



FOOD & DRINK New Madera restaurant offers locally sourced cuisine in an elegant, yet comfortable, setting. [Section 2]

The Almanac

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

AUGUST 5, 2009 | VOL. 44 NO. 49



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MARION SOFTKY HAS KEPT ALMANAC READERS INFORMED
ABOUT INTERESTING PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOR FOUR DECADES

[Page 10]

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

A happy milestone

A handful of 5-year-olds from the Haven transitional shelter in Menlo Park prepare to celebrate the successful end of preschool. They are, from left: Adrian Lisala, Alex Parker, Eseta Feao and Rosalba Montes. The July 29 graduation ceremony took place at the San Mateo County Family Service Child Development Center at Haven, where the children of homeless families and victims of domestic violence are cared for while their parents work toward self-sufficiency.

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Food & Drink

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On the cover

Marion Softky, in front of The Almanac offices on the Alameda de las Pulgas, is observing her 40th year covering the community and its people. Photo by Marjan Sadoughi. See stories on **Page 5** (the community celebrates) and **Page 10.**

CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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- E-mail news, information, obituaries and photos (with captions) to: **AlmanacNews@gmail.com**
- E-mail letters to the editor to: **letters@AlmanacNews.com**

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Locals protest plans to cut bus service

By **Amanda Young**
Special to the Almanac

Citing many senior citizens' dependency on buses, and the importance of buses in the fight against global warming, community members spoke passionately against proposed service reductions and fare increases at the SamTrans community meeting held July 29 in the Menlo Park City Council Chambers.

Two Menlo Park City Council members were among those urging SamTrans to increase ridership rather than cut service for the sake of the environment and the public good.

SamTrans representatives presented four options aimed at reducing costs. The biggest cost-cutter drew heavy fire from the public: It would reduce costs by 15.6 percent by discontinuing routes 281, 481 and 295. Route 295 is the only bus route that stops west of El Camino Real, and SamTrans offers no alternatives to it.

"I am totally dependent on 295," said Patricia Penning, a senior citizen who has lived in Menlo Park for more than 50 years. Since being diagnosed with macular

degeneration, a medical condition that causes a loss of vision in many older adults, she has not used a car, she said. She relies instead on the 295 bus, which stops outside Menlo Commons, the retirement home she lives in.

"I'm already trapped on Saturday and Sunday but if I have to stare at the walls seven days a week, I'm really in trouble," she said.

Joanna Ricketts of Bay Area-based Telecare, an organization with a program in Menlo Park that provides services and care for people with serious mental illnesses, said that most of the individuals at Telecare depend on Route 295 for transportation.

"Ninety-nine percent of our clients don't have driver's licenses due to disabilities," Ms. Ricketts said. "We're trying to encourage our clients to be independent, and that's a reason for the bus route to continue."

According to the SamTrans presentation, Route 295 provides more than 1,238 rides per day — the highest number of rides provided by any of the bus routes

See **BUS**, page 8

Council gives parents deadline to resolve parking dispute

By **Dave Boyce**
Almanac Staff Writer

Parents of students at Woodside Elementary School, irritated at the prospect of losing their parking routines when picking up and dropping off their kids, won a delay on tough new parking regulations.

After pleas for collaboration from parents at the council's July 28 meeting, the Town Council agreed to postpone action that would ban illegal parking that blocks bike lanes on Woodside Road, a state highway.

The council is looking to preempt action by the California Department of Transportation, which would clear the bike lanes by banning parking on both sides of the road between Canada and Kings Mountain roads.

Woodside Road residents have complained of blocked driveways and being forced to walk in traf-

fic lanes to get downtown. The council gave the school community until Sept. 22 to develop ideas about parking alternatives.

The school reportedly has insufficient parking on site. Either the school solves the problem or Caltrans will, Councilwoman Sue Boynton said.

Parents asked for a delay until late October, but no dice. The school community had better get on it, Mayor Peter Mason said, calling the council's postponement "a short fuse."

Caltrans let its concerns be known in a September 2008 letter to the town in response to complaints by cyclists, Public Works Director Paul Nagengast said. Woodside's plan would experiment with no parking on the north side west to Miramontes Road and regulated parking on

See **PARKING**, page 8

After outcry, Caltrain pledges to soften train whistle

■ For residents near the train line, the change can't come fast enough.

By **Sean Howell**
Almanac Staff Writer

Following an outcry from people who live near the tracks over a recent increase in the volume of train whistles, Caltrain has announced plans to reduce the volume of its locomotives' horns to a level residents are accustomed to. The rail agency estimates the change will take two to three weeks to complete.

In mid-July, Caltrain moved the horns from the undercarriage of the cars to the top to allow them to make the proper sequence of sounds, according to spokes-

person Christine Dunn. That resulted in an incidental increase in volume. Caltrain officials said they were trying to figure out how to decrease the volume when they initially announced the change, about a week after implementing the new whistles, but that they weren't sure they would be able to do so.

The rail agency is now saying it plans to install a regulator that would allow it to "finely tune" the volume, while keeping the whistles at the top of the trains.

People who live along the tracks inundated Caltrain with letters and calls, sent angry missives

to City Council members, and spilled their frustration over the louder whistles in online forums. For them, the change can't come fast enough.

"We are suffering from hearing loss, lack of sleep, depression, anger, disruption of family activities," Steve Peckler wrote in an e-mail to Menlo Park's City Council. "We have to run for the interior of our homes when a train comes by. We can't hear our music, hold a conversation or enjoy a quiet meal. ... All of this is resulting in family,

See **WHISTLE**, page 8



Photo by Veronica Weber

Marion Softky shares a laugh with Bill Lane and his assistant, Karen Hamilton, at an Aug. 2 party celebrating Marion's 40th anniversary with The Almanac.

Community celebrates Marion Softky

By **Andrea Gemmet**
Almanac Staff Writer

Lots of familiar faces turned out Sunday at the Portola Valley Town Center to fete veteran reporter Marion Softky at a celebration marking her 40th year of writing for The Almanac.

Colleagues, local dignitaries, council members, environmental leaders and family members mingled and shared stories about Marion's long career chronicling the Midpeninsula and its people.

"A journalist's dream is to have an impact on the community they cover. Everyone here knows from personal experience the kind of impact that Marion has had over the years," said Bill Johnson, publisher of the Palo Alto Weekly and CEO of Embarcadero Publishing Co., which owns The Almanac.

With her background in physics, Marion has excelled at covering complex issues, from particle

physics to transportation plans, and turning them into stories people could understand and even enjoy, said Richard Hine, The Almanac's managing editor. She took the long-term view on important issues such as conservation and the environment, he said.

Philanthropist Bill Lane, whom Marion often refers to as "the town father of Portola Valley," praised the thoroughness and complexity of Marion's stories, saying that he still sends out copies of her article on wildfire danger. Portola Valley wouldn't be what it is today without Marion and The Almanac, he said.

Mort Levine, who owned The Almanac from 1980 to 1993, called Marion "a priceless asset to the paper."

"The folks at The Almanac brought an intellectual rigor and unceasing curiosity (to the job), and

See **MARION**, page 8

Nicholas Caine, 16, swims across English Channel

By Amanda Young

Special to The Almanac

Nicholas Caine, 16, of Atherton, a junior at Sacred Heart Preparatory, swam across the English Channel on July 29, completing the swim of about 20 nautical miles in 13 hours and 11 minutes.

He started from Shakespeare Beach in England and finished at Cat Blanc in France. Nicholas had been hoping to finish in eight or nine hours, but he is proud that he finished the swim.

"Making it was more important than the time to me," Nicholas said in an interview.

Nicholas woke up at 1:55 a.m. Wednesday morning and began his swim at 4:20 a.m. He finished swimming at 5:31 p.m.

"I really enjoyed the first 10 hours, but the last three were really long," Nicholas said. "I started losing ground, but I tried to keep myself thinking about what I was doing."

His mother, Marilyn Caine, was on a support boat that followed Nicholas for the entire swim. The boat was provided by the Channel Swimming and Piloting Federation in England, which observes and assists all English Channel swims, according to its Web site. The federation mandates that swimmers cannot touch the boat or come out of the water for the entire swim.

After the first hour, Nicholas drank a special electrolyte drink every 30 minutes to give him energy throughout the swim.

Nicholas has spent the past two years training for this swim. During the school year, he swam approximately 50,000 yards per week. Over the summer, Nicholas trained in San Francisco's Aquatic Park on the Bay and worked with a personal trainer on weight training.

Nicholas is on the men's varsity swim team at Sacred Heart and trains with the open-water swim club, Water World Swim.



Nicholas Caine, just before he swam the English Channel. The substance on his body is a combination of petroleum jelly and lanolin, used to protect his skin from burning by the salt water.

"I thought (swimming the English Channel) would be something I could test myself with physically and mentally," Nicholas said. "It was a fun and hard challenge to do."

Nicholas plans on swimming around Key West in Florida. He also has a swim race to Alcatraz coming up in the next few months. He has thought about going back to England to swim across the English Channel again.

"Maybe I'll do a two-way swim, which is a swim from England to France and then you go back, without rest," Nicholas said.

Since age 13, Nicholas has enjoyed open-water swimming.

"When you're in the ocean, it's an amazing feeling because you're just in the water, and there's no one to stop you or anything," Nicholas said. ■

Check TheAlmanacOnline.com for more, including a link to Nicholas Caine's blog.

Allied Arts invites community to 'Treasures in the Garden'

The Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park is inviting the community to a "Treasures in the Garden" event on Saturday, Aug. 15, to help visitors know "what happens at Allied Arts Guild and why," says Elaine Scotten of Menlo Park, chairperson for the event.

The guild, operated for the benefit of Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford, will provide information on the hospital and its outreach programs, including the Stanford Blood Center and Teen Van, which collects clothing and other items for homeless

teenagers.

People will be able to donate blood during the event, which will run from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Information will be available on the Allied Arts Guild, how to become a member of the Allied Arts Guild Auxiliary, how to volunteer at Allied Arts, and how to support the Friends of Allied Arts.

Docents will lead tours of Allied Arts Guild buildings and gardens, said Kira Feick, a spokesperson

See **ALLIED ARTS**, next page



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Novitsky, Levenson take top spots in national masters cycling trials

By Amanda Young

Special to The Almanac

Woodside resident John Novitsky recently won the 2009 USA Cycling Masters Road national title in the men's age 50-54 individual time trials. In winning the competition, held June 28-July 4 in Louisville, Kentucky, he successfully defended his first-place finish in 2008.

Menlo Park resident Mary Ann Levenson came in second in the women's 50-54 category, an extraordinary achievement considering she was seriously injured in a 2006 accident on Sand Hill Road when she was struck, while biking, by a drunken driver.

Woodside resident Dawn Neisser finished sixth in the women's 50-54 group.

According to the USA Cycling Web site, Novitsky had a time of 31 minutes, 27.80 seconds in the 14.39-mile race, which involved about 750 feet of up-hill cycling.

About 55 cyclists participated in the men's 50-54 category and 20 in the women's 50-54 category.



National champ John Novitsky and Mary Ann Levenson, who came in second in her age group despite very serious injuries in an accident in 2006.

egory.

The masters road race is for cyclists over age 30. It differs from a track race, where cyclists have a fixed bike gear and race on the track.

The individual time trials differ from team racing in that the cyclists cannot draft, a cycling technique where the team of cyclists line up in a single file to block the wind for the riders behind them, minimizing the energy that cyclists in back need to use.

Levenson and Neisser had times of 35:22.70 and 36:35.90, respectively.

As for Levenson's comeback from her serious accident, she says: "I knew I would cycle again because it's what I love to do. But I never thought that I'd be able to compete at the level I'm at now and do as well. This is such a blessing."

Levenson's injuries still cause her pain, especially her legs, hip, and foot. "If the pain gets too hard, I just ride harder," she said.

She broke her hip in August 2008 and was not able to qualify for the 2009 Summer National Senior Games, taking place at Stanford from Aug. 1-15. Novitsky and Neisser are participating in the Senior Games. ■

Local update on Senior Games

Ted Zayner of Woodside gives us this update on local participants in the 2009 National Senior Games at Stanford.

There are three Woodside residents competing in cycling events on Canada Road on Aug. 6, 7 and 10: John Novitsky, Dawn Neisser, and Ted Zayner.

Also, Ray Gildea of Emerald Hills/Redwood City will be racing, along with Cory Roay of Belmont. Roay, Gildea and Zayner are all members of the Peninsula Velo Cycling Club; Novitsky of VOS Racing, and Neisser of Kalyra Racing.

All five of these athletes are competing in all four events: Two time trials and two road races.

Lots of info, with schedules and events, is at the Senior Games Web site, www.2009seniorgames.org.

M-A girls on bronze-winning team

Local volleyball team City Beach 16 Black tied for third place nationally and won a bronze medal in the 16-year-olds Open Division of the USA Volleyball girls Junior Olympics, held June 26 to July 5 at the Miami Convention Center.

Two Menlo-Atherton High School juniors, Regina Mullen and Diane Seely, played on the City Beach team.

The team went undefeated in the tournament until it lost in the semi-final match June 29 against KC Power 16-1, a team from Kansas City.

KC Power won the semifinal three games to one, and went on to win the championship.

"Initially, we were a little disappointed but then it sunk in that we were the third team in the nation, and it was really exciting," Mullen said.

Both Mullen and Seely had competed in previous Junior Olympics, but this was the first time either had qualified for the Open Division, the



Regina Mullen, left, and Diane Seely were on the City Beach team that won bronze in the 16-year-olds Open Division at the Junior Olympics.

highest of three divisions of play.

Mullen and Seely both play on the M-A varsity volleyball team, Mullen as an outside-hitter and Seely as a middle-blocker.

Mullen hopes her experience at the Junior Olympics will help her during the regular season.

"It's always good to have more experience playing different teams, and just getting more playing time," Mullen said.

ALLIED ARTS

continued from previous page

for the guild, in a press release.

There will be children's activities throughout the day.

Allied Arts shops, outside artists, and Allied Arts Guild Auxiliary members will sell new and

"high quality recycled items," including vases, children's toys, clothing, and arts and crafts items.

Neighbors are invited to bring a table and sell their new and gently used items, Ms. Feick said. Many neighbors have agreed to donate half of their earnings from their

sales to the hospital, she said. To reserve space for a table, call Tiana Wong, events director at Allied Arts, at 322-2405.

For more information about the Treasures in the Garden event, go to alliedartsguild.org or call 322-2405. The guild is at 75 Arbor Road in Menlo Park.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



New Rules May Mean Longer Loan Processing Times

If you are planning to purchase a home, or to refinance one, and you are not already in contract, you should know about some rule changes that went into effect on July 30, 2009. If you are obtaining a home loan to purchase a primary residence or vacation home, the changes will affect you. If you are paying cash, they will not.

Lenders now must comply with a new rule that amends disclosure requirements, sets waiting periods and institutes fee disclosure requirements. In short, lenders may not complete a loan transaction until at least seven days after the mailing or delivery of initial disclosures to the borrower. If the loan rate is changed a new disclosure must be given and a new waiting period

begins. The borrower may not waive the waiting period except in certain emergency circumstances and waiver must be in writing. Lenders may not collect any fees (except for a credit report) from the borrower unless disclosures have been provided.

These new rules are meant to ensure that consumers understand the loan terms and have sufficient time to review the terms before making a commitment. Most home purchase loans will be completed within a normal 30-45 day escrow period. However, buyers should be aware of the rule changes to protect themselves against liability for time delays should they not be able to close the loan through no fault of their own.

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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BUS

continued from page 5

under consideration for reduction or elimination.

The agency said it used four performance measures to calculate an efficiency score: farebox recovery ratio, net cost per passenger, passengers per revenue hour, and passengers per revenue mile. All routes under consideration for reduction or elimination had the lowest efficiency scores, according to SamTrans.

SamTrans' other three cost-cutting options are:

- Reduction in overall costs by 7.5 percent by reducing the frequency and/or hours of several local bus routes, including the KX and 390, with stops in Atherton and Menlo Park; and 280 and 281, with stops in Menlo Park.

- Reduction in costs by 7.5 percent by eliminating several routes, including express route PX/RX.

- Reduction in costs by 10 percent by reducing the frequency and/or hours of local routes such as 390, and discontinuing routes 270 and 280, with stops in Menlo Park.

SamTrans also proposes fare increases, starting with a 25 cent boost in adult fare.

Environmental concerns

Lisa Paulo, a regulatory analyst for California's Public Utilities Commission Energy Division, emphasized the need to think about the requirements of the Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32) scoping plan, which contains the main strategies that California will use to reduce greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

"I strongly encourage SamTrans to be proactive in meeting future requirements [of AB 32]. Increasing rider-

ship is a more cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Ms. Paulo, who develops energy programs for the PUC to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "Low ridership is being used as a reason to cut routes. But there have been no efforts to increase ridership."

According to Environment California, the combustion of fossil fuels accounts for 88 percent of California's global warming pollution, much of which is caused by transportation.

Menlo Park City Council member Kelly Fergusson also encouraged SamTrans to increase ridership as a strategy to address the agency's budget woes. She and Menlo Park Mayor Heyward Robinson emphasized looking at the bigger picture.

"That path we're on risks going into a death spiral," Mr. Robinson said. "We cut rides, cut more and cut more. We need to get out of this mess because buses will be key."

Many community members were also against ending services at 10 p.m., and a few spoke about the importance of express routes in commuting to work efficiently.

Redwood City resident Chantelle Flair said that many people who ride the buses did not know about the proposed service cuts.

"For a lot of people who take the RX, English is not their first language," she said. "I don't think they know the full scope of what is happening."

The SamTrans board will hold a public hearing on Aug. 12, and will accept comments until then.

People may submit comments at the Aug. 12 hearing. They can also comment by e-mail to changes@samtrans.com; or by writing to District Secretary, SamTrans, P.O. Box 3006, San Carlos, CA 94070. ■

hear me say this very often (but this is not a bicyclists' problem," he said. "We've got to come up with ideas that solve the problem. Otherwise, we're all going to keep doing the same stuff."

"They've been doing the same stuff for 30 years," countered parent Daniel Hachigian, who questioned Caltrans' authority in the matter.

Councilwoman Deborah Gordon counseled parents against coming back to make the same arguments in September. "The solution," she said, "is not 'We get to do whatever we have been doing and the heck with the neighbors and the rest of the community.'"

Judy Siever, a Woodside Road resident, added: "I think the kids need to have a safe way to get to school. There isn't a safe place to ride their bikes or walk." ■

PARKING

continued from page 5

the south side, but only for school drop-offs and pick-ups. The no-parking signs could be covered for special events.

Parents blamed the cyclists. "Those darn bicyclists interfered with our ability to drop off our kids, and you're going to be on the hot seat," parent Kermit Claytor warned the council. With no place to park, parents waiting to turn into the school lot will block traffic, he said, adding, "You're going to have a rebellion on your hands."

"Insensitive bikers called Sacramento," parent Chris Canellos complained, adding: "I sincerely regret the loss of freedom that's occurring here."

An incorrect analysis, Mr. Mason said. "You're not going to



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Elise Sola, left, and John Hatfield, right, are among about 25 people who rallied Thursday in Menlo Park for a single-payer health care system. They are in front of Cafe Borrone on El Camino Real at Santa Cruz Avenue.

Rally for single-payer health care system

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

About 25 people stood along El Camino Real in front of Cafe Borrone in Menlo Park on Thursday, rallying for a single-payer health care system.

They waved signs and handed out pamphlets, in solidarity with rallies across the country — most notably in Washington, D.C.

Elise Sola, a 56-year-old woman who suffers from multiple sclerosis, said she will be without health insurance when the small architecture firm she works for in Menlo Park closes its doors. Her current policy costs just over \$1,000 per month, she said, estimating she would make about \$1,500 a month from unemployment insurance.

Asked how she was going to pay for the plan, she said she didn't know.

"I want health care for everybody, regardless of pre-existing conditions," Ms. Sola said. "That's why I'm here. This is really important to me, and to many of my friends."

The rally was organized by San Mateo County Democracy for America, and by the Raging Grannies — sporting flamboyant hats, as always.

"What's going on is pretty scary," said Gail Sredanovic, a Menlo Park resident and raging granny, of the health care debate currently under way in Congress. "They're trying to strip out the health care, and force people to pay for unaffordable under-insurance."

The grannies circulated a petition for people to sign, saying they support the health care plan outlined by President Obama. Ms. Sredanovic said she could live with that plan, if it included a "respectable" government-run health care program, or "public option." ■

WHISTLE

continued from page 5

domestic and marital problems, poor work performance and poor school performance."

Rumors swirled over the volume increase. Some speculated that Caltrain increased the volume in response to several people who have committed suicide on the tracks in recent months. Others alleged that the rail agency was trying to sway public opinion in favor of the high-speed rail system, which would not necessitate a horn.

Ms. Dunn denied both claims, saying this was simply a matter of complying with federal regulations.

"The horns are definitely a safety device, and we want them to be operating correctly," she said. "But it has nothing to do with the suicides."

The agency moved the horn to the top of the train because the system of pipes that brought air to the trains' undersides didn't allow

for the full sound, according to Ms. Dunn. Caltrain engineers pointed out the issue during a recent routine inspection.

The volume was not the problem, Ms. Dunn said. Rather, the horn wasn't producing the proper sound — four distinct blasts. The pipes that brought air to the trains' undersides only allowed for one continuous honk, she said.

Following the adjustment, the whistles will be set at 98 decibels — the level at which they were set prior to the volume increase, and two decibels over the minimum required by federal standards, according to Ms. Dunn.

Engineers are required to sound the horn a quarter-mile before each grade crossing (where a street crosses the tracks), or if they see someone on the tracks, according to Ms. Dunn.

There are six local grade crossings: at Ravenswood, Oak Grove, Glenwood and Encinal avenues in Menlo Park, and Watkins Avenue and Fair Oaks Lane in Atherton. ■

MARION

continued from page 5

Marion really exemplified those characteristics," he said.

Marion's son, Bill Softky, said that he recognized a fair number of faces in the crowd from his mother's many cover stories. One local VIP profiled by Marion didn't attend — Koko, the gorilla who communicates in sign language to her trainer Penny Patterson.

"It's been a blast," Marion told the gathering. "Writing is hard, some of the meetings were long, (but) without The Almanac, I never would have been hugged by Koko."

She was presented with flowers from San Mateo County Supervisor Rich Gordon, a large print by local photographer Robert Buelteman from her Almanac colleagues, and a framed copy of a resolution of the county Board of Supervisors honoring her work.

Surveying the expanse of wrapping paper enveloping one of her gifts, Marion quipped, "Can we recycle that?" ■

Recycling center cleared for construction

■ Waste agency proceeds with plan despite grand jury report alleging lack of due diligence, transparency.

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

A regional board that oversees waste-management matters is moving ahead with plans to rebuild the Shoreway Recycling Center in San Carlos, which serves several local jurisdictions.

At its July 23 meeting, the South Bayside Waste Management Authority (SBWMA) approved issuing bonds that will allow it to begin construction of the facility. It also gave tentative approval to South Bay Recycling as the company to operate that facility, despite a recommendation by the San Mateo County civil grand jury for the board to revisit that decision.

The new facility would increase diversion rates by an estimated 30 percent, according to the waste-management agency.

The recycling center serves Atherton, Menlo Park, the West Bay Sanitary District, and some unincorporated portions of San Mateo County, as well as eight other Peninsula cities.

Eight of the SBWMA's 12 jurisdictions will have to approve the choice of South Bay Recycling before the company is awarded the contract.

The waste-management agency expects the facility to cost about

\$42.3 million to build—much lower than a previous estimate, thanks to a 38 percent drop in estimated construction costs. That was enough to make Atherton reverse its opposition to the new facility, with the City Council voting unanimously at its June 15 meeting to authorize its delegate to approve the bond financing. The council had voted unanimously against funding the Shoreway facility in February, saying the price was too high and the bond market was too unstable.

The agency may issue a maximum of \$56.5 million in bonds, to cover “contingencies.”

Grand jury report

The SBWMA is progressing with plans despite a report by the San Mateo County civil grand jury, issued July 10, recommending that the agency revisit its selection process for its recycling center operation and its garbage-collection contracts. That process failed to live up to the “integrity and transparency” promised by the agency, the grand jury argued.

The waste-management agency has hit back in a letter, saying the grand jury's report is riddled with errors, and that many of its recommendations are unfounded, redundant, or not clearly worded.

“It was only after the release of the selection results that a few of the companies who were not selected began questioning the process and the results,” the agency said in the letter. It sent a 17-page attachment along with its response, correcting errors in the grand jury report.

Among the grand jury's most notable allegations is the claim that the SBWMA overlooked two major bribery scandals involving Norcal Waste Systems, the company selected for the garbage-collection contract, involving San Bernardino County and San Jose. (Norcal recently changed its name to Recology.)

“The implication that Norcal's experience in San Jose was overlooked is without merit,” the SBWMA wrote in its response to the grand jury.

It also denied overlooking the fact that a partner of South Bay Recycling had been cited for numerous violations, connected with its operation of a recycling facility in Los Angeles.

Responding to a set of recommendations by the grand jury on how to select contractors in the future, the SBWMA said it already abides by the key tenets of those recommendations. ■

— Andrea Gemmet contributed to this report.

Pedestrian hit at intersection near Draeger's

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

A car struck a pedestrian in the notoriously problematic intersection by Draeger's market in Menlo Park on Sunday, Aug. 2. The 75-year-old man, a Menlo Park resident, was taken to Stanford Hospital as a “precautionary measure,” but had no visible injuries, said police spokeswoman Nicole Acker.

The pedestrian was crossing Menlo Avenue from the Draeger's parking lot to the store, when he was hit by a 2001 Prius making a left turn from University Drive onto Menlo Avenue. An 85-year-

old woman was driving the Prius.

The police report is not yet complete, but Ms. Acker said that if charges are being pressed, she was not aware of it.

The city has been working to make the intersection safer since 2003, when a 62-year-old woman was struck and killed by a vehicle while crossing Menlo Avenue — one of three pedestrians hit at the intersection that year by cars making a left turn onto Menlo. After that accident, the city considered several options to address the dangers that stem from maintaining crosswalks at an intersection whose streets do not precisely

align.

In 2005, it decided on installing traffic signals — only to see the source of funding fall through. It ended up reconfiguring the intersection and adding orange traffic flags as “interim” measures.

In January 2009, the City Council rejected a plan for a raised sidewalk across Menlo Avenue, asking city staff to research the intersection further, and return to the council with a new plan. Staff has yet to make a proposal.

This was the first accident involving a pedestrian at the intersection since the changes made in 2005, according to city staff. ■

Bohannon project: meetings Wednesday on traffic, housing

A series of public meetings on the Menlo Gateway project proposed by developer David Bohannon will continue Wednesday, Aug. 5, with a meeting before the city's Transportation Commission, and another before the city's Housing Commission.

The Housing Commission is scheduled to meet at 5:30 p.m. in the city administration building, in the Civic Center complex between Laurel and Alma streets. The Transporta-

tion Commission is scheduled to meet at 7 p.m. in the City Council chambers, also in the Civic Center complex.

The 933,000-square-foot project would increase traffic in the surrounding area; a city consultant estimated that it would bring over 11,000 new car trips per day. Reconfiguring lanes and widening the right of way on several streets could relieve congestion, according to the consultant, but many of those measures would require

approval from Caltrans.

The project would also net approximately 1,878 new employees, who would require 1,090 housing units in the region, according to the consultant. Only about 10 percent of Menlo Park employees actually live in Menlo Park.

The city has released an environmental impact report and fiscal analysis for the project. The documents are available at tinyurl.com/menlogateway.



EYE
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Presented by
Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician



AVIATORS FLYING HIGH

From the look of celebrity sightings, aviator sunglasses are on the hottest new fashion accessories. The fact is, however, that it is difficult to attach the adjective “new” to describe aviators, when this classic eyeglass frame style has been around for decades. Before Tom Cruise sported aviator frames in 1986's Top Gun, the U.S. military commissioned the production of these sunglasses for Air Force pilots as far back as 1936. The darkened tear-

drop shaped lenses were deemed to be perfect for blocking the sun from pilots' eyes from a multitude of directions. And when something is designed to be as efficient as it is beautiful, it becomes a classic, which is neither new nor old. It is eternal.

Sunglasses do more than lend you an air of mystery. They help prevent eye problems such as cataracts and macular degeneration. At MENLO OPTICAL, we feature many beautiful designer frames and sunglasses by top designers as well as non-prescription sunglasses. We also carry sports, computer, and occupational eyewear. All eyewear is available with a scratch-resistant coating. Call us at 322-3900, or visit us at 1166 University Drive to browse through our display of frames.

P.S. Aviators are available with prescription lenses.

Mark Schmidt is an American Board of Opticianry and National Contact Lens Examiners Certified Optician licensed by the Medical Board of California. He can be easily reached at Menlo Optical, 1166 University Drive, Menlo Park. 650-322-3900.

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Covering the community for 40 years

Marion Softky has kept Almanac readers informed about interesting people, environmental issues and local government for four decades

By Marjorie Mader

Before receiving that telephone call back in 1969, Marion Softky had never dreamed of having a second career as a journalist—a career spanning four decades during which she has written an amazing range of stories about people, environmental issues, science, and local government.

The call was from Hedy Boissevain, one of three Portola Valley women who founded the Country Almanac in 1965.

“Hedy asked if I would be interested in doing rewrites and short news stories for the community paper,” Ms. Softky recalls. “It was a time when the boys (Bill and Ed) were at Laurel and Encinal schools, and I was thinking about where I would like to focus my energy.”

Ms. Softky had been volunteering for the League of Women Voters, serving as an observer

The author of this story, Marjorie Mader, has been a colleague of Marion Softky at The Almanac for the past 39 years.

of the San Mateo County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

She had become interested in a number of local matters, including the county-wide master plan and regional planning, as well as environmental issues, such as Save the Bay, and a proposal to extend Willow Road in Menlo Park as a freeway through Portola Valley and Woodside and on to the coast.

In her first career, she had worked for large government agencies, such as the National Bureau of Standards in Washington, D.C.

Now, she decided to take Ms. Boissevain up on her offer to work for the community paper.

“I spent 10 years in big government and decided to find out about little government,” she says.

A physics major

Ms. Softky’s entry into the newspaper business was a distinct departure from her first career. Graduating from Bryn Mawr College with a major in physics in 1949, she went to Washington, D.C., and worked for the National Bureau of Standards in spectroscopy.

After earning a master’s degree in physics from the University of Minnesota, she found she didn’t have “a calling for physics” and decided to explore options.

In the mid-1950s, she went to work for the Air Force as an intelligence analyst. A high point was a trip to Germany, where she helped debrief German nuclear scientists who were forcibly taken to the Soviet Union after World War II.

She met her future husband, Sheldon Softky, a nuclear physicist, in 1958, when she worked at the start-up, Aerojet General Nuclear, near Danville. The company built small but safe nuclear reactors for use in training. Her job was teaching the theory and operations

of nuclear reactors to enable her students to gain a “driver’s license to drive the reactor.”

In 1959, after a three-month trip in Europe, she returned and married Sheldon in October. He worked at Stanford Research Institute, now SRI International, in Menlo Park. They bought their home on Encinal Avenue in the Felton Gables neighborhood of Menlo Park.

Sounds perfect

It was 10 years later that she received the phone call from

‘Marion Softky is an editor’s dream.

She is thorough in her research, writes her articles for the long term (many for valuable reference later) and relates to people with a warm, friendly personality.’

— L.W. “BILL” LANE JR.
RETIRED PUBLISHER, SUNSET MAGAZINE

Almanac editor Hedy Boissevain. Co-founder and publisher Betty Fry recalls that “Marion sounded perfect, and she was.”

“Hedy had a clear vision that the community paper would provide readers with factual, non-political information about city, school and other pertinent local affairs,” remembers Ms. Fry. “Marion personified the qualities that Hedy wanted — intelligence, education, good research capabilities, ‘fresh’ journalistic writing skills, and strong ties to the community.”

Ms. Softky’s first reporting assignment was covering a meeting of the Portola Valley school board in the Little Red Schoolhouse. She jumped at the opportunity to switch to covering Portola Valley Town Council meetings. Over the years, she has covered Portola Valley, Woodside, Menlo Park and, a key interest, development issues in the county.

“Working at The Almanac has been a gift to me because of the people I’ve met and the experiences I’ve had,” she says during an interview in her apartment at The Sequoias in Portola Valley.

Over the years, she has

written feature stories about people, places, the environment, science, the area’s colorful history, and geology.

She has interviewed such local celebrities as Shirley Temple Black; former Sunset publisher and ambassador to Australia, Bill Lane; and Nobel Prize winner Arthur Kornberg.

Among the assignments that most interested her was an interview of Prince Vasili Romanov, nephew of the last tsar of Russia, and his wife Natasha at their Woodside home. He related sto-

Menlo Park appeared under her byline over the decades.

“I loved interviewing the old-timers, especially ‘ole cowboys’ Jim Rapley and Harry Conley,” she says. She recalls Jim Rapley weaving yarns of his encounter with a grizzly bear when he was ranching west of Skyline Boulevard, and his “first drunk” as a teenager with “The Hermit of Jasper Ridge.”

While many lament the changes that have taken place in the area in the past half-century, Ms. Softky takes a different view. “It’s astonishing the things that haven’t changed. The Peninsula today has changed very little,” she contends.

The scale of open space from the valley to the coast is unmatched in a large metropolitan area, she says.

The “Freeway Revolt” stopped the extension of Willow Road to the coast; the proposed outer Bayshore Freeway was never built; and a plan was scuttled to “level” the top of San Bruno Mountain to provide fill for proposed development in and around San Francisco Bay.

Incorporation of Woodside in 1955, followed by Portola Valley in 1964, further contributed to preserving the rural atmosphere, undeveloped hillsides and forests. Voters wanted to take control of their future rather than let the county continue to make their land-use decisions.

While these incorporations tended to slow growth in the two towns, the citizen-based Committee for Green Foothills and the Sierra Club fought development of open space, project by project, to preserve the land.

Ms. Softky says environmentalists such as Olive Mayer, Claire Dedrick and Lennie Roberts followed the motto: “Victories are temporary; defeats are permanent. To save open space, you have to buy land fee simple.”

In 1972, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District was formed in northern Santa Clara County to use property tax revenue to buy land specifically to preserve it as open space. Four years later, the district expanded to include southern San Mateo County.

Still, people worried about the possibility of losing prime open space areas to development. In 1977, concerned residents established the nonprofit Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) to raise private funds for land acquisition. POST and the district have preserved as open space more than 80,000 acres,

Marion Softky taking notes at an early Portola Valley Town Council meeting.



Photo by Fran Dempsey

Marion Softky explored Patagonia during a 2008 vacation, and shared it with Almanac readers. Here she is, at dawn, in front of the peaks of the Fitzroy Range (named after the captain of Darwin’s ship, “Beagle”) in Argentina.

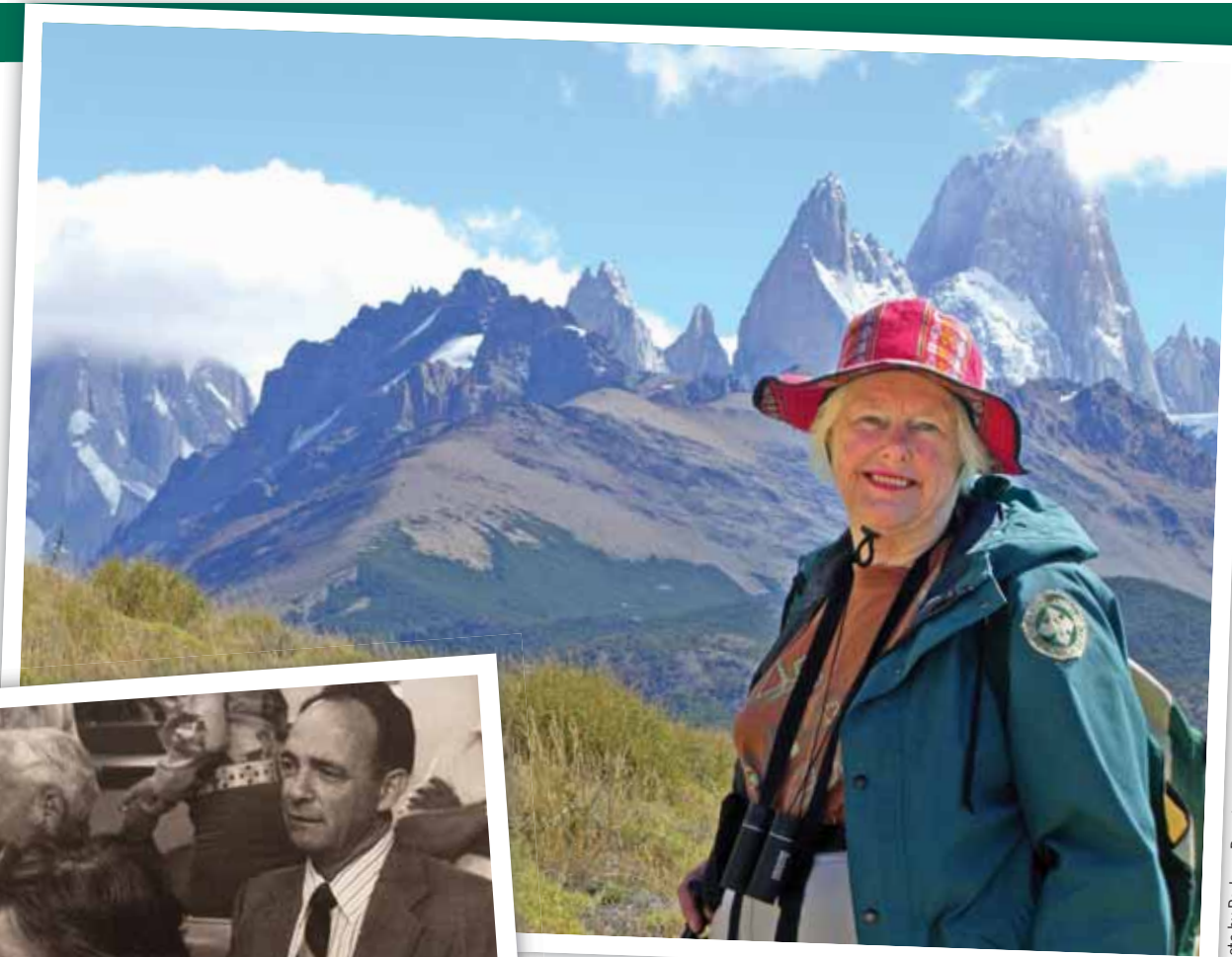


Photo by Barbara Dengler

‘Marion sounded perfect ... and she was. As our editorial staff increased, Marion was able to devote more time to environmental and land-use reporting, for which she has earned a state-wide reputation.’

— ELIZABETH “BETTY” FRY
A FOUNDER OF THE COUNTRY ALMANAC

Marion Softky personified the qualities that County Almanac editor Hedy Boissevain wanted, says Almanac co-founder Betty Fry: “intelligence, education, good research capabilities, fresh journalistic writing skills, and strong ties to the community.”



Photo by Marjan Sadoughi

INFORMATION

To read Marion Softky stories, go to TheAlmanacOnline.com and use the search box at the top of the page.

Marion’s son, Bill Softky, has posted many of Marion’s stories on a Web site:

www.softky.com/Marion/



A BRIEF HISTORY

The Country Almanac, the Portola Valley kitchen-table publishing startup, sparked by the community’s desire for its own weekly paper, started publishing in 1965.

In 1974, it moved its staff to offices in Woodside, settling in the old Spanish-style telephone exchange building at the intersection of Woodside and Canada roads.

In 1985, new owners Mort and Elaine Levine moved the office to larger quarters in downtown Menlo Park at 855 Oak Grove Ave.

In 1993, Embarcadero Publishing Co. purchased the paper and, in 1995, moved the offices to a new and larger building at 3525 Alameda de las Pulgas in West Menlo Park. Shortly thereafter, the paper dropped “Country” from its name.

Community Health Education Programs



Palo Alto Center 795 El Camino Real

Living Well Classes

Learning About Heart Failure

Friday, August 14, 10 – 11:30 a.m.,
and Thursday, August 27,
2 – 3:30 p.m., 650-853-2960

What You Need to Know About Warfarin

Wednesday, August 12, 2 – 4 p.m., 650-853-2960

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Free orientation, Wednesday, September 2, 6:30 – 9 p.m.
Classes start on Monday, September 14 and Tuesday,
September 15, 6:30 – 9 p.m., 650-853-2960

Nutrition and Diabetes Classes

Living Well with Prediabetes

Monday, August 3 and September
14, 9 – noon, 650-853-2961

Healthy Eating with Type 2 Diabetes

Tuesday, August 11,
5:30 – 8:30 p.m., 650-853-2961

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and Child Care Classes



Breastfeeding – Secrets for Success

Thursday, August 20,
7 – 9 p.m., 650-853-2960

Preparing for Birth – A Refresher

Sunday, August 30,
9 a.m. – 1 p.m., 650-853-2960

Support Groups

Cancer

650-342-3749

CPAP

650-853-4729

Diabetes

650-224-7872

Drug and Alcohol

650-853-2904

Healing Imagery for Cancer Patients

650-279-8772

Kidney

650-323-2225

Multiple Sclerosis

650-328-0179

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Site Advisor

Tuesday, August 11,
7 – 8:30 p.m., 650-934-7380

Weight Management Class

Lifescaps® Weight Management (18-week session starts)

Thursday, August 20, 6 – 7:15 p.m.,
650-934-7380

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and Child Care Classes

Infant Emergencies and CPR

Wednesday, August 26, September 2
and 23, 6 – 8:30 p.m., 650-934-7380

Feeding Your Toddler

Tuesday, September 1, 7 – 9 p.m., 650-934-7380



Breastfeeding

Monday or Tuesday,
September 8 or 14,
6:30 – 9 p.m., 650-934-7380

Preparing for Baby

Tuesday, September 15, 6:30 –
8:30 p.m., 650-934-7380

Sunnyvale Center 201 Old San Francisco Road

Breastfeeding Support Group

Tuesdays, 10:30 – noon
408--730-4251



Refunds look unlikely for town's road fee

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Atherton has had a problem with some of its construction-related fees in recent years. Amid threats of litigation, the off-haul fee was dropped and a business license tax targeting subcontractors was re-worked. In both cases, the town issued refunds.

It doesn't look like that will be the case with the town's controversial road-impact fee, meant to cover the cost of repairing roads battered by construction trucks. The fee, 0.71 percent of the project's valuation, is charged to builders as part of the permitting process.

Amid complaints and threats of lawsuits, Atherton officials commissioned a consultant to do an update study of the road-impact fees, but the results have been delayed.

"They did a draft and we were not particularly happy with the amount of reduction of the fee," said Public Works Director Duncan Jones at a special Atherton City Council meeting held July 28.

So the consultant has been sent back to the drawing board, with revised study results now expected in September.

The problem, according to Mr. Jones, is that consultant Kimley-Horn used in its calculations a number from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission representing the theoretical degradation of the streets.

"I looked at it, and our pavement degradation is more than the MTC (number), because of all of the construction trucks on our residential streets," he said.

Mr. Jones said that when he ran the numbers himself, the revenue brought in by the road-impact fee is on par with what the town has been spending to maintain its streets over the past three years.

"My initial calculation is that we are pretty much dead-on," he said.

According to Mr. Jones, in Atherton, residential construction is similar in intensity to commercial construction, with residential streets bearing the brunt of construction impacts.

In other cities, commercial construction mainly impacts large arterial roads, he said in his report to the council. So other cities don't experience the kind of wear-and-tear on residential roads that Atherton does, making the MTC's number too low.

Continued on next page



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County treasurer won't seek re-election

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Lee Buffington, San Mateo County's treasurer-tax collector, announced he will not seek re-election to a seventh term. Mr. Buffington has headed the treasurer's office and its 60 employees for nearly 25 years, and said that he is looking forward to retiring. His term expires in January 2011.

"It's about time, don't you think?" he said.

Despite last year's fiasco that saw a loss of \$155 million in investments with Lehman Brothers, Mr. Buffington said he's enjoyed the challenges of the job, which includes collecting property taxes, managing the county investment pool, and acting as a bank for the county's 26 school districts.

"Lehman was a great big disappointment for us, but we weren't the only ones (who lost money)," he told *The Almanac*.

Mr. Buffington said he had no inkling that he'd remain in the job such a long time.

"The only reason I took the job initially was that I needed health insurance. My wife was terminally ill," he said. "I thought I'd get that and get out, but then I stuck around for a while."

In the past 25 years, the trea-

surer's office evolved from a completely manual operation to the most automated in the state, Mr. Buffington said. At its peak in December, the office processed \$78 million in tax checks in a single day, he said.

"It's the variety that keeps you going. There are different kinds of problems every day," he said. "It's never boring, I'll tell you that."

Two prospective candidates for the office have already approached him, Mr. Buffington said. They are his deputy, Sandra Arnott, and former Burlingame councilman Joe Galligan. Mr. Buffington said he thinks they are both good candidates, but he'd throw his weight behind Ms. Arnott's candidacy.

"I've worked with (Ms. Arnott) for 20 years. She knows the place, and I know she can keep it running," he said. "Somebody else who comes in has to learn the business. People think you buy some securities and you sell some securities, and that's it, but it's not. There are three different parts to the business, all operating under different laws."

Mr. Buffington said that representatives from Standard & Poor's visited the county treasurer's office last month and gave the county investment pool its highest rating. His office plans

out expenditures and revenues over a 15-month period, he said.

"You have to have the money in the right place at the right time," he said. "We're in the forecasting business. Four months ago, we took state funding out of our cash-flow forecast — and we were right."

Mr. Buffington said he plans to spend his retirement doing the things he hasn't had time to do — fishing, traveling and spending time at his daughter's place in Colorado. ■

Author: 'American West at Risk'

Howard Wilshire, author of "The American West at Risk: Science, Myths, and Politics of Land Abuse and Recovery," will be featured at a reception and book reading on Thursday, Aug. 13, in Menlo Park.

The evening, sponsored by the Committee for Green Foothills, will include a no-host reception with the author from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at Oak City Bar & Grill, 1029 El Camino Real, and a book reading from 7:30 to 9 p.m. at Kepler's bookstore, 1010 El Camino Real, both in Menlo Park.

Mr. Wilshire's book addresses such issues as fossil fuel depletion, increased greenhouse gas emissions, and tightening water supply.

Mr. Wilshire's career includes 35 years with the U.S. Geological Survey. He is board chairman of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility and a longtime member of the Committee for Green Foothills.

For more information, call Wendee Crofoot at 968-7243, ext. 314.

Continued from previous page

Kimley-Horn is going to re-evaluate the road fees based on the actual amount spent by the town to maintain its roads — about \$500,000 a year for the past several years, said Mr. Jones. Once the roads are in better condition, they will be less prone to damage and less expensive to maintain, he said.

"We'll change the fee slightly for the next few years," Mr. Jones said. "But basically, I think we're in pretty good shape."

That didn't appease the two members of the public who showed up at the 9 a.m. meeting to talk to the council about the road-impact fee.

"There's no question that construction activity has some impact, but it's ludicrous to think that it has the only impact (on roads)," said Atherton resident Joe Comartin. "It's not fair that those who are building homes in Atherton bear the burden of the entire town's streets."

Atherton resident Carol Flaherty, who has built several homes in Atherton, said that the road-impact fee is clearly an illegal tax.

"The fundamental flaw is that


you assumed that construction trucks go on every street in Atherton, and that is ludicrous. Do you know how many cul-de-sacs there are?" she asked the council. "To make this study valid you have to put a factor in that construction trucks are not on every street."

Council members Charles Marsala, Elizabeth Lewis and Kathy McKeithen also raised questions about whether the road-impact fee study took into consideration other sources of wear-and-tear on the roads — increased garbage and recycling truck traffic, delivery vehicles, and ground water or other geological conditions.

Mr. Marsala said that the amount of deterioration to the roads depends on the type of construction being done, particularly if it involves hauling dirt off-site.

City Attorney Wynne Furth said that the town can't take into account the precise scope of each and every project in determining its fees.

"It's not possible to set a fee exactly so that no one is paying any more than (his) impact," she said. "It's like an insurance pool; it's the most accurate that's practical." ■



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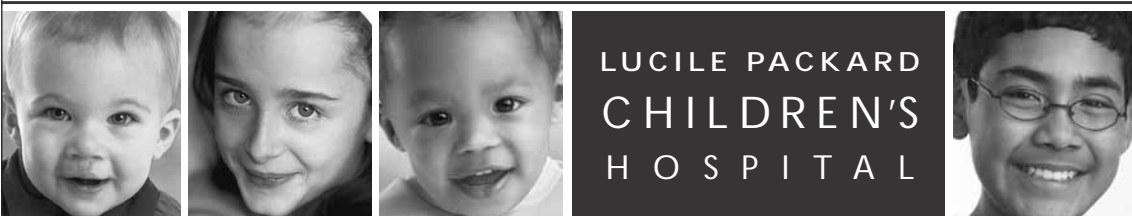
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This family-based, behavioral and educational weight management program promotes healthy eating and exercise habits for overweight children and their families. More than 80% of children achieve long-term weight loss through this program — and parents lose weight too! Call (650) 725-4424 for information.
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- ✱ **CAR SEAT EDUCATION & INSTALLATION**
The Kohl's Child Safety and Outreach Program at LPCH offers a free car seat check and installation education at Kohl's in Santa Clara. Appointments made by calling **650-736-2981**.
- Wednesday, August 26: 11:00 am - 3:00 pm
- ✱ **MOTHERS OF SONS: THE JOYS AND CHALLENGES OF GUIDING YOUR SON THROUGH ADOLESCENCE**
Robert Lehman, MD, co-creator of the "Heart to Heart" program will host an evening just for mothers of adolescent sons. Emphasis will be on understanding and encouraging open communication between parents and children.
- Tuesday, September 8: 7:00 - 8:30 pm

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



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Menlo Park resident **Darryl Warren** at the intersection of El Camino Real and Ravenswood Avenue, holding a sign warning drivers about what he calls the city's racist policies.

Photo by Michelle Le/
The Almanac

Menlo Park resident accuses city's police of racial profiling

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

On July 18, Menlo Park police stopped Darryl Warren as he rode his bicycle at 1:15 a.m. through the Belle Haven neighborhood where he lives. That, at least, is a fact the police and Mr. Warren can agree on.

But as to the officers' motivation for making the arrest, they disagree. Mr. Warren says the officers stopped him because he is black, and asked to search him without probable cause.

Police Commander Sylvia Moir said officers stopped Mr. Warren because he didn't have a bike light, in violation of the vehicle code. They determined that he was "under the influence of a controlled substance," and in possession of marijuana, according to Cmdr. Moir.

Mr. Warren has been very public about his displeasure with the officers' conduct, accusing Menlo Park of instituting racial profiling as a policy. He has stationed himself in front of Applewood Pizza on El Camino Real at Ravenswood Avenue most mornings for the past two weeks, holding a sign to alert drivers to what he sees as the city's racist policies.

Ms. Moir said that anyone riding a bicycle that early in the morning in Menlo Park would appear suspicious, especially because of a recent spate of bicycle burglaries, and reports of suspects fleeing on bicycles following a crime.

"We do have our officers in the field, and they are hyper-vigilant to any kind of activity that is out of the ordinary," she said.

"And a bicycle at 1 a.m. with no lights is out of the ordinary in Menlo Park."

But this wasn't the first time he's been stopped, Mr. Warren said, adding that he isn't the only community member who shares this sentiment.

"I have been stopped in broad daylight, and asked whether I am on probation or parole," he said, adding quickly that he is on neither. The fact that police have asked him the question after stopping him several times, including the night he was arrested, indicates to him that it's department policy.

"He is adamant he was stopped because of the color of his skin," Ms. Moir said. "We are concerned that he would have that perspective, but there is nothing to substantiate that. ... It does highlight the need for us to meet with the community, and resolve any damage that's been done."

Cmdr. Moir said the police department works hard to build relationships with community members; officers are often present at meetings of the Belle Haven Neighborhood Association.

Mr. Warren said that in his opinion, Belle Haven residents are more afraid of the police than of "a robber in the night."

What does Mr. Warren think about the July 16 arrest of Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates in Cambridge, Mass., and President Obama's subsequent comment that the police had "acted stupidly"?

"Gates should have been arrested," he said. "(The officer) had probable cause. I don't agree with Obama on this thing, either." ■

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Incumbents to run for college board

The two incumbents on the San Mateo County Community College District board of directors have filed for reelection. Richard Holober and Helen Hausman filed their declarations of candidacy with the county elections office.

There are two, four-year terms on the community col-

lege board up for election on the Nov. 3 ballot.

The board oversees the district's three colleges, Cañada, Skyline and College of San Mateo. The district serves more than 40,000 students a year, offering two-year degrees and more than 90 vocational and technical programs.

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Members of the Majors Division Alpine-West Menlo All Stars are, top row, from left: Coach Bob Ramies, Grant Henninger, Macklan Badger, Gregory Ramies, Alex Laird, Daniel Hill, Coach Ken Tinsley, and Coach Daniel Bergeson. Bottom row, from left: John Bergeson, Will Richardson, Riley Tinsley, Evan Vandermaas, Rory Davidson, Joseph Armstrong and Thomas Suesser.

Little League: Alpine wins Majors all-star Super Bowl

This story was submitted by Daniel Bergeson, an assistant coach for the Alpine team.

With one of the most potent batting line-ups in recent memory, the Majors Division Alpine-West Menlo All Stars recently took the District 52 Super Bowl Championship at Sea Cloud Park in Foster City.

Alpine beat Menlo-Atherton 10-4 in the title game on June 23, capping an impressive four-game run in four consecutive days. (The Majors Division is for 12-year-olds.)

In its route to the championship, Alpine beat Pacifica 7-2 in eight innings in the first game of the tournament, followed by a 2-0 win over San Mateo, and a 13-7 victory over host Foster City.

It was quite a run. "In four games, these kids never lost focus," Alpine coach Ken Tinsley said. "It was really something to see."

In the title game, Will Richardson started and pitched five strong innings, before Evan Vandermaas came in and pitched a shut-out sixth inning.

Coach Tinsley had the luxury of being able to choose from several players to take the mound. All told, six Alpine players pitched in the tournament, and pitched well.

In Alpine's first-game victory over Pacifica, Joe Armstrong pitched seven shutout innings. Then Thomas Suesser pitched a complete shutout game in Alpine's 2-0 victory over San Mateo.

Daniel Hill, John Bergeson and Greg Ramies then combined to pitch in Alpine's 13-7 victory over Foster City in the semifinals. The pitching duo of Richardson and Vandermaas then brought home the metal in the championship game.

Alpine also shined in the field. In the championship game, a strong M-A team threatened

on several occasions. However, several stellar defensive plays by Alpine prevented M-A from being able to overcome Alpine's lead.

Macklan Badger, Alpine's third baseman, made a solid play in throwing our M-A's lead-off batter in the fifth inning on a hard-hit grounder. And Riley Tinsley, playing center field, caught everything in sight, and stopped M-A from scoring more runs in the third inning with a perfect throw to catcher Greg Ramies to tag out an M-A runner at the plate.

The infield play of Thomas Suesser at shortstop was particularly strong throughout the tournament.

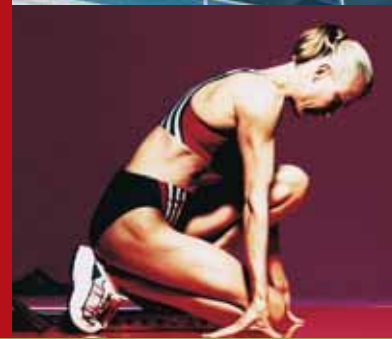
But the real story of the tournament was Alpine's powerful batting lineup. Throughout the tournament Alpine scored early and often. Alpine scored a total of 32 runs in the four-game tournament, and would have scored more were it not for several outstanding defensive plays by M-A and Alpine's other opponents.

Alpine had power up and down the lineup. Riley Tinsley hit a grand slam in the Foster City win. Joe Armstrong, Greg Ramies, Will Richardson, Alex Laird and Grant Henninger all contributed big hits throughout the tournament. John Bergeson, hitting third in the lineup, went 5-5 in the win against Foster City, and had three RBIs and scored three times in the championship game against M-A. Bergeson finished the tournament with a blistering .778 batting average.

The championship was particularly rewarding for Alpine. It was the first Alpine team to win the Majors Super Bowl title in a decade. A banner honoring the 2009 Alpine All Stars team will be on display at the Alpine Little League Opening Day ceremonies next Spring.

Bob Ramies co-coached the team with Ken Tinsley.

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OBITUARIES

Fredric Owen Hawkins

Retired Air Force pilot,
business owner

A memorial service for Fredric Owen Hawkins, an Atherton resident and retired U.S. Air Force pilot, is set for 2 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 11, at Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, 950 Santa Cruz Ave. in Menlo Park. Mr. Hawkins died July 25 at the age of 68.



Owen Hawkins

Born in Bakersfield, he grew up in Atherton, attended Encinal and Central schools, and graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School.

After graduating from the U.S. Air Force Academy, he spent six years on active duty, serving as an instructor and flying 100 missions in a F105 over North Vietnam, his family said. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters, the Air Medal with 11 oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Vietnam service medal.

After retiring from the Air Force as a captain, Mr. Hawkins became a principal member of the Berry Petroleum Co. in Maricopa, California. He also owned and operated Radar Sentry Burglar Alarm Co., and developed Tax-time, a software program for professional accountants. He became one of the first ISPs, or Internet Service Providers, in the area, his family said.

Mr. Hawkins was a member of the Menlo Circus Club and the Sharon Heights Golf and Country Club. He loved computers and electronic gadgets, traveling, playing golf, using his ham radio and playing with his grandchildren, his family said.

He is survived by his wife of 31 years, Connie Hawkins; his children, Greg, Kimberly Loades, Chris, Colin and Cory; and five grandchildren.

The family prefers that memorial donations be made to lung cancer research at MDAnderson.org in Houston.

Margaret Haneberg

Cantor museum volunteer

Margaret (Peg) Russell Haneberg, a one-time volunteer at Stanford University's Cantor Arts Center and a former resident of Palo Alto, Portola Valley and Menlo Park, died July 1 in Belmont from complications associated with Alzheimer's disease. She was 98.

Ms. Haneberg, born Margaret Russell in Los Angeles, graduated from Pomona College and attended the University of South-

ern California, relatives said.

During World War II, she joined the American Red Cross as a recreation worker and met her future husband, Walter Haneberg, at a San Francisco hospital, where he was recovering from shrapnel wounds received during the Allied invasion of Germany, relatives said.

Ms. Haneberg liked to travel all over the world, including China around the time it opened to the West in the 1970s, and enjoyed opera, jazz, conversation and being a community volunteer "well into her 80s," relatives said.

She became one of the first docents at the Cantor Arts Center, where she specialized in the Stanford family history and the art collection, relatives said.

Ms. Haneberg is survived by her daughter, Margaret Haneberg, of San Carlos; and three nieces.

Private services were held. The family prefers that donations in her memory be made to the American Red Cross, 85 Second St., 8th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105; or to the Alzheimer's Association, 2065 W. El Camino Real, Mountain View, CA 94043.

Hugh Nadaner

Photographer and pilot

Longtime Ladera resident Hugo Nadaner, a civilian photographer for the U.S. Navy, private pilot and real estate developer, died on July 29 at the age of 94.

Mr. Nadaner grew up in Los Angeles and attended the University of California at Berkeley, where he met Dorothy, his wife of 72 years, relatives said. They married in 1937, she said in an interview.

During World War II, he worked as a civilian photographer in Richmond, where he shot U.S. Navy ships during construction, launch and shakedown cruises, Ms. Nadaner said. He later shot publicity photos of "major stars" in Hollywood, she said.

The couple moved to Ladera in 1954. Mr. Nadaner became a general contractor, built pools and fences on the Peninsula, and owned a lumber yard in Menlo Park for a time, relatives said.

He flew a single-engine plane, and the couple took trips throughout the West with his wife navigating, she said. He liked snowshoeing, surfing, long walks and nonfiction books, sometimes reading them at a rate of one per night, relatives said.

"Hugo was a devoted family man and was known by all for his warmth and hospitality. He reached out to people in his own community and in his travels. He will be greatly missed," his son Dan said in an e-mail.

Mr. Nadaner is survived by his wife; son Dan Nadaner of Fresno; daughter Nancy Nadaner of Pacifica; and a granddaughter. Services will be private.

ATHERTON

Auto burglary report:

Medical supplies stolen from trunk, Redwood Way, July 26.

Grand theft report: Laptop computer stolen, Menlo School at 50 Valparaiso Ave., July 28.

MENLO PARK

GRAND THEFT REPORTS:

■ Former employee suspected in theft of car-

pet valued at \$1,800, ABC Decorative Rugs at 104 Constitution Drive, July 27.

■ Five Apple iPod Touch devices stolen, 1300 block of Adams Court, July 30.

WOODSIDE

Grand theft report: Several Apple iPhone cell phones and a wallet stolen during party, 1100 block of Canada Road, July 22.

Residential burglary report: Bag of loose change valued at \$150 stolen, 100 block of

Corto Lane, July 28.

PORTOLA VALLEY

Grand theft report:

Copper tubing valued at \$500 stolen, 100 block of Palmer Lane, July 24.

WEST MENLO PARK

Commercial burglary report: Apple laptop computer valued at \$2,600 stolen from Woodland School at 360 La Cuesta Drive, July 27.



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**JUNE BLACKALLER SPIEKER
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Died after a brief illness on Saturday, July 18, 2009 at the age of 88. Wife of Warren Edward Spieker for almost 67 years, they met on a cruise ship bound for Samoa in her school days. Traveling the world was a passion that they shared during their life together, seeing and exploring over 200 countries. Raised in Piedmont, she attended Cal, Berkeley and converted her husband Warren, a Stanford grad, and entire family into Cal fans. Mother of 4, grandmother of 13, and great grandmother of 12, family was the mainstay of her long life; all of her family survives her. She was devoted to her volunteer experience at Stanford Hospital where she was a Pink Lady for scores of years. She maintained many friends from her volunteer days at the hospital who joined her for afternoons learning and playing Bridge. She always had a needlepoint project in hand that she may have designed as well as created. Settling down with her Cavalier King Charles spaniels and a good box of candy were sheer delight to June.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made in memory of June B. Spieker to the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, 400 Hamilton Avenue, Suite 340, Palo Alto, CA 94301. Online donations may also be made at supportlpch.org. A Memorial Mass at Nativity Church was celebrated with her family.

PAID OBITUARY

FREDERIC OWEN HAWKINS

9-17-40 - 7-25-09



Owen was born in Bakersfield, CA, but grew up in Atherton, CA where he attended Encinal & Central Grade Schools and Menlo Atherton High School. He was a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy and was on active duty for 6 years during which time he served as an instructor pilot and flew 100 missions in his F105 over North Vietnam. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with 2 oak leaf clusters, the Air Medal with 11 oak leaf clusters, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Viet Nam service medal, before he retired as a Captain. After his years in the air force he took on the family tradition of being a principal member of the Berry Petroleum Company in Maricopa, CA. He also owned and operated Radar Sentry Burglar Alarm

Company, developed Taxtime, a software program for professional accountants, and he became one of the first ISP (Internet Service Providers) in the area. He was an active member of the Menlo Circus Club and The Sharon Heights Golf and Country Club. His passions in life were for computers, all forms of electronic gadgetry, traveling the world (especially Africa), touring the U.S. in his camper, going to Disneyworld, playing golf with his friends, using his ham radio, going to lunch with his friends, feeding the hummingbirds, taking his family to Hawaii, and playing with his grandchildren. He is survived by his wife and travel partner of 31 years, Connie Hawkins, and by his children and their spouses: Greg Hawkins, Kimberly & Mike Loades, Chris Hawkins, Colin & Maureen Hawkins, Cory & Jamey Hawkins, and by his grandchildren Nolan, Laney, Laurel, Grace Ann, and Madelyn. A memorial service will be held at Menlo Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park on August 11th at 2:00. In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made to lung cancer research at MDAnderson, Houston, TX (MDAnderson.org)

PAID OBITUARY

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



WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

All views must include a home address and contact phone number. Published letters will also appear on the web site, www.TheAlmanacOnline.com, and occasionally on the Town Square forum.

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CALL the Viewpoint desk at 854-2690, ext. 222.

Decision on train horns bad from the start

Perhaps proving that its organization is nimble enough to hear and respond to public concerns, Caltrain announced Friday that it will reduce the sound level of horns on locomotives that use the Peninsula rail corridor.

Several weeks ago, the agency made the questionable decision to move the horns from the bottom to the top of its engines, an action that greatly increased the decibel level of the trains,

noticeable to anyone living, working, or traveling near the tracks. The change prompted a huge outcry from residents that was so strong it prompted the city of Menlo Park to issue

a news release explaining that the volume of the horns was out of their control. Many residents said the additional noise was almost unbearable.

In changing course, Caltrain said it will reduce the volume of the horns back to the level of a few weeks ago, which over the years has been accepted by most local residents. A spokesperson told The Almanac that the change will take two to three weeks

The decision several weeks ago to step up the horn volume caught everyone off guard, with some families even pulling their children inside the house to avoid the blaring horns. The jump in horn volume caused residents to file more than 100 complaints with Caltrain.

The agency said the move was made when it was discovered during a routine safety inspection that its horns were not producing the “distinct, separate, sequential blasts (tweet and

toot) that is required by federal regulations.”

At that point, residents found themselves caught in the netherworld of railroad bureaucracy over the arcane definitions of a “tweet” and a “toot,” nomenclature likely dreamed up years ago by an employee of the Federal Railroad Administration. No federal inspector was involved in the decision to pump up the volume, which had been at a lower level for nearly 10 years.

Caltrain made a major error in judgment that, before this episode is over, will have unnecessarily subjected thousands of Peninsula residents and passengers to more than a month of over-the-top noise. The agency never should have ramped up its horn volume in the first place without first consulting the federal railroad agency and at least notifying cities and residents in advance.

Federal rules require trains to sound the horn one-quarter of a mile before each of the 44 grade crossings on the route. With 50 trains or more making the roundtrip between San Francisco and San Jose, with some even going on to Gilroy, it adds up to more than 4,000 “tweets and toots” every weekday.

We believe that by agreeing to reduce the horns back to prior levels, Caltrain will be able to meet its federal guidelines and maintain a level of safety on the route. In fact, some have questioned whether the trains actually need such a high-powered horn when every grade crossing is protected by gates.

The answer to that question must come from the federal railroad agency, and it is unlikely to come soon. In the meantime, those who live near the tracks can be thankful that their concerns were heard.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Time to fix dangerous Menlo/University crosswalk

Editor:

Earlier this Sunday morning yet another pedestrian was struck and injured by a car at the infamous intersection of Menlo Avenue and University Drive outside of Draeger’s market.

Frankly, I’ve lost count of the number of people hit at this corner! It must be the most dangerous crosswalk in the city! And for good reason; the configuration of that corner is a joke and needs to be addressed once and for all by the city council.

If they won’t do anything about it, then perhaps the citizens should form a volunteer crossing guard group to ensure the safety of pedestrians.

Tim Johnston
Creek Drive, Menlo Park

The Almanac’s fixation with Andy Cohen

Editor:

There are five City Council

members, approximately 52 commissioners and numerous citizen activists in Menlo Park. So why is The Almanac providing public relations services for Andy Cohen, as if his were the only important voice in Menlo Park?

And not just on the gym but on two of the foreclosure programs for which others deserve equal credit, as well as for a possible seat on the California Coastal Commission, in spite of the fact that Menlo Park is not on the coast?

Had Andy Cohen wanted to comment on the new gym before the final council vote, he could have honored the Parks and Recreation Commission and the public process by attending any of the publicly noticed meetings on the topic. He chose not to.

If council member Cohen had objections to the final gym plan, he owed a detailed explanation of his vote to his fellow council members, to the donor, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the library community and voters.

Rather than address his complaints to The Almanac, his comments should have been

made during the meeting so that they could have been entered into the public record. Given his objections to the gym plan, his vote should have been a “no,” but he chose the more cowardly abstention because that does not require him to be accountable.

By refusing to present his arguments on this and other issues before council, Andy Cohen has marginalized himself. He should stop blaming others for his own inability or unwillingness to articulate his position.

And The Almanac needs to expand its Rolodex.

Elizabeth Lasensky
Fremont Street, Menlo Park

Escalating cost of firefighters unsustainable

Editor:

Cities and counties can no longer afford the salaries and pensions of our firefighters.

While the vast majority of Americans have seen their wages decrease and their pensions change to the point that retirement is no longer an option, these men and women are continuing to seek increases.

My niece, a captain in the

U.S. Army whose job is far more arduous and dangerous, makes less than half of a firefighter’s salary. She is also preparing for her second deployment to Iraq in four years that will last 12 months. If she were to remain in the military for 30 years her pension would also be substantially less than what our firefighters currently enjoy.

Our firefighters provide an essential service that is greatly appreciated, but we are discovering that even without the recession these packages are unsustainable. It is time to reduce the cost either through wage and pension reduction or outsourcing.

Jerome Leugers
Lowery Drive, Atherton

Time to let Woodside’s Jackling house go

Editor:

That perennial question of the old Jackling house in Woodside is upon us again.

The land and house have been privately owned for over 20 years. The dispute over the value

See **LETTERS**, next page

LEED rating worth it for new gym

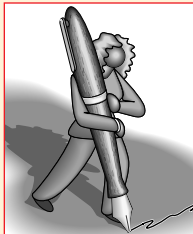
By Henry Riggs

For those who aren't familiar, LEED is a rating system inaugurated in 2000 by the U.S. Green Building Council to set goals for sustainable buildings.

In essence, this is about promoting "good" buildings, those that overall use the least non-renewable resources to build and operate and generate the least greenhouse gases and toxins. Limiting the impact of new and remodeled buildings is a huge step in our response to the truly global issue of climate change.*

But if we thoughtfully design a green new building or remodel, why would we care about "certifying" it under LEED? The simplest reason is to assure that our good intentions become reality. Every week on every jobsite the project team — owner, contractor, architect, engineers and inspectors — solve problems of cost, product availability and ease of construction.

Frankly, green materials and methods take a little extra effort to realize and it is tempting to take "conventional" alternatives, like replacing sustainably harvested wood with typical lumber, or to toss demolition waste into landfills rather than sort and recycle. The certifications process organizes and manages materials and methods, much as the city building inspection process makes sure the roof beams are properly connected, fire walls will resist fire, and so forth. No one on a jobsite seriously thinks all of the safety goals or the green goals will be met without oversight.



GUEST OPINION

So what will this cost? That question seems to be a political football. Menlo Park staff estimated our new \$14 million gym as needing \$250,000 for certification; a Portola Valley town council member guessed that the newly completed Portola Valley Town Center will cost close to \$1 million to certify and no one really seems to want to find out.

Wild guesses like these do not serve the public any more than tossing whole buildings into landfills. For Menlo Park's new gym, a consultant who specializes in the LEED oversight and paperwork for larger projects estimates the certification costs as low as \$70,000. The bulk of this expense

is to assure that the energy-saving systems we pay for actually work as advertised, and thus save the operating expenses intended over the 50-year life-span of our new building, as well as the related reduction in global carbon.

I'm no fan of paperwork. Sometimes I don't much like inspections either, but Menlo Park won't get a green building just on promises. LEED certification will make it happen.

Henry Riggs is a Menlo Park architect who serves on the Planning Commission.

**Buildings account for the largest share of global greenhouse gases, slightly more than transportation. Reference: Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2006, USEPA #430-R-08-005.*

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

of rebuilding the house, which is in a derelict state, and turning it into some kind of historical landmark without plans for where there would be parking or who would be in charge are raising the usual hackles.

How about private property rights? Robles Drive is private. The other property owners along that driveway would

probably not be pleased to find cars parked in and along their driveways while their occupants were climbing around the old house. Who benefits? It seems somewhat hypocritical that this group "Uphold Our Heritage" hasn't seen fit to protect the old water towers that were used to supply water to private homes in the "old days." They had architectural and historical interest.

The Jackling swimming pool, which so many of us enjoyed when our children were young, was destroyed years ago. Other

property lines go through that pool area. The land is also subdivided.

In this dispute, it seems time to let go of past dreams and out-of-tune organs, plus a kitchen which needed a chef, sous-chef and three maids, and let the present owner of this piece of Woodside build a triumphant home with architectural integrity, and let the ghosts in the Jackling house go free.

Trish Hooper
Portola Road, Portola Valley



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