quack, Moo," at 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 4, in the children's library area.

Kepler's bookstore is partnering with the Menlo Park Library Foundation to host the event. Members of the foundation, which is leading a \$500,000 fundraising drive for the children's library area, will answer questions and hand out brochures.

Nancy Cassidy

On Sunday, Oct. 12, singer-songwriter Nancy Cassidy "and friends" will perform at noon on the library lawn. Her performance is a gift to the renovation project. Any donations will go toward the project, said Jane Wyman, co-chair of the library foundation's fundraising effort.

Ms. Cassidy's awards include the Children's Music Web Award for Preschoolers, and the

Recording Industry Association of America's Gold Record Award for "KidSongs: A Holler-Along Handbook." Her song, "Chicken Lips and Lizard Hips," was recorded by Bruce Springsteen on a benefit tape for the Pediatric AIDS Foundation, according to the foundation.

Old Tom

At 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 18, Chief Harold Schapelhouman of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District is expected to arrive at the library on Old Tom, the district's vintage fire truck. He will read to the kids and talk about firefighters' rescue missions. Kids will be allowed to explore Old Tom.

The chief will bring fire crew members, including a rescue dog, Ms. Wyman said.

The events are designed to increase public awareness of the library's role in providing children's programs that are educational and entertaining, she said.

The project includes the addition of a homework center with six computers and Internet access, improved space for "storytime" and other children's programs, more shelving for books, a new early literacy section, and other upgrades.

Ms. Wyman said the renovation project is expected to start at the beginning of next year. ■

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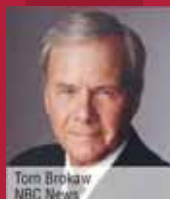
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Woodside celebrates Day of the Horse

Woodside will observe its fourth annual Day of the Horse celebration on Sunday, Oct. 11, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Along with a trail ride with stops for food, feed and beverages, a Horse Fair at Town Hall will include a blacksmith at work and a working stage coach, horse-shaped cookies and horse-themed art, and bobbing for apples and an “apple-juice social,” according to the organizer, the Woodside Horse Owners Association (WHOA).

Trail ride

The “progressive trail ride,” a contest of sorts, takes place between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. and is open to the public.

Official registration closed Sunday, Sept. 28, but latecomers can register by sending an e-mail

to contact@whoa94062.org or calling 380-6408 and leaving a message. Same-day registration is not encouraged but accepted on the grounds of the Mounted Patrol of San Mateo County at 521 Kings Mountain Road.

Registration is \$30 per rider and requires a signed release for each rider and payment of fees. Once registered, you’ll receive a map. Stallions and dogs are not welcome on the ride.

The first 175 registered riders who make it to some minimum number of stops will receive a bag of prizes after turning in their maps with stickers to show which stops they made. Prize distribution is between 1 and 4 p.m. at the Mounted Patrol grounds.

Riders can choose their own routes and will find directions

on the trail as well as stops that offer finger foods, beverages, restrooms, water and treats for the horses, as well as the stickers.

For more information, go to www.whoa94062.org.

Horse fair

The fair includes blessings of the horses at 9:45 a.m., 2:15 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. on the Mounted Patrol grounds, where sponsors of Day of the Horse will have exhibits.

That part of the fair that takes place at Town Hall runs from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and includes exhibits, activities and items for purchase.

Stage coach rides leave from Town Hall between 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. There are puppet shows at 11:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.

Mendelson recognized for protecting, advancing trees

Woodside resident Debbie Mendelson has received recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation for her sustained efforts to protect and advance the interests of trees in Woodside.

Ms. Mendelson received the 2008 Lawrence Enerson Award “for outstanding tree planting and conservation work at the commu-



Debbie Mendelson

nity level” in an April ceremony in Nebraska City, Nebraska. The ceremony was for all the 2008 Arbor Day award recipients.

The honor recognizes Ms. Mendelson’s 12-year effort to put an ordinance on the books to protect heritage trees in Woodside, and for her assistance in creating the Woodside Tree

Booklet, which describes for contractors and residents the trees and shrubs suited for the area, according to a foundation statement.

Ms. Mendelson is credited with starting the now annual Woodside Environment Fest, which this year was called the Woodside Green Fair. The name changes to suit the particulars of the event, Ms. Mendelson said in an e-mail.

Project Read sets tutor training session

If the measure of something’s value is the public’s demand for it, Project Read is a highly valuable program indeed. The list of adults seeking Project Read-Menlo Park tutors to teach them to read and write so that they can read labels on grocery store products, fill out important forms, and read to their children is always longer than the list of volunteer tutors.

The local Project Read program is beginning a new tutor-

training session Oct. 7, and hopes to add a few new volunteers to help whittle down the waiting list of people eager to improve their lives through better literacy.

No experience is necessary to be a tutor, and all materials are supplied. Tutors and their students set their own hours for tutoring sessions.

The next tutor training sessions begin Tuesday, Oct. 7, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Menlo Park Library at 800 Alma

St. That’s followed by a session on Saturday, Oct. 11, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A follow-up meeting for tutors who have already worked with their students for a time is set for Tuesday, Nov. 18, from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Those interested in volunteering but who can’t attend the training sessions can arrange to pick up videotaped and DVD training and resource materials.

For more information, or to register for tutor training, call Project Read-Menlo Park at 330-2525.

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■ OBITUARIES

Dino Canessa*Resident of Menlo Park*

Dino Canessa, 52, of Menlo Park died Sept. 22. He was a member of the Menlo Park, Fairfax and San Anselmo police departments and was a recent employee of State Farm Insurance Co. in San Jose, the family said.

Survivors include his wife Sharon; his children, Christina Coronado and Laura; mother, Angela; brother, Remo (Kate) Canessa; and four nieces and nephews. His father, Umberto Canessa, is deceased.

Services were held Sept. 25 at St. Raymond Catholic Church, followed by interment at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery in Menlo Park.

Car visits Flegel's via front window

The top of a \$10,000 inlaid Italian table was showered with broken glass at Flegel's Home Furnishings at 870 Santa Cruz Ave. in Menlo Park after a Jaguar drove into a plate glass window in the front of the store at about 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Sept. 23.

The Jaguar's driver, a 91-year-old man, reportedly thought his car was in reverse then hit the gas when he meant to hit the brakes, said store manager Brian Flegel in a phone interview.

Mr. Flegel said he hadn't been in the store at the time, but related what he was told about it.

No one was injured, he said. Firefighters had it cleaned up in 15 to 20 minutes.

The car's front tire ran into a foot-high planter, which simultaneously raised the car onto a faux

Obituaries are based on information provided by family members and mortuaries.

The family prefers donations to Stanford Cancer Center, Development Office, 2700 Sand Hill Road, Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Fernande Monnot*Longtime Menlo Park resident*

Fernande Monnot, a longtime resident of Menlo Park and known to many local residents as a teacher at Phillips Brooks School in Menlo Park, died Sept. 21. She was 91.

Born in Shanghai, China, she was married in China to Paul Monnot, who died in 2002.

As a resident of the French Concession in Shanghai, she was an avid tennis player and

followed international tennis matches throughout her life, often rising very early in the morning to watch matches live on TV, family members said.

The Monnots remained in China during World War II and in 1946 were repatriated to France, where they lived until they immigrated to the United States.

She is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Claude and Tom Anyos of Atherton, and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews throughout the United States and Europe.

At her request, no service is being held. The family prefers memorial donations to the Fernande Monnot Scholarship Fund at The Phillips Brooks School, 2245 Avy Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025.

**Fernande Monnot**

■ POLICE CALLS

See Police Calls online at TheAlmanacOnline.com and in the next print edition.

■ POP WARNER

Victories were elusive for the Menlo-Atherton Vikings on Sunday, Sept. 28, as three Pop Warner teams tasted defeat while two others struggled to hard-fought ties with the Bay Cities Broncos at San Mateo High School. Check Jim Gallagher's full report on TheAlmanacOnline.com.

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REQUEST FOR QUOTATIONS FOR ON-CALL EMERGENCY WATER SYSTEM SERVICES

The City of Menlo Park is requesting quotes to provide on-call emergency water system services for its Municipal Water District (MPMWD). The objective of this program is to have one or more contractors available on a regular basis to carry out various tasks. Work shall comply with California Department of Public Health regulations, AWWA standard practices and City of Menlo Park Standards. The City intends to execute a two-year contract with the most qualified contractor with an option to extend on a yearly basis.

For the full Request for Quotes please contact:

Jennifer Ng, Senior Civil Engineer
Engineering Division, City of Menlo Park
Telephone: (650) 330-6740
www.menlopark.org/cip

SUBMITTALS must be received at the City of Menlo Park, Engineering Division by **5:00 p.m., Monday, October 6, 2008.**

Published in THE ALMANAC on September 24, October 1, 2008.



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR SHARON HEIGHTS PUMP STATION DESIGN

The City of Menlo Park is requesting proposals from qualified firms to provide design services for a new, replacement, potable water pump station in Sharon Heights. The objective of this project is the development of a complete, detailed design and specifications from which contractors can prepare bids for construction. Current technology is to be incorporated in this new state-of-the-art facility for maximum reliability and energy efficiency.

For the full Request for Proposals please contact:

Jennifer Ng, Senior Civil Engineer
Engineering Division, City of Menlo Park
Telephone: (650) 330-6740
www.menlopark.org/cip

SUBMITTALS must be received at the City of Menlo Park, Engineering Division by **5:00 p.m., Tuesday, October 7, 2008**

Published in THE ALMANAC on September 24, October 1, 2008

LORRAINE E. SPINELLI JUNE 6, 1924 – SEPTEMBER 17, 2008



On Wednesday, September 17, 2008, at the age of 84, Lorraine E. Spinelli passed away at home in Redwood City surrounded by her family. She was born in San Francisco on June 6, 1924, and was a graduate of Commerce High. She joined the Women's Air Corp (WAC) and served in World War II. Lorraine moved on to marry and raise a family in Menlo Park and Redwood City, CA. Lorraine worked for many years with her husband at his insurance/real estate company, Spinelli and Co. She loved nature and traveling and made many friends all over the world.

Lorraine was preceded in death by Raymond Spinelli

(11/15/07), her husband of 60 years, her parents Ulysses and Willie Brown, her sister Alma Boroff, and her brother, Robert Brown.

Lorraine is survived by her daughters: D'Ann Burns (Jim), Debra Spinelli (Carol Cetrone); grandchildren: Jennifer Denzel (Jason), Jeremy Burns (fiancée Sarah Berch), Maggie Burns, and Caitlin Burns; great grandchildren: Avey and Lexy Burns, Aidan and Andrew Denzel; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and friends.

Contributions in Lorraine's memory to any of the following charities are welcome: The Children's Home Society, Western Blind Rehabilitation Center (Dept. of Veteran Affairs – Palo Alto), and the Peninsula Humane Society.

A Funeral Mass was held Saturday, September 27 at St. Pius Church in Redwood City.

Lorraine's sense of humor, spirited outlook on life, and zest for the unique will be greatly missed. We love you and will miss you Mom, Nona, and Gigi!

PAID OBITUARY

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

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

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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.

Shaky ground for charter school rejection

Supporters of a planned new local charter high school were disappointed — and considerably annoyed — by the Sept. 17 rejection of their petition to have the school chartered by the Sequoia Union High School District. The planned Everest Public High School would be governed by the Summit Institute, which also governs the six-year-old Summit Preparatory Charter High School. And like Summit, Everest would be located within the Sequoia district's boundaries.

There are a number of legitimate questions concerning the assumptions and conclusions about the planned school that Sequoia school board trustees based their decision on, but a big question in our mind is: Why?

It's a near certainty that Summit Institute, with a solid plan based on a demonstrably successful model, will succeed in winning a charter for Everest when it petitions the San Mateo County Board of Education or, if that attempt fails, the state. And no matter who officially charters the school, the Sequoia district will still have to provide space for Everest and pay a per-pupil amount to the school.

The 4-1 rejection by the board — with trustee Olivia Martinez voting in support of Everest — will serve only to foster an unfriendly relationship between two parties with common basic goals: educating the public school students living in the district, and helping them live up to their best potential during their high school years and beyond. "We will be having a relationship with the district no matter what," noted Diane Tavenner, CEO of Summit Institute and a major force in the establishment of Summit Prep. But the district's refusal to grant the charter, forcing Everest petitioners to continue their efforts to secure a charter, will make that relationship "challenging, rather than collaborative," a frustrated Ms. Tavenner told The Almanac. "It's a waste of time, energy ... and money; we could

be spending [all of that] on the kids instead."

Everest supporters are criticizing the Sequoia district for the data and assumptions used in its rejection of the charter petition, and we concur that there's a lot to criticize. For example, the district's report on the petition stated that there is no evidence that Summit Prep (which Everest will be modeled on) has improved student learning. Yet, Summit students' test scores and a reported 96 percent acceptance rate into four-year colleges, among other data submitted to the district by Summit Institute, seem to refute that claim.

The district's report also states that at an Aug. 13 public hearing on the petition, some 20 speakers "voiced concerns" about another charter school — testimony the report refers to four times, including in its conclusion as justification for denying the petition. But what's left out of the report is the fact that an Everest spokeswoman at the meeting told the trustees that, given their "first-hand experience with how Summit has thrived," the petitioners decided not to "rally the troops," and that only she would speak for them.

There's no question that school board members have some legitimate concerns about another charter school in the district, including the possibility that a second school could create greater racial imbalance, with white students who are seeking a charter school education flocking to Everest rather than enrolling in one of the two charter schools in East Palo Alto. But there is a strong demand for the type of program developed at Summit Prep, which, with 3.25 applicants for each of its freshman seats, has to use a lottery for admitting students. And the district owes it to the public to honestly weigh the pros and cons of chartering another school, rather than use selective, sometimes deceptive — if not inaccurate — data and assumptions to reject the petition.

As Trustee Martinez put it, the Everest petition represents "the will of the people." If the district ignores the will of the people, it should be for more compelling reasons than it has articulated in this case.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Public safety vs private property

Editor:

Driving, walking, jogging or biking along Atherton Avenue is becoming increasingly hazardous.

The town's right of way extends six feet beyond the edge of the pavement on both sides of the street in order to provide a safe shoulder for pedestrians and for cars which may be forced to swerve to avoid an accident. That safety margin has been significantly reduced by many property owners who have illegally (perhaps unknowingly) placed increasingly large and dark rocks in this six foot area.

I suspect that these rocks are intended to prevent parking in these areas but the unintended consequence of significantly decreasing the six-foot safety margin makes these rocks not only illegal but unwise. Most of these rocks are impossible to see when it is dark and it is only a

See **LETTERS**, next page



Portola Valley Archives

Our Regional Heritage

This undated photo shows water outflow at Searsville Dam on what is now Stanford's Jasper Ridge Preserve off Sand Hill Road. Work on the dam began in 1888 and was completed in 1891, creating a 300-acre lake. Officials at the preserve say high silt levels could completely fill the lake in the next 10 to 15 years.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

matter of time before someone is injured or killed.

We may own the property adjacent to our streets but we are not free to ignore the restrictions which apply to our use of these areas and which are in place to ensure the safety of the public.

Peter Carpenter
Larch Drive, Atherton

County playing games with ambulance contract

Editor:

San Mateo County Health Director Charlene Silva has subverted the decision of an impartial committee of experts and has recommended that American Medical Response (AMR) be retained to provide ambulance services for San Mateo County for the next 10 years.

San Mateo County Firefighters question the process, information shared, and motive behind this decision. The San Mateo County Firefighters are prepared for a vote of no confidence on the decision by County Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

The health department tried, unsuccessfully, to get the original request for proposals tailor-made for AMR so they would be the only company to respond to the proposals. Rural Metro was one of several bidders who were, by definition, qualified to submit a bid.

When multiple bids were submitted the process required that a special "proposal evaluation committee" review proposals and determine the best provider. The committee was made up of eight fire and medical service professionals from in and out of the county. They carefully

Making the case for high-speed rail

By John Boyle

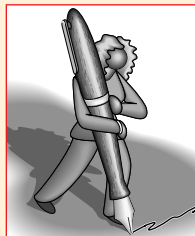
The Menlo Park and Atherton city councils recently voted to join a lawsuit against the current high-speed rail project and against Proposition 1a, the related November bond measure.

Although I was the lone dissenter, it's worth noting that Menlo Park and Atherton were the **only** two cities in the state to join this lawsuit. Meanwhile our governor, key legislative leaders, environmental groups (including California League of Conservation Voters and the Sierra Club), business groups, labor groups, consumer groups, education groups (California Federation of Teachers), and many others have all endorsed Prop 1A.

At \$9.9 billion, this bond is expensive, and portions of the plan are controversial. But all big infrastructure investments are tough decisions. And this investment will leverage multiple funding sources. California expects to receive up to one-third of the construction costs from federal funds for this, the first high-speed rail system in our country. Additionally, high-speed rail will leverage private sector investments and

joint developments with Caltrain.

Our economy depends on our ability to move people and goods cost-effectively. This investment has the potential to generate 450,000 permanent jobs, create more housing options around transit stations, reduce sprawl, and stimulate commerce throughout our state.



**GUEST
OPINION**

Doing nothing is not an option. The alternative is to plow an estimated \$80 billion into new roads and airports to support the estimated growth in California's population over the next 20 years.

Even ignoring the "greater good" argument, there are many local benefits:

■ **Quicker:** Estimated travel time between the Mid-peninsula and Los Angeles is about two hours. No weather delays, no traffic back-ups, and no airport hassles.

■ **Cleaner:** The electric high-speed rail system will deliver enormous environmental benefits by eliminating nearly 12 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions per year and use one third the energy of air travel and one fifth the energy of auto travel.

■ **Quieter:** The high-speed rail project will pay for grade separations wherever the tracks cross a street. No train horns will be

needed at separated grades, and the trains are lighter and use improved rail technology to further reduce noise.

■ **Safer:** Thanks to grade separations and technology innovations, the trains will be safer and reduce local congestion on our streets (no delays at crossings).

Menlo Park and Atherton are also fortunate to be among the few communities which will have local access to the trains, whose only stopping point between San Francisco and San Jose is planned for Redwood City or Palo Alto.

We need to work hard to ensure that this project is done in a way that maximizes the benefits and minimizes the local negatives. Forcing expensive delays and voting against the bond measure does neither. The last time our region faced this type of decision, we blocked BART from coming down the Peninsula. Let's not repeat that mistake.

This project has been under development for over 25 years. Governor Jerry Brown signed the first high-speed rail bill in 1982. Over \$55 million has already been spent on studies and design. With construction inflation on a project of this size, delays can increase the final cost by literally billions of dollars. It's time to move forward. Join me in voting yes on Proposition 1A.

For more information, visit www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov

John Boyle is a Menlo Park City Council member.

considered all issues specified in the request for proposals and determined that the Rural Metro Company would be the best provider.

Now, the health director has asserted that since the AMR parent company is bigger than Rural Metro, AMR has more financial resources to provide the service, notwithstanding that AMR had to be bailed out of bankruptcy by its parent company. By changing the rules to fit a preferred outcome, Ms. Silva hopes to get the Board of Supervisors to stay with AMR.

From a public service standpoint Rural Metro submitted the best proposal with the most reasonable costs. AMR has a dismal track record in our county while Rural Metro has a sterling record after 12 years in San Diego County.

As fire service professionals, our members run over 50,000 medical calls per year. Our members on the front line know full well what problems AMR has providing service to patients. Our only interest is to get the best provider possible. We hope the Board of Supervisors will carefully scrutinize Ms. Silva's suspi-

cious recommendation and give Rural Metro a chance to speak to these new issues that were not part of the original RFP. (The supervisors are scheduled to consider the ambulance contract Tuesday, Sept. 30 at 9 a.m., after the Almanac went to press.)

**Edwin Hawkins, president
San Mateo Co. Firefighters
San Mateo**

Voters urged to defeat Proposition 8

Editor:

I'm writing this letter to urge

you and your readers support to vote no on Proposition 8 Nov. 4.

Our California Constitution should guarantee the same freedoms and rights to everyone. No one group should be singled out to be treated differently. However, Proposition 8 would deny gay and lesbian couples these freedoms and rights.

My partner of 18 years and I were legally married June 17 in the San Mateo County building by Supervisor Rich Gordon. It was the proudest moment of our lives.

We have participated and contributed fully in our lives on the Peninsula for all those years, and to be able to feel like an equal citizen in San Mateo County was wholly fulfilling.

Regardless of how you feel about this issue, the freedom to marry is fundamental to our society, just like the freedoms of religion and speech. In addition, we don't need the Mormon Church in Utah or other right wing religious special interest groups from other states telling Californians what is right or good for us.

This is not a matter of religion, but of basic human rights. Others are certainly free to practice their beliefs in any way they like, but I resent very much being told that I have to think and behave the way they do.

I urge you all to protect our rights as a legally married couple and fully contributing members of California society by voting no on Proposition 8 on Nov. 4.

Jeffrey Adair
Redwood City

Tunnel project needs more study

By Steve Schmidt

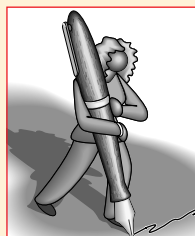
Regarding the bicycle tunnel article last week, I want to make clear the reasons that I am critical of the apparently quick selection of a site near Middle Avenue.

I have attended all four of the recent public meetings dealing with the bicycle/pedestrian undercrossing. The process has been deficient. A growing commitment to the Middle Avenue site over others ignores the fundamentals of sound planning practices.

City Council decisions involving money and construction must be made on the basis of factual analysis. If there are choices between options, each option should receive thorough scrutiny in order to make the best decision. In the case of the bicycle tunnel project, that has not been done. For example:

■ There has been no comparison of this site

with other sites in sufficient detail in order to make a cost comparison between all possible locations. Council member Heyward Robinson assures us that outside money will pay for most of this project but in my years on the board and subcommittees of the City



**GUEST
OPINION**

and County Association of Governments, I learned that outside funding agencies rank projects on cost and cost-effectiveness, among other criteria. If Menlo Park chooses one site without bothering to investigate another known to be less complicated and therefore less expensive, a funding agency might not give us any money.

■ The Middle Avenue site is encumbered by an existing building, the service bay and showroom of the former GM dealership, that prevent a logical and safe connection with the Middle Avenue/El Camino intersection. Since the existing

lease on this particular site doesn't expire for at least four more years, must we wait until 2012 before starting a project that will properly serve residents of Menlo Park? There is another site (Willow/Cambridge) that is not encumbered by a building where the tunnel and its approaches could be designed and built much sooner.

While I am encouraged that our council has taken a step towards delivering on an element included in the general plan 14 years ago, I am concerned that a decision on the location and design of this overdue public improvement will be based on incomplete cost and timing information. It is common for cities to undertake project planning using criteria that includes feasibility, cost and practicality when selecting the best site for a public works project like this one. So far, we have seen only a beauty contest. The \$40,000-plus consultant cost should have been spent on designs of the possible sites so that our council can make an informed decision.

**Steve Schmidt is a former
mayor of Menlo Park.**



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