



LOVE IS IN THE AIR

See Section 2

The Almanac

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

FEBRUARY 3, 2010 | VOL. 45 NO. 23



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Mid-winter market

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Inside

This week's news, features and community events.

FIRST SHOT



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Facelift on Flea Street

Property owner Dan Beltramo shows off a rendering of a project to renovate a building on Alameda de las Pulgas at Avy Avenue in West Menlo Park. He's standing in front of the building. For more, see **Page 14**.

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On the cover

Daniel Alvi takes a bite of a gala apple on a visit to the Menlo Park Farmers' Market in downtown Menlo Park. The market, sponsored by the Menlo Park Live Oaks Lions Club, is one of the few on the Peninsula to remain open every Sunday year-round. Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac. See **Page 10**.

CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

The Almanac Editorial offices are at **3525 Alameda de las Pulgas, Menlo Park, CA 94025**.

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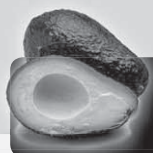
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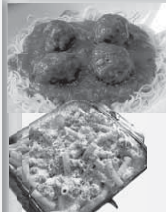
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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Will massive development projects clog local streets?

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

Any commuter who uses Marsh Road to get to U.S. 101 — and there are quite a few of them — could tell you about the white knuckles they've developed, waiting to enter the freeway on their way to work.

But even traffic experts haven't yet quantified how much worse that commute would become if local jurisdictions approve two major nearby development projects. Suffice it to say that steering wheel covers might have to be replaced a lot more often if unrelated proposals for a 1 million-square-foot development project in Menlo Park, and a mini-city on the Bay in Redwood City, come to fruition.

"There are only so many ways to get to 101," Menlo Park Mayor Rich Cline said in an interview. "I don't know how to solve that, that's the thing. (Traffic) is a huge impact, it's probably unmitigatable in a lot of ways. It's a chief concern, without question."

Marsh Road is only one of several streets

in Menlo Park and Atherton that could be affected by those proposals, and by a planned expansion of the Stanford Medical Center. But it can perhaps serve as a case study to illustrate how these projects could impact already overburdened thoroughfares.

According to the city of Menlo Park, Marsh Road was designed to bear about 20,000 vehicle trips per day. The segment of the road just west of the freeway onramp currently sees about 34,000 cars per day.

According to a consultant, the Menlo Gateway project proposed by developer David Bohannon, near the intersection of Marsh and Bayfront Expressway, would add about 2,500 daily trips to the total.

But that amount might be miniscule when compared to the number of trips generated by the Redwood City Saltworks project, a development nearly the size of Menlo Park proposed by agribusiness giant Cargill, stretching along the Bay between Woodside Road and Marsh Road. A Jan. 26 report on that project estimates that it would put 2,600 to 3,100 cars on Marsh Road during peak morning and afternoon

commute hours alone. Peak-hour trips represent only one-fifth of the total daily trips the project is expected to generate.

At this point, it's difficult to get a complete picture of how the Cargill project would affect local streets, as an environmental impact report has not yet been released.

"Clearly, there will be additional trips on Marsh Road and on Bayfront Expressway, but at what level is difficult to tell," said Chip Taylor, who heads Menlo Park's transportation department.

And there are a number of caveats that concerned commuters should take into account. The preliminary estimate of traffic from the Cargill project reflects the number of vehicles that would use sections of Marsh Road both west and east of U.S. 101, while the city estimates given above pertain only to the section immediately west of the highway.

The consultant's report also doesn't take into account the fact that people who already use the thoroughfare might move to the new development, meaning that the report might be counting some trips twice. In general,

the report notes that the project might help to alleviate the Peninsula's jobs-to-housing imbalance, actually reducing the vehicle miles traveled per household.

The estimates related to the Bohannon project don't reflect the fact that Menlo Park is pressing the developer to more aggressively encourage people to take public transportation. And it's possible that neither project will be built for decades, if at all.

Still, the Cargill project in particular — and the 25,000 new residents it would bring — would undoubtedly mean more traffic on local streets, including Woodside Road, Bay Road, Middlefield Road, and El Camino Real. Pair that with the effects of a major Stanford Medical Center expansion on Sand Hill Road proposed in Palo Alto, and Menlo Park and Atherton officials may find themselves wincing when they ponder future traffic patterns in their cities, with state law and the beneficence of other jurisdictions their only recourse.

Mr. Cline, the Menlo Park mayor, said he was looking forward to hearing what Red-

See **MARSH**, page 8

Rodney Smith's widow is ordered to reimburse driver

■ Former school superintendent Anthony Rose, the driver in the accident that killed Rodney Smith, is due \$107,000 to cover expert-witness costs.

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

San Mateo County judge has ordered Portola Valley resident Mary Smith, the widow of Rodney Smith, the former chief executive of San Jose-based Alterra Corp, to pay \$107,225 to Anthony Rose, a former superintendent of the Portola Valley School District.

Ms. Smith had filed a wrongful death lawsuit seeking \$7 million to \$8 million in damages against Mr. Rose, alleging that he was at fault in a May 2007 accident on Sand Hill Road when his car collided with and killed Mr. Smith, who was riding his bicycle.

A jury decided in December, after a 10-day trial, that Mr. Rose was not at fault. Mr. Rose then sought to recover the cost of expert witnesses hired for the trial by his defense attorney, Kevin Cholakian of Cholakian & Associates in

South San Francisco.

The key issue in the case was whether Mr. Smith, 67, turned his eastbound bike into the path of Mr. Rose's eastbound car, or whether Mr. Rose, 87, turned his car into the bike lane and struck Mr. Smith.

The key issue was whether Rodney Smith turned his bike into the path of the car, or whether Anthony Rose turned his car into the bike lane.

Mr. Cholakian told The Almanac in December that he built his case on the testimony of the expert

witnesses who reconstructed the accident using an identical car and bicycle and analyzed the damage to both vehicles.

The jury, after 10 hours of deliberation, voted 9-3 on Dec. 1 to reject Ms. Smith's claim for damages.

Superior Court Judge Carol Mittelsteadt, one of two "complex litigation" judges in the county system, presided over the trial and on Jan. 25, ordered Ms. Smith to reimburse Mr. Rose for the costs of the expert witnesses. ■



Menlo Park City Manager **Glen Rojas** came to the city in 2007 from Chino, an Orange County city that more than doubled in population during his 26 years there. Still, there's more interest among residents in development issues in Menlo Park than there was in his former city, he said.

The Almanac/Michelle Le

Running the city's the easy part

City manager is still working to win skeptics' trust

By Sean Howell

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park and Chino, California, don't have much in common. Chino is a rapidly expanding metropolis whose population has nearly tripled in the past three decades, as land developers gobbled up dairy farms to extend Southern California sprawl. The population of Menlo Park, meanwhile, has been relatively stable over the past half-century, according to the

Bay Area Census.

So it must have come as something of a surprise to Glen Rojas when he was interviewing for the Menlo Park city manager job in 2007 to learn about the fervent political battles that take place here around land-use issues. He hadn't seen anything like it in Chino, despite the fact that the city had added 50,000 new residents during Mr. Rojas' 26 years working there.

See **ROJAS**, page 8



Community Health Education Programs

Palo Alto Center 795 El Camino Real

Lecture and Workshops

Targeted Therapy: What is it and Why Do We Need it?

Presented by David Leibowitz, M.D., PAMF Hematology and Oncology
Tuesday, Feb. 9, 7 – 8:30 p.m., 650-853-4873

Living Well Classes 650-853-2960

Functional Spine Training

First Monday of each month,
5 – 6:30 p.m., 650-853-4873

Managing Your

High Blood Pressure

Monday, Feb. 8, 3 – 5 p.m.

What You Need to Know About Warfarin (Coumadin)

Call for dates and time.

Nutrition and Diabetes Classes 650-853-2961

Adult Weight Management Group

Thursdays, 5:30 – 7 p.m.

Living Well with Diabetes

Tuesdays, 4:30 – 7 p.m., or Fridays,
9:30 – noon

Bariatric Pre-Op Class

First Tuesday of each month,
9:30 a.m. – noon

Heart Smart Class

Third and fourth
Tuesday of every other
month, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.



Bariatric Nutrition SMA

First Tuesday of each month,
10:30 a.m. – noon

Healthy Eating Type 2 Diabetes

Every other month on the third
Wednesday, 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Prediabetes

First Monday of the month, 9 – 11:30
a.m., and every other month of the
third Wednesday, 4:30 – 7 p.m.

Gestational Diabetes

Wednesdays, 2 – 4 p.m.,
650-853-2961

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding & Child Care Classes 650-853-2960

Moving Through Pregnancy

Mondays, Feb. 1, 8 & 22, 7 – 9 p.m.

Feeding Your Toddler

Thursdays every other month. Also in
Los Altos, 650-853-2961

Preparing for Birth

Wednesdays, Feb. 3 – Mar. 10,
7 – 9:15 p.m., Saturday/Sunday,
Feb. 20 & 21, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Feeding Your Preschooler

Thursdays every other month. Also in
Los Altos, 650-853-2961

Preparing for Birth - A Refresher

Sunday, Feb. 7, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.



Breastfeeding:

Secrets for Success

Thursday, Feb. 25, 7 – 9 p.m.

Introduction to Solids

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dates, 650-853-2961.

Support Groups

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650-342-3749

Drug and Alcohol

650-853-2904

Kidney

650-323-2225

CPAP

650-853-4729

Healing Imagery for Cancer Patients

650-799-5512

Multiple Sclerosis

650-328-0179

Diabetes

650-224-7872

Mountain View Center 701 E. El Camino Real

Lecture and Workshops 650-934-7373

Effective Communication Strategies with Children Marvin Small Memorial Parent Workshop Series

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HMR Weight Management Program 650-404-8260

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5 – 6:30 p.m.

Nutrition and Diabetes Classes 650-934-7177

Heart Smart Class

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3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Diabetes Class (two-part class)

Tuesdays, 9:30 a.m. – noon and
Wednesdays, 2 – 4:30 p.m.

Prediabetes

Third Thursday of each month, 2 – 4
p.m. Fourth Tuesday of each month,
3 – 5 p.m.

Sweet Success Gestational Diabetes Class

Wednesdays, 9 a.m. – noon



Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and Child Care Classes

Introduction to Solids

Monday, Feb. 22, 10:30 a.m. – noon

Infant/Child CPR

Monday, Feb. 22, 6 – 8 p.m.

Baby Care

Saturday, Feb. 27,
10:30 a.m. – noon

Preparing for Baby

Tuesday, Feb. 9, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Preparing for Birth

Wednesdays, Feb. 3 – Mar. 10,
7 – 9:15 p.m., Saturday/Sunday,
Feb. 20 & 21, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Feeding Your Preschooler

Thursdays every other month. Also in
Los Altos, 650-853-2961

Preparing for Birth - A Refresher

Sunday, Feb. 7, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Breastfeeding Your Newborn

Monday, Feb. 8, 6:30 – 9 p.m.

Infant Emergencies and CPR

Wednesday, Feb. 3 & 17,
6 – 8:30 p.m.

Childbirth Preparation

Fridays or Saturdays, Feb. 5 or 6,
6 to 9 p.m.

For all, register online or call
650-934-7373.

What to Expect with Your Newborn

Tuesday, Feb. 16, 7 – 8 p.m.



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Betty Jean Whelan: athlete and artist

Betty Jean Whelan of Portola Valley, who was an accomplished athlete in her youth, died Jan. 21 at the age of 81. She was the wife of Joe Whelan, the developer of Portola Valley Ranch, a 453-acre planned community, which has received numerous prestigious national awards.

Ms. Whelan resided at the Ranch with her husband. She was an expert on California native plants and led nature hikes at the Ranch, as well as at Filoli and in the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

Born in Whittier, she attended Parnell Preparatory School for girls and graduated from Montebello High School. She earned a degree in kindergarten/primary education at San Jose State University, where she was a member of Alpha Omicron Pi sorority. She was one of founding members of the San Jose State Aqua Ski Club, one of the first college water ski

clubs in the West.

She met her future husband, Joseph Whelan, at San Jose State. They were married at Santa Barbara Mission in 1948. She was a student teacher of kindergarten in the Menlo Park School District before her children were born.

In addition to waterskiing, Ms. Whelan was an expert tennis player. She played at the Menlo Circus Club and traveled the world, competing with the Women's Amateur International Tennis Team. She also was an avid hiker.

An artist, who drew on her love of nature, Ms. Whelan created paintings, wood sculptures, silk-screens, ceramics, weavings, and quilts, say family members. She volunteered at Allied Arts Guild and the Peninsula Volunteers Turnabout Shop.



Betty Jean Whelan as a young woman.



Betty Jean and Joe Whelan are shown waterskiing as newlyweds.

Ms. Whelan is survived by her husband of 62 years, Joe Whelan; her five children, Karen Sanford, Mike Whelan, Betty-Jo Paroli, John Whelan, and Susan Killian; brother Roc Burrell; 10 grandchildren; and one great-grandchild.

Services have been held. Donations in Ms. Whelan's name may be made to: The Church of the Nativity, Haitian Earthquake Relief, 210 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park, CA 94025.

Dr. Joan M. Merigan: pediatrician for 51 years

Dr. Joan M. Merigan of Portola Valley, who recently retired from her 51-year career as a pediatrician, died Jan. 27 after a short battle with adenocarcinoma of the lung. She was 78.

Her last practice was at the Santa Clara Pediatric Clinic in Santa Clara, where she had served since 1987.

Born in Oakland, she moved to Lake County in her later childhood years. She graduated cum laude from UC Berkeley, where she was a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

She completed medical school and a pediatric internship at the University of California at San Francisco. Following a pediatric residency at the Children's Hospital in Boston, she trained another year at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C.

A lifelong member of the American Academy of Pediatrics, she worked at Group Health Inc. in the Washington area before moving back to the Bay Area in 1963. She practiced at the Palo Alto Clinic for nine years and, from 1973 to 1978, worked at the Stanford Children's Oncology Clinic.

Dr. Merigan and her husband, Dr. Thomas C. Merigan, endowed a chair to the Stanford School of Medicine in 2008.

Dr. Merigan was a classical pianist. She performed before many groups, including her 50th medical school reunion.

For the past 37 years, she lived in Portola Valley, where she pursued her other passion, gardening, say family members. She also enjoyed world travel with her family, attending the San Francisco Symphony and Opera, sailing on the Bay, weekends at Pajaro Dunes, theater, movies, and good friends, they say.

She is survived by her husband, Dr. Thomas C. Merigan, a retired Stanford Medical School professor; son Thomas C. Merigan 3rd of Campbell; and her brother, Judge Richard Freeborn of Clearlake.

A private celebration of her life will be held. The family prefers contributions in her name to a favorite animal welfare organization.



Dr. Joan Merigan

Ted Yates Johnston

Atherton resident

Ted Yates Johnston of Atherton died on Jan. 12, after a long battle with lymphoma. He was 79.

Mr. Johnston, a fourth-generation Californian, was born in Paso Robles in 1930 to Theodore and Josephine Johnston. He lived the majority of his life on the Peninsula and graduated from Sequoia High School in 1947.

In 1950, he graduated from the California Maritime Academy in Vallejo, and then served as a deck officer in the merchant marine and the U.S. Navy from 1950 through 1960. In 1960 he joined IBM as a computer salesman and programmer and moved to Sacramento, where he married Margaret in 1961.

Moving back to the Peninsula in 1969, he joined the computer center at the SLAC National Accelerator Laboratory on the Stanford University campus.

After he retired in 1992, Mr. Johnston biked and hiked many of the Bay Area's roads and trails, as well as several regions in France with the British Ramblers' hiking

club. The trips gave him regular opportunities to butcher the French language to the bewilderment of numerous French waiters, family members said.

Mr. Johnston was an avid reader and oenophile, and he and his wife square-danced and traveled regularly. He worked as a docent at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View.

Mr. Johnston is survived by his wife of 49 years, Margaret Johnston of Atherton; and daughter Pamela Johnston of Pasadena. Memorial donations may be made to a charity of the donor's choosing.

Gertrude M. Dowden

Native of England

Gertrude Mary Dowden died Jan. 16 at Channing House in Palo Alto. Born in Harwich, England, in 1914, she moved with her family to the Isle of Wight, where she married Percy "Bunny" Dowden in 1940.

The young couple worked in aircraft production during World War II. They moved to Montreal in 1952 before locating in Menlo Park in 1956. Ms. Dowden was employed in the geophysics department at Stanford University from 1956 to 1979.

Ms. Dowden was an avid golfer and a longtime supporter of the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital as a member of the Roth Auxiliary.

Ms. Dowden is survived by several nieces and nephews. Her husband, Percy Dowden, died in 1993. No services will be held, at her request. Contributions may be made to Lucile Packard Children's Hospital.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



More Affordable Solar Power

Q I would like to install solar panels on my roof in order to save money on my energy bills but the initial cost is prohibitive. Do you know of any affordable options that would allow me to do this?

A: Many homeowners would be glad to convert their home energy system to a renewable one but the initial cost to install often runs into the thousands of dollars. Now there may be a way to reduce the high cost of conversion to solar power. There are some companies that will lease the equipment for a relatively low monthly fee; often less than the gas and electric charge the homeowner has been paying. This allows the

homeowner to enjoy renewable energy and in many cases, save money.

After many years of being a small, static industry, solar energy is finally maturing and new technologies and products are being developed. As solar energy companies gain more customers, costs will go down and innovation will occur in the industry. This is only beginning to happen but it will likely grow quickly as more people realize that conversion is easier and less expensive than they thought.

Monica Corman
Alain Pinel Realtors
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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. www.MonicaCorman.com



Presented by
Mark Schmidt
Licensed Optician



VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

The component of an eyeglass frame known as the "bridge" connects the two lenses and supports the glasses on the nose. Because this centrally positioned part distributes 90 percent of the weight of the glasses, it plays a big role in determining the comfort and fit of the frames. A saddle bridge, which is molded into the frame, is best suited for heavier glasses because it spreads weight along the sides and top of the nose. A key-hole bridge eliminates pressure on top of the nose by distributing weight along the sides. Adjustable

nose pads afford the greatest flexibility and comfort. They are often fitted with silicon pads that can grip the sides of the nose to prevent slippage.

Eyeglasses are a customized product. The shape of eyeglass frames, the style of bridge, and how the frame sits on your face can affect how you see and minimize some facial features while enhancing others. Bring your eyewear prescription to MENLO OPTICAL at 1166 University Drive, on the corner of Oak Grove Avenue and University Drive. Because we are locally owned, we emphasize individualized attention and quality products. We can help you select the right frames for you and also ensure that they fit properly on the bridge of your nose. Please call us at 322-3900 if you have any questions about this week's column.

P.S. Eyeglasses that slip down the nose are not providing the eyes with the full benefit of the lenses' prescriptions.

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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Winning skeptics' trust

ROJAS

continued from page 5

"People basically trusted their government, and liked the level of development that was going on," he said. The city was constantly busy drawing up major land-use plans and paving the way for development, efforts that consumed much of Mr. Rojas' time. Menlo Park appealed to him in large part so that he could focus more on the "operational" side of running a city, he said, though the proximity of hiking trails and bicycle routes also played a part in his decision to come here.

But that doesn't mean that things have settled down much for Mr. Rojas, as he gets used to living and working in a small, mostly residential community with an aging population.

He has repeatedly gotten an earful from some residents, in public meetings and in private, especially from wary community members in the "slow-growth" or "residentialist" camp. While members of that group have faulted Mr. Rojas' management staff on several points, their major fear these days is that the staff is allowing the "village"-like city they know and love to slip away.

"In general, my feeling is, here's a city manager who came from a very high-growth city, and he transplanted that (mindset) into Menlo Park," said resident Morris Brown, adding that a city manager has more influence than one might think in a city where council members work only part-time. "You know, people of my persuasion tend to think we should be a slow-growth, lower-density, village-like community. And some of the things we see going on seem to be contrary to that view."

Mr. Rojas denied that claim, saying the city staff is simply trying to respond to the desires of residents, and to give council members the information they need to make good decisions.

"I was very involved in development issues (in Chino), but I'm not 'pro-development,'" Mr. Rojas said during a recent interview in his office, backed by long windows that look out over a courtyard. "People have this idea that the manager is what the city is. That's a misnomer."

Part of the reason that Chino residents were so trusting was the stability of the government, Mr. Rojas said. By the time of his departure after serving 10 years as city manager, he had personally selected every department head. Council members' ser-

vice time ranged from 10 to 14 years.

When he arrived in Menlo Park, the longest-tenured council member was going on three years, and the city had just voted two incumbents out of office.

Mr. Rojas maintained that Menlo Park is making strides in communicating with residents, and involving them in decisions. Even Mr. Brown, one of Mr. Rojas' more vocal critics, conceded that the city has done a "really outstanding job" involving residents.

Following Mr. Rojas' recommendation, the council initiated a painstaking three-year effort to build community consensus around plans to redevelop properties along El Camino Real and in the downtown area; one meeting netted 150 participants.

"If we had gotten 150 people out for a meeting in Chino, (city officials) would have been standing on their heads," he said.

Still, Mr. Rojas and his staff have not been able to escape criticism that they are pushing behind the scenes to allow increased development. There have been other accusations, as well, some based on more evidence than others: the staff is inflating the payroll; the staff is making it harder for interested residents to find out what went on at council meetings; the staff is secretly in favor of the state high-speed rail project that council members oppose.

"My goal is for the community to feel that the staff, the council, and the commissions are looking out for their best interests," Mr. Rojas said. "I hope they really believe that their best interests are being looked after — not that decisions are being made behind closed doors, or that we're trying to manipulate them, or keep information away from them. We need to close that gap. Then, when there's debate, you're debating for the right reasons."

"The key point I want to make is that this is a team effort between the staff, the council, and the community," he said in a later interview. "I think we're making some big strides in developing trust. We've got a ways to go, but the council and the staff are really making some big strides."

Mr. Rojas has a quick wit that can take you off guard, given his seriousness of purpose and his succinct manner of speaking. Asked for his age, he said: "How old am I, or how old would I like to be?" before answering the second question: "32."

He's 58. ■

Missing girl Jennifer Blair safe, at home

Jennifer Blair, the Menlo Park teenager who has been missing for more than three weeks, has been found and is safe, police confirmed on Saturday, Jan. 30.

Jennifer was found in Culver City, California, and reportedly turned herself in to a local police station, saying she was ready to come home. She flew back to the Bay Area, and was greeted at the airport by her family, Menlo Park police said.

Jennifer, a freshman at Menlo-

Atherton High School and a graduate of Hillview Middle School, had last been seen leaving her home in the 400 block of Olive Street in Menlo Park at around 4:30 p.m. Jan. 6, according to police. She turned 15 on Monday, Jan. 18.

For over three weeks, police searched for her with assistance



Jennifer Blair

from the National Center for Missing or Exploited Children helped in the search. Family and friends blanketed the area with fliers.

Laura Blair, Jennifer's mother, posted this on The Alamac's Web site on the morning of Jan. 31: "Yes. It is true!!! She is back with us!!! We are so thankful to have her back. Thanks to everyone for your prayers and concern where Jennifer is concerned."

High-speed rail gains momentum with stimulus funds

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

The plan to build a high-speed rail line between San Francisco and Los Angeles is gathering steam, thanks to \$2.25 billion in stimulus funds.

The project is set to send high-speed trains down the Peninsula along the Caltrain corridor, a route that has raised objections from many local residents and elected officials, including the city councils of Atherton and Menlo Park.

"This award is fantastic news for California and for our state's high-speed rail project," said Curt Pringle, chairman of the California High-Speed Rail Authority in a statement. "It is an award that will lead to the creation of tens of thousands of quality jobs in the near-term and to continued economic strength — in the long term."

Unsurprisingly, local critics of the project take a dim view of the stimulus award.

"This is not good news," said Menlo Park resident Martin Engel in an e-mail. "They are clearly making progress toward their goal of construction on the Peninsula, and we already know what that will look like."

Menlo Park and Atherton are among the Peninsula commu-

nities that are pushing for the high-speed rail to be built in a tunnel, rather than on a raised berm.

Menlo Park Mayor Rich Cline said that the tunnel idea deserves serious consideration.

"If it wasn't for tunnels, New York City would not be what it is," he said. "Someone has to have the vision, to see the value of having trains underneath the ground a hundred years from now."

Mr. Cline said that there are legitimate concerns about the high-speed rail authority's business plan, ridership projections and the configuration of the train tracks, and he's getting tired of them being dismissed as Not In My Back Yard obstructionism.

"I'm not a NIMBY," he said. "I think high-speed rail is a great thing and I think it should come through my backyard. But it's a question of how it comes through the town."

The granting of the stimulus funds is not unexpected, Mr. Cline said.

"It was pretty clear from the (Obama) administration

that these funds were coming," he said. "The challenges don't change — actually, they're enhanced."

What's changed is that the rail authority no longer needs to act as an advocate drumming up support for the project, he said. What's needed now is expertise in overseeing massive public building projects, Mr. Cline said.

"The people who got it to this point should be commended, but they have no experience building mega-projects, so the authority needs to be re-staffed with people who know how to handle it," he said.

The rail authority had requested \$4.7 billion in funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for high-speed intercity rail systems. More than a quarter of the \$8 billion in federal stimulus money earmarked for high-speed rail systems is being awarded to California's project.

Mr. Pringle said California was granted a significant portion of the stimulus funds despite "tremendous competition." ■

Program: social thinking, academic success

Is the ability to relate well with others a key to academic success? A panel discussion with three local experts tackles the topic of social thinking and its relation to academic achievement from 7-9 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 9, at Oak Knoll School in Menlo Park. Admission is free.

The panelists are: Michelle Garcia Winner, a speech language pathologist and founder of SocialThinking.org; Dr. John Brentar, Ph.D., the former director of the Children's Health Council and current director of Morrissey/Compton Educational Center; and Karen Grites, the educational services director at Children's Health Council and a former special education

teacher.

Social thinking is a critical skill for effectively participating in class activities and group discussions, reading comprehension, written expression, fitting in and thriving without anxiety, according to Catherine Jaeger of AIM4MP.

AIM4MP, an advocacy and support group for Menlo Park parents, is co-sponsoring the event with the Oak Knoll PTO. It's part of the school's week-long Accepting Our Differences campaign.

The discussion will be held in Oak Knoll's multipurpose room, 1895 Oak Knoll Lane. To attend, please RSVP to aim4mp@gmail.com.

PV schools look to new \$168 parcel tax

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

Voters may be asked to help fill an estimated \$500,000 gap in the Portola Valley School District's budget. A public hearing on placing a four-year, \$168 annual parcel tax on a May 4 mail-in ballot is set for 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 3, in Room 1001 at Corte Madera School, 4575 Alpine Road.

At the meeting, the school board is expected to vote to approve putting the parcel tax on the ballot, in order to meet the Feb. 5 election-filing deadline, said Superintendent Anne Campbell.

The parcel tax won't fill the entire budget gap, but will be used to maintain core academic programs such as reading, science and math, as well as to keep class sizes relatively low, Ms.

Campbell told The Almanac. The district is expecting another round of cuts in state funding amounting to about \$300 per student in the coming school year, she said.

"This is a short-term bridge to better times," she said.

The parcel tax would not be used for administrative expenses, and would have an exemption for senior citizens, Ms. Campbell said. Property owners in the district currently pay a \$290 annual parcel tax that passed in 2004 and lasts for 10 years.

The district hired pollsters Godbe Research to survey the community on potential support for the parcel tax, and the results were heartening.

"People are very supportive of their local schools, and that's very neat to see," said Ms. Campbell. "It's one of the things that makes Portola Valley great." ■

Portola Valley's only gas station has new owner

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

To the motorist turning on to Portola Road at Alpine Road and heading north toward Woodside, everything would appear to be normal at Portola Valley Fuel, the gas station on the left.

And that would be almost right: the services have not changed and the pumps still operate in the wee hours, but there is a new owner. He is Dieter Mees, a native of Germany, a Porsche-trained mechanic, and the former owner of Palo Alto German car repair specialist D & M Motors.

Mr. Mees will run the Portola Valley station with his son Helmut, who is married to former Portola Valley resident Becky Jordan. Helmut is a graduate of the Woodside Priory School and the University of San Francisco where he majored in international business and minored in German. Both men now live in Woodside.

The elder Mr. Mees bought the station and the shop on Jan. 15 from longtime owner and longtime on-site resident Ron Ramies.

"The goal is not to change

anything," Mr. Mees told The Almanac.

"It's not like I failed," Mr. Ramies said in an interview. "I was doing fine. I was struggling. It was seven days a week there. It's kind of like divine intervention, how this took place. They want to do the right thing."

Mr. Ramies said he is planning a month-long vacation in and around the Southern California

of bio-diesel — diesel made from used animal and vegetable fats rather than petroleum.

The station will be as green as the new owners can make it while still being profitable, Mr. Mees said. If the 4,000-gallon diesel tank is to carry bio-diesel, customers will have to show their willingness to pay the premium price.

It's been tried before at this station, but people didn't buy it, Mr. Ramies said, and he had to drop it. "Every penny counts," he said. "It's a pennies game, I hate to say."

Another change might be the sign showing pump prices out front. It's confusing, Mr. Mees said. "Before we tackle that sign, we want to understand the gasoline and oil market," he added. "We are willing to do whatever it takes to make (the business) profitable."

When Mr. Ramies owned the station, he could afford brief bouts of unprofitability thanks to his profitable metal fabrication shop in San Carlos, he said in past interviews. No so with new owners.

"We like to focus our attention on one thing," Helmut Mees said. "I don't like distractions." ■

'It's kind of like divine intervention, how this took place.'

FORMER OWNER RON RAMIES

desert, then may be back in town as a consultant.

Some changes are likely at the station. The new owners are looking for suggestions from customers as to what should be done with the two unused and empty garage bays. The current idea: use one for a hand car wash and the other for auto detailing.

Portola Valley is known for its green sentiments. The station could offer green fuel in the form

'Buy local' campaigns work, merchants say

For the second consecutive year, a local merchants' association is celebrating the results of a national survey indicating that independent sellers are outperforming chain retailers.

The survey, conducted by Minneapolis-based Institute for Local Self-Reliance, found that holiday sales were up by an average of 2.2 percent in 2009 for the 1,800 independent businesses polled. Meanwhile, U.S. Chamber of

Commerce figures showed a 1.8 percent increase in overall retail sales in November, and a 0.3 percent decline in December.

The survey also found that merchants in cities with "buy local" campaigns reported a 3 percent increase in sales, while those in cities without such a campaign reported only a 1 percent increase.

"Since the economic downturn began, we've seen increased interest from local business own-

ers in joining our 'shop local' campaign," said Clark Kepler, owner of Kepler's bookstore and president of Hometown Peninsula, in a press release. "This survey shows such interest is justified."

"I think the poor economy played a big role in my customers intentionally shopping locally," said Dexter Chow, co-owner of Cheeky Monkey Toys, in the same press release. "They felt strongly that shopping locally was good for their community and good for them."



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Mid-winter market

Menlo Park's Farmers' Market offers plenty of produce, even on a winter's day

By Jane Knoerle | Photos by Michelle Le

Shopping the Menlo Park Farmers' Market is a natural on a summer Sunday. The sun is shining, casual dress is the uniform of the day, and the stands are filled with tempting fruits and vegetables, flowers, plants and much more.

The market on a rainy January day is another matter. It's wet, cold and windy. However, that doesn't stop the regulars, who cheerfully brave the elements for their weekly shopping. And while there are no ripe tomatoes or cherries, there is a surprising abundance of good things to eat.

Thalia Lubin of Woodside kept warm in a hooded parka for a recent visit to the Menlo Park market. "I come here because the produce is freshest and best and I want to support the local farmers," she says. Her shopping bag held root vegetables, radicchio and citrus.

"I also come because the market gets me down to Menlo Park and I can do other errands while I'm there."

Another fan of the winter market is Alison Simmers of Menlo Park, who was picking up carrots,

potatoes and sweet potatoes for a stew. "This is stew weather," she says, ducking out of the rain.

Vera Shadle of Palo Alto was filling her bag with tangerines at the Jopley Farms stand, which featured an array of apples, pomegranates, citrus, broccoli, and root vegetables. "I want to support the vendors. You get to know them, ask about their families, and have a relationship," she says.

Having worked on a farm, herself, Ms. Shadle says she appreciates the hard work that goes into farming.

Ellie Flegel of Menlo Park shops the market all year round. "I really enjoy it and get to know the vendors," she says. The Melody Ranch stall is one of her favorites for apples, green beans and peppers. "They have the best peppers."

Ms. Flegel, who is of Greek descent, also finds the ingredients for *tourlou*, the Greek version of ratatouille. She combines Japanese eggplant with onion, squash, sweet red pepper, parsley, Roma tomatoes, and a "secret ingredient" — one carrot — and bakes

it at 375 degrees for 30 to 40 minutes.

"Sam (the late Sam Petrakis, chef/owner of The Golden Acorn) told me about the carrot. It adds sweetness," she says.

Many vendors have been coming to Menlo Park's market since it opened in 1992. Pietro Parravano is one of them. His fish stand at the entrance of the market is always busy and sells out early, especially the salmon and Dungeness crab. On a recent Sunday, however, Mr. Parravano was absent because a storm had prevented him from going to sea.

One of the newer additions to the market is Holding Ranch of Montague, California, which sells grass-fed beef and lamb, pork, free-range chickens and eggs. Savvy shoppers know the eggs sell out early. Holding Ranch has been coming to the Menlo Park market for the past two years.

Another newcomer is Heba Badran of Stanford, who is selling her baklava under the "Happiness Within" name. Ms. Badran says she has been bak-



Opposite page: Cipollini, a member of the onion family, and a wide variety of other organic produce, are sold by Coke Farms at Menlo Park's Farmers' Market. **Left:** Andrea Turner and her daughter, Margaret, shop for spring flowers. **Above:** A white phalaenopsis orchid from Brookside Farms brightens a winter's day.

ing baklava since she was 10. She makes four flavors: pecan, pistachio, walnut and nut-less.

The pastry comes attractively packaged in small amounts. She was offering free samples to passers-by on a recent Sunday. "It's very light and different from any you have tried before," she says.

The Schmidt Family Farm of Selma was featuring olive oil and balsamic vinegar, as well as organic raisins. Jim Schmidt, who has been farming for 40 years, says, "The population needs to take better care of the farmers."

Chefs for trendy restaurants often say their menus are inspired by the products they find at farmers' markets. The Coke Farm of San Juan Bautista provides plenty of inspiration with unusual vegetables, such as romanesco cauliflower, which comes from northern Italy. It is a pale lime green color and its florets, rather than being rounded, rise in a pyramid of pointed cones. It's pretty enough to be used as a centerpiece.

Coke Farm also sells Meyer lemons, cipollini, celery root, shallots, a variety of beets, and a gourmet's selection of greens, from radicchio to escarole. Coke Farm was founded in 1981 by Dale Coke, who is credited with combining several varieties of greens to create "spring mix," featured in many fancy restaurants.

The rain was coming down pretty seriously when we stopped at the Coke Farm stand, but it didn't seem to bother Julia Coke. "We've never not come (to market) because of the rain," she says.

Toward market closing time, Melissa Rentena of Swanton Berry Farm in Davenport was doing a little business with the date vendor. She traded him kiwis, broccoli, celery and a cauliflower for a sampling of his seven varieties of dates. "We often do a little trading at the end of market," she says.

Swanton Farm, which includes a year-round farm stand and u-pick in season, is also noted for its homemade jams, says Melissa.

Lions Club project

As it has since the beginning, the Menlo Park Live Oaks Lions Club manages the operation of the market. With the market, the club raises more than \$35,000 a year to benefit its charitable projects.

At present, there are about 35 booths that rent for \$22 for a 10-foot stall, according to market manager Lori Hennings. She says many of the farmers have

been with the market for years and there is a long waiting list. "They like this market, because customers really appreciate them," she says.

Volunteers from the Lions Club are on hand every Sunday at the market, which is located in the parking plaza off Chestnut Street, between Santa Cruz and Menlo avenues in downtown Menlo Park. Club members provide bottled water and soft drinks to the vendors at minimal cost.

After the market closes, volunteers deliver leftover produce to local charities and half-way houses. Members of the Menlo Park Host Lions Club help with collecting and distributing the food.

The Menlo Park Farmers' Market is one of the few on the Peninsula that is open all year round. Regulars know that, rain or shine, the market offers good organic food and a connection with the farmers who grow it. ▀



■ INFORMATION

The Menlo Park Farmers' Market is open every Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the parking plaza off Chestnut Street, between Santa Cruz and Menlo avenues in downtown Menlo Park. For more information, call Lori Hennings at 831-688-8316.

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Man sentenced for firing into Menlo home

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A San Jose man accused of using a semi-automatic, 9 millimeter handgun in 2007 to fire several bullets into a Menlo Park home was sentenced to 13 years in state prison Jan. 25 in a plea agreement with San Mateo County prosecutors. One of the bullets narrowly missed a child.

Arnoldo Anguiano, 30, pleaded no contest to the felonies of aggravated assault and evading a police officer and admitted to a special allegation of the use of a firearm, Assistant District Attorney Karen Guidotti said in an interview.

Mr. Anguiano, according to the prosecutors' account, approached a house in the 1300 block of Madera Avenue in the Belle Haven neighborhood on Oct. 27, 2007, and began shouting for someone named Alexander, who was not at home at the time, and demanded to be let in.

Sitting in the front room of the house were a grandmother and two children, ages 3 and 4, prosecutors said. When Mr. Anguiano did not receive an answer, he fired "six or seven" shots into the house, with one bullet coming within 3 or 4 inches of the head of the 4-year-old, prosecutors said.

The residents called 911. A Menlo Park police officer happened to be a block away and saw the suspect leave the scene, prosecutors said. The officer attempted a traffic stop, but Mr. Anguiano fled over the Dumbarton Bridge at very high speeds. In Newark, he left his vehicle and officers found him hiding in a back yard and arrested him, prosecutors said.

In addition to the time in prison, Superior Court Judge Susan Etezadi ordered Mr. Anguiano to pay fines totaling \$340, submit a DNA sample, and pay restitution to the victims in an amount to be determined by the court on March 9, Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said in a report.

Mr. Anguiano remains in jail on a no-bail status, prosecutors said. He will receive credit for time served in jail and must serve 85 percent of his prison sentence before being eligible for parole, Ms. Guidotti said.

Mr. Anguiano's defense attorney was not available for comment. ■



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Group launches initiative to cut city pension costs

By Sean Howell
Almanac Staff Writer

A group organized by former council member Lee Duboc has taken formal action to launch a ballot initiative aimed at changing Menlo Park's pension system for new city employees.

Menlo Park resident Ned Moritz on Jan. 27 filed a statement of organization on behalf of a committee called "Citizens for Fair and Responsible Pension Reform." As outlined in documents submitted to the city, the initiative would increase the retirement age for new, non-police employees from 55 to 60 years of age. It would also decrease the pension payments those employees receive.

Because the measure would only apply to new employees, it could take a decade or more for a new pension system to have an impact on the city's budget, due to the way that prescribed payments into the statewide pension fund are calculated.

Prognosticators have warned for years that California's pension system for public employees is not sustainable. Local interest in the issue seems to have picked up in the past year, sparked in part by the effects of the economic recession, in part by a San Mateo County civil grand jury report on the subject, and in part by e-mails circulated by Ms. Duboc.

"This is not a right, left or central issue," Ned Moritz, treasurer of the pension reform group, wrote in a post on The Almanac's Web site. "It affects everyone who pays taxes. ... The reality of our broken economy and the reality of the CalPERS pension investment trust needs to be addressed quickly."

The group organized in response to e-mails by Ms. Duboc. She reported that she had received a significant amount of interest from people willing to donate money to the campaign or volunteer time to collect signatures, but declined to disclose any specifics.

If the group collects enough signatures, the initiative would go before voters in the general election this November, according to Ms. Duboc.

With City Attorney Bill McClure still reviewing the proposal, Mayor Rich Cline said he wanted to get more information before weighing in on how he thought the city should respond to the initiative effort. City Manager Glen Rojas has acknowl-

edged that the current pension system is not sustainable in the long run, but has also cautioned that acting before other cities do so could put Menlo Park at a disadvantage in hiring.

Ms. Duboc countered that, if passed, the measure would make Menlo Park an example to other cities in the county, and even the state. She added that it would be "unreasonable" to expect elected officials to take action on pension reform.

"I think it's really hard, once you get to be an elected official, working in the system, to just go and do this," she said. "If Willie Brown thinks of this as a lost cause with politicians, then, truly, it has to come from the grassroots, the people have to do it."

Mr. Moritz said the initiative process could provide the council with an impetus to address the issue.

"Our committee is not trying to circumvent" the council, he said. "If they wish to take the process over, they have that option."

Under the group's proposal, after 30 years' service, employees would receive an annual pension equal to 60 percent of the average of their three highest consecutive annual salaries. The current system allows employees to retire after 30 years with 81 percent of their highest annual salary.

Rodolfo Ordonez, a liaison between Menlo Park employees and the union that represents most city workers, argued at the Jan. 26 council meeting that there is no need for pension reform.

"The truth is that pension benefits are not excessive, and do not drain public (funds)," he said. "It's a myth that the (pension) formula is the reason we are facing this humongous debt. ... The real reason is the downturn in the economy." ■

Correction

In an announcement of vacancies on Menlo Park's Planning Commission that ran in the Jan. 27 issue, we reported that Henry Riggs, a member of the commission, had reached the two-term limit. In fact, Mr. Riggs has one term of eligibility left, having served one full and one partial term. He plans on applying to remain on the commission, he said.

"This is not a right, left or central issue. It affects everyone who pays taxes."

NED MORITZ,
TREASURER OF INITIATIVE DRIVE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT 500 LAUREL STREET MENLO PARK, CA 94025

NOTICE IS GIVEN that the District Board of the West Bay Sanitary District will conduct a public hearing on Wednesday, February 10, 2010, in conjunction with the regularly scheduled meeting, which commences at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be held in the District's offices at 500 Laurel Street, Menlo Park.

The purpose of this Public Hearing is to consider a resolution of intention to Annex Certain Territory in Portola Valley (5 Grove Court - APN 079-030-130) to the West Bay Sanitary District On-Site Wastewater Disposal Zone. The resolution is available for review at the District's offices, Monday - Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

At the Public Hearing, any interested person may address the District Board. Written comments may be submitted at or before the Public Hearing by addressing them to the District Board at the address indicated above.

Dated: December 23, 2009

/s/ Vivian Housen
Vivian Housen
Interim District Manager
West Bay Sanitary District

RESOLUTION NO. 1709 (2009)

RESOLUTION OF INTENTION TO ANNEX CERTAIN TERRITORY TO THE WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT ON-SITE WASTEWATER DISPOSAL ZONE

Lands of Kim

The District Board of West Bay Sanitary District finds and determines as follows:

A. This Resolution of Intention is adopted pursuant to the District's "Zone Master Annexation Resolution" ("ZOMAR"), which was adopted by the District Board on August 12, 1996. The provisions of ZOMAR are incorporated by reference into this Resolution of Intention.

B. The District has received an application to annex a parcel of real property (the "Parcel") to the District's On-Site Wastewater Disposal Zone (the "Zone"). The Parcel is described in Exhibit "A" attached to this Resolution of Intention and the description contained in the Exhibits are incorporated by reference. The name and address of the applicants and the number, type, volume and location of on-site wastewater disposal systems which are proposed to operate on the parcels to be annexed are described in Exhibit "B" attached to this Resolution of Intention and the information contained in the Exhibit are incorporated by reference.

C. The applicants have demonstrated to the satisfaction of the District Board that the Parcel constitutes "real property" for the purposes of Section 2(b) of ZOMAR in that:

- All of the conditions described in Subsections i., ii., iii., iv. and v. of ZOMAR Section 2(b) are satisfied; or
- Other conditions exist which demonstrate that the Parcel will benefit directly or indirectly from the activities of the Zone. If applicable, those conditions are also set forth in Exhibit "B" and are incorporated by reference.

D. All of the conditions and requirements of ZOMAR Sections 2(a), 2(c), 2(d) and 2(e) have been fully satisfied.

In consideration of the foregoing findings and determinations,

IT IS RESOLVED by the District Board as follows:

1. It is the intention of the District Board to annex the Parcel to the Zone pursuant to the provisions of ZOMAR and applicable provisions of law.
2. In conjunction with a meeting of the District Board to be duly and regularly called and conducted, the Board will conduct a Public Hearing for the purpose of considering all matters pertaining to this Resolution of Intention.

The time, date and place of the Public Hearing are:

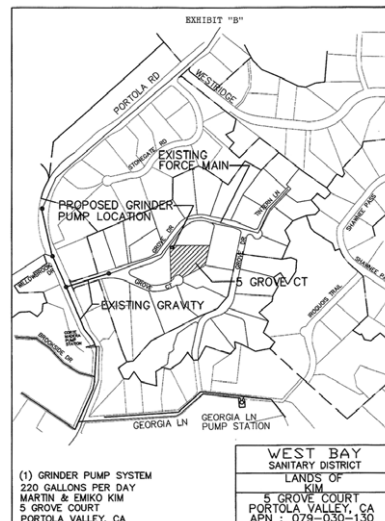
Date: February 10, 2010
Time: 7:30 PM
Place: West Bay Sanitary District Offices
500 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025

At the Public Hearing, all interested persons will be heard.

3. This Resolution of Intention shall be published and copies shall be delivered to the persons and entities as specified in ZOMAR Section 2(e)(i.).
4. A true copy of this Resolution of Intention shall promptly be filed for record in the office of the County Recorder of the County of San Mateo.
5. The Interim District Manager shall cause the matters set forth in Sections 3 and 4 of this Resolution of Intention to be completed as directed.

EXHIBIT "A"

PROPOSED ANNEXATION OF LANDS OF KIM 1.53 ACRE+/- PARCEL AND PORTION OF GROVE COURT 0.15 ACRE+/- INTO THE WEST BAY SANITARY DISTRICT AND ON-SITE WASTEWATER DISPOSAL ZONE BOUNDARIES



That real property being a portion of Lot 24 and a Portion of Grove Court as shown on that certain map entitled "Tract No. 608 - Stonegate, Subdivision of a Portion of Corte Madera Rancho" filed in the office of the County Recorder of San Mateo County, State of California, on September 29, 1948, in Volume 29 of Maps at Pages 31-33, being more particularly described as follows:

BEGINNING at the westerly most corner of said Lot 24 thence proceeding counterclockwise the following courses and distances: thence South 78°47' East a distance of 276.58 feet to the westerly line of Grove Court; thence North 86°23' East a distance of 50 feet to the easterly line of Grove Court; thence along the easterly line of Grove Court North 03°37' West a distance of 30.39 feet; thence along a tangent curve to the right having a radius of 20 feet, an arc length of 14.45 feet, and central angle of 41°24'35"; thence along a tangent curve to the left having a radius of 40 feet, an arc length of 92.98, and a central angle of 133°11'25"; thence North 21°46'03" West a distance of 204.61 feet; thence North 63°16' West a distance of 148.42 feet; thence South 14°13' West a distance of 324.25 feet to the westerly most corner of Lot 24 and the POINT OF BEGINNING.

Containing 1.53 acres more or less.

This description of land is not a legal property description as defined in the Sub-division Map Act and may not be used as the basis for an offer for sale or for the sale of the lands described herein.

October 13, 2009

MENLO PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

NOTICE OF PUBLIC COMMENT
PERIOD AND PUBLIC HEARING

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Menlo Park City School District is proposing to construct new facilities on an approximately 8.6-acre portion of the existing 9.36-acre Hillview Middle School campus, located at 1100 Elder Avenue in Menlo Park, San Mateo County, California. A Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA) has been completed for the project, as required by the California Department of Education and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control.

PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

The public review period for the PEA begins on February 3, 2010 and ends on March 10, 2010. The PEA report is available for review at the Menlo Park City School District office, located at 181 Encinal Avenue, Atherton, California. Interested parties may review copies of the PEA report at the office Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

If you wish to comment on the PEA report in writing, comments must be submitted to Mr. Ahmad Sheikholeslami, Director of Facility Planning and Construction, 181 Encinal Avenue, Atherton, California 94027. Your comments may also be sent by FAX: (650) 329-1506. All comments regarding the PEA must be received by 4:30 pm on March 10, 2010. If you have questions, please call Mr. Ahmad Sheikholeslami at (650) 321-7140 x5614.

PUBLIC HEARING

Public comments regarding the PEA will be received at a Public Hearing on March 9, 2010. The Public Hearing will be held at 7:00 pm at the Menlo Park City School District Office, 181 Encinal Avenue, Atherton, California.

ANUNCIO

El Distrito Escolar de Menlo Park City conducirá una reunión pública para considerar la evaluación medioambiental preliminar (PEA). La reunión pública tomará lugar a las 7:00 de la noche, el 9 de marzo del 2010 en la oficina del Distrito, en el 181 Encinal Avenue, Atherton, California.

Si prefiere hablar con alguien en español acerca de esta información, favor de llamar a Ahmad Sheikholeslami al (650) 321-7140, ext 5614.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE

2955 Woodside Road
Woodside, CA 94062

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR
PLANNING COMMISSION

Districts 4

The Planning Commission participates in the administration of the planning laws and policies of the Town. It is responsible for recommending to the Town Council ordinances and resolutions necessary to implement the General Plan and adopted development policy. The Commission also conducts necessary public hearings to administer the planning laws and policies of the Town and acts upon applications for zoning amendments, conditional use permits, variances, subdivisions and other related functions as may be assigned by the Council.

The Planning Commission meets on the first and third Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.; Commissioners are appointed for a four-year term.

District 4 encompasses the Emerald Lakes area, the Cañada Road area north of Arbor Court/Olive Hill Lane, including the Runnymede Road and Raymundo Drive areas.

Interested residents may check residency requirements and request information and applications Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m.-12 noon and 1-5:00 p.m. at the Town Clerk's Office, Town Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, on the Town's web site at www.woodsidetown.org or by telephoning (650) 851-6790. Deadline for applications is Friday, February 12, 2010, 5:00 p.m.

Resident calls for probe of police department

■ Jonathan Buckheit won a "declaration of factual innocence" after he was arrested.

By Andrea Gemmet

Almanac Staff Writer

An Atherton resident who said he was wrongfully arrested in 2008 on domestic violence charges was exonerated Jan. 14 by a San Mateo County Superior Court judge. Now, he's publicly calling for an investigation into the Atherton Police Department's practices.

Jonathan Buckheit, who won a declaration of factual innocence from the judge, is pursuing a lawsuit in U.S. District Court against Atherton and two of the town's police officers, saying that his civil rights were violated by the 2008 arrest.

"I was falsely arrested in a domestic dispute in which I called 911," Mr. Buckheit told The Almanac.

No charges were brought against Mr. Buckheit in the domestic violence call that involved Mr. Buckheit and a woman, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

"It was not sufficient (evidence) to prosecute, but it was not a case where we would agree to declaration of factual innocence," Mr. Wagstaffe said.

When Mr. Buckheit sought a copy of the police report from his

arrest, both the Atherton Police Department and the San Mateo County District Attorney's office refused to give it to him, he said. Then-city Attorney Marc Hynes told him he was not entitled to the police report, Mr. Buckheit said.

"I was the one who received physical injuries during the incident, so I was entitled to it," he said.

Eight months later, Mr. Buckheit said he finally got the report, but only after he filed a lawsuit to get it. He was awarded almost \$8,000 in legal fees and damages in that case, he said.

"The most disturbing thing is that they were trying to block my access to even apply for factual innocence," Mr. Buckheit said. "If there's no police report, you can't argue with the judge that you're factually innocent."

He asked the Atherton City Council to call for an investigation, saying that one of the officers involved testified in court that his police report had been altered.

"Order (city manager Jerry) Gruber and (chief Mike) Guerra to refer the report-tampering to the appropriate agency — not the San Mateo County District Attorney," Mr. Buckheit said at the Jan. 20

■ ATHERTON

council meeting.

Chief Guerra told The Almanac he couldn't comment on the situation, as there is a pending lawsuit, but did say, "We take those things very seriously, and we're looking into Mr. Buckheit's (allegations)."

A factual innocence petition is a relatively rare legal procedure. The petitioner, in this case Mr. Buckheit, must prove that there is no reasonable cause to believe that he or she committed a crime. Once granted, the arrest records are expunged and the case sealed.

"I've been totally exonerated," he said. "The judge said he was deeply disturbed by (the handling of the case)."

According to Mr. Wagstaffe, the DA's office "vigorously opposed" the factual innocence petition, but that the judge saw things differently.

"Judge Mark Forcum said the victim did have bruises, but that you can't say for sure where she got them," said Mr. Wagstaffe.

Mr. Buckheit said he's not thrilled about going public with his situation, but that he had no choice.

"What's happening isn't right, and it shouldn't just get swept under the rug," he said. ■

Alameda strip with Starbucks, post office gets a facelift

The long building on Alameda de las Pulgas at Avey Avenue in West Menlo Park that houses a Starbucks, a U.S. post office, and, until recently, a Round Table Pizza, among other shops, is get-

ting a facelift.

"We're giving the whole structure a new look," said Dan Beltramo, whose family owns the strip.

The Beltramos are making the

See picture on Page 3.

unit formerly occupied by Round Table taller for aesthetic reasons, to "highlight that end of the building," Mr. Beltramo said.

The Beltramos are putting a stucco finish on the building, adding handicapped restrooms, ramps and parking spaces, repaving the parking lot, and fixing up the landscape.

"We hope the building's going to be very attractive," he said, adding that the family is still seeking a tenant for the Round Table space.

Project Read
fundraiser

Menlo Park's Cafe Zoe will hold a fundraiser Friday, Feb. 5, for Project Read, a city-sponsored adult literacy program.

The fundraiser is scheduled to run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the cafe, located at 1929 Menalto Ave. in the Willows neighborhood. "Retro-revival" songwriter Chris Jones will perform, as will Monsters are not Myths, a rock, folk, and blues group with "an insatiable appetite for the ridiculous," according to the cafe.

A quarter of all sales during those two hours will go to Project Read.

TOWN OF WOODSIDE

2955 Woodside Road
Woodside, CA 94062

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR
ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE
REVIEW BOARD

The Architectural and Site Review Board (ASRB) reviews and makes recommendations to the Director of Planning and Building on residential, site design and commercial applications.

Meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month, 4:30 p.m. Appointment is for a term expiring in February 2013.

Interested residents may request information and applications from the Town Clerk's Office, Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM-12 noon and 1-5:00 PM, Woodside Town Hall, 2955 Woodside Road, by telephone at (650) 851-6790, or through the Town's web site at www.woodsidetown.org. Deadline for applications is Friday, February 12, 2010, 5:00 p.m.

District offers charter school space on Woodside campus

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

An offer of school facilities is on the table to Everest Public High School for the 2010-11 school year. It comes from the Sequoia Union High School District, which fought unrelentingly to prevent Everest from opening its doors to its first freshman class last August.

The district is now offering to relocate Everest's freshman and sophomore classes from 18,000-square-feet in a well-equipped office building in Redwood City, where the school has a two-year lease, to a one-year stint on the campus of Woodside High School, where the school would have eight classrooms plus an administrative office.

Everest is a sister to popular Summit Preparatory Charter High School. Both were heavily over-subscribed in the spring of 2009.

The offer comes in the context of a lawsuit. Everest is suing the Sequoia district, claiming that the district acted illegally in offering to house Everest in several modular classroom buildings for two years in residential East Palo Alto.

Jim Lianides, an assistant superintendent for the Sequoia district, outlined the new offer on Wednesday, Jan. 27, to the district's governing board, with representatives from Everest and Woodside High in attendance.

Diane Tavenner, co-founder

of Everest and Summit Prep, said she asked the district for an advance copy of the offer before the board meeting and was refused. Ms. Tavenner had no comment on the preliminary offer.

Woodside High officials did not learn of the proposal until the day before the meeting, Mr. Lianides said.

The district plans to mail a detailed offer to Everest officials on Monday, Feb. 1, Mr. Lianides said. Everest would have a month to evaluate it, followed by a month to allow the district to prepare a final offer — which the board would have to approve. Everest would then have 30 days to accept or reject it.

Everest and other local charter schools are entitled to facilities because the Sequoia district, on three occasions in the last decade, used a provision in the law that allows passage of a bond measure with less than the two-thirds majority normally required for tax increases.

Why offer space at Woodside High? It's the one comprehensive school with the lower enrollment to accommodate what Mr. Lianides said would be 190 Everest students.

The district has staunchly defended the legitimacy of its East Palo Alto offer, so why the switch?

A possible explanation: a two-year stay at the East Palo Alto site would be untenable, Mr. Lianides told the board, without more classroom and parking space. ■

Council may hike fees for town facilities

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

■ PORTOLA VALLEY

The town of Portola Valley is considering another increase to fees charged for the use of town facilities, this time for the 15-month old spacious community hall and two smaller activity rooms at Town Center.

The Town Council seemed agreeable to considering a new fee structure at a public hearing tentatively set for Wednesday, Feb. 10. The council recently raised fees for organized sports that use the town's soccer and baseball fields in a bid to have players split field maintenance fees with the town.

Portola Valley is a bit straitened midway through its first budget year in 15 years in which revenues have dropped. Home-construction and state-derived revenues are down and expenses are up, including a 33 percent increase over three years for law enforcement services.

Room rental fees would jump sharply. A resident wanting to hold a memorial service today would pay \$100 for the community hall, and \$75 for one of the activity rooms. After surveying

rates for similar facilities elsewhere, town staff would boost the fee for memorials to \$1,000, an increase of 567 percent, and the activity room fee to \$200, up 167 percent.

The town should not be providing memorial services at a price that undermines similar facilities in town, Assistant Town Manager Janet McDougall told the council on Jan. 13. Nearby Valley Presbyterian Church, for example, charges \$1,490 for a memorial service, she said.

"Are we somehow inadvertently driving much needed money away from a local church?" Ms. McDougall asked rhetorically in an interview with *The Almanac*. "Are we inadvertently turning the community hall into a memorial chapel?"

It's a balancing act. "It's certainly not the town's intent to create hardship for people during a difficult loss" of a loved one, Ms. McDougall noted.

Renters have caused damage, although minor so far, she said. There are gouges in the hall's eucalyptus floor, and the wrong

kinds of tape have damaged painted walls in the activity rooms. Renters would pay separately for event insurance, which can boost costs significantly if alcohol is served.

The new rules will likely limit weekend use to one event per weekend because staff are not around for cleanup and damage assessment between events. Go to tinyurl.com/PV-fees for more information.

Unlike the case for field-use fees, maintenance costs are not the issue. Revenues from the 22 weddings, parties and memorials held since the hall opened have covered upkeep costs, Ms. McDougall said. Fees are higher for non-residents.

There's no charge for community and town-sponsored events, of which there have been 143.

For comparison, the town of Atherton charges \$3,000 to rent its Holbrook-Palmer Park meeting room to gatherings of 100 people or fewer, Ms. McDougall said. A similar gathering could rent Independence Hall in Woodside for \$150.

In Menlo Park, the Burgess Recreation Center rents for \$156 per hour on a weekend, according to city's Web site. ■

Does your student think outside of the box?

Could he or she be happier in a different setting?

Consider making a change mid-year if your child's school is not a good match, because a year is a long time in the life of a child.

ACCEPTING TRANSFER STUDENTS IN GRADES 9-12 FOR THIS YEAR



INFORMATION SESSION

with Doug Thompson, Ph.D, Head of School

Thursday, February 4, 7-8pm



MID-PENINSULA
HIGH SCHOOL

no rsvp necessary
1340 Willow Road, Menlo Park
(650) 321-1991 www.mid-pen.com

Outdoor seating at Safeway complex?

A routine administrative permit allowing for outdoor seating at the Safeway complex on El Camino Real has been appealed all the way to Menlo Park's City Council.

The council will consider the appeal, brought by Middle Avenue resident Elizabeth Houck, at its meeting Tuesday, Feb. 2. In the short, handwritten letter Ms. Houck filed with the city Dec. 12, 2009, she does not say which aspects of the permit she objects to — only that she believes it does not comply with the intent of the city's permitting guidelines.

The permit would allow Rubio's and Peet's, two of the businesses in the complex, to provide outdoor seating for their customers.

Ms. Houck had previously

appealed the planning department's approval of the permit to the Planning Commission, asking for more landscaping, better access to wheelchairs, strollers and bikes around the seating area, and better-looking cigarette ash cans, among other things. The commission amended some of the conditions of the permit and approved it in a 5-0 vote at its Dec. 7 meeting.

Ms. Houck had been part of a neighborhood group that worked with Safeway for several years on plans for its remodel, approved by the council in 2005. She did not respond to a request for comment from *The Almanac*.

The council meeting will begin at 7 p.m. in the council chambers, between Laurel and Alma streets in the Civic Center complex.

RJ's Upholstery and Slipcovers
A Better Choice Since 1960
1064 Cherry Street

A Fabric Store
Chair Seats and Cushions Special
\$1/yard on selected fabrics
650-591-0220 San Carlos

REGISTRATION IS OPEN
ALPINE/WEST MENLO LITTLE LEAGUE
T-BALL, COACH PITCH, PITCHING MACHINE, MINORS (AA & AAA), & JUNIORS

Please visit the League website for online baseball registration and information:
<http://www.eteamz.com/alpine/index.cf>

Registration closes **February 22** for T-Ball, Coach Pitch and Pitching Machine

Late registration closes February 8 for Minors (AA & AAA)

Alpine Little League also offers recreational girls softball for 5-14 year olds who live in Menlo Park, Portola Valley, Woodside and Atherton.
<http://www.eteamz.com/amsoftball/index.cfm>
Send your inquiries to: alpinelittleleague@gmail.com
Although registration is closed, it may not be too late if you hurry!

Opening Day is March 20th!

Registration questions? Contact the Alpine Little League Registrar at: alpinelittleleague@gmail.com
(Please contact division commissioners with all non-registration related questions.)

Owners Retiring Store Closing SALE

Fine China, Linens, Silvers, Exquisite Gifts

845 Santa Cruz Ave, Menlo Park • (650)322-2428

Huge Mark-downs On ALL Items In Stock; No Exceptions.

GUIDE TO 2010 SUMMER CAMPS FOR KIDS

Camp Connection

Camp Directors:

There is still time to be included in **Camp Connection** -- Embarcadero Media's new Summer advertising package for camps and schools. Camp Connection is a three part advertising program combining a full color magazine, online advertising and a newspaper directory.

The Almanac MountainView VOICE Weekly Palo Alto ONLINE

Deadline is Wednesday, February 10
Call 650.223.6580 or 650.223.6579 for information.

express

Get local news updates **FREE** in your e-mail inbox daily.
Sign up today at TheAlmanacOnline.com

Ryan Corley achieves Eagle rank

Ryan Corley, a member of Portola Valley's Boy Scout Troop 64 and a sophomore at Menlo School, has earned the rank of Eagle Scout, and was honored at an Eagle Scout Court of Honor ceremony on Jan. 31.

To commemorate his achievement, the U.S. flag was flown over Capitol Hill in his honor on his 16th birthday, according to his mother, Kristi Corley.

Ryan completed 24 merit badges. For his Eagle Scout service project, he led a team in restoring an old observation deck and benches at the north



Ryan Corley

end of Russian Ridge, a part of the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. The project, which took more than 200 hours, included cutting lumber, drilling screws, removing brush, replacing a table, sanding and staining the deck.

Ryan is the son of Chuck and Kristi Corley of Portola Valley.

Portola Valley Troop 64 is sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Menlo Park and has 35 active scouts.

Saturday: Carol McClelland talk on green careers

Carol McClelland, co-chair of Menlo Park's Green Ribbon Citizens' Committee, will speak at Kepler's bookstore at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, about an installment she has written in "...for Dummies" series.

"Green Careers for Dummies" "explores the green frontier of careers and shows you how to find a field that is best suited to your primary interests, skills, and goals," according to a Kepler's press release.

Ms. McClelland founded Green Career Central, and worked as a consultant, helping people to make career transitions.

Rector's installed at Trinity Church

The Rev. Matthew Dutton-Gillett was installed as rector of Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in ceremonies held Jan. 30 at the church, 330 Ravenswood Ave. in Menlo Park. The Right Rev. Marc Handley Andrus, Episcopal Bishop of California, presided.

The Rev. Dr. Carl R. Gillett, retired United Church of Christ minister and father of the new rector, gave the sermon. A reception followed the service.

The Rev. Dutton-Gillett is a graduate of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and holds a master of divinity degree. Ordained a priest in 1992, he came to Trinity Parish in August 2009.

He is married to Kate Dutton-Gillett. The couple has two children, Madeline and Max.

Apply to own Habitat home

Families interested in applying to live in a three-bedroom Menlo Park home renovated by Habitat for Humanity can attend an information session Saturday, Feb. 6, or Monday, Feb. 8.

The project to renovate the home is part of a program to buy foreclosed homes in Menlo Park's Belle Haven neighborhood. The city of Menlo Park

BRIEFS

contributes to the program through its below-market-rate housing fund.

Both sessions will be held in the Menlo Park Senior Center, at the end of Terminal Ave. in Belle Haven. The session Saturday, Feb. 6 will run from 10 a.m. to noon. The session Monday, Feb. 8 will run from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Interested families must attend one of the sessions in order to receive an application.

Applicants must either live or work in Menlo Park. Eligible families must have an income of between 40 and 60 percent of the area median income. For a family of four, that would range from \$45,250 to \$67,860, according to Habitat spokeswoman Jennifer Doettling.

For more information, call (415) 625-1010.

Mark Macy appeal: help animals of Haiti

Mark Macy, owner of the Pet Place in Menlo Park, is appealing for people to help the animals of Haiti, as well as the people.

He says millions of animals, from livestock to dogs, cats and other companion animals, are homeless, sick, starving, injured, and frightened.

For more information on how to help, enter this in your search engine: World Society for the Protection of Animals.

Cafe Scientifique examines water crisis

California has many pressing issues, but one surely at or near the top of the list is the reliability of its water supply.

The ecosystem depends on it, of course, but so do the huge farming, industrial and residential communities in a state with seasonal rainfall and glaciers and snow packs, summertime water banks essentially, that are shrinking as the planet warms.

"Facing Scarcity: The Water

Crisis in California" is the topic for February's Cafe Scientifique presentation at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 9, with speaker Richard Luthy, a civil engineering professor at Stanford University.

The program will be held at the SRI International Building at Middlefield Road and Ringwood Avenue. Doors open at 5:15 p.m. and close when the room reaches capacity.

Mr. Luthy has chaired the National Research Council's Water Science and Technology Board and is former president of the Association of Environmental Engineering and Science Professors.

Cafe Scientifique, sponsored by the pharmaceutical firm ROXRO PHARMA and SRI, is a monthly meeting where the public can explore and debate scientific and technological issues in a non-academic setting.

Go to www.cafescisv.org for more information.

SamTrans hikes fares

SamTrans hikes its fares beginning Monday, Feb. 1.

The fare increases are aimed at narrowing a \$28.4-million budget shortfall for the current fiscal year, according to spokeswoman Christine Dunn. Service cuts to help cover the gap went into effect in December. The agency is also relying on attrition to balance the budget, she said.

The adult local fare will increase from \$1.75 to \$2. The express cash one-way fare will increase from \$4.50 to \$5. Eligible discount fares will increase from \$.75 to \$1, and youth fares will go from \$1 to \$1.25.

The cost of monthly passes and express passes are also increasing, according to Ms. Dunn. On July 1, paratransit and lifeline fares will also jump, she said.

This represents the second time in the past year that fares have increased. Passenger fares cover 18 percent of operational costs, according to Ms. Dunn.

For more information, visit samtrans.com.

Atherton history book author at library

Pamela Gullard, co-author, with Nancy Lund, of "Under the Oaks: Two Hundred Years in Atherton," will discuss her journey to create the book and answer questions at 4:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12, at the Atherton Library, 2 Dinkelspiel Lane in Atherton. A reception will follow.

Opera and song

Opera arias and legendary love songs will be featured at a Valentine's Day dinner from 5 to 8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 14, at the Little Store restaurant, 3340 Woodside Road in Woodside.

Soprano Ilene Meredith and tenor Peter Girardot will perform, accompanied by pianist Simona Snitskovaya.

The dinner will include champagne, tomato bisque soup, Caesar salad, and New York steak, or petrale sole amandine, rice and zucchini — with chocolate cake for dessert. Cost is \$75 per person, excluding tax and gratuity.

For reservations, call 851-8110.

Yoga retreat

Menlo Park yoga instructor Rebecca Snowball is holding a yoga retreat weekend Feb. 27-28 at the Stillwater Institute, 16350 Skyline

AROUND TOWN

Boulevard in Woodside. She is a yoga instructor at Devi Yoga in Menlo Park. For more information, go to yogasoul.com.

Allied Arts gift

The Allied Arts Guild Auxiliary recently donated \$110,000 to the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. The auxiliary owns and operates the Allied Arts Guild complex in Menlo Park and runs it for the benefit of Lucile Packard Hospital.

"The auxiliary is extremely proud to be able to donate such a sum of money during such a difficult economic time," says Jackie Holmkvist, 2009 president of the Allied Guild Auxiliary.

The auxiliary raises money for the hospital through public events, such as the Harvest Festival, and private events, including weddings and business meetings. It also raises money by renting artists' shops and studios located at the complex, as well as through sales at the Artisan Shop, which is operated by the auxiliary. It also hosts Tally Ho, a gala fundraiser held each fall.

Allied Arts is located at 75 Arbor Road in Menlo Park.

Toy, coat drives

Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage offices collected 5,709 toys and 1,664 coats during the holiday season to benefit families in Northern California, the company announced.

The Toys for Tots and "Operation: One Warm Coat" campaigns marked the 23rd year the company has supported the drives, in partnership with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and several non-profit organizations.

Robert P. Jenkins

Early Lockheed employee

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 6, at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 600 Colorado Ave., in Palo Alto for Robert P. Jenkins. Mr. Jenkins Dec. 16 died at The Sequoias in Portola Valley.

Born in 1925 to a Navy family, he lived in a number of different places as a youth. He graduated from the California Institute of Technology and received a master's degree from Stanford School of Business. He served in the U.S. Naval Reserve and took part in the atomic bomb tests on Bikini Atoll in the Bikini Islands.

He was among the early employees of Lockheed, when it opened its research labora-

OBITUARY

tory in Palo Alto. His combined scientific and business training was important to the success of the Lockheed marketing department, say family members.

Mr. Jenkins was an accomplished golfer, skier and bridge player. He was active as a vestryman at St. Mark's Episcopal Church. He was elected an honorary life member of Sons in Retirement (SIR) for his service.

Survivors include his wife, Patricia, of The Sequoias; daughters Sally Jenkins and Sue McVicker.

Memorials may be made to St. Mark's Outreach Fund or to Pathways Hospice, 585 N. Mary Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94085.

BIRTHS

Menlo Park

■ Ana and Una Fifita, a boy, Dec. 29, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Christine and James Orr, a boy, Dec. 11, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Melinda and Tyler Nielson, a girl, Dec. 13, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Carolyn Whealan-Andersson and Christer Andersson, a boy,

Dec. 16, Sequoia Hospital.

■ Evgenia and Nicolas Jacques, a daughter, Jan. 16, Sequoia Hospital.

La Honda

■ Jennifer and Ward Line, a boy, Dec. 29, Sequoia Hospital.



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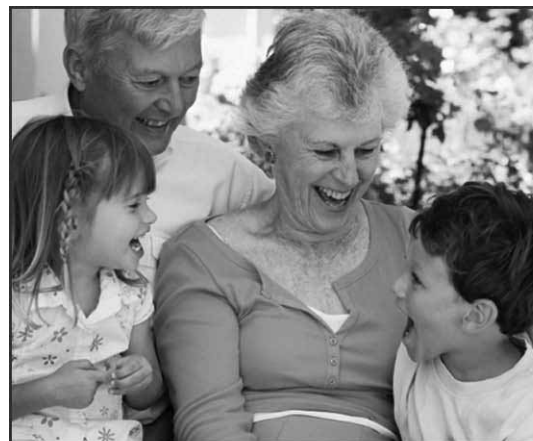
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WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

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

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Editor at the Almanac,
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No substance to Cargill charge

Cargill's breathless accusation that a Menlo Park City Council member and the environmental group Save the Bay were engaged in a "backroom deal" in discussing a resolution opposing the Redwood City Saltworks project is hogwash, and we doubt if anyone other than Cargill's public relations consultants is concerned.

The supposed culprits, Andy Cohen and Save the Bay political director Stephen Knight, were "exposed" when an unnamed person filed a public records act request with the city of Menlo Park to see all the e-mail messages between Mr. Cohen, Mr. Knight and Councilwoman Kelly Fergusson,

pertaining to a proposed resolution opposing the Cargill project. So far, the council has not taken up the resolution, though city officials say it will likely be on a February agenda.

Based on what we saw in those e-mails, Mr. Cohen, Ms. Fergusson and Mr. Knight were simply discussing possible ways for Menlo Park to work with the Redwood City government to save the more than 1,400 acres that would be developed by Cargill and DMB, its joint venture partner. Nothing illegal was exposed by the two-inch-thick stack of copied e-mail messages made available to Peninsula news outlets.

In a discussion with Almanac reporter Sean Howell about the e-mails, Cargill spokesman Pete Hillan pointed to a message Mr. Cohen sent to Save the Bay political director Stephen Knight in June 2009. In it, Mr. Cohen said, "just met with paul Collacchi (former Menlo Park City Council member) and talked about a regional approach to housing cooperating with Redwood City to provide some higher density in our El Camino Real visioning process along El Camino in exchange for Cargill project going away — you'd have to work this out in greater detail with paul, but it's

consistent with my earlier stand."

Mr. Hillan sees it this way: "He's suggesting something of value to Redwood City in exchange for Cargill going away. This is evidence of a backroom deal that was not done in a public way."

Mr. Cohen has a much different spin on the e-mails. He says he was simply mentioning an idea and did not construct any kind of a deal with Mr. Knight, other council members or Redwood City. "Backroom deal" is a term sure to get the attention of newspaper editors and newspaper readers alike, but the e-mails don't provide any evidence to back up that accusation.

Both Mr. Knight and Mr. Cohen sounded baffled by the accusation. When asked about it, Mr. Knight took the opportunity to not only defend Save the Bay, but to get in his licks against the Cargill project.

"Cargill is getting desperate, and there is nothing out of the ordinary or secret about the fact that Save the Bay, for 50 years, has been working with cities around the San Francisco Bay Area to protect the Bay from exactly this sort of thing. ...The era of filling in the Bay is over."

The Cargill/DMB joint venture, dubbed the Redwood City Saltworks project, is an immense development that would create a mini-city of 8,000 to 12,000 homes and 1 million square feet of office space, in addition to sports fields and other facilities, on 1,436 acres east of the Bayshore Freeway between Marsh Road and Seaport Boulevard. The plans call for about 400 acres to be restored to wetlands. Six federal agencies and 12 or more state, regional and local agencies would have to review the project, a task that is likely to last for many years.

It is no surprise that Menlo Park council members are talking about ways to lessen the impact such a huge project would have on their city. When built out, the Saltworks could accommodate more than 25,000 residents, plus thousands of office workers. Any council member who is not interested in talking about this project with Save the Bay or any other interested group is simply not doing his or her job.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Native gardens save water, add beautiful landscapes

Editor:

Wouldn't it be wonderful if Menlo Park could become known as the Native Plant City of America? Exquisite gardens of native plants of all sizes and colors along winding stone or brick walkways would not only beautify our landscape but would reduce use of the most precious resource of all, water.

The city could work in conjunction with our own Sunset Publishing, classes could be held, awards could be given. You only need to open the pages of any magazine that features native gardens to see how extraordinary these gardens can be.

We are accustomed to grassy lawns. Yet, we spend inordinate amounts of water to keep them going. When weeds or insects appear, or before they appear, we poison our earth with insecticides, herbicides, and "magical" fertilizers with substances that keep weeds from germinating in the first place.

See **LETTERS**, next page



San Mateo County Historical Association

Our Regional Heritage

A good crowd was on hand at the dedication of the Pulgas Water Temple in 1934. The temple stands atop the Hetch Hetchy aqueduct, which carries water to reservoirs along Canada Road, near Woodside.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

When a weed does appear, we zap them again with poisons that cannot be beneficial to our earth.

Some may argue that lawns are essential to give children a place to run and play. Yet, we live in one of the most incredible landscapes available anywhere. We have parks to play or picnic in, and beaches, hills, forests, natural grassy landscapes visited by butterflies and birds to occupy our time and thoughts.

I endorse the city's proposal to drastically cut down on lawn watering. I would further encourage rethinking of how we envision beauty in our front and back yards by changing our lawns into places of beauty filled with native plantings, which would subsequently be visited by butterflies and birds.

Carol Taggart
Valparaiso Avenue, Menlo Park

Later start to school day a good idea

Editor:

Thanks for the recent article, "Get Some Sleep," about later start times for high school students. I must say this is a subject I have hoped would come to light before my second child finished at Menlo-Atherton High School.

It makes so much sense. When my daughter was at Hillview her start time was just 30 minutes later and it made all the difference. We had a much easier and more pleasant start to our days.

I know that this is a monumental change for some people but I think we should give it a try. I hope more people will support this idea and help give the kids any advantage we can. I think giving them more sleep is an advantage.

Amy deBenedictis
Laurel Avenue, Menlo Park

City's proposed water plan is off the mark

Editor:

Michael Lambert's guest opinion last week expressed concisely and clearly why the city's proposed water efficient landscaping law is a bad idea.

Mr. Lambert points out that our water providers already charge for water on a tiered scale that increases price along with increased usage. For this reason, I simply turn off my sprinklers in the winter. Why should I water my lawn when nature does it for free?

When I do water in the summer, I do so for a few minutes at 4 or 5 a.m., only three days a week, to let the water soak in during the cool time of the morning.

With a lawn in the vicinity of 4,000 square feet, and some common sense, I've never even come close to a monthly water bill of \$100 (excepting a break one month in a

Bohannon project needs some hard bargaining

By Vincent Bressler

David Bohannon is asking the city of Menlo Park for zoning entitlements for his Gateway Project that will dramatically increase the value of his property, and change the nature of the eastern portion of Menlo Park. A development agreement that will define what Mr. Bohannon gets, and what the city gets in return, is currently being negotiated. Here are three possible items that the city should consider as it negotiates the agreement with Mr. Bohannon.

Business tax

As a member of the Planning Commission, I have had an opportunity to review this project. In order to ensure that Menlo Park shares in any zoning windfall that it bestows upon Mr. Bohannon, I urge the negotiating team to insist upon a significant municipal business tax for all Menlo Gateway properties. This tax would be a function of floor space and gross rents collected, using a formula to be determined.

Cities throughout the United States use these kinds of taxes, and since the Menlo Park location is considered an asset for many service-oriented businesses that pay a premium to establish their offices here, it

seems only appropriate that the city share in the associated revenues. In fact, I wonder why we would permit large new commercial development if the city does not benefit in kind.

A municipal business tax would reduce pressure for the city to distort the development process by insisting on hotel or retail uses that may or may not be appropriate for a given site. I assume that Mr. Bohannon knows what uses are best for his land. A commercial rent tax will simply guarantee that Menlo Park benefits while allowing Mr. Bohannon to maximize his own profit.

Reduced car trips

The Menlo Gateway project is located at the nexus of the Bayshore Freeway and the Dumbarton Bridge and is conceived as a car-centric commercial development. However, freeway entry and exit points near this project are at or near capacity during peak hours. The development includes immense parking garages and relatively small amounts of open space.

During a Planning Commission meeting I proposed that the total car trips associated with this project be cut in half from current projections. Since Mr. Bohannon wants a 15- to 20-year time line for the development agreement, that should give

him plenty of time to figure out how to make this project work without clogging our roads and cluttering the land with parking garages.

Increase housing ratio

The environmental impact report for the Menlo Gateway project indicates that the housing demand generated in Menlo Park will be equal to 10 percent of the new jobs generated by the project, assuming that demand mirrors existing patterns: only one in 10 people who currently work in Menlo Park lives in Menlo Park. I am concerned that regional bodies will not be satisfied with a continuation of this massive imbalance, nor will our residents welcome or benefit from the additional thousands of car trips per day generated by this project.

My contention during the Planning Commission meetings was that the housing ratio be 25 percent, not 10 percent. In other words, for every four jobs created by this project, capacity for housing one new residence should be built. This new housing should primarily be located in and around the area of the development. If Mr. Bohannon can demonstrate that new housing is not required because unemployed Menlo Park residents or Menlo Park residents currently working outside the city will be employed at Menlo Gateway, then perhaps the requirement can be reduced from 25 percent.

Vincent Bressler is a member of the Menlo Park Planning Commission.



GUEST OPINION

water line inherited from the previous owner), and rarely even come close to \$50.

Someone with 1,000 square feet of lawn, and no common sense, can easily use as much water as or more water than me by watering thoughtlessly. The problem is not lawn size, but watering intelligently, as Mr. Lambert recognizes.

I hope that putting off discussion of the proposed law indicates that the City Council recognizes it made an error in proposing this ill-conceived law that would go far beyond state mandates, and is letting it quietly slip into well-deserved oblivion.

Brian Schar
Laurel Avenue, Menlo Park

Another move to fill in the Bay

Editor:

It feels like 1960 all over again. At that time developers were filling San Francisco Bay for profit. It took the dedicated effort of many individuals and organizations to educate the public about the need to restore the quality of Bay water, to enhance its natural flow, to preserve and improve the natural habitats for wildlife, and to recover as much shoreline as possible. The result has been a much healthier Bay.

Now we are looking at a developer from Arizona planning to fill in the Cargill salt ponds in Redwood City. They intend to create a new city of 25,000 people with 12,000 houses. The developer, DMB, has plans for 1,436 acres, threatening the only deep water port in the South Bay and creating roads, traffic, pollu-

Rail editorial challenged

By Judge Quentin L. Kopp

Your recent (Dec. 30) editorial entitled "High-speed rail running off track" demonstrates a continuing bias and ignorance of facts concerning a project approved by the Legislature, three governors and just 14 months ago by California voters.

A business plan changes with changing circumstances, and as even you pointed out, "...it's virtually impossible these days for economists to predict even five years out." Our Dec. 15, 2009, business plan represents the best plan currently conceivable,

including estimated costs based not on 2009, but on the future years in which such construction, engineering and associated cost will be incurred.

You wrongly imply that the entire \$9.95 billion in bonds will be sold immediately. That is spuriously not true. The voter-approved general obligation bonds will be sold on an "as needed" basis, meaning, for example, our current fiscal year budget emanates from a small portion of such general obligation bonds sold by the state treasurer last summer. (We are no longer funded by a state general fund appropriation.)

Finally, your head continues to be in the sand, ignoring the estimation and a huge demand for water. They suggest people could live near where they work but I think we all know there are already hundreds of empty office and business spaces near residential areas. New business will be a drain on what is now in place. It is the same for water. Even if they have a water source for this new city, it is the same water we all share from limited sources.

I hope the citizens of the Peninsula will write to the Redwood City Council insisting that they consider the impact of such development on the entire Peninsula. They need to understand we do not want to fill the Bay, we want to protect it.

Mary Paine
Mapache Drive, Portola Valley

including estimated costs based not on 2009, but on the future years in which such construction, engineering and associated cost will be incurred.

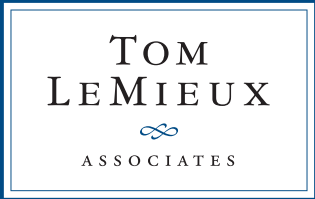
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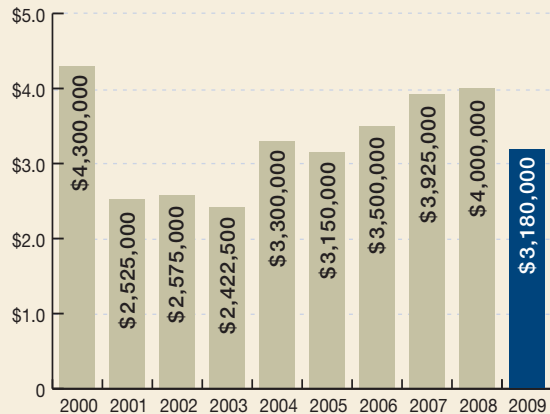
ated 2030 California population of not 38.2 million, as it is today, but 50 million, whose transportation needs would require 3,000 new freeway lanes, together with five or more major airport runways and 92 more airport gates at an estimated cost in 2009 dollars of \$100 billion.

I'm thankful you weren't around in the 1930s to purvey your views over the building of the Golden Gate or Bay bridges, or in the 1950s over the building of the interstate highway system and the state water project. California would be another third world country.

Quentin L. Kopp is a retired Superior Court judge and a member of the California High-Speed Rail Authority board of directors.



Atherton Median Sale Price Comparison

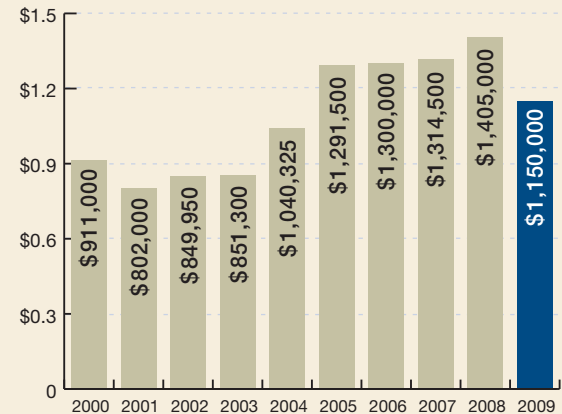


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Menlo Park Median Sale Price Comparison



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FOR SALE



48 Fairview Avenue, Atherton

Newly constructed 6-bedroom, 7.5-bath home by The Pinnacle Group; three levels with recreation room, fitness room, theatre, and wine cellar – on 1 private acre in west Atherton; excellent Menlo Park schools

OFFERED AT \$11,495,000

FOR SALE



958 Hermosa Way, Menlo Park

Gorgeous new home by Laurel Homes with 6 bedrooms, 5 baths, and 2 half-baths; hickory floors, fine stone finishes, recreation/media room, wine cellar, fitness room, and outdoor covered lanai; top-rated Menlo Park schools

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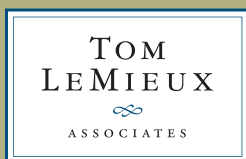
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