

The Almanac

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

FEBRUARY 6, 2013 | VOL. 48 NO. 23

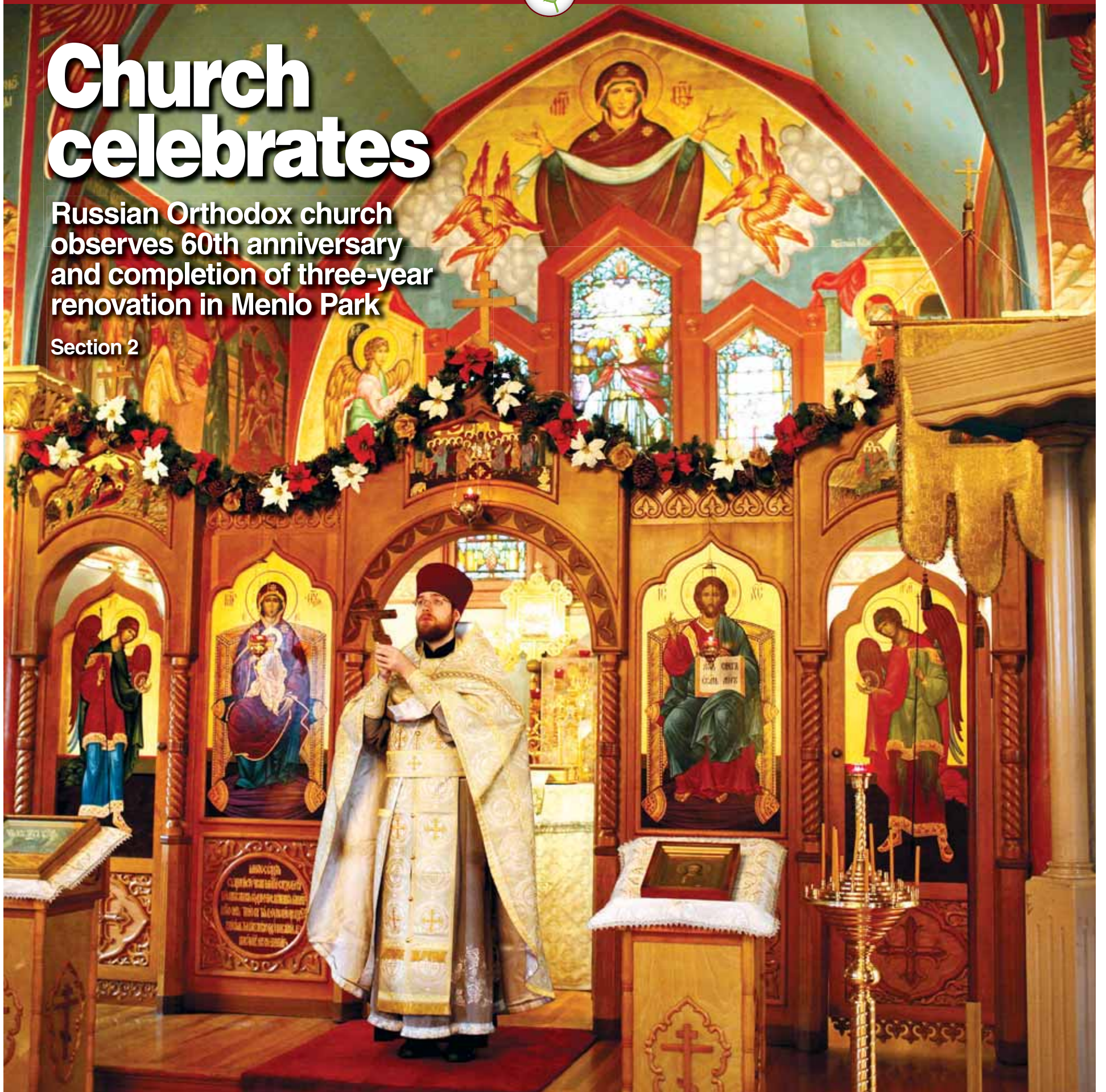


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Section 2



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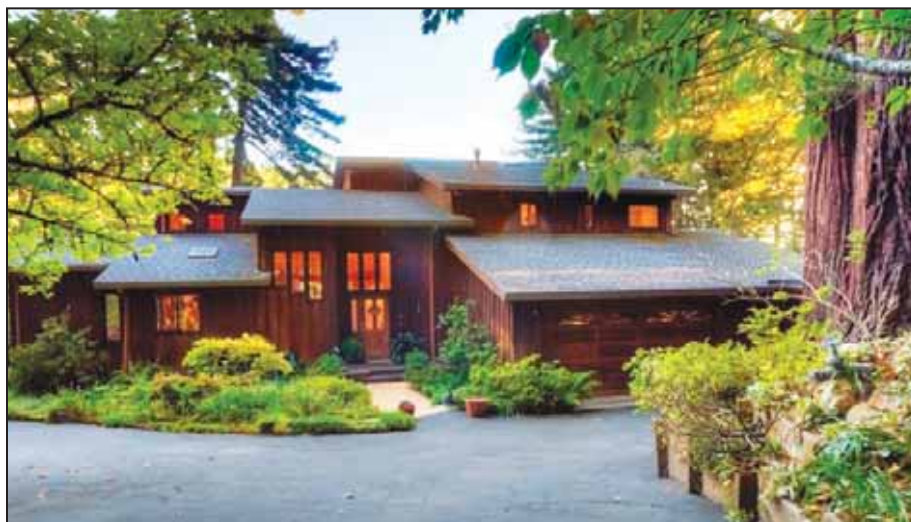
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Sister 'Hurricane Helen,' 94

MEMORIAL

Befriending flocks of lively teenagers, sitting at the bedside of dying children, providing a place where their parents could stay, visiting criminals in prison. These are just some of the missions Sister Helen Costello undertook over her years as a Religious of the Sacred Heart and teacher at Sacred Heart Schools in Atherton. Sister Costello died Jan. 24 at Oakwood, the Society's elder care center in Atherton. She was 94.

A memorial Mass was held for her at Sacred Heart Schools on Feb. 1. A Mass of Christian Burial took place Feb. 2 at the Oakwood Retirement Community chapel.

Sister Costello had a particular affinity for educating boys and she developed strong bonds with the former altar boys she once supervised at St. Joseph elementary school, part of Sacred Heart Schools, according to a 2007 Almanac feature story on her.

They called her the "Flying Nun" or "Hurricane Helen," and she held social gatherings for them in her cottage, which the boys dubbed "The Castle," because it was "such a dump," Sister Costello said. The boys took on renewal of the cottage and refurbished what was once an old cow-tenders cottage.

The Castle was used as housing for parents of terminally ill children at Stanford Hospi-

tal or others who needed a place to stay overnight. Sister Costello hosted teen parties, even entertaining the Stanford football team on three occasions. She counted football players Dan Pastorini, Don Bunce and Jim Plunkett among her flock.

In her cottage, Sister Costello kept a bulletin board with more than 200 pictures of children and teenagers, many bedridden or in wheelchairs. All these were children she had befriended, often sitting at the bedside of a dying child. When a child passed away, she often would arrange the burial and drive the body to the mortuary herself.

There were also clippings of the famous 1976 Chowchilla kidnapping on the bulletin board, according to the Almanac article, in which Richard and James Schoenfeld of Woodside and Fred Woods of Atherton hijacked a bus full of children and left it entombed in a quarry for ransom.

Three years later, after an inspiring homily at Mass, Sister Costello visited the

kidnappers in prison, and she revisited them several times.

Sister Helen Costello grew up in Los Altos and graduated from Sacred Heart Academy in Menlo Park (now Atherton). She wanted to enter the Society of the Sacred Heart, but her family disapproved. She worked for several years in San Francisco department stores, but followed her call to religious life and entered the Society in 1939. She professed her final vows in Rome on Feb. 9, 1949.

Her first assignment was her own alma mater in Menlo Park. In the 1950s, she spent five years at Forest Ridge Academy of the Sacred Heart in Seattle, and summers at San Francisco College for Women (now the Lone Mountain campus of the University of San Francisco), where she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees. In 1956, she returned to St. Joseph's elementary school, where she remained as a teacher for 16 years.

Sister Costello was born in San Francisco on Oct. 14, 1918. She is survived by her sister Kathleen Costello of Cupertino, brother-in-law Albert Horn of San Mateo, sister-in-law Margaret Ann Costello of San Francisco, and nieces and nephews.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Society of the Sacred Heart, 4120 Forest Park Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63108.



Almanac file photo
Sister Helen Costello

Wilma Ruth West, Woodside resident

Longtime Woodside resident

Wilma Ruth West, who lived in Woodside from 1963 to 2005, died of complications from pancreatic cancer on Jan. 24 at the age of 94. Two years ago, she moved to Renton, Washington, to be near her granddaughter, Debbie Friant.

Ms. West worked at the Woodside Library, was a room mother at Woodside Elementary School, and was employed at the Stage Stop. She was

an avid artist, mostly painting in oil, the family said.

She is survived by her three grandchildren, Debbie Friant, Kari Lambert and Erik Wordal; nine great-grandchildren; and three great-great grandchildren. Her daughter, Kaye West,



Wilma Ruth West

died in 2012.

Memorial services will take place graveside at Skylawn Memorial Park in March.

Email Debbie Friant at debFriant@yahoo.com if you are interested in attending.

Visit tinyurl.com/Health-130 to make a memorial donation to the Christian Health Service Corp.

Visit tinyurl.com/West-125 to leave remembrances on the Almanac's Lasting Memories website. Obituaries are based on information provided by the family.

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Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

Stanford-Arrillaga project: Boon or doom?

■ Concerns aired at lengthy study session.

By **Sandy Brundage**

Almanac Staff Writer

What's worse than a string of empty car lots? Eight acres of mixed-use office space, retail and apartments, according to the many public speakers and some Menlo Park officials. What's better than a string of empty car lots? Eight acres of mixed-use office space, retail and apartments, according to Stanford University, developer John Arrillaga and other city officials.

The university proposes replacing car lots along 300 to 500 El Camino Real with a mixed-use complex of 96,000 square feet of medical offices,

133,500 square feet of offices, 10,000 square feet of retail, and two five-story apartment buildings containing up to 150 units.

The Menlo Park Planning Commission held a study session on Jan. 28 to examine the project, and more than 100 people crowded into the council chambers to participate.

Steve Elliott, managing director of real estate for the university, described the project as "a rare opportunity to create a transformational development" that would benefit the community by providing more local shopping and dining, medical services, and housing that would appeal to seniors.

It's the nature of that transfor-

mation that inspired 451 people to sign a petition protesting the proposal. Save Menlo, the grassroots coalition that organized the petition, was out in force Monday night.

Save Menlo says 451 people have signed a petition protesting the proposal.

"The reason why I feel personally that we need to save this current Menlo Park and save the vision of Menlo Park that so many people in this room participated in, not more than six months ago during the specific plan planning process, is to save all those things that we hold dear," said group

spokeswoman Perla Ni.

Among Save Menlo's concerns: the impact of added traffic on bicyclists and pedestrians; the potential for cars cutting through neighborhoods to dodge congestion on El Camino Real; the incongruity of five-story buildings across the street from single-story businesses; and lack of public benefits.

Other worries include whether this one project would devour most of the new development allowed within the boundaries of the downtown/El Camino Real specific plan, which caps new residential units at 680, and non-residential at 474,000 square feet.

Senior Planner Thomas Rogers said that's inaccurate. He referred to the staff report: "As such, the 500 El Camino

Real proposal would represent between 20 and 23 percent of the residential uses and 45 percent of the non-residential uses."

Feeding the community's anxiety over the anticipated traffic impact are the constraints imposed by the new specific plan, which limit the city's control over projects that meet baseline requirements — as Stanford's proposal does — to architectural review.

The review must evaluate criteria such as whether a project matches the general character of a neighborhood, and whether it damages the "harmonious and orderly growth" of Menlo Park. Planning commissioners hinted that passing the architectural

See **ARRILLAGA**, page 8

El Camino Real traffic lights are still not fixed

By **Sandy Brundage**

Almanac Staff Writer

Feel like a long time since traffic streamed smoothly along El Camino Real in Menlo Park? It's not your imagination.

Caltrans has yet to finish repairing the traffic-light snafu created when a crew working on a repaving project at the intersection of El Camino Real and Santa Cruz Avenue accidentally cut electrical lines feeding into the signal synchronization system on Oct. 1.

"A portion of the issue was corrected, but the loops that detect traffic have not been fully connected," said Chip Taylor, Menlo Park public works director. "Also, several traffic controllers need to be replaced and the final striping needs to be completed. Since this is a Caltrans project, the city does not have control."

He said he plans to keep pushing Caltrans to complete the project in a "very timely manner" — and agreed that the transportation agency's definition of "timely" leaves something to be desired.

Caltrans initially projected that the lights would be back to normal by mid-November. Cold

weather delayed the project's completion, according to agency representatives.

"At night it has been freezing temperatures, leaving the contractor unable to complete the striping. I was told by the resident engineer that the contractor scheduled striping every night, but had to cancel every time the weather was too cold," said Caltrans spokeswoman Gidget Navarro.

Striping started the night of Jan. 30, and was scheduled to be finished by Feb. 1, according to Ms. Navarro. But that's only the first step in what sounds like a two-week long process in getting the traffic lights synchronized again.

The 16 control loops on each side of El Camino Real allow signal lights to adjust "on demand" to the amount of traffic. Without them, you get the standstill traffic now gracing commutes through downtown Menlo Park. Once striping is finished, Caltrans said the remaining traffic-sensing loops must be reconnected, then signals checked and programmed, before the snarls will ease up.

"The ones that are OK are being programmed as we speak.

Signals have been unsynchronized for almost five months.

See **TRAFFIC**, page 8



Michelle Le/The Almanac

Louis Matas dances the polka with his good friend Vi Janis at his 99th birthday party.

Call out the band: Lou Matas turns 99

By **Renee Batti**

Almanac News Editor

For years, he's crooned for others as a member of an itinerant singing group, and entertained celebratory crowds as part of a marching band. But it was Louis Matas' turn to be serenaded and celebrated last week at a local restaurant as he turned 99.

A crowd of 50 to 55 helped Mr. Matas, a resident of Ather-

ton for more than 40 years, celebrate the end of his ninth decade on Jan. 29, a day before his birthday. They all gathered at Harry's Hofbrau in Redwood City, where Mr. Matas and his longtime neighbor, Doug Anderson, have dinner every Tuesday night.

It was Mr. Anderson who organized the celebration — the second consecutive birthday party at Harry's. "The third

one I'm scheduling for AT&T Park," Mr. Anderson says.

Between now and then, though, Mr. Matas has lots to do. A tenor with the Golden Tones singers, he rehearses with the group every Friday in San Mateo, and sings three times a month at convalescent facilities on the Peninsula.

His music skills are also

See **LOU**, page 8

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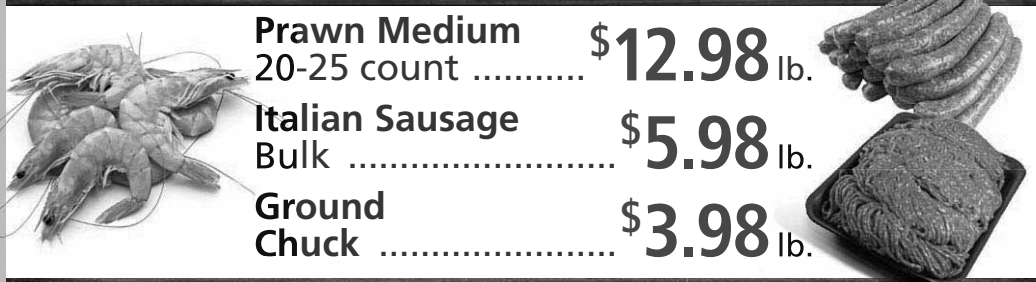


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Menlo Park hires new police chief

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Robert Jonsen, a 26-year veteran of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, has been named the new police chief of Menlo Park.

He succeeds Lee Violett, who has led the department during the interim since the former chief, Bryan Roberts, left in August 2012 after only 23 months in the position. Mr. Jonsen arrives at a troubled time for the police department, and will be the fifth chief hired during the past eight years.

Expected to take over in mid-February, the new chief "brings a unique blend of successful experience in police operations, community awareness and sensitivity, and innovative use of technology," Mr. McIntyre said in a press release on Jan. 30. The position comes with a \$185,000 annual salary.

For the past two years, Mr. Jonsen served as captain of the Lancaster Sheriff's Station in Los Angeles County, overseeing 227 deputies in the city of about 157,000 residents. Prior to

that, he headed an "anti-crime effort in Antelope Valley that helped reduce crime rates to their lowest in over a decade," according to the press release.

Mr. Jonsen earned a bachelor's degree from California State University, Long Beach, and a master's degree in organizational leadership from Woodbury University in Southern California.

"There are no words to adequately express my excitement returning to the Bay Area after living and working in Los Angeles for the past 30 years," Mr. Jonsen said in the press release. He was born and raised in the Bay Area, according to Menlo Park city staff.

He will be formally appointed after the city completes the background check required of California police chiefs when they accept a position with the department of another jurisdiction. ■



Bob Jonsen

Veteran faces evaluation in Woodside shovel attack

A military veteran who said he served in Iraq will be evaluated for his competency to stand trial on charges that he used a shovel as a deadly weapon and attempted to disarm a police officer in a Dec. 12 incident in Woodside.

Milo Mcintosh Imrie, 23, pleaded not guilty to all charges in December and has been in county jail on \$25,000 bail.

A Superior Court judge suspended criminal proceedings at a Feb. 1 hearing and continued the case to Feb. 5 for the appointment of mental health professionals to evaluate Mr. Imrie, who may have post-traumatic-stress disorder,

according to a report by the San Mateo County District Attorney's Office.

Were Mr. Imrie to make bail, he would have to stay in a residential treatment center, prosecutors said. Geoff Carr, his defense attorney, "expressed a doubt" as to his client's competency to stand trial, prosecutors said.

In the Dec. 12 incident, Mr. Imrie allegedly threatened violence to himself and to his cousin in his cousin's Woodside home, prosecutors said. Deputies arrested Mr. Imrie at the Menlo Country Club, to which he had fled after allegedly hitting his cousin with a shovel, prosecutors said.

Man exposes himself to girl

A man driving a white van exposed himself to a girl walking near Ivy Drive and Windermere around 7:45 a.m. Friday, Feb. 1, Menlo Park police said.

The man asked the girl in Spanish whether she knew the janitor at her school, and threatened her if she told anyone what he'd done, according to the police report.

The van drove away east on Chilco Street. The driver

was described as a heavy-set, unshaven Hispanic man, possibly in his 30s and with a light complexion, wearing a white T-shirt, blue pants and black baseball cap.

Menlo Park police ask parents and children to review safety precautions and call police when they see something out of the ordinary. To report information, call police at 330-6300 or the anonymous tip line at 330-6395.

Court denies schools' appeal to recover losses in Lehman collapse

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

A state appeals court on Jan. 31 approved the dismissal of a lawsuit brought against San Mateo County by 12 county school districts — including the Menlo Park City, Las Lomas, Portola Valley and Woodside districts — over the collective loss of about \$20 million in investments resulting from the 2008 Lehman Brothers collapse.

The districts sued the county and its treasurer at the time, Lee Buffington, in January 2011, claiming that the county failed to act “with care, skill, prudence and diligence” in managing the county investment pool that school districts are required, for a substantial fee, to put their bond revenue and other working funds in.

Other public agencies in the county, and the county itself, had funds in the investment pool, which lost a total of about \$155 million with the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy.

The First District Court of Appeals ruled that the county's investment decisions are “discretionary activity which should not be the subject of scrutiny and second-guessing,” according to a press release from the county.

Of the local school districts that joined the legal action, the Menlo Park City School District took the biggest hit by far: It lost nearly \$4 million. The Ravenswood School Dis-

trict lost about \$854,500; the Las Lomas district, almost \$400,000; the Portola Valley district, nearly \$150,000; and the Woodside district, about \$100,000.

The Sequoia Union High School District, which didn't participate in the lawsuit, lost about \$6.5 million.

The school districts' actions were led by the county Office of Education, headed by Superintendent Anne Campbell.

The lawsuit asserted that the

The districts lost \$20 million in the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy.

treasurer's office violated state and county investment policies; failed to adhere to legally required prudent investment practices; failed to properly diversify the \$155 million in investments “among sectors of the economy”; and failed to sell the Lehman notes “after learning of deterioration in the finances, credit rating, and stock price of Lehman.”

Stuart Gasner of Kecker & Van Nest, the San Francisco law firm representing the county, said the court's ruling centered on its main finding that the defendants were immune from the civil action.

In the county-issued press release, Mr. Gasner said, “We are pleased with the decision and that a three-judge panel

essentially came to the conclusion that we have argued all along: the treasurer cannot be sued for making complex investment decisions or for failing to predict Lehman's collapse.”

“This lawsuit was a bad idea from the start,” Mr. Gasner told the Almanac. He said he had tried to convince the plaintiffs that a lawsuit would be a waste of time and money, and that it would merely be “seeking to move money from one pocket to another.”

Ms. Campbell could not be reached for comment by press time. It is unknown whether the plaintiffs will seek a review of the appeals court decision by the state Supreme Court.

After filing the claim two years ago, Superintendent Campbell told the Almanac that her office, school district representatives and the county had been working together for nearly two years to find ways to recover the money, but that the talks didn't yield satisfactory results. She said the districts not only wanted their money back, but wanted “to be sure that the policies of the county investment pool have been changed to make sure this doesn't happen again.”

In November 2011, a San Francisco Superior Court judge dismissed the lawsuit, ruling that the county and its treasurer were immune from civil suits. The appeals court was asked to review the decision. ■

Parcel tax public hearing set for Feb. 6

By Renee Batti
Almanac News Editor

■ SCHOOLS

Just ahead of a Feb. 6 public hearing to discuss renewal and possible increase of the district's parcel tax, Portola Valley School District Superintendent Carol Piraino has sent a message to the community emphasizing the need for local funding that can't be touched by the state.

“We know we can't rely on the state to provide the quality of education our students deserve,” Ms. Piraino said in a written statement. “That is why the governing board is currently evaluating options to renew and enhance this stable source of local funding. ...”

The existing parcel tax measures C and D both expire next year. The two-school district raises almost \$1 million annu-

ally with the tax — nearly 10 percent of its budget.

District property owners now pay a total of \$458 per parcel per year. Although district officials had hoped voters might support not only renewal of the tax but a hike of close to \$200, a recent survey showed that an increase of \$123 to \$129 might be more palatable to likely voters.

The district may place renewal measures on the ballot as soon as May.

Spending of parcel tax revenue is restricted to educational programs with emphasis on science, math, reading and writing instruction; attracting and retaining qualified, experienced teachers; supporting arts and music programs; and maintain-

ing small class size.

“If a measure is placed on the ballot, you can be assured that no funds from the measure will be used for administrator salaries, an independent citizens' oversight committee and annual audits will be required to ensure funds are used properly, and an exemption will continue to be available for seniors to make certain the cost is not a burden to those on a fixed income,” Ms. Piraino said in her statement.

The public hearing is set for 6 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 6, in room 102 of Corte Madera School, 4575 Alpine Road in Portola Valley. After the hearing, the school board will nail down the specifics of what it will put before voters, and will act on the district's recommendation to place the parcel tax measures on the May 7 all-mail ballot. ■



REAL ESTATE TRENDS

by Samia Cullen

What to Expect In 2013

Local home prices rebounded last year and are expected to continue the upward trajectory in 2013. Our local market saw median home prices increasing to above the record prices of the 2007 recession, shattering expert predictions at that time that the real estate market would never look the same. Home sellers again will be in the driver's seat with bidding was a common occurrence due to pent-up demand and low inventory. While homes will sell quickly this year, they still have to be priced right.

Here's a rundown of what to expect from the market:

- 1) Increasing home prices will bring reluctant homeowners off the sidelines.
- 2) Expect home prices to jump at least 6% this year.
- 3) The Federal Reserve has held interest rates steady at near-record lows over the last several years in an effort to entice buyers into the market, and experts are

not expecting significant jumps in rates this year. Rates could move modestly higher this year to around 4% but still be among the lowest in a generation.

4) The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau issued new qualified mortgage standards last January that detail criteria lenders must use to determine if a borrower qualifies for a loan. Experts expect more mortgage rules to be handed down this year to help prevent reckless lending that led to the meltdown.

5) Buyers should start the mortgage lending process at least one month before they plan to start seriously looking because experts expect the process to take longer under the new lending standards.

6) House hunters should be ready to move quickly if they find the right house as inventory is expected to remain at low levels throughout the year.

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Marching band member turns 99

LOU

continued from page 5

on display in the washboard section of the colorful Los Trancos Woods Community Marching Band, in which his neighbor, Mr. Anderson, plays snare drum. The band marches in celebrations such as the St. Patrick's Day and Columbus Day parades in San Francisco. Mr. Matas notes that he brings up "the tail end of the band."

Performers with both the Golden Tones and the marching band were at the birthday party, as was banjo player John Robbins, whose group, Happy Time Banjos, performs at the hofbrau on Tuesdays. Mr. Anderson says the banjo player came early that night to join in with other musicians in the room to provide the celebratory sounds for the event.

Granddaughter Patricia Poole flew in from Washington state for the party, and offered a tribute to Mr. Matas, Mr. Anderson says. Atherton Mayor Elizabeth Lewis, whom Mr. Matas calls "the nicest mayor on the Peninsula," presented the honoree with a proclamation from the town.

Also in attendance was Rigo Laguardia, an official of the San Mateo County Carpenters Union No. 217 — an organization Mr. Matas has belonged to longer than any other member, Mr. Anderson says.

A self-described craftsman during his long career, Mr. Matas built many homes on the Peninsula, including in Atherton, getting his contrac-

Lou Matas has built many homes on the Peninsula, including in Atherton.

tor's license in the 1940s, he says. Mr. Anderson says he likes to joke with his neighbor about the number of homes in town he's help to build, noting that "he's been in more women's bedrooms than any man in Atherton."

The two men have been pals just about as long as they've been neighbors: about 40 years. "He's a wonderful neighbor," Mr. Anderson says. "He has five tools of anything you need," and fixes anything in Doug and Pamela Anderson's home that

Mr. Anderson "can't use duct tape or WD-40 on," he says.

A San Francisco native, Mr. Matas worked in the shipyards for the defense industry during World War II. He and his wife, Marie, had two daughters: Libby and Madelyn. Both Marie and Libby have passed away, and Madelyn lives in Washington state, Mr. Matas says.

He's a man of many interests. In addition to music, Mr. Matas belongs to two Model A clubs, and owns a completely restored 1929 Model A Ford. And, he still drives, possessing a license that expires when he turns 103. "But I don't drive at night," he says, adding that he relies on friends to give him a ride if he goes out after dark.

He's in good health, with no medical problems, he says. And what's the secret to long life? "How can we tell?" he responds. "I believe that, number one, you get a certain something from your father and your mother.

"The second thing is, all things in moderation." Perhaps so, but few people who know him are likely to say that Lou Matas is moderate in his enthusiasm for living. ■

Stanford-Arrillaga project: Is it doom or a boon?

ARILLAGA

continued from page 5

review gauntlet might not be a cakewalk.

Commissioner Henry Riggs noted that "this is not the architecture I expected from the guideline that it be harmonious with the neighborhood."

The commission requested further analysis of the traffic impacts and retail parking, questioned the suitability of the multi-story, modernistic design, and wondered whether the project's Middle Avenue plaza is truly public space, or whether it's functionally a three-lane easement for cars accessing the complex.

"I saw a plaza ... as being the substantial benefit in trade for the scale that's being allowed here," said Commissioner John Kadwany. "This is barely a plaza." He called for Stanford to explore further options.

City staff cautioned against using architectural review to stymie a proposal. "The Planning Commission has a track record of how it has applied the architectural control findings," Mr. Rogers said. "I would say that those findings have not been used in a way to extend beyond the look and feel, which is a very meaningful part of the process, but not

extend beyond those to arbitrarily deny a use or size of a building if it conforms with another set of ordinances or design guidelines."

He noted that the most applicable architectural review criteria, in this case, is whether a project conforms to the specific plan. As for whether traffic impacts were adequately analyzed by the specific plan, Mr. Rogers said that discussion will continue.

Staff expects the proposal to return to the Planning Commission later this year. Commissioner John Onken is recused from these discussions due to a conflict of interest.

The floor-area ratios that trigger public benefit discussions were scheduled for council review when the specific plan was approved in June 2012. Although Stanford has already submitted its project, this summer the council will have the opportunity to set a lower trigger level for future proposals.

Editor's note

The Almanac recently reported that revisions to the proposal increased the project's size by 5,000 square feet. The January 2013 revision increased the total project size from 357,500 to 443,200 square feet, a change of 85,700 square feet created by adding housing units. ■

TRAFFIC

continued from page 5

They have to be cut, spliced and wired to each main box at each

intersection," Ms. Navarro said on Jan. 31. "All the signals are anticipated to be back to normal in the next two weeks when all the loops have been checked." ■

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Princess Ida and Prince Hilarion are sworn to marry when they come of age but Ida refuses and has gone off to start a women's university where she teaches that man - not woman, just man - is descended from apes. Romantic Hilarion and two friends disguise themselves as women in order to enroll and

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Woodside Elementary School District will be accepting applications for the **Fall 2013 Preschool Classes beginning March 1, 2013.**

Woodside Preschool is a half-day, fee-based program running from 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Children must be at least 2 years, 9 months old as of September 2nd, 2013 in order to apply. Preschool students are placed in either the Preschool or Pre-K class based on age and availability. Priority is given to children living within the Woodside School District boundaries.

Interested families are encouraged to attend our Orientation and fill out an application. Applications will be available for pick up at the elementary school office or download online beginning March 1st. For more information regarding Woodside Preschool please

contact **Lisa** at ldayeh@woodsideschool.us,
(650) 851-1571 ext 250 or visit our website
at www.woodside.k12.ca.us.

Pastor Bostic memorial bench

Dr. Hattie L. Bostic, the late pastor and co-founder of Mt. Olive Apostolic Original Holy Church of God in Menlo Park, was honored with a bench dedicated in her memory in Hamilton Park on Jan. 20. Pastor Bostic, a community leader in the Belle Haven neighborhood for more than 50 years, died in 2011. The dedication ceremony was conducted by her son, Bishop Teman Bostic, present-day pastor of Mt. Olive, located at 605 Hamilton Ave. in Menlo Park.



Pastor Bostic



PV man pleads guilty to tax evasion

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Portola Valley resident Christopher B. Berg has pleaded guilty to federal charges that he willfully failed to inform tax authorities about \$642,069 he had deposited in a secret Swiss bank account in 2005, according to a Jan. 30 statement from the U.S. Department of Justice. Had details of the account been disclosed, Mr. Berg would have had a tax liability of

\$270,757, prosecutors said.

Mr. Berg could be fined up to \$250,000 and sentenced to five years in prison, prosecutors said. A sentencing hearing is set for July 8 at the U.S. District Court in San Jose.

Mr. Berg set up the secret account in 2000 at the San Francisco offices of the Swiss bank UBS “to shelter a portion of his consulting income from taxation,” prosecutors said. Between 2001 and 2005, he used wire transfers to make deposits at

UBS, and used that money in Europe, including for traveling expenses and the purchase of a vehicle.

Mr. Berg did not inform his accountant about the UBS account nor did he disclose the deposits and income earned on those deposits, prosecutors said. The law requires U.S. citizens to disclose the existence of foreign accounts with assets valued at more than \$10,000, and any interest in or authority over such accounts. ■

A farmers’ market in downtown Woodside?

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Skyllonda residents and the Woodside Town Council welcomed a farmers’ market on Wednesday afternoons at Skyline Boulevard and La Honda Road in Woodside. Would the council, residents and downtown merchants welcome another one, perhaps in the public parking lot outside of Town Hall on Saturday afternoons?

Maggie Foard, who manages the Wednesday market, proposed this idea in brief remarks at the council’s Jan. 22 meeting. Because she brought it up during the public comment period — the item was not on the formal agenda — the council refrained from commenting.

The idea for the Wednesday market at Skyllonda met with near universal acclaim from the council and the community last fall. A commercial use permit was amended to allow open-air sales at the site. The market closed for the season in mid-December and is set to reopen in April.

A Saturday farmers’ market in downtown Woodside would present complications. Ms. Foard is seeking space

on public property that is not zoned for such activities, so she would need a variance, she said. A market would take parking spaces in a town chronically short of parking. And Roberts Market just down the block has a significant produce section.

If Ms. Foard applies for a use permit, town staff would assess the factors, including effects on

‘I envision a friendly and intimate farmers’ market with a focus on local seasonal organic produce. ...’

MAGGIE FOARD

parking and access for people with disabilities, Deputy Town Manager Paul Nagengast told the Almanac. When someone proposes some activity on public property, “the question always is, ‘Would we issue ourselves a permit?’” he said. The matter could end up before the Planning Commission, the council or both.

The market can be seen as an activity to strengthen community spirit and help the residents live sustainably, objectives that

are embodied in Woodside’s recently revised general plan, Ms. Foard noted.

“I envision a friendly and intimate farmers’ market with a focus on local seasonal organic produce from nearby small family farms and other small food producers to complement but not compete with the existing local specialty stores,” Ms. Foard said. “I think the Wednesday market has accomplished this nicely and having a second local market on the weekend would be the icing on the cupcake so to speak.”

The market would be certified by the county Agriculture Department, as is the Wednesday afternoon market and the Sunday markets in downtown Menlo Park and at Canada College. A certified market in San Mateo County requires that the produce be sold by the outfit that grew it.

Among the items available at Woodside’s Wednesday afternoon market are organic fruits and vegetables, organic grass-fed beef and chicken, free-range eggs, wild and sustainable seafood, local honey and cheeses and fair trade coffee, Ms. Foard said. “So it’s very different than a farm stand or produce market. It is direct from farm to table.” ■



February 4
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Former 49er accused of assault in Menlo Park

By **Dave Boyce**

Almanac Staff Writer

A jury trial is set for April in San Mateo County Superior Court for former San Francisco 49er offensive tackle and Palo Alto resident Kwame Harris. San Mateo County prosecutors have charged Mr. Harris with felony assault resulting in great bodily injury in a fight with a former romantic partner in August 2012 at Su Hong To Go, which serves Chinese take-out food at 630 Menlo Ave. in Menlo Park.

The alleged victim, Southern California resident Dmitri Geier, is suing Mr. Harris in civil court in San Mateo County over the incident. According to the civil complaint dated Oct. 24, 2012, Mr. Harris allegedly punched Mr. Geier in the face several times and with “full force,” leaving him with broken bones around an eye socket, damage that required a steel plate to repair.

Sacramento-based attorney Alin Cinteau, who is defending Mr. Harris in the criminal case, said that Mr. Geier hit Mr. Harris first and that Mr. Harris made a “reasonable response” to being “wrongfully assaulted.” It was, Mr. Cinteau added, “a verbal confrontation and escalated from there. Mr. Geier hit my client.”

If convicted, Mr. Harris could spend up to nine years in state prison, Assistant District Attorney Albert A. Serrato told the Almanac. Prosecutors offered Mr. Harris a plea agreement, but he rejected it, Mr. Cinteau said. Mr. Harris is out of custody on \$75,000 bail. A trial is set for 8:45 a.m. on April 29.

According to the civil complaint and accounts by prosecutors, the incident began over a

to-go container of rice that Mr. Harris and Mr. Geier were to share before Mr. Harris drove Mr. Geier to San Francisco International Airport. An argument ensued after Mr. Geier poured soy sauce into the open lid of the rice container and Mr. Harris objected, Mr. Serrato said.

After several minutes of arguing, Mr. Harris allegedly told Mr. Geier to find another way to the airport and that he (Mr. Harris) planned to throw Mr. Geier’s belongings out of his car. Mr. Geier accepted this change in



Kwame Harris

plans, prosecutors said, adding that he would retrieve his belongings from the vehicle. But on the way out of the restaurant, Mr.

Harris allegedly began pushing Mr. Geier and trying to pull down his pants, accusing Mr. Geier of having stolen his underwear.

Mr. Harris is 6 feet 7 inches tall and, in his playing days, weighed 310 pounds, according to Pro-Football-Reference.com. The civil complaint describes Mr. Geier as “much smaller.”

Once outside, Mr. Harris allegedly grabbed Mr. Geier by the front of his shirt and punched him several times on the arms. Mr. Geier punched back, managing to connect with Mr. Harris’ face perhaps three times. Mr. Harris then allegedly punched Mr. Geier in the face several times and Mr. Geier fell to the ground.

Mr. Harris removed Mr. Geier’s belongings from his car and drove away. Mr. Geier managed to hail a cab and was treated at O’Connor Hospital in San Jose. ■

Urban farming pioneer gives talk

Will Allen, urban farming pioneer and national food policy leader, will open this year’s Wallace Stegner lecture series at 8 p.m. Monday, Feb. 11, at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts. The talk will be followed by a book signing and reception.

The evening kicks off the 20th anniversary of the series, presented annually by the Peninsula Open Space Trust. Speakers explore issues related to land, nature, and the environment in honor of the late author and conservationist Wallace Stegner.

Will Allen started his career in the 1970s as a basketball player. Retiring from sports, he joined

Proctor & Gamble in marketing and sales. Son of a sharecropper, he eventually left corporate life to return to his roots in farming.

He purchased a plot of inner-city land in Milwaukee, which evolved into his current non-profit, Growing Power. He now oversees an urban farming program that trains community members to grow food using resources at hand.

Tickets at \$22 may be ordered from the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts box office at 903-6000. Series subscriptions are available for \$325, \$175 and \$75 per person.

Visit openspacetrust.org/lectures to subscribe.

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Matt is the go-to Realtor for Silicon Valley's most exclusive clientele, offering elite customer service and a pleasant, professional experience. After starting his own company at the age of 22 and with over thirteen successful years in outside sales, Matt understands the needs of business professionals, venture capitalists, professional athletes and celebrities. His savvy know-how and entrepreneurial approach to marketing and advertising get his clients out-of-the-box results.



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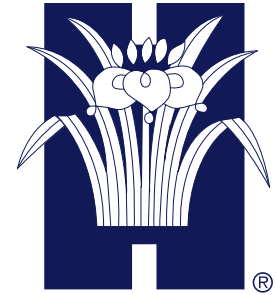
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Cyclist's account of road-rage event

By Dave Boyce

Almanac Staff Writer

A Portola Valley resident said he was among about 100 cyclists at the scene of a road-rage incident involving a pickup truck on Jan. 26 in Woodside. Mark, who asked that his last name not be used, said he called the Almanac to present another view of the incident, and said he contacted the Sheriff's Office with his account.

The driver of the pickup truck reported to deputies that some 50 bicyclists attacked his truck on Jan. 26. He said that shortly after 10:30 a.m., the cyclists surrounded his truck at the stop sign on Canada Road at Wood-

side Road and then kicked and punched the vehicle, leaving it with a scratched door and a shattered mirror.

It was the same group of cyclists he'd passed earlier on Canada Road, the driver told deputies. He said he had no idea what prompted the road rage.

Mark's account

A group of cyclists was heading south "really fast" on Canada Road when a pickup "blew by us just crazy fast," Mark said, "Everybody just kind of cut over to the right so we wouldn't get hit."

Congestion allowed four or five riders to catch the truck at

the Woodside Road stop sign, Mark said. They blocked the truck and were pounding on it — and the driver was getting out. "Oh man, this is not good," Mark said he recalled thinking. He said he yelled at the cyclists to cool it and at the driver to stay inside, "and he did, thank god."

"What the cyclists did after the fact was absolutely wrong and illegal. But he used his car as a weapon," he added.

There are problem drivers and problem riders, Mark noted. "It was good that that guy got back in his car," he added. "I thought it was going to get really, really out of hand." ■

Planning Commission reviews BevMo

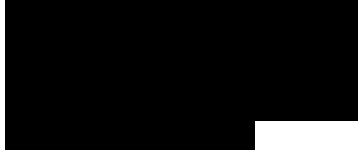
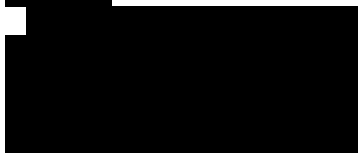
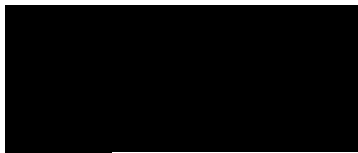
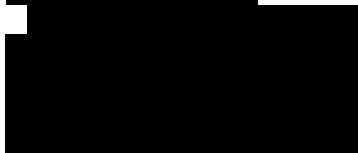
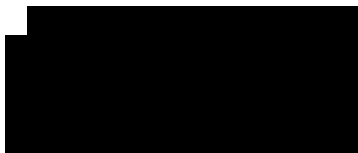
It seems like only yesterday that some Menlo Park residents rose up against allowing a Beverages & More at 700 El Camino Real. A divided Planning Commission, followed by a split City Council, finally approved the use permit in 2010, and the new BevMo opened in February 2011.

The permit called for planning commissioners to review operations two years after the El Camino Real location opened. According to the staff report for the Feb. 4 meeting, fears of rampant crime have failed to materialize.

The police department reported three incidents at the BevMo — one armed robbery in May 2011; one public intoxication and trespassing in April 2012; and one bicycle theft from in front of the store in September 2012. Spot checks of the store found that employees kept the parking lot clear of shopping carts, and the miniature bottles of alcohol locked in display cases, as requested by city officials as a condition of approving the permit.

The staff report did not discuss whether the BevMo has taken business away from local proprietors, such as the Beltramos, who had contributed their share of protests against allowing a new competitor to open in town.

■ BRIEFS



Jack A. Hybl

May 27, 1926 – Jan. 22, 2013

Jack Hybl passed away peacefully on Tues. Jan. 22 from lung cancer. He was born in Oak Park, IL. He lived there with his mother, twin sister and older brother until he joined the Marines in 1943. He married Beverly Jean in 1950 in Oklahoma City. They moved to California where Jack managed a pottery shop in Los Angeles. They later moved north to the Bay Area's Kings Mountain, where Jack was first a machinist at American Gear. He later went on to start RX Plastics and his own Mr. Gears Company. Jack helped start the Kings Mtn. Volunteer Fire Brigade as well as the Kings Mtn. Art Fair. Later he lived in Atherton and Menlo Park where he was a member of 1st Baptist Church as well as volunteering at other churches and missions. One of his favorite endeavors, was playing with the acclaimed harmonica foursome, the Harmonifiques. Jack loved playing the comedy roll in the group. Jack is survived by his wife of 62 years, Beverly Jean, three sons, Scott, Jeff, Joe; six grandchildren and four great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his daughter, Janet.

Jack was dearly loved by his family and all those who knew him. The celebration of Jack's life will be held at 1st Baptist Church of Menlo Park, Sat. Feb. 16 at 2:00 pm.



PAID OBITUARY

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Memorial service set for Ed Davis

A memorial service for Ed Davis, a former mayor of Portola Valley and longtime community volunteer, is set for 4 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 17, in the Community Hall at Town Center at 765 Portola Road. Mr. Davis died Jan 25 of lymphoma. He was 79.

Mr. Davis did some heavy lifting as a volunteer in serving on panels that can make great demands on one's personal time, including six years on the Planning Commission

and eight on Town Council. After retiring from the council in 2007, Mr. Davis volunteered to be the town's liaison with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

The family prefers memorial donations to the Open Space Fund, Portola Valley, 765 Portola Rd., Portola Valley, CA 94028.

Visit tinyurl.com/Davis-111 to leave a remembrance on the Almanac's Lasting Memories website.



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Viewpoint

IDEAS, THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS ABOUT LOCAL ISSUES FROM PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITY. EDITED BY TOM GIBBONEY

Districts lose fight for Lehman funds

Twelve local school districts found out last week that even though they lost millions of dollars invested by a county official in the failed Lehman Brothers investment bank, they had no recourse to sue the county to recover.

The dismissal of their case by a state appeals court wrecked the hopes of the districts, including five in the Almanac's circulation area, to pin the responsibility for their cumulative loss of about \$20 million on then-county treasurer Lee Buffington's investment policies. After the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment bank in September 2008, his strategy of using the bank for short-term investments of millions of dollars was criticized by representatives of the school districts, which were legally required to put their bond revenue and other working capital into the county's investment pool.

Mr. Buffington's trust in Lehman, despite hearing rumblings that the investment bank was on shaky ground, ultimately cost county taxpayers a collective \$155 million, a stunning loss that shocked the school districts and other government agencies that had trusted the county to safely manage their funds.

Unless the districts decide to appeal to the state Supreme Court, the case against the county is over, although the districts have recovered a small percentage of their losses in a federal case that is being pursued by the county with seven other plaintiffs.

That action was bolstered by a federal judge's decision last October, which allowed some allegations of misconduct to proceed against Lehman's London-based accounting firm of Ernst & Young, and Lehman executives, including the chairman and chief executive officer.

As part of the Lehman liquidation, the county already had been paid back \$15.2 million, about 10 percent of its total \$155 million

investment in Lehman, from distribution payments in April and October of last year. And that could grow to 22 percent or more as auditors unravel the complex distribution of what is left at Lehman.

The school districts' lawsuit, led by the county Office of Education, bristled with allegations against Mr. Buffington (who died in late 2011), claiming that the treasurer's office violated state and county investment policies, failed to adhere to legally required prudent investment practices, and failed to properly diversify the \$155 million "among sectors of the economy." It also said the treasurer failed to sell the Lehman notes "after learning of deterioration in the finances, credit rating and stock price of Lehman."

The school districts that lost big in this case include Menlo Park City, \$3.9 million; Las Lomas, almost \$400,000; Portola Valley, nearly \$150,000; and Woodside, nearly \$100,000. For the smaller districts, the losses represent just 1 or 2 percent of their total budget, but Menlo Park City lost 14 percent of its \$28 million annual budget. The Sequoia Union High School District, which includes M-A and Woodside, lost \$6.5 million (7 percent of its budget), but was not a party to the lawsuit.

Since 2008, the school districts have become much more vigilant in watching how county officials invest their money, an entirely appropriate reaction after such a large loss. Some school officials were aware of Lehman's shaky status just prior to the collapse and suggested to Mr. Buffington that he pull out of the investment bank. But he declined and his decision turned into a huge loss.

It was a monumental error that school district and county officials should make sure can never happen again.

EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

LETTERS

Our readers write

Big changes in Menlo over last 40 years

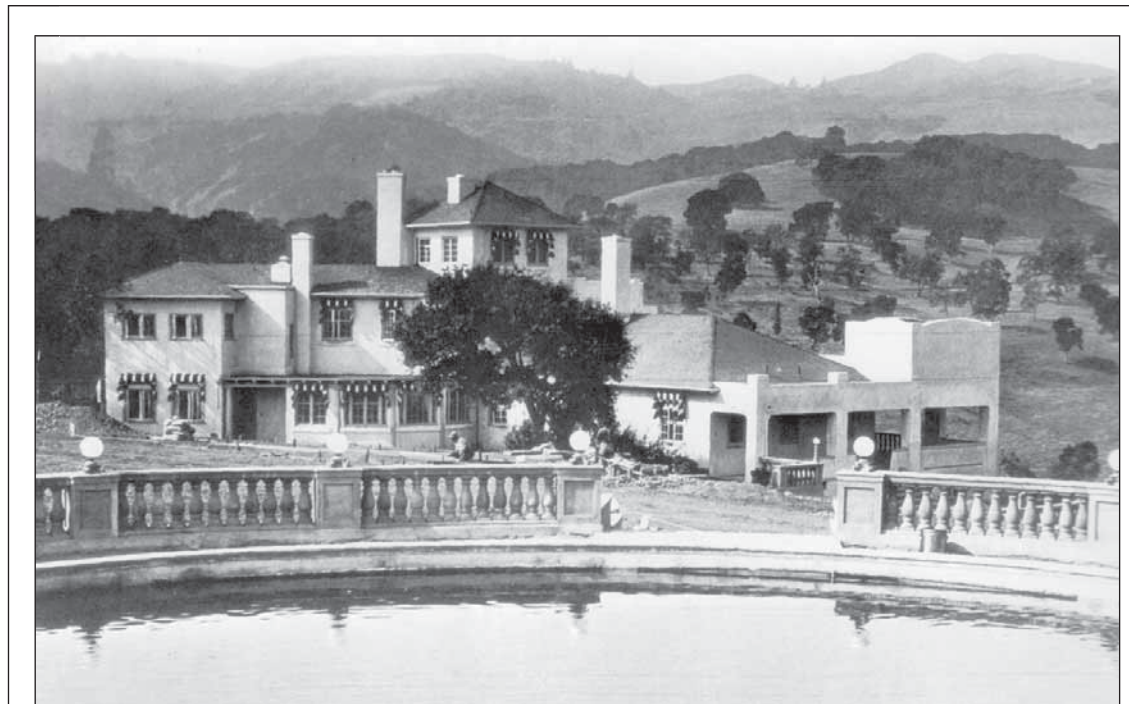
Editor:

We moved from Palo Alto to Menlo Park in 1985. Although prices were considerably cheaper back then, it was still a financial stretch for us to move into the neighborhood we wanted.

But we felt that Palo Alto just had too much of a big-city feel, that Menlo Park had the atmosphere we desired and would be a great place to raise our young family.

Over the last almost 30 years we've seen quite a few changes and the small town feel of Menlo Park gradually eroded away. Much of that change unfortunately has been due to our neighbor Stanford, in their continual push to expand and overcrowd the area in which we live.

We are deeply disappointed in Menlo Park for even considering such a massive project as the Stanford/Arillaga development in an already congested area and are therefore opposed



Portola Valley Archives

Our Regional Heritage

Portola Valley resident Herbert Law built this lavish Roman villa with a roof garden and tower as his personal residence on Willowbrook Farm in the 1920s. The farm at one time covered 90 acres, from the stone gatehouse at what is today Willowbrook Road to Alpine Road.

to the project. We see absolutely no benefit to a plan that overcrowds our streets and neighborhoods while providing very little in return.

We see what was once a great place to settle down and raise a family, a city with a small-town atmosphere, a haven in the suburban sprawl of the

Bay Area, being turned into yet another unidentifiable/forgettable town on the Peninsula that may only be remembered

Continued on next page

We must untie the El Camino traffic knot

By Henry Riggs

After nearly a decade, there is a proposal to develop vacant lots along El Camino in Menlo Park. There are significant changes needed before the project is accepted by residents, and Stanford University, the applicant, got the message last Monday night. But there was another message, for our City Council.

It was crystal clear at the four-hour Planning Commission study session: Whatever projects get built, Menlo Park residents are demanding that El Camino traffic be addressed. Now.

Unlike many building project meetings, nearly all speakers across almost two hours offered constructive, considered commentary. Given the dominating concern for traffic gridlock and neighborhood impacts (cut-through traffic), it's worth noting that not one person asked for neighborhood speed bumps or stop signs; they asked that the source of the problem — El Camino traffic flow and the added traffic of a major project — be solved by our city.

Two observations seem inescapable:

■ El Camino and related traffic has been a major resident complaint for a decade or more — and is one of the 12 visioning goals formally adopted by the council four years ago. This is not just the recent Caltrans signal-coordination problem, although that spotlights the importance of open traffic flow.

■ Whoever rebuilds the derelict El Camino corridor — as residents have hoped for years — new

buildings will bring more cars, even with aggressive alternative commute programs. Those cars must rely on El Camino as the arterial roadway — not the surrounding neighborhood streets.

We are fortunate that six large parcels are all being brought forward for development at once:

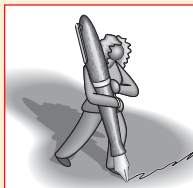
If they had separate owners and were brought forward incrementally, we might continue to kick the can down the road. The city needs to have a clear, responsible plan to not only restore full function to El Camino but to prepare for greater traffic volume — remembering that the reality of “bad traffic” is not how many cars get through — it's how many sit and wait to do so. And we need to include improved bike and pedestrian crossing between the east and west halves of downtown.

To do this, the City Council must make clear choices about street parking, dedicated bus lanes, and the appropriateness of bicycles on an arterial with multiple commercial driveways and high-demand intersections. This discussion should be scheduled promptly.

Pending that, residents will rightly continue to doubt that Menlo Park has the roadway infrastructure to handle its current traffic, let alone that from a million square feet of new construction.

Please, let's begin.

Henry Riggs is a member of the Menlo Park Planning Commission



GUEST OPINION

LETTERS

Our readers write

Continued from previous page

by those sitting in traffic while trying to drive just the short 1 1/2 miles of the city limits along El Camino Real.

We see radically increased traffic, noise and air pollution. We see more traffic signals along El Camino and in the town limits. We see more traffic-related accidents, injuries and deaths. We see property values being affected

negatively. We see increased costs. And we see a much less desirable place to live.

*Paul and Cindy Podesta
Bay Laurel Drive, Menlo Park*

express

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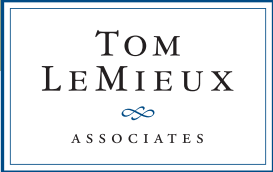
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FOR SALE



95 Fleur Place, Atherton

7 bedrooms, 9 full-, 2 half-baths, gorgeous grounds; guest house and pool
OFFERED AT \$11,750,000

FOR SALE



76 Ridge View Drive, Atherton

Pinnacle location with magnificent Bay views; multi-level 5 bedrooms, 4.5 baths with pool and spa
OFFERED AT \$4,695,000

FOR SALE



459 Walsh Road, Atherton

4-bedroom, 3.5-bath home with resort-like amenities; pool, spa & tennis; Las Lomitas schools
OFFERED AT \$3,850,000

FOR SALE



187 Byrant Street, Palo Alto

Remodeled condo with amazing outdoor living, two-story, 4-bedroom, 3-bath end unit
OFFERED AT \$1,795,000

FOR SALE



196 Selby Lane, Atherton

Craftsman with 5 bedrooms, 4.5 baths, glorious gardens, pool & spa; private cul-de-sac
OFFERED AT \$3,495,000

FOR SALE



24 San Juan Avenue, Menlo Park

New construction, Mediterranean with modern interior design, 4 bedrooms, 4 baths, 1 half-bath
OFFERED AT \$3,450,00

COMING SOON



396 Atherton Avenue, Atherton

Brand new construction, 6-bedroom, 7-full, 2-half bath estate home on over one acre
OFFERED AT \$14,500,000

SOLD



1365 Bay Laurel, Menlo Park

One-level 5-bedroom, 4-bath creekside home; just over a half-acre; detached guest house, pool
OFFERED AT \$3,950,000

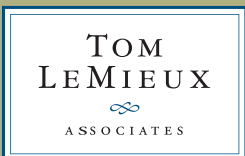
SOLD



838 Partridge Avenue, Menlo Park

Charming remodeled home in Allied Arts, one level with 2 bedrooms, 2 baths
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