



Longtime manager
of Kepler's bookstore dies at 93 | Page 12

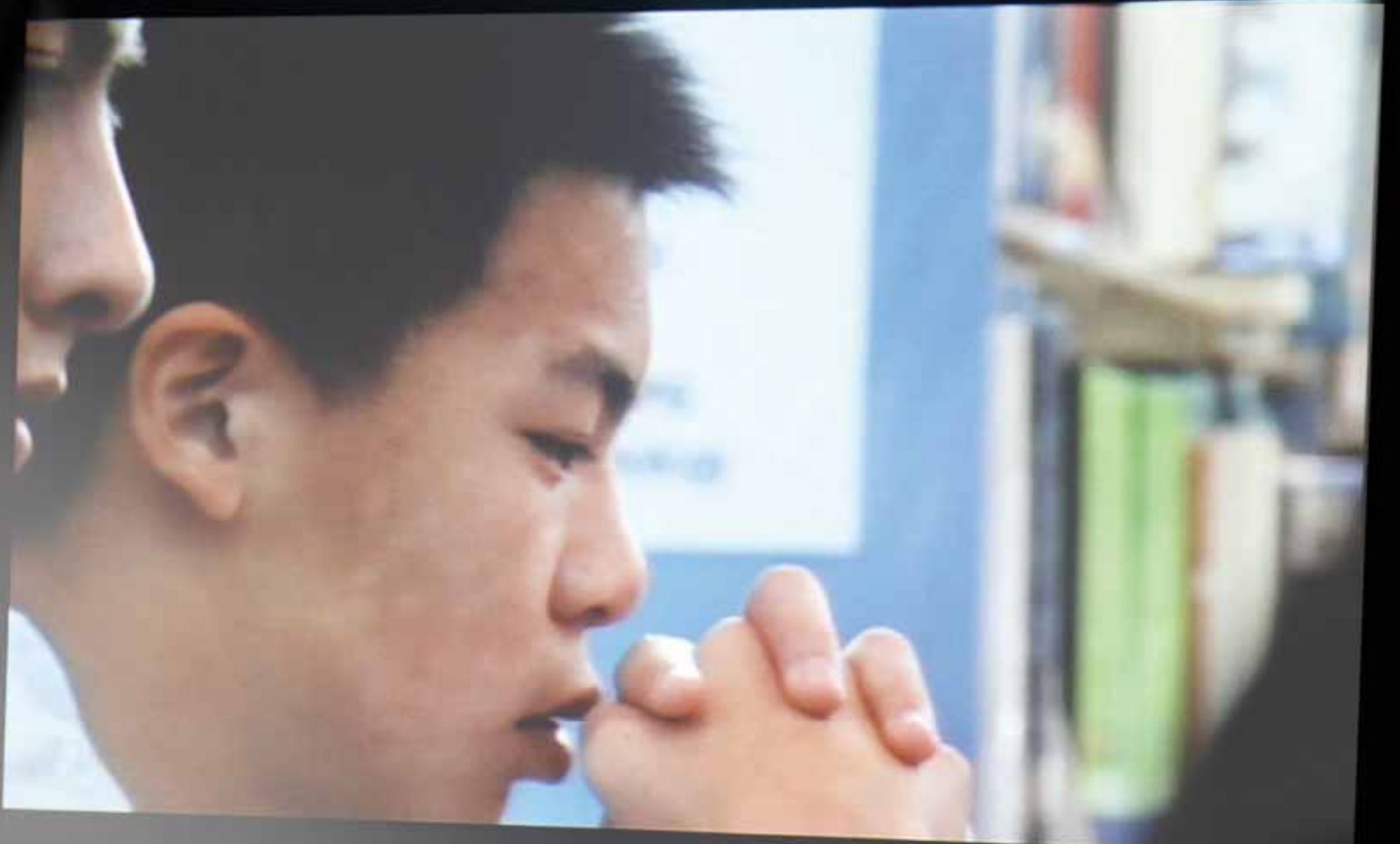
The Almanac

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

MARCH 23, 2011 | VOL. 46 NO. 30



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documentary has one
principal thinking of
'fundamental changes'
in the classroom
Section 2

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Former president Bill Clinton discusses his Clinton Global Initiative at a private event in a Portola Valley home.

Former president visits Portola Valley

The author, Samantha Bergeson, is a resident of Portola Valley and a sophomore at Menlo School.

By Samantha Bergeson

Special to the Almanac

It was not your typical week-day school night with homework assignments and a rushed dinner. Instead, my friends and I got to meet former president Bill Clinton at a Portola Valley home, where he had come to talk about his Clinton Global Initiative, which mobilizes resources and world leaders to tackle some of the world's most pressing problems.

The invitation-only dinner and fundraiser, held in early December, focused on opportunities to prevent climate change, but Mr. Clinton also discussed the AIDS epidemic, micro-financing in Ethiopia, and how he built the Global Initiative.

After driving through multiple security checkpoints, we were ushered into the comfortable living room of the home, with guests ringing with anticipation for the arrival of the former president.

Approximately 30 people — mainly adults but a few teen-

agers as well — attended. Mr. Clinton met with each visitor, expressing interest about personal details such as family life and where their children went to school.

While raising funds for the Global Initiative was the primary purpose of the evening, the guests also had the opportunity to discuss current political and social issues.

Menlo School student meets former president Bill Clinton at a Portola Valley dinner and learns about his global initiative

Mr. Clinton, with his eloquence and charismatic presence, created an eventful occasion out of what I had expected to be a stuffy formal evening with a former president.

The Global Initiative, as he explained, was established in 2005 to forge partnerships between leaders of governments, nonprofit organizations, and businesses to devise a plan of action to attack global problems.

As a result of commitments

to action by these leaders, Mr. Clinton said, more than 2 million girls have received grants for schooling, 75 million children have been given access to sustainable health care, and nearly 20 million people have increased access to clean water. Roughly, \$1.75 billion has been invested in or loaned to small companies across the globe.

Within developing countries such as Malawi and Haiti, health is a driving factor. Hundreds of hospitals have been built in Malawi with the goal of putting a medical center within walking distance of many citizens.

During the evening, teenagers and parents alike participated in discussions regarding national healthcare and global issues such as disease-prevention.

Mr. Clinton challenged the students attending to set goals for themselves, and strive for international change.

After three hours of dining and mingling, Mr. Clinton closed the evening, and I promptly left to finish my math homework.

Visit clintonglobalinitiative.org for more information.

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The Almanac



Local News

MENLO PARK | AThERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Critics say teaching style the issue, not technology

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

Teachers, parents, administrators and others in the Portola Valley School District are sharply criticizing an article in the Almanac's March 16 edition that they say grossly misrepresents the district's classroom technology program.

The article cited the district's hiring of a new social studies teacher earlier this year, and the exodus of a large number of sixth- and seventh-graders from the classrooms of social studies teacher John Davenport, into the new teacher's classes.

The story quoted Mr. Davenport saying that the reason for the creation of new classes to parallel his was that parents were complaining that he was using technology too intensively, and that they wanted a more traditional teaching style for their children.

But district administrators and others say the classroom division had nothing to do with technology, but rather with complaints by parents of Mr. Davenport's teaching style.

"We moved our son out of Mr. Davenport's class not because of technology, but because he was receiving a sub par education in

SCHOOLS

social studies, as had several of our older children," Karen and Guy Lucian wrote on the Almanac's Town Square forum. "The new class is refreshing, on point, appropriately more rigorous, uses technology in well-thought out, integrated ways, and we cannot thank the administration enough for giving us this option," they wrote.

Superintendent Tim Hanretty said last week that he can't discuss personnel matters, but said he was accurately quoted in the March 16

article, saying that Mr. Davenport's class did not address the learning needs of all the students in the classroom.

He and Assistant Superintendent Carol Piraino said in an interview that technology was not the issue. Ms. Piraino noted that Timothy Sato, who was hired to teach parallel classes to Mr. Davenport's, is using a comparable level of technological tools to teach his classes.

The creation of parallel classes, they said, was to provide options for parents who believed their children's needs were not being met.

The fact that parents had options, they said, wasn't properly conveyed

in the March 16 article, which said that the district "sent" 42 of Mr. Davenport's 77 sixth-grade students to Mr. Sato's classrooms. It was up to the parents to decide whether to transfer their children, they stressed.

Mr. Davenport this week refuted the district's statement that technology was not the issue in the creation of parallel classes. In two meetings with administrators, he was told that parents weren't happy with his switch from a traditional lecture-discussion format to a tech-intensive research

See **SCHOOLS**, page 8

Could a huge quake and tsunami, on a scale equal to Japan's, happen here?

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

"Everyone's nervous," said Sheldon Breiner, a geophysicist at Stanford University and a resident of Portola Valley who said he's gotten lots of questions from neighbors since the devastating March 11 earthquake and subsequent tsunami off the coast of northeastern Japan.

A common question: Can the Peninsula experience a 9.0 earthquake? "No," Mr. Breiner said. "We might have an 8."

The length and depth of the San Andreas fault are key factors, Mr. Breiner said, as is the fact that the San Andreas ruptures by tectonic plates sliding past one another, a so-called strike-slip fault.

In an interview, U.S. Geological Survey geologist David Schwartz agreed that the San Andreas is limited to magnitude 8, or 7.9 — if it slips along its entire length of 292 miles. Because it is a relatively shallow 9 miles deep, a larger quake is not possible. Multiplying length times depth, "you don't have enough 'surface area' to slip to produce a magnitude 9," he said.

The dimensions of the crust material involved tends to determine the magnitude of an earthquake. If the San Andreas slips only along the section between the Golden Gate and Los Gatos, for example, the quake likely won't exceed 7.2, Mr. Schwartz said.

is both under water and along a subduction zone, Mr. Breiner said. Earthquakes in a subduction zone like the one off Japan are the result of thrust faults in which one tectonic plate moves on top of another, causing the sea floor to rise.

A rise of 18 or 24 or 30 feet over hundreds of miles will lift an immense quantity of water and create a huge wave, Mr. Schwartz said. By contrast, a strike-slip fault such as the San Andreas "has a very small if any vertical component," he said.

The difference is easily demonstrated with your hand submerged in a bathtub or sink, Mr. Breiner said. Move your hand up or down and the result is a wave. Slide it backward and forward and the surface effect is minimal.

A subduction zone with the potential to generate a tsunami does exist along the West Coast, but it begins at Mendocino County and extends north along the coasts of Oregon and Washington, Mr. Breiner noted.

But, Mr. Schwartz added, a local destructive wave is not out of the question in the case of an underwater landslide. "Strong shaking does have the potential near the coast to set something off," he said.

Who's next?

Another common question concerns the Ring of Fire linking seismic activity to the nations



Photo by Sandy Napel

This photo is from the opening night performance Friday night. Standing, from left, are Matt Schertler, Maddie Napel, Michael Farzi, Zach Abt, Ali Candlin, Will Hanley, Maddie Rostami, Helmi Henkin and Josh Weiner. Sitting, from left, are Viera Leebong and Rachel Fosnaugh.

Life is pandemonium on M-A stage

By Lyn Napel, parent volunteer for the M-A Drama Boosters.

Navigating the world of pre-adolescence is tough enough, but when you factor in all the stresses of competing in the "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee," life is pandemonium, as they say in the song from the play.

Menlo-Atherton High School is staging this Tony-award winning Broadway musical comedy, which opened Friday night and runs through March 26, with live accompaniment by students

from M-A's orchestra.

Remaining performances are on Thursday, Friday and Saturday, March 24-26, starting at 7:30 p.m., at the performing art center on the M-A campus. Use the Ringwood Avenue entrance, just off Middlefield Road in Atherton.

In the play, six young spellers convene in the local high school gym for the annual county spelling bee, only to find that parental pressures and pre-pubescent stress send them into overdrive as they compete for the championship title.

Come see your favorite M-A teachers and staff on the hot seat as they attempt to spell alongside the student actors!

The music and Busby Berkeley-like dance numbers will have you moving in your seat. You can't help but cheer for this adorable cast of misfits, clumsily trying to make sense of all the chaos that surrounds them.

Admission is \$12 for adults and \$8 for students, staff and seniors.

Visit tinyurl.com/bee-318 to buy tickets. They can also be purchased at the box office. ■

Local tsunamis?

Tsunamis occur where a fault

See **QUAKE**, page 8

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Menlo Park man was in Japan when quake struck

Chuck House, who lives in the Stanford Hills area of Menlo Park, was in Hachioji, Japan, 25 miles west of Tokyo, on March 11, teaching a seminar on large company innovation. Thirty seconds after saying, "You want to invent earth-shaking products," the earthquake struck. He tells what it was like on AlmanacNews.com. >Go to tinyurl.com/house-31011 to see his account.



Fergusson ponders trip reimbursement

■ She recaps high-speed rail trip.

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer



Kelly Fergusson

It was past bedtime even for night owls by the time the Menlo Park City Council reached the staff reports section of the March 15 agenda, but those who stayed awake past 1 a.m. heard a recap of Kelly Fergusson's recent two-day trip to Washington, D.C.

Accompanying Palo Alto Councilman Larry Klein and high-speed-rail (HSR) lobbyist Ravi Mehta, Ms. Fergusson met with 11 congressional staff members and legislators, including Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Menlo Park, she said. The councilwoman described Ms. Eshoo as saying California had botched HSR, but wasn't against Caltrain modernization.

On March 3, Ms. Fergusson said: Build high-speed rail right or not at all; publish a credible ridership study and business plan; correct oversight deficiencies; and invest in electrification to benefit both Caltrain and Menlo Park.

Palo Alto's position on electrification is that the city doesn't want to spend HSR funds on the project, while Menlo Park's stance is not so clear-cut, Ms. Fergusson said, therefore she didn't spend much time on that topic. She said

Their discussions in Washington, D.C., focused on the first four of five points laid out in a memo she released

Palo Alto had created a booklet outlining that city's position on HSR and steps the council had taken. "It serves to bring anybody up to speed in a half hour or less."

"It was really a great two-way opportunity for education," Ms. Fergusson told the council, and reported that some of those she met with weren't aware of the flawed ridership study.

Fellow council member Kirsten Keith asked for a written report listing everyone her colleague met with in D.C. and indicating whether they were a staff member or legislator.

Ms. Fergusson said she hasn't decided whether to ask the council to reimburse the approximately \$1,400 trip. In the days leading up to the trip, residents expressed indignation over her plan to stay in a \$400-per-night hotel. ■

Corte Madera jazz vocal group gives free concert

"Panache," Corte Madera School's award-winning jazz vocal group, will perform in concert Monday, March 28, backed by the professional "A Touch of Brass Big Band," in the school's multi-use room.

The concert, free and open to the public, begins at 7 p.m. in the multi-use room, 4575 Alpine Road in Portola Valley.

"Panache" won second place at the 23rd annual Folsom Jazz Festival, competing against middle and high school students from California and Nevada.

Juliet Green, the school's music specialist and a vocalist, directs the group of sixth- through eighth-graders. They will sing some of their favorite jazz standards such as "All of Me."

Her students have been practicing for a month after school with the 19-piece Big Band, under the direction of trumpeter Ed Morrison. The band incorporates brass, woodwinds and rhythm, covering styles from Swing, Latin, Blues, Rock and Ballads to Swinging Gospel.

Portola Valley may adopt tennis law

A new law under consideration by the Portola Valley Town Council may establish penalties for conducting commercial instruction, such as tennis, on a public facility without a permit.

The council will discuss the matter at its meeting on Wednesday, March 23, which starts at 7:30 p.m.

According to a recommendation in a staff report,

■ BRIEFS

a violation of the ordinance would result in an infraction, a category of petty crime that includes traffic violations and that results in a fine if convicted.

Commercial instruction at town facilities such as parks, open space and recreation areas requires a written agreement that includes insurance, according to the report.

The council meets in the Historic Schoolhouse at 765 Portola Road. This meeting will include a staff presentation on a recent Parks and Recreation Committee discussion of this topic.

Also on the agenda: an increase to the discounted rate that a member of the fulltime town staff pays to use the community hall. A staff report recommends that the current rate of \$200, set in 1993, increase at least to \$525 and possibly \$900, with a refundable deposit of \$1,000.

Candidate forum for county supervisor race

A 90-minute candidate forum in the race for the San Mateo County District 1 supervisor seat is set for 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 30, at the Veterans Memorial Senior Center at 1455 Madison Ave. in Redwood City.

The countywide all-mail-in-ballot election begins on April 4 and ends on May 3.

Candidates expected to attend are, in ballot order, Terry Nagel, Gina Papan, Michael G. Stogner, Richard Holober, and Dave Pine.

Go to tinyurl.com/forum-330 for more information.

REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Gloria Darke



One to Buy, Two to Sell?

Dear Gloria,

We recently submitted an offer on a property along with two other people. Even though our offer was the highest (that's what our agent was told) we didn't get it. Our agent said the reason was because my husband isn't in town and is unable to see the property in person. However, he saw the virtual tour and other pictures. I thought it only took one person to buy, even though you are a married couple.

Virginia P.

Dear Virginia, You are correct that one signature could legally buy a property without the other spouse's signature. You would have to qualify on your own and the preapproval would have to be written that way. To close the transaction, it would also require a quitclaim from the other party. Having been involved in more than one of these situations I find that it isn't really the legality of it so much as it is the con-

cern that the party who has not seen the property may not be as enthusiastic about paying the price that was agreed to or just getting cold feet. If there are contingencies a buyer can back out. If there are other offers, even if they are lower in price a seller may wish to have the bird in hand.

I represented buyers a few years ago where the husband was in New York and his wife made the offer on a house she just loved. The offer was then countered at a higher price and she was able to persuade her husband to accept the counter on this house he had never seen. When asked how she was able to convince him she said "He knows that if mama isn't happy, ain't nobody happy"! I offer this tidbit only to emphasize the point that if it is only one half of the couple to have seen the house, it for sure needs to have the blessings of the party who spends the most time there and that's usually "Mama".

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



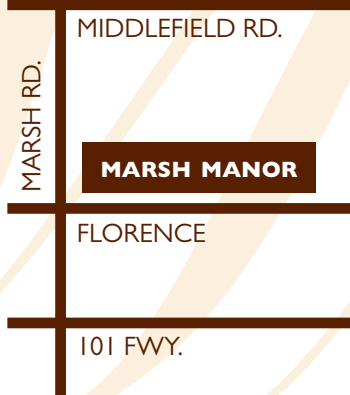
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Menlo Park council looks at \$1.3 million in budget cuts

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

The \$1.3 million in cuts proposed for Menlo Park's general fund will largely come from reducing personnel costs, according to a staff report presented at the March 15 council meeting, saving an estimated \$681,000.

The city has already eliminated 10 fulltime equivalent positions; the remaining employees, with the exception of public safety workers, have seen no salary or benefit increases or bonuses during the past year, and won't expect any for at least another year, City Manager Glen Rojas said.

The national economy continues to hammer away at Menlo Park's revenues. "We're pretty much stuck at a less than desirable return on our investments," Finance Director Carol Augustine said of the city's portfolio, which is responsible for the largest reduction of general fund revenue. Sales tax revenues also took the brunt of the impact from the recession during past three years, she said, dropping 10 percent for two years

before nose-diving 20 percent last year.

"I'm looking at the next year as much as possible," said Mayor Rich Cline, pointing out that often the city is too late to fix the situation before passing the budget for an upcoming fiscal year, and asking Ms. Augustine what makes a budget balanced.

"A balanced budget can mean many things to many people," Ms. Augustine answered. "The way Menlo Park has defined 'balanced budget' is that it's a sustainable budget over many economic cycles."

So what direction will the city take for the 2011-2012 fiscal year starting July 1. Staff continues to investigate outsourcing services such as grounds maintenance, janitorial service, parking enforcement, and Onetta Harris Community Center management.

Other options on the table include eliminating frozen positions and drawing from the reserve fund to pay off the city's \$7 million unfunded pension liability, as suggested by Coun-

cilman Peter Ohtaki, to save \$828,000 during the next fiscal year, and nearly \$3.6 million in interest charges, according to staff.

Mr. Ohtaki also broached the idea of a 3 percent pay cut for city employees making more than \$100,000.

And, of course, further service cuts remain a possibility. The council may consider eliminating the police department's two-officer traffic unit and shutting the public library one day per week or more. Child care at the Menlo Children's Center along with Belle Haven Child Development Center sits alongside those services on the chopping block.

"There's a good need behind it," argued Mayor Cline during a discussion of whether to continue subsidizing the child care centers given that approximately half of the users are East Palo Alto residents. The centers may also lose additional funding if the governor's proposal to shut down redevelopment agencies passes, he said.

Local nonprofits could also lose community funding from the city as they simultaneously attempt to weather drastic decreases in state funding.

The city plans to release a proposed budget by May 12. ■

Heroes recognized by police

■ BRIEFS

Three people who rescued a man pinned between cars by a drunken driver received commendations from the Menlo Park police department on March 15.

Saying the three were heroes, Chief Bryan Roberts thanked Janet Digioia, Alex Raanes and Rob Silano for stopping a drunken driver's rampage through downtown Menlo Park on a December afternoon.

The alleged driver, Margaret Brill, 62, of Atherton, careened down Santa Cruz Avenue, striking at least four vehicles and injuring two people, according to police. The three bystanders helped the injured and took Ms. Brill's keys away, keeping her on the scene.

The district attorney's office has charged Ms. Brill with six counts of felony drunken driving and hit-and-run, with a preliminary hearing scheduled for March 28. She was arrested again two days after the original incident on suspicion of being drunk in public at an Atherton train station. She remains out of custody on \$50,000 bail to attend a court-ordered treatment program.

Council meetings canceled

The Menlo Park City Council

kicks off spring by taking it easy for the rest of March, at least in terms of meetings. The March 22 and March 29 meetings have been canceled.

The council will next convene on Tuesday, April 5, at 7 p.m. in the council chambers at the Civic Center at 701 Laurel St. One anticipated item on the agenda: the final environmental impact report for the Stanford University Medical Center expansion.

QUAKE

continued from page 5

that border the Pacific Ocean. Over the past year, major earthquakes have occurred in Chile, New Zealand and now Japan. Are we next?

"There's no evidence of any kind that I've seen" that shows such a causal relationship, Mr. Breiner said.

"We could have something soon, but there is no connection (with previous quakes)," Mr. Schwartz said. "It's really kind of coincidental. There's no A causing B causing C, which will cause D." ■



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SCHOOLS

continued from page 5

format, he said in an e-mail.

He was told that the unhappiness "was due to the high level of computer use, and a letter written to the parents announcing the split social studies (classes) specifically mentioned my use of technology as precipitating factor in the hiring of a new teacher," he wrote. "Thus, to try to decouple my 'teaching style' from my use of technology is disingenuous, at best."

The school district launched its "21st Century Learning" program about five years ago, introducing interactive white boards, laptop computers for each student, and

other technological tools to the classroom, and offering teacher training in their use.

The technology initiative has gained much recognition both locally and nationally as a model program, according to Linda Yates, a Portola Valley resident who helped shape the program.

Mr. Hanretty noted that the statement in the March 16 article that the district had spent \$4 million on its technology program over the last four years was incorrect. The district actually spent about \$984,000 since the 2006-07 school year, he said.

School board members, some of whom have extensive knowledge of sophisticated technology, closely scrutinized proposed purchases

and staff costs as the program developed, Mr. Hanretty said.

Board president Bill Youstra said the board's intent was to ensure that enough funding and teacher training was provided for the program, but added that the board monitored it closely to make sure it was "effective, but cost-effective, too."

Ms. Piraino and Mr. Hanretty said that the district's teacher-training aspect of the technology program was given short shrift in the March 16 article, which referenced a monthly technology tutorial as the prime method of training. "Technology specialist) Kim Brown has spent hours and hours with those teachers," Mr. Hanretty said.

In addition to Ms. Brown's training work, the district has a Teacher on Special Assignment (TOSA) program that recruits and pays teachers with an interest and certain skill level in a particular technological area — such as interactive white boards or Google Docs — to become a specialist in that area, and then help train colleagues, they said.

Parents, teachers and others in the school community commented on the March 16 article in the Almanac's Town Square forum, and the newspaper received a letter challenging the article from Portola Valley's Linda Yates and Jenn Kuhn, who said the letter was signed by more than 300 people. The letter is published as a guest opinion on Page 15. ■



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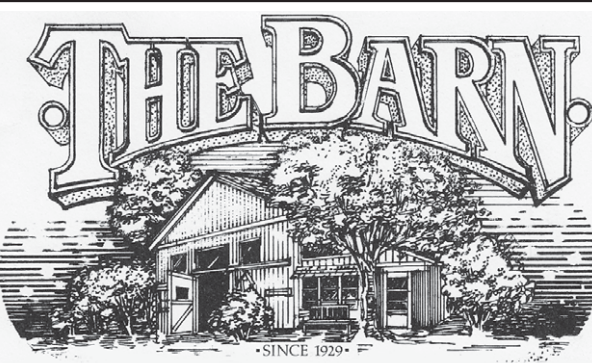
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Stanford hospital expansion: Report calls traffic mitigation for Menlo Park ‘intolerable’

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

A report drafted by the Menlo Park transportation commission calls the inequity between the \$8.3 million Stanford has proposed giving Palo Alto to mitigate impacts from its upcoming hospital expansion versus the minimal amount allocated for Menlo Park “intolerable.”

After taking 10 days to carefully choose their words, the transportation commissioners approved a set of recommendations to the Menlo Park City Council regarding the final environmental impact report

(FEIR) for the Stanford hospital expansion. The action was taken during a special meeting of the commission on Friday, March 18.

The \$3.5 billion project would bring about 1.3 million square feet of new development and more than 2,200 new employees to Palo Alto by 2025. It could add an estimated 10,000 daily car trips to the area, making traffic in Menlo Park a primary concern for the commission.

Menlo Park won’t receive any general fund revenue from taxes associated with the proj-

ect and has only been offered a 2 percent “fair share” contri-

The commission recommends that Stanford pay the full costs of traffic mitigations and provide compensation if traffic is higher than expected.

bution toward the total cost of traffic mitigation, even though 51 percent of the hospital’s traffic will pass through the city, according to the commission, with Sand Hill Road as the most direct route to three

of the four planned parking lots at the center.

Also, if Stanford doesn’t make its goal of having 35 percent of the hospital’s employees use alternative forms of transportation to get to work, Palo Alto receives an additional \$4 million. Menlo Park, again, stands to get only the “fair share” contribution.

“Palo Alto has the money to deal with it; Menlo Park does not,” said Commissioner Ray Mueller during a discussion of what happens if the medical center doesn’t reduce employee traffic by 35 percent.

Commissioner Robert Cronin, who abstained from approving the report, didn’t share his colleagues’ concerns,

stating that “one additional car every 45 seconds to one-and-a-half minutes isn’t anything to worry about. That’s spread out over eight hours.”

The commission’s recommendations try to address that imbalance by asking the Menlo Park city attorney to determine whether the inadequate compensation and proposed traffic mitigations are grounds for re-doing the EIR. They also ask the city to demand Stanford pay the full costs of traffic mitigations as well as provide compensation if employee traffic is higher than expected.

The EIR goes before the Menlo Park City Council on Tuesday, April 5. The meeting starts at 7 p.m. in council chambers at the Civic Center at 701 Laurel St. ■

Investigator clears Atherton officers accused in Johns complaint

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

■ **ATHERTON**

For the second time in two months, an outside investigator hired by the town has declared that citizen complaints against Atherton police officers are unfounded.

John Johns, the town’s former finance director who successfully sued Atherton for wrongful termination, had accused officers of evidence tampering, retaliation, illegal search and seizure, and unlawful detention related to an August 2007 incident.

Mr. Johns filed the citizen’s complaint in February 2010. He named Sgt. Sherman Hall, Sgt. Tim Lynch, Sgt. Kristin Nichols, and Officer Tim Marks. He also complained of then-police chief Robert Brennan’s conduct during the incident.

The town hired Pete Peterson, a former police chief of Clayton, California, to investigate Mr. Johns’ complaint. During the investigation, Mr. Johns sought to add Officer Brad Mills to the list of officers to be reviewed.

Atherton Police Chief Mike Guerra on March 10 notified Mr. Johns of the investigation’s findings: all allegations are “unfounded.” The report itself,

he said, is confidential under provisions of the state’s penal code regarding personnel investigations.

The cost of the investigation was \$6,968.75, according to police Lt. Joe Wade.

Mr. Johns has challenged several elements of the investigation, and said he will seek a new review of the alleged police misconduct. Among his challenges is that he named five current officers in his complaint and amendments. Yet, the findings announced by Chief Guerra refer to only four officers.

He also said that not all of the violations he alleges were committed against him were addressed.

Asked why only four officers were investigated, Lt. Wade said Mr. Johns’ allegation against Officer Mills was unrelated to the others, and therefore did not fall under the scope of the Peterson investigation.

Mr. Johns has since asked Chief Guerra for “information that would help me reconcile my citizen’s complaints with the investigations Mr. Peterson purportedly conducted” — information he needs to file a new complaint, he said.

If the information is not provided, he wrote in a March 17 e-mail to Chief Guerra, “I am prepared to file a writ of mandamus in California Superior Court to require you to release the Peterson ... report and to initiate an investigation of those allegations that I have brought to your attention directly and through Mr. Peterson that have so far been ignored.”

Mr. Johns’ complaints stem from his detention in Town Center by officers, including then-police chief Brennan, when he was on administrative leave from his town post. Mr. Johns maintains that the incident was in retaliation for his reviews of police department spending that cited irregularities. He was fired two months later.

Mr. Peterson also conducted the investigation into resident Jon Buckheit’s complaints against the department over the alteration of a police report detailing Mr. Buckheit’s 2008 arrest during a domestic violence incident.

Mr. Buckheit and other residents had protested the hiring of Mr. Peterson, and pushed instead for the appointment of an outside investigator by a judge or former judge.

Mr. Peterson concluded in January that Mr. Buckheit’s complaints were “unfounded,” a ruling Mr. Buckheit challenged as incomprehensible. ■

Volunteers sought on transportation issues

County transportation officials are seeking San Mateo County residents to volunteer for a citizens advisory committee that is a liaison between the public and directors of the San Mateo County Transportation Authority.

The transportation authority is an independent agency that administers revenues from a countywide half-cent sales tax to fund local transportation projects and programs.

The 15-member advisory com-

mittee meets in San Carlos at 4:30 p.m. on the Tuesday before the last Thursday of the month. Applicants have until Monday, April 11, to submit an application.

Go to smcta.com for an application, or call 508-6223, or send an e-mail to cacsecretary@smcta.com.



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(continued on next page)

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Atherton likely to fight developer lawsuit in court

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

The lawsuit filed by the development firm Pacific Peninsula Group against the town of Atherton is still active, after the City Council declined to finalize a mediated settlement agreement when it met March 16 in closed session.

Terms of the proposed settlement are confidential.

The open-session council agenda that followed the closed session listed approval of a settlement — which would have allowed the council to vote on the proposed agreement in public. But the item was pulled from the agenda at the beginning of the open session, an indication that the council didn't accept the mediated terms when it met behind closed doors.

Pacific Peninsula sued the town last August to recover \$298,000 in road-impact fees it claims it was charged illegally. During the discovery phase of the ongoing legal process, that amount was lowered to about \$215,000, according to attorney Leah Castella, who is defending the town in the lawsuit.

Ms. Castella said no other mediation is scheduled, and a court date on the lawsuit is set for Aug. 22. The town will file a motion for summary judgment to have the suit dismissed

before that time, she said.

The lawsuit followed the council's decision to refund a portion of road-impact fees paid by builders before the town discontinued the fee in late 2009 due to controversy about its legality. The Pacific Peninsula Group (PPG) sued to force the town to refund the fees it paid in their entirety.

At the public comment period preceding the closed session, resident Melinda Tevis urged Councilwoman Elizabeth Lewis to recuse herself from the discussion and vote because PPG was involved in the building of her home, and therefore she had a conflict of interest.

Ms. Lewis angrily rejected the claim that she has a conflict of interest. She said that PPG didn't build her home, although Jude Kirik, the president and a principal of one of the group's companies, Pacific Peninsula Architects, designed it.

Mr. Kirik is also a principal of another PPG group, the Pacific Peninsula Custom Group. PPG has four groups, all sharing a building in Menlo Park, according to its website.

The town attorney announced after the closed session that no reportable action was taken during the session, so it is unknown who participated in the discussion of the proposed settlement. ■

Atherton council agrees to plan to lower hike in trash-collection rates

By Renee Batti

Almanac News Editor

Garbage rates will go up in Atherton, but not as high as the town first proposed, the City Council decided March 16 during its regular meeting.

Residents will still pay the highest rates compared with those charged to residents of other towns in the joint powers authority, which represents 10 Peninsula cities, including Atherton and Menlo Park, and the county.

But rather than rate hikes ranging from 63 percent to 98 percent, depending on the size of a customer's trash can, as first proposed by the town, the

new proposed fee schedule will raise garbage collection rates 39 percent for all service levels.

While lowering proposed rates in general, the council raised one proposed fee: Under the new proposal, customers would be charged \$5 per green-waste receptacle beyond the standard allocation of two. The original proposal included a \$1 charge for each container after the first two.

Under the new proposal, service for a 20-gallon garbage can would cost \$24.04 per month, rather than \$28.22, as earlier proposed. Service on a 32-gallon can would cost \$38.46, rather than the earlier-proposed \$45.15. The most costly level of

See **RATES**, next page

Menlo Park raises rates for trash-collection by 7%

■ New rate takes effect April 1.

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park residents will be paying 7 percent more to throw things out, starting April 1. That translates into an additional \$1.75 to \$6.21 per month for residential service, which ranges from \$25 to \$88.71 per household.

The City Council settled on a lower increase in garbage rates in a split 3-2 vote Tuesday, March 15, after disposing of the staff's recommended 15 percent hike.

Council members Peter Ohtaki and Kirsten Keith dissented after indicating they needed more information before feeling comfortable with any permanent increase.

"I want to see the final audit before I approve anything," Ms. Keith said, and asked the city to coordinate a meeting with the 13 other cities belonging to the South Bay Waste Management Authority (SBWMA) to discuss the situation.

In 2009, Menlo Park garbage rates jumped 18 percent. Last year, 28 percent.

This third hike comes as a result of \$895,000 the city owes for garbage service by Allied Waste as a result of the service provider signing a labor contract in December 2008 that included pay raises of 17 to 19 percent over five years after the company

learned that it lost a bid to renew its service contract for Menlo Park and 11 other jurisdictions.

Those increases are passed through SBWMA to the jurisdictions it serves. And in this case, they're also passed along to the new service provider. When Recology took over from Allied on Jan. 1, it was forced to honor those salary rates for the remaining time left on the 2008 contract.

The city says it doesn't have enough money in the account set aside for garbage service to settle the debt, which must be paid in full by October 2012.

Along with City Manager Glen Rojas, council members Rich Cline and Kelly Fergusson argued that delaying an increase could leave the council trying to pass a 20 percent hike in the fall.

Before making a motion to approve a smaller increase, Ms. Fergusson expressed concern over losing potential revenue if the council didn't raise the garbage rate. "We have to pay for utilities," she said. "That's the society we live in."

The motion also asked that any audited reports for Allied Waste and Recology be posted online, along with a schedule of upcoming SBWMA meetings, and that the council receive information identifying executive-level Recology staff. ■

RATES

continued from previous page

service, a 96-gallon can, would cost \$114.15 per month, rather than \$162.53.

The vote to lower the rate increases was 3-2. Although all council members voiced frustration and skepticism over the need to raise rates as high as first proposed, Mayor Jim Dobbie and Councilwoman Kathy McKeithen supported charging the higher rates to move the process forward, noting the town and its residents will be saddled with a growing debt owed to the garbage collection firm, Recology, the longer the rate increase is delayed.

Interim City Manager John Danielson said the town will have to go through another lengthy public noticing process, and hold another hearing, meaning it is unlikely the new rates will go into effect before July. Changing the originally proposed rates could delay the rate hike even more.

It was agreed that more questions needed answering about Recology's costs to provide service to the town and other factors driving rates up, and if the higher rates couldn't be supported when further analysis was completed, they could be lowered later, some council members noted.

The higher proposed rates were the subject of a public hearing in February, which drew a crowd of angry residents. At that meeting, the council accepted Mr. Danielson's proposal to bring together several outside analysts to answer the list of questions raised over the proposed rates.

The results included a history of rate hikes since 2002 — too small to keep up with rising costs to the garbage collection service — and comparisons to service in other communities in the JPA. Most other towns served have commercial customers, who are charged far higher rates and offset the cost to residential customers. ■

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Ralph Charles Kohn

Longtime manager of Kepler's bookstore



Ralph Kohn

A memorial service will be held Saturday, April 9, for Ralph Charles Kohn, who managed Kepler's bookstore in Menlo Park for about 30 years, from the late 1960s to 1997. He died Feb. 23 at age 93.

The memorial will start at 2 p.m. at the Palo Alto Friends Meeting House, 957 Colorado Ave. in Palo Alto.

Born in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1918, to a Methodist mother and a Jewish father, Mr. Kohn was the oldest of three children. He graduated from Cornell College in Iowa.

According to his daughter, Twink Stern, Mr. Kohn detested war and became a conscientious objector during World War II, spending the years working on the East Coast with children who had special needs. There he met lifelong friends Roy Kepler and George Haight, and formed a network of peace activists who spent their later years in California.

Following the war, Mr. Kohn joined the Merchant Marines on a freighter and worked as a ship hand. He traveled to Europe, Africa, and the Far East. This experience had a lasting effect on him, and he savored these years of exposure to people and politics, the family said.

When Roy Kepler asked Mr. Kohn to manage one of two Kepler's bookstores, he jumped

at the chance to move to California. His family said he was proud to work in the Menlo Park store, largest paperback bookstore on the West Coast at that time.

He found a home on Cloud Avenue in Menlo Park and enjoyed sharing ideas with locals such as the family of Joan Baez, as well as Ira Sandperl and Nick Simon.

As he managed Kepler's, he became close to the Kepler family and when Roy's son, Clark, became the owner, the two of them became close, the family said.

He and his wife Irene became the keepers of Kepler's traditions, and each summer, hosted a taco party at their home so that former employees of the store could catch up with the extended family of Kepler's people.

He and his wife enjoyed driving all over California and Canada, and to Mexico, the family said. They also traveled to Europe and Vietnam.

Mr. Kohn stopped working at the bookstore after having a stroke in 1997.

The family expressed thanks to caregiver Lya Vale Cruz and Heartland Hospice for their care for Mr. Kohn during his final years.

He is survived by his wife, Irene Myers Stern Kohn; her children, Twink Stern and James Stern; five grandchildren; 14 great-grandchildren; and his youngest sister, Shirley Kohn.

The family prefers donations to "10 Books a Home," which provides free in-home and in-school literacy services to children in East Palo Alto. Donations may be mailed to 1735 Woodland Ave., Suite 11, East Palo Alto, CA 94303; or made online at 10booksahome.org.

Homer Clair (Buzz) Hamlin

Played football for Stanford and Cal

A memorial service will be held Saturday, March 26, for Homer Clair (Buzz) Hamlin, a resident of Menlo Park for 44 years, who died March 9.

The service will start at 3 p.m. at St. Bede's Episcopal Church, 2650 Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park.

A member of a third generation of an early San Jose and Morgan Hill family, he entered Stanford on a football scholarship in the fall of 1940. He played two years as a fullback until Dec. 7, 1941.

He left school to enter the Army Air Corps and was commissioned as second lieutenant. As a pilot, he was assigned to the 8th Army Air Corps 96th Bomber Group, 413th Squadron, flying B17s from Snetterton

Heath in England.

He flew 23 missions over Germany and was awarded the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters. At the end of combat operations, he flew more missions delivering foodstuffs in Belgium for people who were isolated.

Returning to the states, he completed his education at the University of California at Berkeley, graduating in 1947. Football was his passion. He played two seasons for Cal. By playing for intense rivals Stanford and Cal, he joined just two other men known to have played for both schools, family members said.

After college he went to work for Fiberboard Paper Products, working in Los Angeles, San Jose, and then Seattle as general manager for the Northwest region. He returned to San Francisco as national sales manager for Fiberboard. He finished his career with Owen Illinois, retiring in 1985.

He was an active outdoors person who loved golf and belonged to the California Country Club. When Fiberboard developed Northstar-at-Tahoe, he was the first person to purchase a condo so he could ski more often, which he did past his 80th birthday, family members said.

Janet Anthes, his wife of 64 years, preceded him in death as did his daughter, Wendy Schreiner. He is survived by his children Christine and Jonathan; five grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

The family prefers donations to Pathway Foundation (Hospice), 585 North Mary Ave., Sunnyvale, CA 94085. Arrangements were by Darling Fischer Chapel of the Hills in Los Gatos.

Anne Brown O'Donnell

Enjoyed hosting friends at her Atherton home

Friends and family are invited to a memorial Mass on Friday, March 25, for Anne Brown O'Donnell of Atherton, who died March 11. She was 88.

The Mass begins at 11 a.m. at St. Raymond Catholic Church, 1100 Santa Cruz Ave. in Menlo Park. A private committal will take place at Holy Cross Cemetery in Menlo Park before the Mass.

Born in Los Angeles, she attended Marymount High School in that city, spent a year at Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York, and then enrolled at USC. She left school for two years to support the home front effort during World War II, working at Lockheed Aircraft and volunteering more than 500 hours at the American

Continued on next page



PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

AMENDING CITY OF MENLO PARK MASTER FEE SCHEDULE

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park, California, will hold a Public Hearing to consider amending the City's Master Fee Schedule concerning proposed changes in fees for the following departments, Administrative Services, Community Development, Community Services, Library, Police, and Public Works. The amounts of the proposed fees are based on information which will be available to the public at least 10 days in advance of this Public Hearing at the Finance Department.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that the City Council of the City of Menlo Park will hold this Public Hearing on Tuesday, April 5, 2011, at 7:00 p.m., or as near as possible thereafter, in the City Council Chambers of the City of Menlo Park, Civic Center - 701 Laurel Street, Menlo Park, California, at which time and place interested persons may appear and be heard thereon.

NOTICE IS HEREBY FURTHER GIVEN that "if you challenge this matter in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the Public Hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Menlo Park at, or prior to, the Public Hearing".

DATED: Dated: March 16, 2011
/s/
MARGARET S. ROBERTS, MMC, City Clerk

Published in THE COUNTRY ALMANAC on March 23, 2011 and March 30, 2011

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■ POLICE CALLS

WOODSIDE

Theft report: Tools and equipment stolen from unlocked construction site, 200 block of Glenwood Ave., March 14.

Fraud report: Business partner appears to have drained shared account to secretly fund another business, 100 block of Farm Road, March 14.

ATHERTON

Auto burglary report: Green SUV broken into, parking lot at Menlo-Atherton High School at 555 Middlefield Road, March 12.

Fraud reports:

■ Unauthorized use of Social Security number, 200 block of Camino Al Lago, March 15.

■ Identity theft, Selby Lane, March 15.

■ Unauthorized use of Social Security number, first block of South Gate Ave., March 17.

MENLO PARK**Residential burglary reports:**

■ Loss estimated at \$11,800 in break-in and theft of electronic equipment, jewelry and computers, 1000 block of Del Norte Ave., March 14.

■ Loss estimated at \$600 in break-in and theft of TV, 200 block of Ivy Drive, March 17.

Fraud reports:

■ Loss estimated at \$7,000 in unauthorized use of credit card to purchase products made by Apple Computer Inc., 1400 block of Mills Court, March 17.

■ Attempt to pass counterfeit \$50 bill, Yogurt Stop at 401 El Camino Real, March 16.

■ Resident continuing to be billed for electricity at former residence in Texas, 1300 block of Hill Ave., March 14.

Continued from previous page

Red Cross.

She returned to USC and graduated with a degree in art history in 1944.

She worked for a number of years at Bullocks Wilshire in Los Angeles before marrying Hugh O'Donnell of San Francisco in 1955. They lived first in San Francisco and then down the Peninsula where they raised their family. They were married for 54 years. Hugh died on July 24, 2010.

Anne spent many years as a volunteer for the CYO, the Oakwood Auxiliary, the Woodside-Atherton Auxiliary for the Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford, the Family Service

Agency of San Mateo County, the San Carlos Adult Day Care Center, and several other organizations.

She gave her time to the Order of Malta and attended a number of Lourdes Pilgrimages with the Sick and Dying.

She enjoyed oil painting, and loved hosting friends at her home in Atherton, the family says.

In the 1980s, "she turned a two-year stay with Hugh in Santiago, Chile, into an adventure by making many new friends, and converting a nice rental house into a beautiful, warm home away from home for locals and travelers alike," the family says.

She and Hugh took every

chance they could to travel, more often than not bringing their children along.

She is survived by her sons, Michael of Menlo Park and Peter of Palo Alto; and four grandchildren.

The family expressed thanks to the staff of Nazareth Classic Care in Menlo Park where she lived with Hugh for the last three years.

The family asks that any memorial donations be made to San Carlos Adult Day Services, care of Catholic Charities-CYO, 180 Howard St., Suite 100, San Francisco, CA 94105; or Religious of the Sacred Heart-Oakwood, 140 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton, CA 94027; or a charity of the donor's choice.

William Hull Malkmus

Feb. 3, 1935 – Feb. 27, 2011

William Hull Malkmus, a long time Woodside resident, passed away peacefully on February 27, 2011 in Palo Alto, California after complications from pneumonia.

Bill was born on February 3, 1935 in Los Angeles, to Katherine Fisher Malkmus and William Otto Malkmus. He graduated from Harvard School of North Hollywood, and in 1958 from Stanford University, where he was president of his fraternity, Alpha Delta Phi. He served in the U.S. Marines Reserve. He went on to receive an MBA from Harvard Business School in 1961.

In 1961 he began his business career with Checchi and Co. of Washington D.C. doing economic consulting in Somalia and Bangladesh. Upon returning to California, he worked as an investment banker for many years with J. Barth, Dean Witter and Bateman Eichler. Later he was CFO of Vivra, a healthcare service company.

A budding oenophile, Bill began making wine in his San Francisco garage in the 1970s. This led to the founding of Tualatin Vineyards in Forest Grove, Oregon in 1973. From the planting of the first vines, to winning Best of Show for both red and white categories at the London International Wine Competition, he and winemaker Bill Fuller were pioneers of the Oregon wine industry. In 1997 Tualatin merged with Willamette Vineyards and he served on the Board.

A devoted Father, Grandfather and Brother, Bill is survived by his son James, daughter Reven, his brother Stephen, step-children Anne, Shelly and Jim, and 4 grandchildren. Also surviv-

ing are his first wife Lizbeth McCulloch Malkmus, and second wife, Luanne Grupe Rottici.

No one was more loved than Bill, aka Rawhide, Wick.

He was devoted to family and friends. Bill was popular; it was legendary that while passing through any airport in the world, he would undoubtedly encounter a friend or acquaintance. He enjoyed skiing, hiking, jogging with his dogs, Stanford sports, fine wines and good times. He was an example of how to live life fully, with kindness, integrity, and he was always the perfect gentleman. In his later years, Bill mentored young entrepreneurs and tutored exchange students. He enjoyed tending his vegetable garden, going to church and watching his grandchildren play.

There will be a celebration of Bill's life at Christ Church, Portola Valley on Saturday, April 16 at 10:30 am. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Bill's name to the Peninsula Humane Society or the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Bill's name to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, www.openspace.org, or the Peninsula Humane Society, www.peninsulahanesociety.org.



John O'Connor's MenloParkFunerals.com

1182A Chestnut Street
Menlo Park, CA

FDR 502

FD 2060

Anne Brown O'Donnell

August 3, 1922 - March 11, 2011

Anne was born in Los Angeles to Leon and Ethel Brown and was their only child.

She attended Marymount High School in Los Angeles, spent one year at Marymount College in Tarrytown, New York, and then enrolled at USC. She left school for two years to support the home front effort during World War II, working at Lockheed Aircraft and volunteering over 500 hours at the American Red Cross. She returned to USC and graduated with a degree in Art History in 1944.

She worked for a number of years at Bullocks Wilshire in Los Angeles before meeting and marrying Hugh O'Donnell of San Francisco in 1955. They lived first in the City and then down the Peninsula where they raised their family. Anne and Hugh were best friends, partners, and roommates for 54 years until Hugh's death on July 24, 2010.

Anne spent many years as a volunteer for the CYO, the Oakwood Auxiliary, the Woodside-Atherton Auxiliary for the Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford, the Family Service Agency of San Mateo County, the San Carlos Adult Day Care Center, and several other organizations. She gave her time to the Order of Malta and attended a number of Lourdes Pilgrimages with the Sick and Dying. Her Catholic faith was a central part of her life. She had a special devotion to St. Martin de Porres, the patron saint of Lima, Peru.

Anne's father taught her how to swim on Catalina Island, how to appreciate a good boxing match at the Olympic Auditorium, and to turn away at the right moment at a bullfight in Tijuana. He also took her on a trip to pre-Castro Cuba. From her mother she learned the elements of style in clothing, antiques, and interior decorating, and how to understand people from the Lone Star State. Anne was a devoted daughter of the City of Angels. She grew up there in its glory days of sunshine and promise. She heard Nat King Cole sing at the Coconut Grove, watched Joe Louis win a fight or two, and lived in an apartment across from Ava Gardner. She loved the Bay Area but adored Southern California.

Anne enjoyed oil painting and brightened every canvas with color and light. She appreciated many types of music, the more upbeat the better. She loved hosting new friends and old at her home in Atherton. In the 1980's she turned her two-year stay with Hugh in Santiago, Chile into an adventure by making many new friends, both Chilean and expatriated, and converting a nice rental house into a beautiful, warm home away from home for locals and travelers alike. She and Hugh took every chance they could to travel to different parts of the world, more often than not bringing their children along for the ride. She changed two generations of diapers and watched her grandkids outgrow her kids. Anne may have had one bad mood in her whole life but it probably was just indigestion. She greeted every day and every situation with a smile. She laughed the loudest at herself.

Anne was pre-deceased by her husband Hugh. She is survived by her son Michael and daughter-in-law Cecilia (Menlo Park) and son Peter and his girlfriend Louise McManus (Palo Alto) and four grandchildren: Andrew, Coca, Tomas, and Nick (all of Menlo Park). She leaves one sister-in-law Jeanne O'Donnell (Chatham, NJ), four nieces, three nephews, and many great-nieces and nephews. And a lot of friends.

Special thanks to the staff of Nazareth Classic Care in Menlo Park where she lived with Hugh for the last three years.

Friends and family are invited to a memorial Mass on Friday, March 25, 2011 at 11 AM at St. Raymond Catholic Church at 1100 Santa Cruz Ave. in Menlo Park.

A private committal will take place at Holy Cross Cemetery in Menlo Park before the Mass. In lieu of flowers, please make any memorial donations to San Carlos Adult Day Services care of Catholic Charities-CYO, 180 Howard Street, Suite 100, San Francisco, CA 94105 or Religious of the Sacred Heart-Oakwood, 140 Valparaiso Ave., Atherton, CA 94027 or a charity of your choice.

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Viewpoint

Ideas, thoughts and opinions about local issues from people in our community. Edited by Tom Gibboney.

Scramble for city's redevelopment funds

With the future of redevelopment agencies hanging by a thread in Sacramento, a new concern has been raised about the distribution of the property taxes generated by Menlo Park's Las Pulgas RDA, which benefits parts of Belle Haven and a sliver of property on Willow Road west of the freeway.

Cities all over the state are rushing to protect and defend their RDAs, and Menlo Park is no different. The agencies are threatened by Gov. Jerry Brown, who wants to strip whatever unencumbered funds

are available from RDAs to help balance the state budget this year and then pay for schools in subsequent years.

And even if the Legislature votes to take away RDA funds, it is almost certain that cities will sue to stop it, which could tie up the funds in court for years. (By Almanac press time Monday, the Legislature had not endorsed Gov. Brown's takeover of RDAs.)

On the local level, Menlo Park resident Jennifer Bestor, whose children attend central Menlo Park schools, argued in an Almanac Guest Opinion last week that the Las Pulgas district takes away \$1.8 million a year that otherwise would go to local elementary and high schools. Instead, schools receive just a fraction of the total revenue that comes to the RDA (\$10,000 for Menlo Park City School District and \$150,000 for the Sequoia Union High School District).

As basic-aid school districts, Sequoia and Menlo Park City are primarily funded by local property taxes, so dollars lost to the RDA come right out of the school district's pocket, Ms. Bestor says, adding that the loss comes at a time when the districts are seeing significantly more students, but no corresponding funding increase. For example, the Menlo Park district is in the midst of rebuilding its Hillview middle school campus to accommodate a huge enrollment increase, and the district has made room for more students at its other campuses.

Not surprisingly, the city has a different point of view, as seen in the Guest Opinion by City Manager Glen Rojas on the adjoining page. He says that property values today would not be where they are without

the improvements made possible by redevelopment funds. Improvements slowly began to add value to the tax rolls when the district was created in 1981, and reached today's much higher levels after many capital improvements were made.

For 2010-11, the city expects the incremental taxes over 1981 to be \$10.6 million, of which almost half is committed to debt service on bonds issued for projects in the district. When all other obligations are paid, income of only about \$1 million will remain that could be designated to support the schools.

In the Almanac's Town Square Forum, a Belle Haven resident notes that without redevelopment funds, Belle Haven would not have a community center, a full soccer field or a swimming pool. Projects such as these are enhancing the quality of life in eastern Menlo Park, and would not have been possible without the RDA funds, the poster said.

History has shown that RDA projects have returned good value to Menlo Park, a record that supports the district's continuation as is, at least for now. If Gov. Brown's RDA-busting plan is approved, there is no doubt that it will be more difficult to pay for improvements in the eastern part of the city, and it remains to be seen if schools will benefit from the state takeover a year later, as promised by Gov. Brown.

Over the last 10 years Menlo Park schools have benefited tremendously from the run-up of real estate values, and can easily get by without the revenues lost to the Menlo Park RDA. It should also be noted that Belle Haven and East Palo Alto elementary students attend schools in the state-supported Ravenswood Elementary School District, which receives far less per pupil than west side schools, including Menlo Atherton and Woodside.

In future years, perhaps Menlo Park's Pulgas district can opt to share more of its tax income with schools and other special districts. And more privately funded development could take place around the new Facebook headquarters and the Menlo Gateway project, which could lessen the need to generate capital projects from the Pulgas revenue and open the door to the city sharing a much larger portion with local school districts.

LETTERS

Our readers write

Former council member sticks up for Fergusson

Editor:

Last week's Almanac story (and accompanying editorial) on council travel implies that some Menlo Park City Council members are abusing the city's travel policy.

The Almanac's prime evidence: Kelly Fergusson's large number of reimbursement requests relative to other council members. But there is a simple explanation for the difference: Kelly works harder than most of her colleagues.

Her travel costs are a reflection of how much she does for her constituents. She attends more meetings, sees more constituents, has a larger network, and immerses herself more deeply into her council job than any other member I've come across. Instead of "raising

See **LETTERS**, next page

Jacque Audiffred Collection

Our Regional Heritage

This 1966 photo shows stores at Woodside and Canada roads in what was known as Leo's Shopping Center. Today, the complex has been updated and includes Roberts Hardware & Tack and Buck's of Woodside restaurant.

LETTERS

Continued from previous page

eyebrows,” we should be thanking Kelly for being so dedicated to her constituents and the job of serving on the Menlo Park City Council.

We are lucky that Kelly was able to take time away from her job and family to travel to Washington, D.C., to advocate Menlo Park’s position on high-speed rail (and yes, Menlo Park has a position). There is no question that the city should reimburse her for this trip.

Kelly’s meetings with key members of Congress will help them better understand Menlo Park’s opposition to and concerns about high-speed rail. And they will help Kelly (and by extension the rest of council, staff, and the community) become more effective advocates with Congress on high-speed rail and related issues.

The local media, including the Almanac, are zealous in reporting the slightest misstep by a council member (both real and imagined), and an “assume the worst” tone and perspective now permeate many of the stories and editorials. This was not always the case. I hope that the press will return to a more balanced approach. Our community will be well served if you do.

Heyward Robinson
Heyward Robinson is a former council member and mayor of Menlo Park

Grateful for editorial on travel expense controls

Editor:

Thank you to the Almanac for its editorial about the Menlo Park City Council’s inadequate travel expense controls, facilitating Kelly Fergusson’s excessive use of taxpayer dollars to fund her frequent political junkets. Your recommendations for reform should be taken seriously by the council.

The case of Ms. Fergusson’s recent trip to Washington, D.C., illustrates how the travel policy can be abused by a council member who cares more about political career advancement than about serving Menlo Park’s interests. Apparently, she had a substantive meeting with just one legislator, who she could have just as easily met in her local Bay Area office. And it only cost \$1,400. What a bargain!

Nevertheless, I’m sure that we can count on travel pictures of Ms. Fergusson, shaking hands with D.C. politicians, to be prominently featured in her future campaign literature.

Frank Tucker
Politzer Drive, Menlo Park

City defends use of redevelopment agencies

By Glen Rojas

There is another side to redevelopment that is absent in Jennifer Bestor’s Guest Opinion last week on redevelopment agencies (RDAs).

The article includes a lot of accurate data, but the application of the data is based on conjecture. The conclusion that schools have been shortchanged over the years through loss of revenue funneled into redevelopment efforts relies on an assumption that property values would have been equal to the current assessed rolls without years of redevelopment efforts.

Clearly the state did not believe that “its pockets were being picked” when it created redevelopment agencies to, over the years, provide value to otherwise blighted areas. Redevelopment was intended to be a long-term investment in the state of California, and it works.

A conclusion anchored by only current year data does not allow consideration of the long-term benefits that have been realized by redevelopment in Menlo Park’s Las Pulgas Community Development Agency project area.

Redevelopment agencies were formed to issue debt to fund major capital improvement projects, which in turn create the value necessary to increase property tax revenues increment to pay off the debt.

The redevelopment that has occurred in Menlo Park — such as the visible improvements along Willow Road east of U.S. 101 since 1981 — has added value to the tax rolls, which has been used to pay debt service on the bonds and provide for other improvements and services that make the community a better

What is a redevelopment agency?

An RDA must establish a plan that in many respects is similar to a constitution or charter. It sets forth the basic goals, powers and limitations of the agency, including its time span — typically several decades. The RDA is required to provide an updated redevelopment implementation plan every five years. The Menlo Park agency’s most recent plan, based on extensive community involvement, covers last fiscal year through June 30, 2014, and can be found on the city’s website, MenloPark.org. The plan details the agency’s service goals and objectives for housing and non-housing activities, with an additional emphasis on business development.

place to live and work. One can only speculate about what the area’s current property tax rolls would look like if redevelopment had *not* occurred.

After assuming that the property tax would be \$11 million or more under any circumstances, the article’s graphic analysis tries to compare how the annual property tax is currently allocated (bottom portion of the diagram) to how it would be allocated if the agency were eliminated (top portion).

The agency’s budget is incorporated into the city’s annual budgeting process. For 2010-11, tax increment revenue of \$10.6 million is expected to be spent on total debt service (\$4.9 million); legally required funding of housing activities (\$1.2 million); approximately \$3 million for pass-through payments to other agencies (including schools); \$80,000 for county tax collection administration fees; \$70,000 for shuttle bus programs; and yes, that leaves \$1.35 million which the city can use to

fund additional public safety services (\$1 million) and administrative overhead.

That leaves very little to sock away for future redevelopment projects, which can be extraordinarily expensive and take years of planning. It should be noted that if the proposal to eliminate redevelopment agencies succeeds, the debt service will still need to be paid, so that the actual amounts of property tax available to agencies would be much less than the amounts shown in the top portion of the diagram.

With continuous raids on the RDA by the state to fund schools (the most recent cost the agency \$3.4 million in 2009-10 and \$710,000 in the current fiscal year), it is very difficult to plan for the long-term redevelopment needs. Proposition 22 reaffirmed that California redevelopment agencies are indeed on-going governmental concerns, with the ability to procure credit and debt financing, and continue to plan and invest in redevelopment project areas.

The city understands the financial crisis that exists at the state level, but to divert funds from RDAs to fix the problem only shifts the burden closer to the taxpayer — at the local level.

Elimination of RDAs cuts off long-term plans at the knees, creates enormous confusion in municipal credit markets, further shakes the credibility of the state as a partner in local government efforts, and ignores the specific needs of residents and businesses in these areas.

Redevelopment has created a lot of “wins” for the state. Let’s not dismantle this working mechanism that makes many areas of California desirable places to work and do business.

Glen Rojas is city manager of Menlo Park.



Valley school story disputed by parents, staff

By Linda Yates and Jenn Kuhn

This note is a community response to last week’s cover article, “Classroom Divide,” which alleged confusion about and even punitive approaches to the use of technology in Portola Valley School District classrooms. It was based largely on information from a single teacher and written by an Almanac intern. Let us offer a very different truth, starting over five years ago.

In January of 2006, the Almanac published a front page article about 21st Century Learning within the PVSD. Senior staff writer Marjorie Mader, reported on a three-day learning lab led by world-leading paleontologist Paul Sereno and his team. The labs, provided to every student, were hands-on, project-based, authentic, and multidisciplinary. This archaeological exploration launched the 21st century education transformation that is ongoing in our

Editor’s Note: Last week’s cover story on the technology program in the Portola Valley School District generated heated comments from district parents and officials. The Almanac acknowledges there were inaccuracies in the portrayal of the program. A story on Page 5 of this issue strives to provide some balance to the reporting.

district — a collaborative effort of teachers, administration, staff, parents and students.

Since 2006, PVSD has incrementally designed, tested and adopted multidisciplinary approaches, project-based learning, collaborative projects, hands-on activities, differentiated and even personalized curriculum, authentic work and yes, technology integration, to support 21st century learning experiences for our children. Our example is becoming recognized locally and nationally, including by the U.S. Department of Education.

Throughout these years, we have leveraged a plethora of local and national resources to guide our innovation and design, including sessions with IDEO and Stanford’s

d.school, meetings with Denise Clarke Pope (co-founder, Stanford’s Challenge Success), and others. We agree with Tom Friedman, David Brooks, Sir Ken Robinson, Harvard Professor Tony Wagner and the ever-growing chorus of researchers, educators, leaders, and indeed President Obama, that a more relevant 21st century education is imperative for the nation’s future competitiveness.

Clearly, broad integration of technology within the classrooms is one fundamental component of 21st Century Learning. The vast majority of Portola Valley parents, teachers, staff, administration and children embrace technical opportunities — why wouldn’t we? Indeed, the thought that there could be too much technology within our digitally savvy, Silicon Valley district is an odd one.

The article was correct to cite fifth-grade teacher Marcy Barton as a district leader in technology integration; more broadly, she created our very 21st-century-relevant, hugely successful Integrated Exploratory class, including a 1:1 student laptop program. But Marcy’s story is more comprehensive than technology use, and

her success represents an evolving norm in our district that touches every teacher at Ormondale, every grade four and five teacher at Corte Madera School, and most teachers in the middle school. The real story is not about a tiny cohort of disgruntled teachers, but about an entire district and community pulling together to embrace new ways of learning.

In response to last week’s article, over 170 families representing more than 300 signatures, including teachers, staff, administrators and parents, respectfully request that the Almanac print a retraction and return to its usual high standard of research and reporting and write a different cover article on 21st century education. We believe you will uncover the true story of Portola Valley’s early adoption and ongoing leadership within the educational community.

Linda Yates and Jenn Kuhn are parents whose children attend Portola Valley schools, and wrote this guest opinion on behalf of some 300 district parents. Their names will be published in an advertisement in next week’s Almanac.



FOR SALE



226 Oak Grove Avenue, Atherton

Located on a Lindenwood cul-de-sac off the main road this beautifully updated property features a 3-bedroom main residence, a newer 2-bedroom guest house, plus a studio; lap pool and spa, custom wine cellar, media room, and chef's kitchens in both homes; access to top-rated Menlo Park schools

OFFERED AT \$3,995,000

FOR SALE



255 Selby Lane, Atherton

Located on a cul-de-sac off the main road in Central Atherton and beautifully finished throughout with traditional designer appeal. Two-story main home with 6 bedrooms plus 3 flexible rooms for office, fitness, or play. 1-bedroom guest house with kitchen, garage, and private gated entrance. Beautiful grounds with pool, spa, koi pond, waterfall, and level lawn.

OFFERED AT \$4,250,000

FOR SALE



460 Walsh Road, Atherton

Built in 2007 by PPG and preceded by a private bridge, this Tuscan-inspired three-level, 5-bedroom, 4.5-bath estate home's countless luxuries include a theatre, wine cellar, pool, spa, and an impressive 1-bedroom, 1-bath guest house all surrounded by level lawn and a redwood grove in West Atherton; Las Lomitas schools

OFFERED AT \$4,250,000

FOR SALE



170 Stone Pine Lane, Menlo Park

Urban-style living close to downtown with private garden terrace; 3-bedroom 2.5-bath home features great room kitchen with fireplace and surround sound; large master suite, and numerous skylights. Association pool; Menlo Park schools.

OFFERED AT \$1,050,000

To view these properties and others, please visit my website at www.tomlemieux.com

