

In this issue  
**Dining Out 2013**

# The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWS PAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

MAY 29, 2013 | VOL. 48 NO. 39



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Section 2

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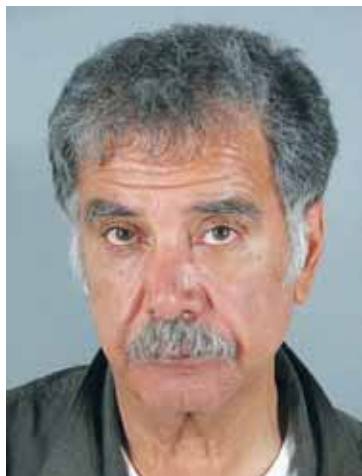
# Jury finds Woodside man guilty of murdering his wife

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

The jury in the murder trial of former Woodside resident Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh reached a verdict May 23, declaring him guilty of first degree murder in the 2010 shooting death of his wife, Parima Parineh, 56, at their Woodside home.

Mr. Parineh, 67, faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole, said San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe.

The jury, which had been deliberating since May 20, decided that Mr. Parineh had committed murder for financial gain. His wife's life was insured for \$30 million, and he had seen his real-estate holdings, valued at \$152 million in 2007, melt away to the point that he had lost all his income, and had applied for government assistance, prosecutors said.



**Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh, 67,** faces a mandatory sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Deputy District Attorney Jeff Finigan had repeatedly pointed out to the jury the improbability of the defense attorney's argument that Mr. Parineh's wife had committed suicide. Four 0.38-caliber bullets were found in Ms. Parineh's bedroom. One had gone through

her cheek and mouth, one had missed, and one may have grazed her head. The fourth shot went through her brain and killed her, prosecutors said.

"Is this the most extreme, superhuman suicide ever? No. This is murder plain and simple," Mr. Finigan told the jury.

Defense attorney Dek Ketchum attempted to establish in the jurors' minds a reasonable doubt that Mr. Parineh had committed murder. "It was a suicide gone horribly wrong by a woman not familiar with the gun," Mr. Ketchum said in his summation. "She shot herself, she struggled, she missed and then she killed herself."

San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Lisa Novak presided over the trial.

Mr. Parineh's next scheduled court appearance is at 1:30 p.m. July 12 for a pre-sentencing report, sentencing hearing and imposition of a sentence, prosecutors said. ■

## Woodside to give historic preservation award

Woodside's past, and a recognition of those who have made notable efforts to preserve it, will be celebrated between 4 and 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 29, at the Woodside Community Museum at Town Center.

At this event, the History Committee will announce the recipient of the town's first Historic Preservation Award. Appetizers. The award "celebrates property owners who have preserved and maintained historic structures and/or have demonstrated a commitment to

preservation," according to the History Committee.

To be eligible, a structure must be at least 50 years old. The award is meant to inspire others to preserve elements of the town's past that "embody (its) unique character and provide a tangible link to its rich heritage."

The Community Museum is open on the first and third Saturdays of the month between 1 and 4 p.m., or by appointment. Among the rotating exhibits are artifacts salvaged from the Jack-

ling House, an estate built for copper baron Daniel Jackling in the 1920s and demolished in February 2011 by former Apple Computer CEO and co-founder Steve Jobs after he won a decade-long battle to replace the house with something more modern.

To RSVP or for further information about the history of Woodside, your property, donations to the museum, or to arrange a private visit, call 851-1294 or send an email to woodsidehistory@woodsidetown.org.

### CALLING ON THE ALMANAC

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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## Parents push for Mandarin immersion program

■ Menlo Park City School District already offers popular Spanish immersion classes.

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

With China on a path to becoming the largest economy in the world, the interest in teaching children in the United States the Mandarin language is also growing apace. And given the climate of business innovation that keeps Silicon Valley a key player in the global economy, why shouldn't local schools offer Mandarin immersion programs to prepare kids for the global marketplace many of them will be compet-

ing in?

That's a question local parent Carol Cunningham is raising in the Menlo Park City School District, where she has been leading an effort to add such a program to the district's offerings. The effort, she told the school board at a recent meeting, is supported by more than 50 families, with about 80 children among them, and that support "is steadily growing."

Mandarin language programs are now offered as an elective at La Entrada Middle School in

the Las Lomas district and as an after-school program at Oak Knoll Elementary School in the Menlo Park City district. Mandarin instruction is also offered at the private Menlo School and Sacred Heart Prep in Atherton.

Parents say they want to prepare kids for the global marketplace.

But there is no immersion program offered in the local public schools, and Ms. Cunningham, born in the United States of Chinese ancestry, believes such an intensive program is the best way to learn a second lan-

guage. Within several years, an immersion program leads to full literacy in both English and the second language, she said in an interview with the Almanac.

The Menlo Park district has a popular Spanish immersion program, which it launched in 2008, "so the value of learning foreign language, especially in an immersion setting, has already been recognized and a foundation established in the district," Ms. Cunningham said. "We just want to expand this program to add Mandarin as another language option."

China and the Mandarin language will play an increasing role in "the bigger, global picture," Ms. Cunningham said.

"We want our children to not only compete, but to excel and prosper in a 21st century global economy. This is a message we've heard throughout this district and others, and requires innovative, strategic, and forward-thinking leadership, which the district has already demonstrated."

Ms. Cunningham has met with district Superintendent Maurice Ghysels, and with individual board members, advocating for the immersion program. Both Mr. Ghysels and school board President Terry Thygesen said the district is willing to consider such a program in the context of developing a long-

See MANDARIN, page 8

## Menlo Park action on new housing plan in final stretch

By Sandy Brundage  
Almanac Staff Writer

The fact that the housing element staff report came with 26 attachments, lettered from A to Z, predicted it would be a very long night on May 21 as the Menlo Park City Council entered the final round of fine-tuning the city's housing plan update.

By the time the meeting ended around 1 a.m., the council voted 4-0, with Rich Cline absent due to travel, to introduce most elements of the new housing plan. The council modified one clause related to how much stucco can be used on a facade when there is new construction — a maximum 80 percent seems preferred — and postponed a vote on how to regulate secondary, or granny, units.

The council agreed with rezoning four sites as potential locations for high-density housing development:

■ Gateway Apartments at two locations: the 1200 block of Willow Road and the 1300 block of Willow Road. Both sites are owned by the Mid-Peninsula Housing Coalition (78 units total).

■ Hamilton Avenue East located in the 700 and 800 blocks of Hamilton Avenue (216 units).

■ A site in the 3600 block of Haven Avenue (540 units).

A fifth site, with enough room to create 60 units on the Department of Veterans Affairs campus in the 700 block of Willow Road, is also on the list, but doesn't require rezoning.

Five Belle Haven residents spoke out against clustering the new units in their neighborhood, raising concerns about equity, crime and property values. Johnny Walton said that early in the housing element process, property owners who lived in areas being considered as potential low-income housing zones said no, while those who owned property but didn't live there said yes.

"I think that should be really considered," he told the council. "If we're the ones that have to live next to it, that should be considered."

City Attorney Bill McClure noted that the downtown/El Camino Real specific plan includes zoning for nearly as many units of affordable housing as the Belle Haven neighborhood would, and provided references to several nationwide studies that he said showed affordable housing did not lower property values provided the sites were managed well.

The council agreed with rezoning four sites as potential sites for high-density housing.

See MENLO ACTION, page 13



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

Rotary Club scholarship winners are: First row, from left: Alexis Cole, Samantha Castaneda, Alexia Lozano, Elizabeth Arellano, Ayanna Bohannon and Jennifer Guillen. Second row, from left: Ethan Williams, Cassie Stansberry, Matthew LaDouceur, Kristen Wong, Madeline Dutton-Gillett, Alex Braslavsky, Gladys Bustos, and Katie Woods. Third row, from left: Jonathan Morataya, Alaina Perkary, Jamauri Bowles, Raven Campbell, Cameron Mertens, Daniella Sanchez and Kayte Toscano. Fourth row, from left: Alexandria Mullings, Angel Cuschieri and Brian Omondi. Not pictured: Nimsi Garcia-Sandoval and Linda Torres.

## Rotary awards \$87,000 in scholarships

Twenty-four graduating seniors from local high schools received college scholarships May 20 during the 27th annual Rotary Club of Menlo Park awards ceremonies, where more than 100 additional students received academic achievement awards.

The \$87,000 in need-based scholarships were shared by students planning to attend four-year colleges and community colleges, and the recipients of two arts scholarship. Students from Eastside College Preparatory, East Palo Alto Academy, Sacred Heart Preparatory and Menlo-Atherton high schools received scholar-

ships and academic awards. Academic honors also went to students from Menlo School.

The students who received the scholastic awards were selected by their school. The awards were handed out by school principals and headmasters as parents, friends and fellow students looked on at the Menlo-Atherton High School Performing Arts Center on May 20. The ceremony was preceded by an uplifting address from Michael Pritchard, a motivational speaker well-known in the Bay Area.

Rotary Club president Tim Leary welcomed the students to the event and Rotary Club

Foundation president Lee Lipfert handed out the scholarships. Club member Michelle Tsui presented her family's math and science scholarship, awarded every year to a top-performing young woman, and two students received arts scholarships endowed by Drue Kataoka. In addition, six students received Rotary youth leadership awards for taking part in a training program for sophomores and juniors that focuses on leadership, citizenship, service, and personal growth.

Here are the recipients of

See ROTARY, page 8

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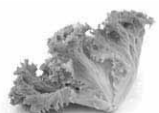
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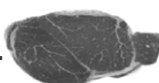
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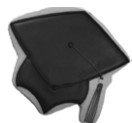


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## Wine and Spirits

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# Facebook may foot bill for Belle Haven substation

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park appears closer than ever to completing its nearly decade-long quest to open a functioning police substation in the Belle Haven neighborhood.

A site has been selected, in a strip mall at Hamilton Avenue and Willow Road, and now it looks like Facebook plans to step in to help pay the bill.

The substation would cost the city an estimated \$100,000 per year, according to the police department, and would be staffed at least part-time and include regular hours along with officers rotating through while on patrol.

City Manager Alex McIntyre told the council last week that he was meeting with Facebook executives on Friday, May 24, to finalize the deal, although Councilman Ray Mueller questioned whether the city should allow the social media company to pay for what he described as the city's responsibility to Belle Haven residents.

Facebook representatives declined to comment as the agreement had not yet been finalized.

## ■ BRIEFS

### HIP Housing to host actress Rita Moreno

Actress Rita Moreno will be featured at HIP Housing's annual luncheon on Friday, May 31.

"We moved from tenement to tenement in those early years," Ms. Moreno said in a press release. "Becoming self sufficient is so difficult without a place to land, a place to call home. Safe, affordable housing is such an important part of the equation. Mami and I were never looking for a hand out — but like most a hand up would have been greatly welcomed. I am inspired by the life-changing work of HIP Housing and other like-minded affordable housing programs. My heart is stirred, my hope rekindled and my own resolve to make a difference is strengthened."

Other speakers include comedian Dan St. Paul and state Senator Jerry Hill. The event is open to the public.

Register in advance at [hip-housing.org](http://hip-housing.org); tickets cost \$90. ■



Troop 109's new Eagle Scouts are, from left, Kevin Shimbo, Thomas Liggett, Jeremy Chow and Christopher Scherm.

## Eagle Scouts for Troop 109

Menlo Park Boy Scouts of America Troop 109 will host an Eagle Court of Honor for four young men at 1 p.m. Sunday, June 9, at the Palo Alto Scout Center, 1305 Middlefield Road, in Palo Alto. Those honored will include:

■ **Kevin Shimbo**, 14, a sophomore at Menlo-Atherton High School who earned 24 merit badges and completed his Eagle project titled "An Aviary for the SPCA." The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals needed an aviary to help birds recuperate until they could be released safely into the wild. Kevin organized construction of the structure with help from Troop 109 scouts and friends.

■ **Thomas Liggett**, 18, a senior at Menlo-Atherton High School who earned 21 merit badges and constructed bulletin boards for

the Ravenswood City School District as his Eagle project. He led a team of volunteers to design and install the bulletin boards at elementary schools in East Palo Alto and Menlo Park to assist communication with families.

■ **Jeremy Chow**, 17, a senior at M-A who earned 27 merit badges and completed a mural at Belle Haven School as his Eagle project. He organized a team to create the mural to inspire leadership and aspirations for students to achieve higher education.

■ **Christopher Scherm**, 17, a senior at M-A who earned 21 merit badges. His Eagle project was creating wheelchair-accessible raised planter beds at the VA in Menlo Park so those in wheelchairs could enjoy gardening.

# Menlo transportation commissioner resigns, criticizing city staff

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Charlie Bourne has resigned after nearly six years of service on the Menlo Park Transportation Commission, citing Brown Act violations by city staff and attempts to stop the commission from reviewing projects.

He didn't mince words while speaking before the City Council on May 21. Mr. Bourne described a deteriorated relationship with city staff, saying his resignation was triggered by recent Brown Act violations forced on the Transportation Commission by staff despite his warnings, and poorly written consultant reports that weren't reviewed by staff before they were presented to the commission for approval.

The frustration came to a head on May 8, when the commission agenda stated that commissioners would discuss a report on the safe-routes-to-school project for Oak Knoll Elementary School, but did not state on the agenda's synopsis that they would be making recommendations and forwarding the plan to the council for review.

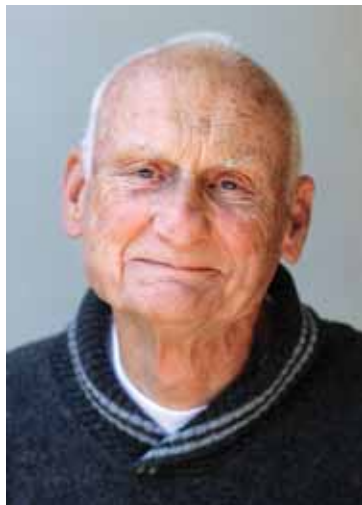
"The public — Oak Knoll parents and neighbors — had no advance notice that a plan of immediate and direct interest to them was going to be voted on that night," Mr. Bourne said.

Describing the plan as deeply flawed, Mr. Bourne wrote staff that he was "disappointed that the Project Steering Committee did not receive copies of this report and have an opportunity to review it before this meeting. I'm sure that many of them would have appreciated the opportunity to voice their concerns with this project at this meeting."

He also took issue with the limited degree of involvement the commission has with large projects, such as the Stanford-Arrillaga proposal, Stanford Medical Center, and downtown/El Camino Real specific plan.

"Our request to city staff to get those matters on our agendas and to get staff to provide relevant information to permit such a review were declined, citing council approval of the process," Mr. Bourne told the council. "Furthermore, the transportation staff would not give us their comments on the EIRs that were published for these reports."

In addition, he pointed to an attempt by city staff in April to have the council agree to have the Transportation Commis-



Charlie Bourne cites Brown Act violations, and marginalization of Transportation Commission.

sion meet in a smaller area at the Civic Center, one without video capabilities. Currently the commission meets in the council chambers, allowing the meetings to be recorded and archived online.

The item somehow wound up on the council's consent calendar — normally reserved for routine business requiring little discussion or public comment. The council declined to accept that, and instead asked for the item to be placed on the regular agenda at a future meeting.

What this all adds up to, from Mr. Bourne's perspective, is the marginalization of the Transportation Commission.

"These are the kinds of critical reviews this commission is designed to do, but not permitted to do," Mr. Bourne said. He later concluded, "Without some change in council attitudes and oversight, and some change in all levels of city staff, I see no future for this commission other than deciding where to paint the curbs red."

Transportation Commission staff liaison Rene Baile did not respond to requests for comment.

The Almanac reported last year that two commission meetings had to be canceled due to

Brown Act violations; and that staff took steps to prevent it from happening again.

Councilman Ray Mueller, who served on the Transportation Commission with Mr. Bourne before being elected to the council, said he was frustrated by the circumstances that led to his colleague's departure. "I take his resignation very seriously, and appreciate he left the commission the way he served, guns blazing."

He said he shares Mr. Bourne's concerns. "I know and appreciate our transportation staff have been buried in work and short staffed this year, and a new transportation manager just started a few weeks ago. Still, in my view the underlying problem must be corrected. The Transportation Commission needs to be included in city planning matters."

Any commission that deals with transportation impacts will at times stir public unrest or criticize city staff and City Council, Mr. Mueller commented, but that criticism is essential to the city's planning process.

What can be done? As might be expected from Mr. Bourne, professor emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley and a man with a long list of professional honors that includes the 2004 Book of the Year award from the Association for Information Science and Technology, he has a few ideas.

One, the council should insist that the Transportation Commission have a direct, major role in reviewing any projects with a transportation component, instead of relying only on the Planning Commission. Two, increased council oversight of transportation and public works staff.

He'd rather not waste time — Mr. Bourne has called for the commission to be immediately included in the ongoing review of the proposed Stanford-Arrillaga El Camino Real development. ■

## Menlo library offers tutors for e-books

With all the different formats and devices, reading eBooks is not as easy as checking out a hardcover from the library, at least at first.

To help patrons learn the ropes, the Menlo Park Library

now has eBook tutors available on Monday and Wednesday nights. They can also get people acquainted with downloading audiobooks. Call 330-2520 to make an appointment.



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## REAL ESTATE TRENDS

by Samia Cullen

### Risks of Waiving the Appraisal Contingency

In today's market buyers who are planning to write an offer on a property in a multiple offer situation have difficult decisions to make. In order to be competitive they must write their offers without contingencies. Otherwise, they have a greatly reduced chance of getting the house they want.

The appraisal contingency is one of the contingencies that sellers do not want to see in the offer. Prices are on the rise in many areas but appraisals don't always immediately catch up to these sudden increases, despite efforts by agents to keep appraisers informed of the latest sales. If a property appraises for less than the offered price, the buyer will be forced to come up with extra cash for a larger down payment or risk breaching the contract.

In response to rapidly increasing prices, the California Association of REALTORS® created a form called

"Market Conditions Advisory" that is usually part of our local disclosure package. Buyers have to read, acknowledge and sign-off on all the documents in the package. The form includes a statement that the purchase price offered by a buyer is his decision, not the real estate agent's. It also states that making an offer without contingencies — such as the appraisal contingency — is not recommended by the real estate broker.

Buyers should discuss this disclosure and waiver of the appraisal contingency with their agent. Using recent market sales data, buyers and their agent should try to estimate a likely range of appraised values for the property, so that the buyers can determine whether they have the financial flexibility to close the transaction if the property appraises for less than the offered price.

If you have a real estate question or would like a free market analysis for your home, please call me at 650-384-5392, Alain Pinel Realtors, or email me at scullen@apr.com. For the latest real estate news, follow my blog at www.samiacullen.com

## Celebrate the Hayward Design Center Grand Opening in Menlo Park



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## Kiwanis Club awards \$45,000 in scholarships

The Menlo Park Kiwanis Club has awarded \$45,000 in college scholarships to 11 Menlo-Atherton High School students.

This is the 28th consecutive year that the club has supported the scholarship program, said John Martin, chairman of the Kiwanis scholarship committee.

“We hold an interview process with each student,” he said. “Coming in, we have their applications and transcripts, so we knew that this year’s group were all-stars in the academic playing field. The fun part of our com-

mittee is to talk to these future leaders.”

Awards were given based on the student’s record of community service, academic performance, and financial need. The amounts vary, usually based on financial need, Mr. Martin said.

Awards were made to Tyler Finn, Stephen Chu, Nina Lozinski, Kathleen Muenzen, Katie Woods, Yvonne Fu, Jenna Swartz, Emily Carlson, Saane Fakalata, Gabriel Estacuy, and Maddie Napel.

### ROTARY

*continued from page 5*

this year’s Rotary Club of Menlo Park scholarship awards:

■ Tsui/Tsiang Family Math and Science Scholarship to **Elizabeth Arellano**, Eastside Preparatory, who is headed to Reed College.

■ Judge John D. Russell Scholarship to **Alex Braslavsky**, Sacred Heart Preparatory, who is headed to Columbia University.

■ Robert G. Paroli Family Scholarship to **Alaina Pekary**, who is headed to Biola.

■ Doris and Orm Rector Scholarship to **Daniella Sanchez**, Menlo-Atherton, who is headed to Northwestern.

■ Crittenden Family Scholarship to **Katherine Woods**, Menlo-Atherton, who is headed to USC.

■ Business and Professional Scholarship to **Raven Campbell**, Eastside Preparatory, who is headed to Occidental.

■ Rotary Club of Menlo Park Foundation Scholarships to: **Jamauri Bowles**, Eastside Preparatory, headed to Haverford College; **Gladys Bustos**, Eastside Preparatory, headed

to UCLA; **Samantha Castaneda**, Eastside Preparatory, headed to St. Mary’s; **Cameron Merten**, Sacred Heart Preparatory, headed to UCLA; **Alexandria Mullings**, Sacred Heart Preparatory, headed to USC; **Ethan Williams**, Sacred Heart Preparatory, headed to Stanford; **Alexis Cole**, headed to Canada College; **Mathew LaDouceur**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to College of San Mateo; **Alexia Lozano**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to Canada College; **Jonathan Morataya**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to Foothill College; and **Linda Torres**, East Palo Alto Academy, headed to Foothill College.

■ Drue Kataoka Arts Scholarships to **Brian Ormondi** and **Kristen Wong**.

■ Tom Borden Grant to: **Damby Byun**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to DeAnza College; **Angel Cuschieri**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to Foothill College; **Madeline Dutton-Gillett**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to Canada College; **Nimsi Garcia-Sandoval**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to Canada College; **Cassie Sansberry**, Menlo-Atherton, headed to San Francisco City College. ■

### MANDARIN

*continued from page 5*

term “strategic vision” for the district — a process that is likely to begin in October.

Creating a new language program can’t be done in isolation, Mr. Ghysels said. “I am still defining how we will take the holistic look at the entirety of our curriculum and instruction programs that is necessary to help provide a coherent framework for decision-making and resource allocation,” he said in an email.

At the May 13 school board meeting, Ms. Cunningham

was joined by four other parents urging the board to support Mandarin immersion in the district, emphasizing the importance of learning a language at a young age, and noting that Mandarin — the national language of China, Taiwan and Singapore — is spoken by 1.1 billion people worldwide.

Ms. Cunningham, who has two preschool-age sons, told the Almanac that many of the supporting families have children who will be entering the school district in a few years, and would like to be able to enroll them from the start in a Mandarin immersion program.



**Boys’ team**, from left, Noah Kim, Ezekiel Eason, Nathan Westfield, Yannis Hoermann and Rowan Irvine.

## Locals compete at state championships

Noah Kim of Menlo Park Gymnastics won first place on vault at the state boys gymnastics championship (level 4 and 5), held March 10 in San Luis Obispo.

Ezekiel Eason took third place in the all-around, Yannis Hoermann placed fourth on the high bar, and Rowan Irvine placed seventh on vault. In the first year of the team’s competing, these scores led the team to a third-place finish in its division. Also competing was Nathan Westfield as a level 5 gymnast.

### Menlo Sparks girls

The Menlo Sparks girls team competed in the Nor-Cal spring state championships, held April 13 in Rancho Cordova.

Dominating the junior division was Sophia Simon, who won the all-around title. She also took first on bars, second on floor, and third on vault.

Teammate Corrine Deksheniaks was impressive in the youngest division with fourth on beam, sixth on vault, and sixth all-around. In level four senior division, Hannah Shaw claimed third on vault.

In level five, Lauren Brillhart placed eighth on beam and Maddy Shapiro placed second on vault. Chelsea Wilson placed fifth on vault.

Pearce Wagner, Matt Methner and Cameron



**Menlo Sparks girls team** includes, front row, from left, Corrine Deksheniaks, Hannah Shaw and Sophia Simon; and back row, Chelsea Wilson, Maddy Shapiro and Lauren Brillhart.

Matzke coach the boys’ team. The girls’ team is coached by Savina Krakowski, assisted by Amelia Cunningham, Nicole Hyde and Cameron Matzke.

The teams train at the Arrillaga Family Gymnastics Center in Menlo Park.

“In order to enter immersion, you must enroll the child at the kindergarten or first-grade level,” she said.

She and other parents have researched possibilities for such a program, and believe “it could be designed to be cost-neutral,” with only minor costs for teacher development and textbooks, she said.

In addition to the Mandarin immersion effort, some parents are also pushing for a Mandarin language elective at Hillview Middle School. Vivien Fitzhugh said she helped create the after-school Mandarin program at Oak Knoll last fall.

“When I was working on this project, I found out there are a lot of students at different ages/grades from our school district (who) are already attending Chinese classes either in other after-school programs, Saturday schools, or with private teachers,” she said in an email.

“I believe there has been an increase in demand in Chinese language classes because parents are aware of global changes,” she said, adding that learning Mandarin “will be helpful to preparing our kids for the future, economically and socially.”

Ms. Fitzhugh said she has

spoken briefly with Hillview Principal Erik Burmeister, as well as with Superintendent Ghysels and Allison Liner, the district’s chief learning officer, about offering middle school students Mandarin language instruction, and that she and a group of parents plan to have future discussions on the matter.

Woodside High School offers Mandarin language instruction, and an effort is under way by parents to persuade Menlo-Atherton High School officials to add a program to that school’s curriculum, Ms. Cunningham said. ■



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

**Fourth-grader Sammy Rayfield** talks with his senior friend Lucy Tophan before she digs into the meal her buddies brought her, by request: homemade egg salad sandwiches, cheese and fresh fruit.

## Learning and giving: a two-way street for local kids and seniors

By **Renee Batti**  
Almanac News Editor

**K**aren Rynewicz teaches fourth-graders in a school that's among the highest-achieving in the state. It's located in a town steeped in wealth, inhabited by more holders of doctorates and master's degrees, proportionally, than most communities in the country.

Yet Ms. Rynewicz knows well that, despite the educational advantages of attending a school like Corte Madera in Portola Valley, the highest level of learning depends on extending classroom walls beyond the enviably equipped campus. For the past eight years, she and parent volunteers have shepherded her students every month to Lytton Gardens senior community in Palo Alto, where the kids work with 10 residents — interviewing them for an oral history project, performing musical programs for them, and otherwise forming friendships with them.

The program won a J. Russell Kent Award in 2007, an honor presented by the San Mateo County School Boards Association to recognize outstanding teachers and programs. The award, Ms. Rynewicz said, was for best class project in the county. “The program benefits so many people,” she said, adding that she hopes she will be able to continue it indefinitely.

The apparent benefits to the

Lytton Garden residents are many. Participation is by sign-up, and during the students' first visit of the school year, two students each are paired with one senior.

Each month, the kids engage their “senior buddies” in a range of activities; for example, there's bingo on some visits; on Valentine's Day, they passed out flowers; and in May, they catered a luncheon — each student duo asking their senior friend what he or she would like to eat, then serving it forth, often preparing it themselves.

The students also have packed along iPads to teach their older friends how to use them. Many seniors with arthritis have a hard time with desktop keypads, but can use iPad touch pads easily, Ms. Rynewicz said. Last year, the students raised money to buy an iPad for the residents, and this year's class is hoping to do the same, she said.

But while the seniors get lessons on how to use an iPad, the kids get lessons on life. That's in large part because a key component of the program is collecting oral histories. The students gather information about the lives of their senior partners through interviews and a questionnaire, then write their biographies.

Being with her senior buddy has made “life more open for me,” says student Brisa Vaughan, who with Tess Gabrielson is paired with Lorraine Congdon,

who at 95 is the oldest participant in the program and the only one who has participated all eight years of its existence.

For the May luncheon, Brisa and Tess presented a vase of roses to Ms. Congdon. They were pink and white, her favorite colors. “We love her — she's so sweet,” Brisa said of her senior friend. “And I love them,” Ms. Congdon said, beaming.

In an email she wrote after the luncheon, Brisa said: “It has changed my life to learn and be with (Lorraine) because ... she never gives up on life and just keeps trying. She just kind of taught me to never give up ...”

Before participating in the program, Brisa said, she had always “been worried around elderly people.” But after spending time with the seniors, she has learned that older people “are not that different than my friends and I. ... My friends used to be a little afraid ... but now they are OK around the old people. It reminds me of how a lot of people are scared of homeless people, and don't make eye contact, or try not to notice them.”

“I guess being with Lorraine has made me not so afraid of people that are different than me.”

In June, on their final visit to Lytton Gardens for the school year, the students will present the seniors with their biographies and perform a musical program, Ms. Rynewicz said. ■



May 27

WEEKLY REAL ESTATE REPORT



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### NOTICE OF BUDGET HEARING

The Woodside Elementary School District will hold a public hearing on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2013-14 on Tuesday, June 11, 2013 at 3:30 p.m. at the Woodside Elementary School District Office located at 3195 Woodside Road, Woodside, California. A copy of the proposed budget will be available for public examination at the above location from June 6, 2013 through June 11, 2013 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Any taxpayer directly affected by the Woodside Elementary School District Budget may appear before the Woodside Elementary School District Board of Trustees and speak to the proposed budget or any item therein.

5/29/13

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# What will new school look like, and how much should it cost?

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

What kind of school do Menlo Park City School District residents want to see built on the district's former O'Connor School site, and how much are they willing to pay for it?

A community meeting to discuss the future of the site, located in the Willows neighborhood in Menlo Park, and a bond measure that's likely to be on November's ballot asking voters to fund the project, is set for Wednesday, May 29.

The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. at Hillview Middle School, 1100 Elder Ave. in Menlo Park.

In the face of rapidly increasing enrollment in district schools, the school board earlier this year voted to take back the O'Connor campus at 275 Elliot Drive, leased since 1991 by the German-American International School (GAIS). The approximately five-acre, irregularly shaped parcel now houses one permanent 1950s-era building that includes 10 classrooms, and a number of portables, accommodat-

ing about 315 GAIS students in preschool through eighth grade.

Staff has developed a number of options for rebuilding or renovating the campus, and board members have indicated that they prefer options that would either tear down the existing building and construct entirely new facilities, or would renovate the existing building and construct additional buildings.

Projected costs of those options range from about \$13 million to \$21.75 million. Those figures are in today's

dollars, according to Ahmad Sheikholeslami, the district's facilities director. Should the board choose an option projected to cost nearly \$22 million, it is likely to ask voters to approve a bond measure of about \$30 million.

Board members also expressed support for building facilities comparable to those on the district's other four, recently modernized campuses.

Another key question community members are being asked to comment on is what class levels should be taught at the new school. Board members have indicated they favor a neighborhood school for K-5 or 3-5 programs, but other options have not been dismissed.

According to district staff,

most community members who have contributed to the discussion over the past few months have indicated they want a neighborhood school on the site. A minority of the public supports a school of choice — for example, language immersion, or a program focused on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

At the last school board meeting, board members and Superintendent Maurice Ghysels strongly supported creating a neighborhood school on the new campus, but noted that "choice" programs can also be offered there.

Go to [tinyurl.com/NewSchool13](http://tinyurl.com/NewSchool13) for a staff report listing options for the new school.



Photo courtesy Andrea Gemmet

## St. Raymond says goodbye to Nigerian pastor

St. Raymond Church in Menlo Park held a big barbecue event recently, with live music and Nigerian dancing, to say goodbye to its pastor, Father Edward Inyanawachi, who is heading back to his home parish in Nigeria. He asked the children to join him in dancing.

## Thomas Seccombe

March 4, 1948 - May 14, 2013

Tom Seccombe died of cancer on May 14 at the age of 65. Thomas Ainsworth Seccombe was born March 4, 1948 in Barre, Vt. His father, working the day of his birth, climbed a ladder to the hospital window late that night to view his son for the first time.

The family moved to the Bay Area in 1954, where Tom spent the rest of his life. Graduating from Woodside High School in 1966, he attended UC Santa Cruz for a short time, and later earned a Certificate in Computer Technology at De Anza College.

Mental health issues took a heavy toll on Tom and he courageously struggled to manage them while aspiring to live both an ethical and rewarding life. He was a generous friend and neighbor with a ready willingness to lend a hand and had a sincere concern for others, always challenging himself to do the right thing.

Community service, central to Tom's life, included refurbishing donated computers to be re-donated (which led to two trips to Cuba), working in food banks, helping the elderly and disabled, and rescuing his Cypress Garden neighbors from any electronic problems.

Tom was also a board member for the Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara for several years and his siblings spec-

ulated that, due to his characteristic conscientiousness, he was most likely the only member to read every last word of the endless reports submitted to them.

Tom pursued many interests — photographing the moon and exploring the galaxy with his immense telescope, following many musical bents, studiously reading every National Geographic. Always eager to share a new discovery, his family and friends would receive surprise gifts such as recordings of Charlie Rose Shows, mariachi concerts, or new astronomical developments.

Tom shared a singular friendship with his friend, Woody Rehanek, spending many hours together, exploring the Sierra de la Giganta mountains behind Loreto, Mexico, or swimming the blue waters of the Sea of Cortez.

The Seccombe family is especially touched and grateful for the sensitive care Woody provided Tom during his final illness and his devoted friendship over the years. Tom was the beloved son of Jean and Roger Seccombe; a caring brother to Ann, Alison, and Matt; the thoughtful uncle of Lacuna, Lytton, and Ellen; and a good friend to many. A private gathering to honor Tom's life will be held at a later time.



Realtors, from left, Lehua Greenman, Judi Kiel and Diane Rothe lend a helping hand to Bill Duncan of Menlo Park, who turned 100 on May 22.

## Helping seniors, homebound

During the weeks of May 6-10, more than 100 Silicon Valley real estate agents helped seniors and the homebound with household tasks they could no longer do on their own. This is the 12th year for the free service known as the Realtor Service Volunteer Program (RSVP).

The agents assisted seniors, ranging in age from the early 60s to 100, in more than 200 households. Those tasks includ-

ed changing smoke detectors and carbon monoxide batteries, replacing light bulbs, washing windows and watering plants. "If they can be safe with our help, they can stay in their homes for as long as possible," said Nancy Domich, who has been an RSVP volunteer for eight years.

The program was started by members of the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors in 2001.

PAID OBITUARY

■ POLICE CALLS

*This information is from the Menlo Park and Atherton police departments and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Under the law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent until convicted.*

**WEST MENLO PARK**

■ **Residential burglary report:** Deputies arrested and booked into jail Marcus Alexander of San Francisco on burglary and possession of stolen property charges after encountering him in a residence he once lived in on Sherman Avenue but that was now occupied by other tenants, May 14. Deputies searched him, with his consent, and found a credit card stolen from a current resident; deputies also determined that he had entered the residence unlawfully and taken items from the bedroom of another tenant.

**WOODSIDE**

■ **Auto burglary report:** Someone smashed a window and broke into a locked Jeep at the Park and Ride at Lawler Ranch and Sand Hill roads, causing damage estimated at \$590, May 13.

■ **Theft reports:** Someone stole a handicap placard from an unlocked vehicle on Hardwick Road, May 15.

**LADERA**

■ **Auto burglary report:** A black BMW parked in the 3200 block of Alpine Road was found May 8 with its front passenger window smashed and a leather Tumi bag, a laptop computer and various equipment missing for a total loss estimated at \$4,100.

**MENLO PARK**

**Residential burglary reports:**

■ Someone kicked in the front door of a home on Woodland Avenue and stole a laptop computer and TV for a total loss estimated at \$2,000, May 16.

■ Someone broke into an apartment storage unit on Sharon Park Drive and stole a wooden hope chest said to be worth \$500, and an \$80 Samsonite suitcase, May 20.

■ There were no signs of anything having been stolen, but a burglar alarm did sound along Woodland Avenue after someone apparently climbed through an open rear window and left through the front door, May 22.

**Auto burglary reports:**

■ Someone stole a \$300 Serato Scratch model digital vinyl-record emulator after first smashing the window of a vehicle parked along Sharon Park Drive, May 19.

■ An orange-and-black bag valued at \$4,100, a head lamp valued at \$40, and a \$200 octoscope are missing from a vehicle that was parked in an apartment building parking lot on Eastridge Avenue, May 20. Police, and a Web search, were unable to provide a description of an octoscope.

■ A \$100 laptop computer case and a \$200 SAP MiFi wireless router were stolen from a vehicle parked on Sharon Park Drive, May 19.

■ Someone stole a black Juicy brand purse after smashing the window of a vehicle parked on Marsh Road, May 17.

■ Someone broke a passenger side window of a vehicle parked on Sharon Park Drive and stole a black leather gym bag valued at \$100 and its contents, including a \$100 pair of athletic shoes and \$50 in gym clothes, May 20.

**Theft reports:**

■ A woman visiting Bedwell Bayfront Park at the end of Marsh Road reported the theft of several items from her unlocked vehicle, including a \$275 black Brahmin purse, a \$610 pair of reading glasses, \$75 in cosmetics, \$75 in cash

*Continued on next page*

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# Menlo Polo Club hosts polo classic June 9

Celebrating its 90th year, the Menlo Polo Club will host its 3rd ExpertQuote Silicon Valley Polo Classic from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, June 9, at the Menlo Circus Club, 190 Park Lane in Atherton. The event is free and open to the public.

Polo is the only sport where men, women, amateurs and professionals, in partnership with some of the best-trained animals in the world, compete on the same field, at the same time, according to a Polo Club press release.

"The Menlo Polo Club is distinguished as being one of the oldest clubs in California, second only to Santa Barbara Polo Club," says Lyn Jason Cobb is president of the Menlo Polo Club. "My grandfather, William



Lyn Jason Cobb

Gilmore, founded the club in 1923 and served as president until the war. My father, Mack Jason, took the reins after the war and served as the Menlo Polo Club president for 46 years. As a third generation player, it's been my pleasure to also serve as president and watch the club thrive."

As a member of the United States Polo Association, the Menlo Polo Club plays as part of the Pacific Coast Circuit. The circuit is home to 34 clubs and has more than 525 registered polo players.

Go to [menlopoloclub.com](http://menlopoloclub.com) for more information.



Jessica AnnaLee Photography

Members of the 2012 Silicon Valley Polo Classic vie for prizes.

Continued from previous page

ing a wrought iron decoration on top, the decoration having been stolen, May 17.

■ Someone stole a bicycle trailer from a residence on Roble Avenue, May 20.

■ Two women in their 20s entered the Willow Cove Valero gas station and stole \$167 worth of Five Hour energy drinks, then fled, May 16. Police described the women as black and in their 20s. One wore a pink top, black pants and pink shoes and wore her hair up; the other had her hair in a pony tail and wore a blue top and white pants, and was carrying a black bag.

#### Accident reports:

■ A 26-year-old woman in the company of another pedestrian in the crosswalk at the northern section of University Drive and Santa Cruz Avenue walked away with minor abrasions to her arms and hands after being thrown up onto the hood of a 2014 Honda Odyssey van, bumping into the windshield and falling to the ground after the vehicle stopped, May 17. The driver, a 35-year-old woman, "failed to see the pedestrians in the crosswalk" and was not cited, police said.

■ A bicyclist suffered minor abrasions to the chin and left knee after coming off a

sidewalk and into a crosswalk at Chester Street and Willow Road and running into a vehicle in the crosswalk, May 17.

■ A bicyclist suffered minor injuries after running into the side of a front corner panel of a pickup truck at Cambridge Avenue and El Camino Real, May 21.

■ A tractor trailer truck struck a concrete pedestal, the sidewalk and some vegetation at the corner of University Drive and Santa Cruz Avenue, May 15.

■ A white moving truck struck an overhanging tree limb, broke it off and drove away on Carlton Avenue, May 15.

#### Stolen vehicle reports:

■ Someone stole a green Kawasaki XL300 dirt bike while it was parked along Sonoma Avenue, May 19.

■ Someone stole a white Ford truck parked on Campbell Avenue, May 17.

**Indecent exposure report:** Several witnesses reported seeing a man masturbating outside a public restroom at Bedwell Bayfront Park at the end of Marsh Road, May 15. Police described the man as of Asian Indian ethnicity, 30 to 35 years old, with short dark hair, a goatee and a tattoo on his right bicep. He fled the scene in a white vehicle, possibly an Infiniti.

## Not the usual country weekend

By Marie Wagner Krenz

For 95 years members of my family have spent summers and Sundays in our Woodside house, but we've never had a weekend quite like the last one.

My sister-in-law Eileen and I had dinner on Saturday night at a local restaurant. We had made it early because my two grandchildren were coming later to spend the night. About 6:30 I went into the living room to leave my handbag on my chair and to put on welcoming lamps for the children. I left the room for a moment to check the refrigerator in the kitchen, then returned to the living room.

I could not believe what my eyes were telling me. Lying on a small rug by the front door and right next to my chair was the largest snake I had ever seen. As horrifying as he looked, I was fairly certain it was not a rattler, but I did not waste time on identification.

I ran outside to summon my sister-in-law but she was deep in conversation on her cellphone and just gave me a happy wave. I tore back into the house to be sure of what I had seen minutes before, but a problem had arisen. The snake had disappeared as quickly as he had come.

It was bad enough to have a snake you could see, but to have one slithering around unseen was far worse. I knew he had to be hiding nearby, and that was truly frightening.

I dashed to the telephone to call the fire department, assuring them this was not a fire kind of emergency, but that we had a huge snake in the house and needed help ejecting him. Five minutes later a big red truck drove into the yard with three young men. One walked into the house with his companions but refused to go into the liv-

### ■ IN WOODSIDE

ing room. He said that snakes scared him to death.

The firemen, all three this time, went over the entire house, searching for our unwanted guest. They went to every room, checked under every chair, every bed, and looked into every closet. No snake. They left then but told us to call if he reappeared.

The children arrived and were happy to spend the night on our sleeping porch, a place where I had slept during my childhood. I asked if they wanted me with them, and they seemed to like the idea. I didn't tell them, of course, that I was afraid to sleep in my own room by myself.

There was no sign of the serpent until about three o'clock Sunday afternoon when a scream shattered the peace of our day. My sister-in-law was about to open the kitchen door when she looked down and saw the snake, looking exactly as I had described him.

A nephew visiting that day was experienced with snakes and knew how to pick him up. We all escorted the young man and his onerous burden into the forest across from our house. There, my nephew put him down in the freedom of the great outdoors. We warned that snake not to come back.

It was a gopher snake between 4 and a half and 5 feet long and as thick as my wrist. And that creature had been lying by my chair.

*About the author: Marie Krenz is a freelance writer from Orinda who spends weekends at her family home in Woodside.*

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## Menlo action on housing plan in final stretch

Continued from page 5

While Sharon Heights and Linfield Oaks residents successfully campaigned to remove their neighborhoods from consideration from this housing update, city staff has said that the next update cycle — which starts as soon as the current update is approved — will once again look at sites throughout Menlo Park.

The update is a part of a lawsuit settlement over the city's failure to comply with state housing law for the past 10 years. Menlo Park had to find sites where zoning changes could allow construction of about 900 new housing units, with 454 units dedicated to affordable housing. The settlement also requires the city to provide zoning incentives for developers to build affordable housing, including within the

new downtown/El Camino Real specific plan area.

But those affordable units may not get built. Developers can choose to construct only market-rate housing. Greenheart Land Company, which plans to develop 777-821 Hamilton Ave., is going to stick with market-rate units, representative Steve Pierce told the council.

The council opted to pull granny units from consideration on May 21 in favor of having a separate discussion on June 4. A public speaker questioned the need to restrict granny units to one bedroom, stating that would prevent caretakers from staying with their clients as needed, particularly in cases where the units provided housing for people with disabilities or the elderly.

Council members later debated the allowable distance between structures and whether own-

ers who want smaller setbacks should be required to get neighboring property owners' approval first, or to go through the city's potentially expensive variance process.

The discussion eventually took its toll.

"I hope you guys all understand what you're talking about. Because I've reached that point where this is starting to become Charlie Brown language to me," Vice Mayor Ray Mueller noted as the meeting rolled on past midnight.

The last step in the update process is scheduled for June 4, when the council will hold a second reading of the housing element update and then vote to adopt the zoning changes. Should council members wish to make changes to the ordinances they still have the opportunity to do so, staff said. ■



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# Viewpoint

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

## Enrollment surge may alter attendance boundaries

It appears that some Menlo Park, Atherton and Ladera parents planning on sending their teenagers to Menlo-Atherton High School in a few years may be in for a surprise as a huge surge in elementary school enrollment forces the Sequoia Union High School District board to think about boundary changes in assigning high schools to neighborhoods.

The community discussions have only just begun as Sequoia district Superintendent James Lianides embarks on a series of meetings at Sequoia's four comprehensive high schools. He comes to Woodside High at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 29.

The increase in enrollment, coupled with a finite amount of space at Sequoia's four high schools — Menlo-Atherton, Woodside, Sequoia in Redwood City and Carlmont, which serves Belmont and San Carlos — may incline the Sequoia board toward equalizing enrollment at all four schools and possibly restructuring old agreements that required two-thirds of Ravenswood students to be bused to Carlmont and Woodside rather than attend Menlo-Atherton, which is much closer to home.

If Mr. Lianides and the Sequoia board do redraw attendance district boundaries so that the high schools serve students who live closest to them, it may mean that some or all Las Lomas district students from Menlo Park, Atherton and Ladera will be assigned to Woodside High rather than M-A. It could mean that Ravenswood City School District students will fill most of the seats at M-A, where students in recent years have achieved very high scores on standardized tests.

It's about numbers. This year the Sequoia district has about 8,300 students, but that total is expected to hit 10,000 in the 2020-21 school year. Simply dividing the additional 1,700 students between four high schools would add 425 to each school. To reach parity, each school would have to accommodate 2,400 students, assuming enrollments remain the same among the four charter schools and

at Redwood Continuation High School (for students in need of an alternative route to a diploma).

Equal enrollment at all four high schools is problematic because capacity is 2,200 per school. M-A could accommodate another 200. Woodside, now at 1,700, theoretically has room for 500 more. But where would the classrooms go? There simply is no room on these campuses.

While a new high school would seem the obvious answer, Mr. Lianides says it is not possible. There are no sites available and essentially no money in the capital budget. What to do? The district board wants to discuss it and has proposed four talking points, or

tenets, in no particular order:

- Equal distribution of students and facilities.
- Maintain some student choice in selecting a school.
- Maintain socio-economic diversity at Carlmont High School in Belmont.
- Maintain intact middle-school communities where possible, given possible boundary changes.

Already some parents, particularly in the Las Lomas district, have voiced great concern about their children losing touch with the community of M-A, where academic performance is currently about 100 points higher (on a 1,000 point scale) than at Woodside. An examination of the current practices shows that Las Lomas students, despite living farther from M-A, have always had an edge over Ravenswood students in getting into M-A via the open enrollment process. If a decision is made to equalize enrollment, Las Lomas students may lose that edge and head to Woodside in a few years.

While siblings of M-A students will be granted the right to attend the same high school, a transition to Woodside won't be easy for some parents, particularly if they graduated from M-A. But in designing a new system, the Sequoia district will have to create boundary rules that apply equally to all middle schools.

**EDITORIAL**

The opinion of The Almanac

**LETTERS**

Our readers write

### Seeking more yellow for red light cameras

*The following letter was sent to Sgt. Sharon Kaufman of the Menlo Park Police Dept.*

When we talked last week I said extending yellow light times would reduce red light running whereas massive enforcement does not and will not accomplish this primary goal except for an initial period of time. Mark Riggs of Redflex said pretty much the same thing.

I call your attention to the signal light at Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road. In July of 2010 the yellow light for the left turn lanes was extended from 3.0 to 3.5 seconds to allow motorists who approach at speeds far above 25 mph enough time to recognize the change to yellow and to come to a complete stop.

And what have been the results of this seemingly insignificant change?



Portola Valley Archives

### Our Regional Heritage

An unidentified man examines damages on Alpine Road in Portola Valley after the 1906 earthquake. The site is near today's emergency exit from Portola Valley Ranch.

With the short 3.0 second yellow, violations averaged 213 per month for the 12-month period before the change. After

the change? Violations in the 27 months following the change averaged only 80 per month. In fact, the average would have been even lower, 64 per month,

had there not been nearly triple the number of violations in three of the last four months in the study period.

Continued on next page

Continued from previous page

Throwing out the months of June, July and August of 2012, when violations tripled, Menlo Park experienced a 70 percent reduction to red light running at this location.

You steadfastly insist there will be a rebound effect. There has been none so far. If you can spot one, please let me know. It has been nearly three years. Still waiting?

Let's not lose sight of the fairness issue. What of those 2,000-plus motorists who were needlessly cited for being one-half second late or less before the change was made? Tickets with fines and fees exceeding \$1 million have been paid? What were they guilty of? Being human? Having normal reaction/perception reaction times? I would say they were obeying Newton's laws which say objects moving at higher rates of speed

need more time to stop.

One last thing: What would account for the tripling of violations in June, July and August of 2012?

*Roger Jones,  
organizer Red Light Camera  
Protest Group*

**A welcome decision on artificial turf**

Editor:

Thank you, Portola Valley Town Council, for upholding the core values of our town founders in denying artificial turf playing fields.

Our founders had the foresight to preserve the natural scene through geological zoning and detailed planning rules that you, and former council members, have carefully supported through the years.

That is why we live here.

*Marilyn Walter  
Coyote Hill, Portola Valley*

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