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# The Almanac

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

JULY 17, 2013 | VOL. 48 NO. 46



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# Rose Scott dines at White House

By Sam Borsos

Special to the Almanac

Picture this story: A child wins a contest and is awarded with the chance to eat wonderful food, take a tour of a famous building, and meet famous people. No, this is not the plot of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. It's the experience of Rose Scott, a 12-year-old Menlo Park girl who had dinner at the White House on July 9 and met President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama.

Rose, who attended the White House with her mother Jean Lum Hoy, was among 54 children who won the trip by creating recipes for the "Healthy Lunchtime Challenge" contest. The second annual contest, with 1,300 entries, was promoted by Michelle Obama to help reduce childhood obesity.

The winners dined at the White House and toured its kitchen garden.

"They do take things seriously," said Ms. Lum Hoy of President Obama and the First Lady, who both appeared at the dinner. "They said to all of the kids, 'You're leaders. Pay it forward.' They care about healthy eating and they're trying to change how kids across America eat."

Ms. Lum Hoy, speaking from a phone at the airport, said that she and her daughter were still on a "White House high" from the excitement.

Both agreed that their favorite parts of the trip were seeing the president, who stopped by the dinner to shake hands with the contest winners, and talking to the First Lady.

"We got to meet her for a few minutes," said Rose of Michelle Obama. "I talked to her about how I was so excited to be there and how it was such an honor to meet her."

The dinner was made up of several winning dishes: spring rolls, a barley salad, and mini pizzas with cauliflower crust. Rose met people from all over the country.

"It was such an incredible



Photo courtesy of Jean Lum Hoy

**Rose Scott**, 12, of Menlo Park in the Red Room at the White House.

honor and such a privilege to meet these wonderful children and their parents who really care about their food," Ms. Lum Hoy said. "It was interesting to

**Menlo Park girl, 12, submits winning recipe for healthy lunch challenge**

hear their stories and how they came up with their recipes."

Ms. Lum Hoy's family has been cautious of what they cook due to her 10-year-old son Galen's allergies to wheat and dairy. At her visit to the White

House, she heard many other stories of how children got interested in healthy cooking.

"Some have food allergies like my son, some have recipes that they've been making for years, some parents are chefs," she said. "It was cool to see so many people interested in eating healthy and locally, and see that people care about what goes in their bodies."

After Rose and her mother, along with the other winning contestants, visited the White House kitchen garden, Rose said: "It was very cool. They had all kinds of vegetables and papayas and they also had a bee hive."

Go to [letsmove.gov](http://letsmove.gov) to see all 54 winning recipes. ▀

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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AThERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## Higher property values reflect 'strong recovery'

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

Cities, school districts and other public agencies in San Mateo County will see their revenue from property taxes swell as a result of a significant rise in assessed property values in 2013-14.

Compared with last fiscal year's figures, the county experienced an overall 6.01 percent increase in assessed property values. For the second year running, Atherton's increase surpassed 9 percent, with a 9.04 percent increase for 2013-14 and a 9.05 percent increase last fiscal year.

Atherton was the only city or town to experience a 9 percent or higher increase last year. This year, the town's increase is second highest; Foster City experienced a 9.37 percent increase over last year's assessed property value — up from 3.28 percent last year.

Menlo Park's assessed property values rose by 6.51 percent, up from 4.44 percent last year; Woodside values increased by 7.56 percent, up from 4.23 percent; and Portola Valley values increased by 6.22 percent, up from 5.28 percent.

Overall, the county's combined secured and unsecured property value assessment roll increased

by \$8.8 billion, to \$156 billion, according to an announcement by Mark Church, the county's assessor-county clerk-recorder.

**'The real estate market has definitely rebounded this year and overall is showing signs of a strong recovery.'**

MARK CHURCH, COUNTY ASSESSOR

"The real estate market has definitely rebounded this year and overall is showing signs of a

### Changes in assessed property values

City	Change/2013	Change/2012	Change/2011	Change/2010
Atherton	+9.04%	+9.05%	+3.11%	-0.06%
Menlo Park	+6.51%	+4.44%	+0.30%	+1.22%
Portola Valley	+6.52%	+5.28%	+1.87%	+1.09%
Woodside	+7.56%	+4.23%	+2.48%	-0.51%

Information from the San Mateo County assessor's office.

strong recovery," he said. "Total assessed values have increased in all 20 cities, and most of the percentage increases are significant compared to previous years."

But there are exceptions: Brisbane experienced a decline of .08 percent, and other North County and coastal cities showed less than robust

increases. For example, Half Moon Bay's values increased by only 1.3 percent; South San Francisco's, by 2.25 percent; and Colma's, by 2.51 percent. Property in unincorporated areas increased in value by 3.88 percent.

About 1 percent of the \$156

See **PROPERTY VALUES**, page 10

## Atherton council may try again to appoint member

By Renee Batti  
Almanac News Editor

Is there a City Council election in the near future for Atherton voters? A November election seemed certain after the council on July 11 failed to agree on one candidate out of seven who wanted to be appointed to a vacant council seat. Now, however, it appears the council will consider trying again to appoint a new colleague at its July 17 meeting.

The council heard statements from the seven applicants at the special meeting, and briefly interviewed them before attempting to choose one whom at least three of the four members could support to finish out Jerry Carlson's term. Mr. Carlson, whose term expires in December 2014, resigned July 1.

Residents attending the Thursday night meeting encouraged the council to appoint one of the applicants rather than call for an election — and try to do business with only four council members until December. But three balloting rounds ended in stalemate: The final ballot gave John Rugeiro two votes, and Rick DeGolia two votes.

The split vote — with Mayor Elizabeth Lewis and Councilman Cary Wiest voting for Mr. DeGolia, and councilmen Jim

Dobbie and Bill Widmer supporting Mr. Rugeiro — exemplifies why a four-person council is likely to be a problem: It reflects the frequent alliances on the council since December. Mr. Carlson was often the third vote to tip the council's decisions in the Lewis/Wiest direction.

With that dynamic in place until the year's end, some observers fear, the council will be unable to address important matters before the town, including ongoing contract negotiations with the police union.

After the failed attempt to appoint a new member, the council approved a resolution to call for a special election to be held on Nov. 5 with any

other elections in the county. The deadline for the town to file papers with the county for an election was Monday, July 15. City Clerk Theresa DellaSanta on Friday said she had filed the paperwork that day, but would cancel it if the council makes an appointment July 17.

City Manager George Rodericks said he placed the option to make an appointment on the July 17 council agenda after Mayor Lewis asked him on Friday if and when the council

**Four council members fail to agree on candidate to fill Jerry Carlson's seat.**

See **ATHERTON COUNCIL**, page 8



Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

The colorful markings in this Palo Alto bike lane are similar to what is coming to bike lanes on Alpine Road as it passes under Interstate 280. This photo was taken from an intersection. The combination of green and white indicates a "conflict zone," in which oncoming vehicles making a right turn would have to cross privileged bike territory.

## Green bike lanes coming to Alpine Road

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Green-colored pavement is coming to bike lanes along the sides of Alpine Road as they pass under Interstate 280 just east of Ladera. Where the bike lanes and vehicle lanes cross, such as at the freeway entrance and exit ramps, the pavement will be striped in green and white to indicate a "conflict zone," an engineer for the San Mateo County Public Works Depart-

**Safety for the inexperienced rider is the focus.**

ment told the Almanac.

The work is set to begin in the first week of August, with much of it to be done at night and with temporary striping for about a month to allow the asphalt to cure before adding the green coloring, said Senior Civil Engineer Gil Tourel of

Public Works' road-design section.

A decision to make this part of Alpine Road safer for cyclists, including inexperienced cyclists, stems from a Nov. 4, 2010, accident that led to the death of Los Altos Hills cyclist Lauren Perdriau Ward. Ms. Ward, 47, was traveling west toward Ladera and collided with a westbound tractor trailer truck in the shade under the I-280 overpass.

See **GREEN BIKE LANES**, page 8

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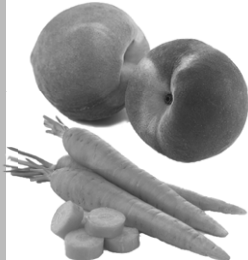
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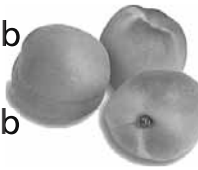
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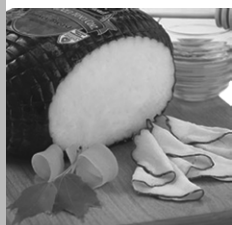
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**Menlo Park red-light cameras under scrutiny**

By Sandy Brundage  
Almanac Staff Writer

Members of the Menlo Park Transportation Commission saw red, then gasped as they watched video footage of drivers running red lights at intersections monitored by cameras. The footage was part of a presentation about the red-light camera program given during the July 10 commission meeting, held in advance of a council hearing next month that will decide whether or not to keep the cameras running.

Once the gasps faded, the commissioners took a hard look at the data. Menlo Park has four red-light cameras, mounted at Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road, and the intersections of El Camino Real with Glenwood Avenue and Ravenswood Avenue.

Statistics per intersection compiled by the police department attributable to running a red light showed zero accidents at El Camino Real and Glenwood Avenue, one at El Camino Real and Ravenswood Avenue, and six at Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road during the two years prior to installing the cameras in 2008.

Since the cameras were installed, data shows two to three accidents resulting from red-light violations at the Bayfront Expressway and Willow Road intersection, and none at the other locations.

"In all honesty, it doesn't seem like there's that many collisions at these intersections in general," Commissioner Penelope Huang noted.

David Carnahan, author of the staff presentation, pointed out that one collision equals lots of frustrated drivers backed up in a traffic jam at busy intersections and increased carbon emissions from idle cars. "Not astronomically large numbers," he said, referring to the collision rate, "but ideally each (accident) would be prevented."

Federal and state studies indicate that the cameras do tend to reduce the number of "T-bone" collisions at intersections, but may also slightly increase the number of rear-end collisions. Since, in general, rear-end collisions cause less expensive damage and injuries, according to staff, cameras therefore tend to

lower the cost of accidents. The commissioners asked staff to collect data on accident types specifically for Menlo Park before presenting the analysis to the council.

If a red-light ticket is paid in full, without any decrease of penalties through appealing to the court, the driver pays \$480. Menlo Park gets about \$155; the rest goes to the county and state.

The program nets the city's general fund about \$220,000 per year — when all the cameras are running. Almost as an aside, staff noted that the Caltrans paving project that accidentally took out the signal synchronization along El Camino Real for months also left the cameras at the Glenwood and Ravenswood intersections non-operational from November to February, something the city left un-

nounced until the function was restored. In 2010, a collision temporarily shut down the Bayfront Expressway camera.

The outages didn't cost the city anything besides ticket revenue. Menlo Park's contract with Redflex, the Arizona-based company responsible for operating and maintaining the cameras, contains a "cost neutrality" clause that saves the city from paying the \$5,000 to \$6,000 monthly fee per camera if the revenue from the citations issued doesn't cover the cost.

In response to a question from commissioner Maurice Shiu, staff said they did not yet know how much the red-light camera program cost Menlo Park administratively.

Other local cities, such as Redwood City, Hayward and San Carlos, have canceled their programs. During the transportation commission meeting, staff attributed Redwood City's decision to seeing a "dramatic decrease" in accidents that indicated "driver education" had taken place, so the resources could be better used now for other police initiatives. Hayward, on the other hand, opted to shut the program down because it was losing money, according to staff.

On Aug. 20 the City Council is scheduled to consider whether to renew the Redflex contract and if it should add a camera at the intersection of Bayfront Expressway and Chilco Street. ■



Michelle Le/The Almanac

## Hear we go again ...

Turf that for only a few months covered the playing field at Hillview Middle School in Menlo Park is being carted away as crews reconstruct the field. The project, expected to continue until school begins in August, was undertaken after irregularities affecting the levelness of the new field were discovered and an analysis “determined that the problems were the result of improper drainage detail installation and the use of incorrect base soil underneath the synthetic field,” according to the Menlo Park City School District facilities director, Ahmad Sheikholeslami. The school’s new playing field had been in use only since March.

## City starts next housing update

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

The housing update is finished! Let’s get started on the housing update. Menlo Park residents may be forgiven for wondering if they’re starring in a civic version of “Groundhog Day” — no sooner has the city wrapped up its first housing plan update in 10 years than it finds itself facing yet another.

The council kicked off round 2, which will plan the city’s housing zones for 2014 through 2022, by re-establishing a housing steering committee, now made up of Mayor Peter Ohtaki, Councilman Rich Cline, Planning Commissioners Katie Ferrick and Katherine Strehl; and Housing Commission members Carolyn Clarke and Sally Cadigan.

They are scheduled to meet Aug. 6 to start planning an analysis of potential locations for emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing as required by state law.

During the previous update, finalized in June, the council voted to allow secondary units,

### Menlo Park must create zoning for emergency shelters and transitional housing.

aka “granny units.” Now it has to figure out how to legitimize existing secondary units that were built before they were legal. To that end the council will use part of the \$70,000 set aside for implementation of the housing plan changes to hire a consultant to guide the development of an amnesty program.

The recently approved housing update led to the rezoning of 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).

The update was a part of a lawsuit settlement over the city’s failure to comply with state housing law for the past decade. 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.

Developers can choose to construct only market-rate housing, leaving the number of incoming affordable units in doubt. To encourage the construction of below-market-rate housing, the city plans to issue a notice to developers that at least \$1 million in funding is available to help build affordable rental units. The money comes from Menlo Park’s existing below-market-rate housing fund. The council was scheduled to vote on issuing the notice at its July 16 meeting. ■

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman

### New Disclosures Regarding Gas Pipelines



**Dear Monica:** I see so much new underground piping being installed by PG&E on local roads in the area. Is there information available about the location of underground gas pipelines in this area? Robert D.

**Dear Robert:** Yes, there is information available about gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines. As of July 1, 2013, this information will be included in all real estate transactions. The disclosures states that “the general location of gas and hazardous liquid transmission pipelines is available via the National Pipeline Mapping System (NPMS)

web site maintained by the Dept. of Transportation at <http://www.npms.phmsa.dot.gov/>. You can find out who the local pipeline operators are by searching by ZIP code and county on the NPMS web site.”

Most of the pipeline infrastructure is old and in need of replacement. Record keeping by the utility companies is not always complete but substantial efforts are being made to replace the aging pipes with new ones that meet present codes and standards. The DOT website will let you know where the underground pipes are in your area.

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# Atherton council may try again to appoint member

continued from page 5

could try again to appoint.

Mayor Lewis said it's uncertain whether the council will make another attempt to appoint, but she wanted the option to do so. The agenda item leaves the door open for such an effort, she said, and also allows the council and staff to discuss any new information or options to consider in determining how to fill the vacant seat.

## No agreement

Because of ground rules agreed to before council voting got underway on July 11, the first ballot narrowed the choice in subsequent ballot rounds to Mr. Ruggeiro, a transportation commissioner and longtime council watcher; and Mr. DeGolia, vice chair of the Community Center Advisory Committee.

There was added drama to the affair when Councilman Cary Wiest abstained in the first go-round.

Mr. Wiest had stated, after

six of the seven applicants made statements (candidate Diane Sandhu did not attend) and before the council voting began, that he was struggling with choosing a single candidate. Calling the candidates "an incredible group of people," he said: "Residents of Atherton deserve to hear what we are hearing (tonight). They deserve to have some input" in the choice. He then said he would be "very supportive" of calling an election, but stopped short of saying he would insist on one.

When the first ballot was passed out, he appeared undecided on his choice as council colleagues were turning in their ballots. When he finally turned his in, the choices were read: Jim Dobbie and Bill Widmer supported John Ruggeiro; Mayor Elizabeth Lewis cast her vote for Rick DeGolia; Mr. Wiest abstained.

That ballot in effect disqualified the remaining five candidates, but a candidate would need three votes to be appointed. Mayor Lewis asked: Should the council try again? Councilman Wiest was asked: Would you reconsider?

"I feel very strongly that

there should be an election," he responded. "I think the residents of Atherton — they've said they want to be involved."

The residents of Atherton in attendance got involved. To call for an election to fill a 12-month term wouldn't serve the town well, said resident Bob Polito, a member of the town's Audit/Finance Committee. "Your job is to make tough decisions," he forcefully told Mr. Wiest.

The sentiment was echoed, with other residents asking in irritation why council members would have put residents through the application process if they weren't committed to filling the position this month.

Resident Valerie Gardner urged the council to find consensus and appoint a member that night, noting that a vacant council seat would "inhibit the town's ability to move ahead" on important issues the council is facing between now and December.

On the second ballot, Councilman Wiest changed his mind and voted for Mr. DeGolia. No changes occurred with the third ballot.

The filing period for residents who want to run for the seat, if an election goes forward, is from July 15 to Aug. 9.

## The candidates

Here's the complete list of candidates who sought appointment to the council at the July 11 meeting:

Audit/Finance Committee chair and Rail Committee member Greg Conlon; longtime council watcher and Transportation Commissioner John Ruggeiro; Community Center Advisory Committee vice-chair Rick DeGolia; Audit/Finance Committee member Diane Sandhu; Transportation Committee and Rail Committee member Michael Lempres; Atherton newcomer Michael Stogner, a former San Mateo County supervisor candidate; and Jo-Ann Byrne Sockolov, a former San Mateo County Board of Education candidate.

The applicants were sent a notice via email on Friday that the council might appoint one of them after all on July 17. ■

**The split vote reflects the frequent alliances on the council since December, leading some to fear that a four-member council will be unable to address important matters before the town.**



Foundation members and students presented the Las Lomitas district school board with a mock check representing the foundation's \$2.8 million gift at the June 12 board meeting.

## Foundation gives \$2.8 million to schools

The Las Lomitas Elementary School District's quest to maintain small class sizes and support educational programs with new technology was given a big boost with the recent \$2.8 million gift from the Las Lomitas Education Foundation.

The largest-ever gift — which is \$400,000 more than last year's contribution and represents more than \$2,000 per student — will "enable new technology to support academic excellence for our students at both schools," the foundation's president, Komal Shah, said in a message to parents and supporters.

The grant also will support 19 teachers at the two schools — Las Lomitas (K-3) in Atherton and La Entrada (4-8) in Menlo Park — to keep class sizes small, Ms. Shah said. A committee that set spending priorities for the grant allotted \$1.41 million to teacher support, making it the single largest spending category.

Funds will also go toward specialists and counselors, and "enhanced" curriculum such as music, art, language studies and P.E., she said.

Technology support will include iPads for all sixth-through eighth-graders, iPad centers in 3-5 classrooms, fund-

ing for the Media Lab at La Entrada, and new student computers in Las Lomitas classrooms, according to Ms. Shah.

The two largest sources of foundation donations each year are direct contributions from district families and an auction.

Ms. Shah said the enhancements made possible by this year's gift are all due to be in place this fall. "Because of our demonstrated shared commitment to funding our kids' future, we can all look forward to the start of the new school year with renewed enthusiasm," she said in her message to the community.

## Green bike lanes coming to Alpine Road

continued from page 5

Colored non-slip pavements for bike lanes are in wide use in Europe and are increasingly popular in the United States, said Corinne Winter, executive director of the Silicon Valley Bike Coalition. The bike coalition and Public Works collaborated on the design of these bike lanes. "It's been fantastic," Ms. Winter said when asked about the joint effort. Relations had been adversarial, but no longer. "We're more often asked for input and expertise and we're being treated as partners," Ms. Winter said.

The project will include grinding and resurfacing the road to create a "blank canvas" for permanent re-striping, Mr. Tourel said. The funding of \$560,000 consists of \$175,000 from the county's Measure A half-cent sales tax for transportation

projects, with the rest coming from the county's dedicated Road Fund, said Public Works Director Jim Porter.

In 2012, the county Board of Supervisors authorized spending \$175,000 for this project. Why the 220 percent increase? "The scope of work changed (and) asphalt is expensive," Mr. Porter said, referring to the decision to include the eastbound lane of Alpine Road in the project. "That significantly added to the cost," he said.

## Safety first

There were options in placing the westbound bike lane. At the traffic light where Sand Hill Road meets I-280, for example, westbound bikes cross a lane of vehicle traffic to reach a "pocket lane" sitting between two vehicle lanes. Cyclists heading west across the freeway then find

themselves between two lanes of fast moving traffic, sharing space with motorists.

Such a configuration is not safe for children and so was rejected for the Alpine Road intersection, Ms. Winter said. And the preference for pocket lanes among highly skilled cyclists? "That's actually a minority of bicyclists who feel that way," Ms. Winter said. "I generally don't think that pocket lanes are appropriate for the novice rider."

The design at Alpine Road is meant to increase the appeal of cycling and accommodate inexperienced cyclists, including children, who might be avoiding this intersection because it's seen as unsafe, she said. "I think it's really going to enhance cycling in the area and make it much more comfortable for people," she said. ■

# Woodside man sentenced to life without parole for wife's murder

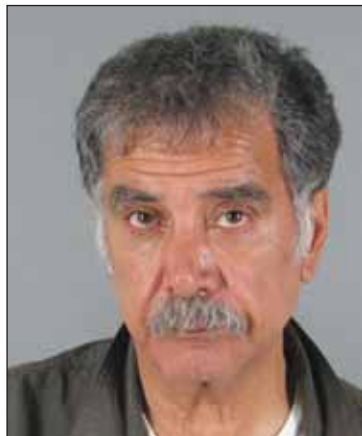
Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh, the Woodside man found guilty of murdering his wife and attempting to make it look like a suicide, was sentenced Friday, July 12, to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Unlike his trial appearances, for which Mr. Parineh wore a dark suit, at his sentencing hearing before Judge Lisa Novak, he wore an orange prison jumpsuit with chains around his ankles and wrists. At one point, the wrist chains were removed so he could read a letter to the judge, said Deputy District Attorney Jeff Finigan, who prosecuted the case.

San Mateo County District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe called Mr. Parineh's letter "a lengthy and rambling statement, claiming innocence and blaming his children for making the victim commit suicide."

In responding to Mr. Parineh's letter, Judge Novak called him a "shameful, petty, little man who has destroyed a family" and that he "should be ashamed" of everything he just said, Mr. Finigan said. "Your arrogance is exceeded only by your greed which is exceeded only by your cowardice," she added.

Mr. Parineh, 67, will be housed in San Quentin State Prison in Marin County while officials determine where in the prison system he will spend his time.



**Pooroushasb "Peter" Parineh** read a letter to the court that blamed his children for making his wife commit suicide.

Among the determining factors are the nature of his offense, the length of his sentence and his medical condition, Mr. Finigan said.

Mr. Parineh was found guilty in May of first-degree murder in the shooting death of his wife Parima Parineh on April 13, 2010. He testified that on that day he found his 56-year-old wife's bloody body in bed in the master bedroom of their Woodside mansion. She was shot twice in the head, with wounds that prosecutors said could not have been self-inflicted.

Mr. Parineh was in dire financial straits when his wife died, according to lawyers and wit-

nesses from both the defense and prosecution. Five of his properties were in foreclosure and he was within days of being evicted from his Woodside home.

Apparently his wife had more than \$30 million worth of life insurance policies in her name, which prosecutors argued provided a motive for the suicide cover-up in her murder.

The defense contended that Parima Parineh, an accomplished painter, was depressed in the months before her death and that she shot herself knowing her family was facing financial ruin.

The defense argued that the gunshot that entered from the right of her mouth and out the left side of her head might not have been fatal, allowing her to fire a second shot.

At the end of the trial, which began in mid-April, the jury found Mr. Parineh guilty of murder with the special circumstance of killing for financial gain and for using a firearm.

On July 12, the judge also ordered Mr. Parineh to pay \$10,000 in restitution and \$10,000 in felony fines. Money found on him at the time of his arrest, totaling around \$1,000, was ordered turned over for restitution, Mr. Wagstaffe said.

— *Dave Boyce of the Almanac and Bay City News Service.*

## Civil rights lawyers examine school district

By **Dave Boyce**  
Almanac Staff Writer

In a bid to start a conversation on addressing poor academic performance among students from the Ravenswood City School District who attend high schools in the Sequoia Union High School District, a group of Bay Area civil rights lawyers has issued a report that attempts to put the Sequoia district on notice that its interactions with Ravenswood are under scrutiny.

The Bay Area chapter of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights issued a 36-page report dated July 2013 that takes the Sequoia district to task for 30 years of subdividing the cohort of students from the Ravenswood elementary district among three high schools. While students from the Belle Haven neighborhood are assigned to nearby Menlo-Atherton High, East Palo Alto students face an eight-mile bus trip to Woodside High or an 11-mile trip to

Carlmont High, where the first period starts at 8 a.m.

"Educational opportunity is a critical component for the life success of our youth, particularly youth of color," the report says. "Encouraging and ensuring that supports are in place to help students succeed at every level should be fundamental to our educational systems."

"Arbitrary and harmful policies that disproportionately and negatively impact students of

color are infringements with life-altering implications. This (report) seeks to bring attention to a problem in Sequoia Union High School District that can be easily addressed to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed."

The East Palo Alto community had been served by Ravenswood High School, but the Sequoia district board closed it in 1976. The school had declining enrollment and a concentration of people of color, according to a Ravenswood alumni association history. A 1983 court-ordered consent decree — which the Lawyers' Committee report does not mention — required the Sequoia district to establish populations at each high school that fell within 5 percentage points of reflecting the district's ethnic diversity as a whole, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Morgan Marchbanks told the Almanac.

### Oops

Doesn't this always happen? In the July 10 Almanac, we ran a photo submitted by a reader of a sign on the Menlo-Atherton High School campus that misuses an apostrophe. The sign reads: "Visitor's must register in office." Of course, in our caption, we misspelled that very word as "Vistor's." He who lives in a glass house ...

See **CIVIL RIGHTS**, page 10



July 15

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## Civil rights lawyers examine school district

continued from page 9

The consent decree expired after six years, but the busing continued. The district's logic: "If we met the spirit of the consent decree, leave it in place," Ms. Marchbanks said. Why was Sequoia High School not an option? The school's assignment plan abuts the Ravenswood district. Sequoia High was excluded because, at the time, it did not need to go outside its assignment plan to acquire a sufficiently diverse population, Ms. Marchbanks said.

Sequoia district officials have been meeting with Ravenswood district officials once a month for the past two years to address the achievement gap and related issues of inequity, Ms. March-

banks said.

The Sequoia district responded to the report with a letter, a draft of which was provided to the Almanac. "We are pleased to see that this report's findings and recommendations are nearly identical to ongoing SUHSD policy directions based on work begun two years ago by the superintendent and board, as anyone following the board's deliberations, policy setting and budget priorities will recognize," the letter said.

The report comes on the heels of a series of community forums in May led by Sequoia district Superintendent James Lianides and meant to inform the communities about projections that over the next decade, high school

enrollment will jump 22 percent. One topic that came up repeatedly: the importance of intact middle-school cohorts as students move through high school.

Three of the four high schools are expected to exceed their maximum capacity by 2020, and a new school is not in the cards. Properties large enough to accommodate one are rare if not nonexistent, and with an estimated cost of \$200 million, are financially out of reach. Expansion of the built-out campuses will have to go up rather than out. As for how to pay for it, the district's capital improvement fund sits at \$9 million. A bond measure proposal is all but certain.

Among the initiatives the Sequoia board is considering in

the interim is an open-enrollment preference for Ravenswood students that would put them at the head of the line in transferring to Menlo-Atherton High. Such an enrollment privilege for admission to M-A has long been in place for households in the Las Lomas Elementary School District that are located outside the M-A assignment plan.

Las Lomas families are not the only families given preferential treatment. In a related policy, families assigned to M-A from the unincorporated Fair Oaks/Friendly Acres neighborhood between Atherton and Redwood City also have privileged placement if they want it, but to schools other than M-A.

Go to [tinyurl.com/LCCR-123](http://tinyurl.com/LCCR-123) for a copy of the Lawyers' Committee report. ■

## PROPERTY VALUES

continued from page 5

billion in the county's property value assessment for this year will translate into tax revenue for public agencies, according to Terry Flinn, special assistant to the assessor. The county anticipates receiving about 22 percent of that revenue, he said, basing the projection on last year's allocation.

Although each school district, special district and city also receives a portion of the tax revenue, the county is still working on determining the allocation amounts, said Shirley Tourel, the county's deputy controller. But the dollar amount should be higher than last year's for each public agency, Mr. Flinn said. ■



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## Burglars enter unlocked windows in Woodside

Deputies chase crowd from Emerald Hills home

Unlocked windows figured in two recent Woodside residential burglaries. In another incident, a crowd made its way into an unoccupied Emerald Hills house, had a party, and ran away when sheriff's deputies arrived.

The party, reported June 29, was held in a home in the 4200 block of Jefferson Avenue in the Emerald Hills neighborhood, deputies from the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office said. About 50 people were involved and left the house with two broken windows and debris strewn about.

Deputies said they have spoken with "subjects" but have no clues yet about who organized the party or how they gained entrance to the house. The property owner, upon learning of the incident, chose not to prosecute, deputies said.

In a burglarized home on

Hillside Drive in Woodside Glens, deputies said they checked for latent fingerprints — those not visible to the unaided eye — and found five. The burglar entered the home through an unlocked window, rummaged through several rooms, and left with a computer, an Apple iPad, two Apple iPods and jewelry for a total loss estimated at \$15,700, according to a July 8 report. No one has come forward as a witness, deputies said.

In a home under construction on Manzanita Way, someone removed a screen and entered via an unlocked window, ransacked the master bedroom and stole a 9 mm handgun, cash, gold coins, an Apple iPad and a watch, deputies said. There were no witnesses and no estimate of the value of the items stolen, according to a June 29 report.

## Nancy Baker Veitch, community volunteer

Nancy Baker Veitch, a longtime resident of Atherton, died peacefully in the presence of her children on June 24 at The Sequoias in Portola Valley. She was 85.

Ms. Veitch was born in Oxnard and grew up in Pasadena. She attended Westridge School and the University of New Mexico, where she met her future husband, Stephen Veitch.

The couple married in June 1950. After his tour of duty with the U.S. Air Force was completed, they moved to Palo Alto so he could attend Stanford Law School.

Ms. Veitch was active in the community, belonging to Allied Arts Guild, Friends of Filoli, Family Service Agency of San Mateo (now Peninsula Family Service), the Woodside-Atherton Garden Club, the Monterey Bay Aquarium, and the Menlo Circus Club.

She was an avid gardener and loved tending to the different varieties of plants and trees in her Spencer Lane garden, say family members.

She enjoyed traveling the world, with Florence, Italy, her favorite destination.

Ms. Veitch is survived by her

### OBITUARIES

Obituaries are based on information from mortuaries and families.

daughter, Julia B. Veitch of Carmel; son Christopher O. Veitch of Newport Beach; sister Jean Baker Watkins of Napa; three grandchildren; a niece and seven nephews. Her husband of 49 years died in 2000.

A private celebration of her life will be held. Donations may be made to Peninsula Family Service or the Parkinson's Institute.

### Susan Ann Daniel

Menlo Clinic nurse

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, July 27, at the Church of the Nativity in Menlo Park for Susan Ann Daniel of Morgan Hill who died June 21. She was 76.

Ms. Daniel was born in Grand Rapids, Minnesota, and graduated from Grand Rapids High School in 1954. She became a registered nurse after graduating from the College of St. Scholastica in Duluth, Minnesota, in 1957. After working

in hospitals in Minneapolis and Grand Rapids, she moved to Menlo Park in 1960, working at the Menlo Medical Clinic for her entire career.

In 1964 she married David J. Daniel and had two daughters. They later divorced. After retiring, Ms. Daniel moved to Morgan Hill, where both daughters resided.

Ms. Daniel is survived by her daughters, Sharron Daniel and Ann Bueno, both of Morgan Hill; brothers Patrick O'Brien of Bella Vista, Arizona, and James O'Brien of New Brighton, Minnesota; one grandson; and many nieces and nephews.

Donations may be made to the GI Research Program c/o Dr. George Fisher, Stanford Cancer Center, 875 Blake Wilbur Drive, Stanford, CA 94305; or for Diabetes Research, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Fund, (jdrf.org).



Susan Ann Daniel

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## Mary Durkin Kearns Piersol

September 20, 1921 – June 20, 2013

Mary Stewart Durkin Kearns Piersol was born in Brooklyn, New York, September 20, 1921 to Mary Stewart Bushfield of Goshen, NY and Joseph Stephen Durkin of Newburgh, NY. Her father was a CPA for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She grew up in Chevy Chase, MD and Washington, DC with her brother, Joseph Stephen Durkin, Jr., and was a graduate of Woodrow Wilson high school and Trinity College in Washington, D.C. Fluent in French and Spanish she served in a division of cultural cooperation of the State Department during World War II. During this time she also worked as a liaison with Chinese students.

She was married January 26, 1946 to 1st Lieutenant Thomas F. Kearns USMC, a graduate of Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, at The Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Washington, D.C. They made their home in Salt Lake City, Utah where Mr. Kearns was Vice President of Kearns Corporation, owner of the Salt Lake Tribune. They had 6 children together but were divorced in 1955. Mr. Kearns died in 1967. In 1963 Mary Durkin Kearns married a widower, Frank W. Piersol, of Atherton, in Carmel, CA. Mr. Piersol was an executive with Stanford Oil Corporation in San Francisco for over 50 years. He died in 1982. Mary worked as a realtor for Finn & Hunt and Cornish & Carey.

Mary was an Atherton resident for 50 years, a member of the Junior League, Atherton Dames

and Church of the Nativity Catholic Church. She was a member of the Menlo Circus Club in Atherton for 41 years.

Mary enjoyed travelling all over the world, but especially being at the ocean. She loved music, dancing, playing the piano and her garden.

She is survived by her six children, Mary Kearns Coffron of Menlo Park, Kathryn Kearns Gould (Chris) of Atherton, Patricia Kearns Kehrer of Dillon, MT, Thomas F. Kearns IV of Reno, NV, Carol Durkin Kearns of Spokane, WA, Michael J. Kearns (Miriam) of Salt Lake City, UT; five grandchildren, Tamara Coffron Nurisso (Fred) of Redwood City, CA, Brock Coffron (Lynn) of Stevensville, MT, Whitney Gould Topping (Henry) of New York, Christopher K. Gould (Aly) of Hong Kong, Judge Thomas Kearns of Salt Lake City, UT; nine great-grandchildren, and one niece, Victoria Durkin Moser (Karl) of Zurich, Switzerland.

Vigil will be held Wednesday, July 17, 7pm at Crippen & Flynn, 400 Woodside Road, Redwood City, CA. A memorial service is scheduled for Thursday, July 18, 11:00 a.m. at Church of the Nativity, 210 Oak Grove Avenue, Menlo Park, CA.

In lieu of flowers the family requests donations be made to Sequoia Hospital Foundation, Dr. Bruce McAuley - Cardiac/Pulmonary Dept., 170 Alameda de las Pulgas, Redwood City, CA 94062 or Ocean Medicine Foundation c/o Dr. Andrew Newman, 750 Welch Rd, Suite 104, Palo Alto, CA 94304.



PAID OBITUARY

## Police catch man inside restaurant after midnight

A man decided to visit Menlo Park's Mongolian BBQ restaurant late at night. Unfortunately, he chose to patronize the establishment long after closing hours.

Menlo Park police responded to a burglar alarm around 12:35 a.m. on July 11 at the restaurant, located at 700 El Camino Real. They found 55-year-old Max Perez of San Jose. He had allegedly acquired about \$300 of the restaurant's cash and "miscellaneous

items," according to the report.

Information was not immediately available on how Mr. Perez got into the restaurant and why someone from San Jose would be in Menlo Park allegedly burglarizing a restaurant after midnight.

He was arrested on suspicion of burglary, being under the influence of a controlled substance, and possession of narcotic paraphernalia, according to Menlo Park police.

— Sandy Brundage

## City hires new finance director

By Sandy Brundage

Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park has convinced the assistant finance director of Sunnyvale to change jobs. Drew Corbett will start work in Menlo Park on Aug. 14 as the city's new finance director.

Mr. Corbett replaces Carol Augustine, who left in March. His annual salary will be \$171,000, according to the city.

He served as the assistant director of finance for Sunnyvale for the past three years, helping the city manage a \$285 million budget. He also spent five years as a financial analyst for Intel.

"Drew is energetic, ambitious and enthusiastic. We're looking forward to adding Drew's exceptional public and private sector experience to our talented leadership team and expect his skills will support our goal of continuing to improve Menlo

Park's already excellent financial condition," City Manager Alex McIntyre said in a statement released Friday, July 12.

Mr. Corbett earned a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of the South before joining the Teach for America Corps and serving two years in Compton. He also completed a master's degree in business administration at the University of Wisconsin. He currently sits on the board of the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers.

"Menlo Park has a reputation as a well-managed and financially-sound city that provides an excellent level of service to its residents and business community," Mr. Corbett said in the press release. "I am very excited about joining the leadership team and contributing to the continued success of the organization." ■

## Katherine Nell Stivers Pelan

October 7, 1930 – July 10, 2013

Katherine Nell Stivers was born in Medford, Oregon on October 7th, 1930 to Dorine Hunter Stivers and Raymond Chandler Stivers. As a child Kay performed on NBC radio's Stars of Tomorrow with Nate Cohn as a tap dancer and singer. As a youth she was also an accomplished equestrienne. The family moved to Stockton, California where Kay graduated from Stagg High School, and then earned a degree from the University of the Pacific. Kay graduated from Nursing school and in 1953 married John Mason Tucker, whom she had dated off and on since high school. Their daughter, Laura, was born in 1955. They divorced in 1957, and Kay and Laura moved to San Francisco, where Kay met John ("Skip") Pelan on a blind date when Skip was in the Army at the Presidio. The couple was married shortly thereafter and Skip adopted Laura in 1960.

The family moved to Palo Alto and then to Portola Valley. In 1966 the family grew when they welcomed Janet (Janie), as an infant. Kay was a nurse at Kaiser Santa Clara, Belmont Hills and ultimately retired from the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Menlo Park. Kay and Skip moved to Menlo Park in 1980. Skip, the love of her life, passed away in 2007.

Kay was an excellent cook and often had large groups of family and friends for holiday meals, picnics in the redwoods, and on the coast. She

loved to needlepoint and knit, and was involved in a wide variety of causes and organizations. She loved animals of all kinds, and the family had an endless stream of cats and dogs, and the occasional rabbit and rat. She was a docent and volunteer at the San Francisco Zoo for more than 15 years observing the lemurs, orangutans and bears and working as an instructor in the youth summer camps at the zoo. Her work there was a vocation that gave her endless joy and many

stories to tell. Kay was a Campfire Girl leader and was camp nurse at Camp Unalayee in the Trinity Alps for several years. In the 1970s Kay was involved in the BCRA and St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Kay loved to travel and was lucky to have visited a number of zoos around the world through her membership in the International Zoo Educators Association. She was a voracious reader and she loved learning throughout her life. She was intelligent and passionate about what she loved.

Kay is survived by her daughter, Laura, son-in-law Adam, daughter, Janie, and son-in-law John as well and her beloved grandchildren Kate, Adam, Ella, Jack and Chase. There are no services per Kay's wishes, but a gathering for family and friends will be announced at a later date. In lieu of flowers the family suggests donations in her honor may be made to the San Francisco Zoo.



PAID OBITUARY

## Joanne "Soddie" Willett

1932-July 9, 2013

Joanne "Soddie" Willett of Redwood City, CA, passed away Tuesday, July 9, at the age of 81. Soddie was born in Lemoore, California, and graduated from San Jose State University.

Soddie was a popular elementary school teacher for the Redwood City and San Carlos School Districts for over 30 years. While still teaching she was active in the Children's Home Society. She enjoyed playing bridge, attending craft groups and other AAUW events after her retirement.

Aside from her hearty laugh, Soddie is best known for her creativity, craftwork and her culinary skills.

She leaves behind a wonderful support team of special friends and family that will miss her warm, humorous and generous personality.

She was preceded in death by her husband Basil Willett and is survived by her son Kevin Willett.

Donations may be made to the Redwood City Public Library Foundation in her memory. No public memorial is planned, a family celebration will be held instead.



PAID OBITUARY

# A tough climb behind him, Ross awarded top prize

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Ross Fulkerson of Portola Valley is at the peak of his game and he's just 12 years old. But he is also on a path to encounter peaks that are higher, much higher. Ross, who starts seventh-grade at Corte Madera Middle School in August, is a rock climber.

Ross took first place in the 11-13 age bracket in Atlanta in the 2013 Sport & Speed Youth Nationals, an annual indoor climbing-wall competition held this year over the July Fourth weekend. His team, Planet Granite, is based in Sunnyvale and Ross's specialty is sport climbing. In competitions, the roped-in sport climber tries to find a way up a synthetic wall using plastic hand- and footholds that "setters" arrange in challenging ways. "They try to make the climb so you can't do it," Ross said in an interview.

"This was his second U.S. Nationals invite," his mother Paige Bishop Fulkerson said in an email. In 2012, he placed sixth, she said. He has one more year in this bracket.

Ross came to rock-climbing by way of tree climbing and unicycles, all signs of an extraordinary sense of balance, his mother said. He was walking at 9 months and climbing redwood trees at 4. "He climbed incredibly high in trees since he was little," she said.

But not without supervision.



Ross Fulkerson came to rock-climbing by way of tree climbing and unicycles.

He had been warned about the risk of falling, and that kids fall out of trees all the time and break their bones, and that one way to avoid falling out of a tree is to have three extremities touching the tree at all times — and he listened, his mother said. He was not cavalier and double-checked himself before he moved, she said. "Ross has always given me

so much confidence," she said. "He was just pretty smart about the way he would climb."

He rode a unicycle to school in the second grade, but only after assuring himself that he could make it there and back without spilling, his mother said. "It took him about six months," she added. His parents don't climb but they do ski.

Ms. Fulkerson recalled their first visit to a climbing wall. "Is that your kid? Has he climbed before?" observers asked about Ross, she said. "That guy's incredible. We're all sitting here trying to figure out who this kid is." Soon enough, Ross was enrolled in a climbing camp and he's been climbing regularly for three years.

"It's an individual sport, but it's team encouragement. They take turns watching each other," Ms. Fulkerson said.

His coach, Isaac Williams, "deserves a tremendous amount of credit," she said. "He spends time with the kids who have a tremendous desire to be strong and do difficult moves."

Ross has climbed in Yosemite and the Pinnacles and at Smith Rock in Oregon. Is free climbing — the rope-free scaling of big walls like Half Dome and El Capitan — in his future? Her son has said, "Oh, no way. That's ridiculous," in response to such questions, Ms. Fulkerson said. Free climbing is "really not admired and not endorsed by the climbing coaches and the kids," she said. ■



Photos by Photo Bob

Ross Fulkerson of Portola Valley took first place for the 11-13 age bracket in a national climbing-wall competition in Atlanta over July 4-7. Ross, soon to be a seventh-grader at Corte Madera Middle School, got his start climbing trees and now climbs rocks in Yosemite and at Smith Rock in Oregon.

## ■ POLICE CALLS

This information is from the Menlo Park Police Department and the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office. Under the law, people charged with offenses are considered innocent unless convicted.

### MENLO PARK

#### Commercial burglary reports:

■ Someone broke into a warehouse on Hamilton Avenue without leaving traces as to how it was done and left with a safe containing cash, gasoline debit cards and fast-track passes, July 8.

■ Coins are missing from a clothes dryer in a coin-operated laundry on Coleman Place, July 9.

**Residential burglary report:** A homeowner pulling into her driveway in the 1000 block of Woodland Avenue spotted three figures in black running away after trying unsuccessfully to get into her house through the back door, July 10.

#### Auto burglary reports:

■ Someone smashed a window on a vehicle parked at Bayfront Park and stole a purse for a total loss of \$340, July 7.

■ Someone rummaged through three unlocked vehicles, two of them inside a Pine Street garage with its door open and the other outside the garage. Paperwork had been examined in two of the vehicles, but \$40 in cash is missing from the third, July 7.

■ A few blocks away on Seminary Avenue, someone entered three other unlocked vehicles and stole \$5 in cash from one and \$10 from another, July 7.

#### Theft reports:

■ In yet another incident involving three unlocked vehicles, this time on Gilbert Avenue, someone entered the vehicles and got away with \$25 from one and \$20 from another, July 7.

■ Someone stole \$4 from an unlocked vehicle on College Avenue, July 7.

■ A pair of sunglasses is missing from an unlocked vehicle on Pope Street, July 11.

#### Accident reports:

■ Medics took a bicyclist to Stanford Hospital with non-life-threatening injuries after colliding with a Toyota Matrix at Laurel Street and Ravenswood Avenue. The driver made a right-hand turn but did not see the cyclist, July 9.

■ Medics took a bicyclist to Stanford Hospital with non-life-threatening injuries after colliding with a vehicle at Creek Drive and El Camino Real while riding on the wrong side of the street, July 10.

### PORTOLA VALLEY

#### Residential burglary reports:

■ A maid hired to clean a house on Sierra Lane told the homeowner that she entered the house and found it ransacked. The estimated loss is \$1,000, July 1.

■ On returning to a home on Groveland Street, the homeowner found a window screen lying on the front deck, then several other screens lying around, and then evidence of prying at the French doors that open on to the deck. Inside, nothing appeared to be missing, July 8.

## Susan Ann Daniel

December 29, 1936-June 21, 2013

Susan (O'Brien) Daniel, 76, of Morgan Hill, CA, passed away peacefully in the presence of her children on June 21, 2013. Sue was born in Grand Rapids, MN, in 1936 and graduated from Grand Rapids High School in 1954.

She became a registered nurse after graduating from St. Scholastica in Duluth, MN, in 1957, and after working at hospitals in Minneapolis and Grand Rapids, she moved in 1960 to Menlo Park, CA, where she spent the rest of her career at Menlo Medical Clinic.

In 1964 she married (ex) husband, David J. Daniel and had two daughters. Following her retirement, she moved to Morgan Hill, where both daughters also reside.

Sue was preceded in death by her parents, Vincent and Anna O'Brien of Grand Rapids, MN. She is survived by daughters

Sharron Daniel and Ann (Allan) Bueno and her beloved grandson Brian Bueno, the light of her life, all of Morgan Hill. She is also survived by her brothers Patrick (Mary) O'Brien of Bella Vista, AR, and James (Maureen) O'Brien of New Brighton, MN, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Sue's warm heart and tender hands touched many. She will be missed.

We love you and miss you Mom and Grandma, XOXOXO...

A memorial service will be held July 27th at 11 am at The Church of the Nativity, 210 Oak Grove Ave., Menlo Park.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the GI Research Program under Dr. George Fisher, Stanford Cancer Center, 875 Blake Wilber Dr., Stanford, CA 94305 or for Diabetes Research, the JDRF (www.jdrf.org).



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The Almanac, established in October 1965, is delivered each week to residents of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside and adjacent unincorporated areas of southern San Mateo County. The Almanac is qualified by decree of the Superior Court of San Mateo County to publish public notices of a governmental and legal nature, as stated in Decree No. 147530, issued December 21, 1969. ©2013 by Embarcadero Media Company. All rights reserved.

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**WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?**

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

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**Email** your views to:

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Menlo Park, CA 94025.

**Call** the Viewpoint desk at 223-6507.

# Viewpoint

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

## Council should appoint new member

Atherton residents are closely watching their four elected town officials' next move in filling a vacant seat on the City Council after watching them divide down the middle during a special meeting last week. The council had met that night in an attempt to appoint one of the seven candidates who applied for the vacant post. The seven candidates included residents who have proven their commitment and involvement with the town through years of service on advisory committees, including transportation and finance, and one who came in third in last November's race for two seats. The council's inability to find common ground even with applicants with such a high degree of qualifications and commitment is troubling, and disappointing.

The day after the July 11 meeting, which ended in calling a November election after the council failed to agree on an appointment, the town announced that the council may revisit the matter at this week's meeting, on July 17. We hope they seize the opportunity.

Some residents attending last week's meeting weren't all too happy with the 2-2 vote that seemed to be set in stone after three rounds of balloting. When it appeared that the four council members had slipped into their pattern of alliances — Jim Dobbie and Bill Widmer on one side and Elizabeth Lewis and Cary Wiest on the other — several residents urged them to try harder, appoint an applicant who could be sworn in this week, and avoid an election in November.

A vacant council seat, said resident Valerie Gardner, would "inhibit the town's ability to move ahead" on issues the council

needs to address between now and mid-December, when a new member would fill the seat should an election be held. She's right. There is no reason to believe that council members who couldn't agree on a candidate from among the impressive field of applicants before them will be able to effectively address the town's business during a time when important matters are at hand or on the horizon. High on the list is negotiating a new contract with the town's police officers — an issue that already has had a polarizing effect on residents.

That said, appointment of a new council member must be done with great care, putting politics aside in the public's interest. Any appointed member who chooses to run for election in November 2014 after serving out the term of Jerry Carlson, who resigned July 1, will have an incumbent's advantage at the ballot box. If an applicant shows signs of having a political bent that reflects that of either camp on the council, he or she should be disqualified.

Ms. Gardner, speaking to council members as they appeared to be heading for a stalemate, said the council should consider first and foremost the candidate's mindset, not politics. A collaborative spirit and the ability to hear and consider what others say are critical, and would help the council work through potentially divisive issues.

Of the seven candidates, surely there are some who meet those criteria and, as Ms. Gardner also noted, appointing one of them is the responsible thing to do. Other residents who added their two cents to the discussion agreed. We do too.

**EDITORIAL**

The opinion of The Almanac

**LETTERS**

Our readers write

**Sculpture: Safety for children the issue**

Editor:

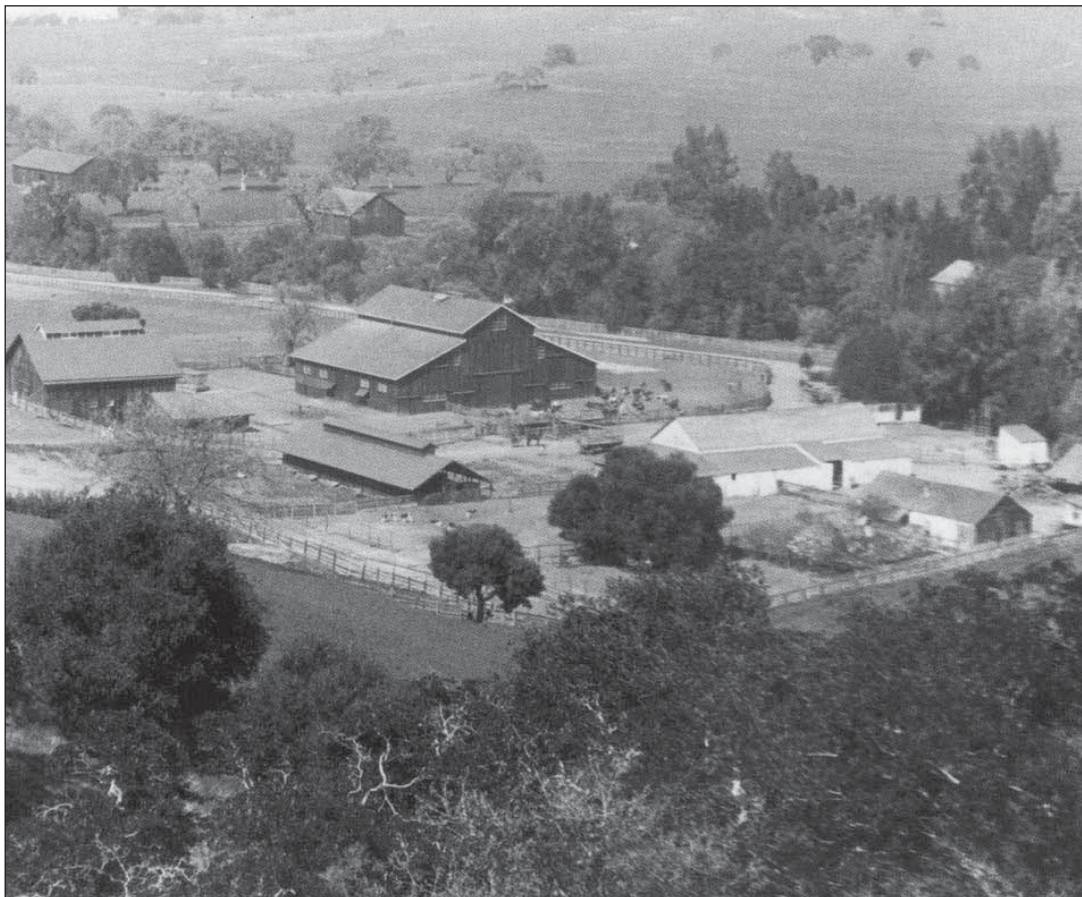
In response to Jill Andre's letter last week regarding safety (being) more important than the couch sculpture — how right she is if she has watched the children climb on the sculpture and jump off the top "couch." Where is the safety in that? What's going to happen when one of the children misses the soft ground and ends up on the lower rocks?

This is a public park and the children think it's fun to climb. Menlo Park could have a good lawsuit if someone got hurt. Maybe this is not what Jill had in mind, but it's also (as) important as the bicyclists and pedestrians she mentioned.

Eiffel Tower compared to the rock sculpture? I don't think so. It is time to get rid of the sculpture.

T. Barnett  
Willow Road, Menlo Park

Continued on next page



Portola Valley archives

**Our Regional Heritage**

The Burke Ranch occupied the site of today's Ladera Country Shopper a hundred years ago. The horizontal road in the center of the photo is Alpine Road. The residence was located somewhere on the foreground hill.

**LETTERS**

Our readers write

*Continued from previous page*

**Another fan of the Atherton Police Department**

Editor:

I could not agree more with Mr. Carr's comments (Letters, June 26).

In the 40 years I have resided in Atherton, all my experiences with the Atherton Police Department have been positive

in the areas of responsiveness, cooperation, respectfulness, and helpfulness — from chief, officers, and office personnel.

It has been a source of comfort and ease to know we have a most efficient corps of officers dedicated to preserving the safety of our community. Our Atherton Police Department receives high marks from me and my family, and we hope to have this high measure of service continue.

Marie Zahn

Glenwood Avenue, Atherton



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Give back to your community and consider serving on a City Commission. The City is currently recruiting applicants for the following Commission vacancies that will occur in the remainder of 2013.

TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

**3 Vacancies**

Summer application deadline: July 31, 2013; Fall deadline: September 27

The Transportation Commission is charged primarily with advising the City Council on matters related to the adequacy and improvement of all types of public and private transportation within and across the City, including the best approaches to establishing and maintaining systems and facilities for the transport of people and goods around the City. Specific focus areas include:

- The coordination of motor vehicle, bicycle, mass transit, and pedestrian traffic facilities
- The development and encouragement of the most efficient and least detrimental overall transportation system for the City supporting the goals of the General Plan
- Coordination with regional transportation systems
- Serve as the appeals board for appeals from staff determinations concerning establishment of traffic signs, pavement markings, speed zones, parking regulations, traffic signals, bike lanes, bus stops, etc.

**To Apply: Visit the City Website Commission page or contact Pam Aguilar at [piaguilar@menlopark.org](mailto:piaguilar@menlopark.org) or 330-6620 for an application**

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