

# The Almanac

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

JANUARY 14, 2015 | VOL. 50 NO. 19



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Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

**Kerry Keplinger**, center, could win a \$10,000 remodel of her Corte Madera classroom if she gets the most votes for the project designed by her students, including William, left, and Connor, right.

## Portola Valley classroom in running for remodel prize

By **Barbara Wood**  
Almanac Staff Writer

What happens if you challenge students to design a dream remodel of their classroom? At Portola Valley's Corte Madera School, the result is a chance to win \$10,000 toward that remodel.

Teacher Kerry Keplinger's submission of her students' plans to remodel Corte Madera's STEM (which stands for science, technology, engineering and math) classroom is one of 10 finalists in the Great American School Spectacular, put on by the Great American Insurance Group.

Based on online voting at GASchoolSpectacular.com, the top three projects will receive \$10,000, \$5,000 and \$2,000. Voting started Monday, Jan. 12, and continues through Jan. 30. Individuals may vote once a day.

Ms. Keplinger's seventh- and eighth-grade STEM students came up with all the submitted ideas as a class project, Ms. Keplinger says. They were

**'We feel collaboration is key to creating an environment where kids want to work and have fun while doing so.'**

responding to a late October challenge from Portola Valley School District Superintendent Lisa Gonzales. "Room 701 is now your project, your challenge, your personal space, your location to dream and dream big," she said. "Make the room productive. What can work better? What would you love to see? What can make this the most amazing STEM lab ever?"

Students used multimedia presentations to show their designs, including products that fit into the budget.

One student presentation emphasized tools to improve collaboration. "We feel that collaboration is the key to creating an environment where kids want to work and have fun

while doing so," students Connor, Philip, Buzz and Beatty said. They suggested lots of surfaces that can be written on and erased, such as paint that turns walls into whiteboards, and moving tables with whiteboard surfaces.

Students asked for some practical things: comfortable, rolling chairs, multi-height tables, sets of simple tools such as hammers and screwdrivers, soldering kits, electronic components, headphones, power drills and volt meters.

They asked for new computers for the classroom, because Ms. Keplinger said, she now brings laptops from her math classroom for the STEM students to use. They also asked for some of the latest in technology: a 3-D printer and a computer system that allows students to see presentations in 3-D.

"I hope we win. I hope we get the word out there and get people to vote for this," Ms. Keplinger said. "I think it's important for kids to see their dreams come true and get their wishes." ■

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# Local News

MENLO PARK | AHERTON | WOODSIDE | PORTOLA VALLEY

## Menlo Gateway hotel moving forward

By Sandy Brundage  
Almanac Staff Writer

A new full-service luxury hotel is on Menlo Park's horizon: Developer David Bohannon said he has found a "very capable, very excited" partner for his Menlo Gateway project.

While voters approved the required zoning changes in 2010, construction of the 1-million-square-foot office-hotel complex on 16 acres along Independence and Constitution drives has sat in limbo as Mr. Bohannon attempted to solve the conundrum presented by his development agreement with the city: The office

component, which has an easier time attracting investors, can't proceed without the hotel, which has faced a much tougher investment market, according to Mr. Bohannon.

"While there's been lots of news about hotels getting developed here and there, none of those is this type of hotel," he told the Almanac on Friday, Jan. 9. "The institutional market has been very steadfast in just avoiding major capital investment in large, full-scale almost urban type hotels."

One partnership that looked promising didn't pan out. "I spent a year and a half working with one guy and I cut him loose. I just

couldn't make a deal with him. That was painful. ... I thought we were going to get there but in the end, we couldn't," Mr. Bohannon said. "It caused me to restart the process. ... I had to look for someone capable of developing a high-end, full-service hotel in a market environment that is not cooperating with that."

He isn't quite ready to name the hotel developer he's been working with, as the final agreement still has "a little ways to go," but he thinks he'll be introducing the group to the city in late February.

"I will say: a couple months ago, after working with these guys for several months, we entered into a memorandum of

agreement outlining the chief principle terms of our deal," Mr. Bohannon said. "In the meantime, I've completely engaged my design team — the marketers, engineers, all the people required to take it from the concept to the full design."

He will have to ask the city to modify the development permit, as the current hotel design scraps the original plan for an attached health club.

Other adjustments include not necessarily waiting to lease 60 to 70 percent of the office space before starting construction.

"We would like to have that, but quite honestly, if I have to, we would figure out how to go

ahead with at least the parking structure because the hotel needs that. We're not going to hold up the hotel."

He was scheduled to present the annual update on the project to the Planning Commission on Monday, Jan. 12, after the Almanac's deadline. The development agreement estimates that Menlo Gateway will provide an estimated \$1.4 million in annual hotel revenue, and also requires a \$1.25 million contribution toward Belle Haven and Bedwell Bayfront Park improvements.

Construction could start some time in 2016. "This is the part of the program I like — when we get to do it," Mr. Bohannon said. ■

## School board drops closed session on charter school

By Barbara Wood  
Almanac Staff Writer

The Menlo Park City School District has dropped plans to hold a closed session meeting of its governing board after the Almanac pointed out the meeting could violate the state's open meetings law, the Brown Act.

The posted agenda for the Jan. 9 closed session was for a "conference with legal counsel-existing litigation." The agenda listed the litigation as the "appeal of Menlo Mandarin Immersion Charter School" to the county board.

After seeking clarification from Superintendent Maurice Ghysels and John Yeh, the attorney representing the district, the Almanac on Friday sent an email to board members and other district officials asking that the closed session not be held. The Almanac's editors argued the charter school's request to be approved by the San Mateo County Board of Education is not litigation.

On Jan. 12, Superintendent Ghysels said that although the district continues to believe the meeting could properly be held in closed session, it had no plans to reschedule. He cited the fact that "no court case or Attorney General opinion has specifically applied the litigation exception to the charter appeal process and that this is an area where

legal opinions may differ."

"Therefore, in an abundance of caution, once the issue was raised, we decided to take the meeting off calendar and have no current plans to reschedule, which will allow the parties to focus on the pending charter appeal," he said in an email.

An email sent to board members Friday morning by Almanac Editor Richard Hine and Associate Editor Renee Batti said: "The Almanac believes that the closed-session meeting would not comply with California's Brown Act, which requires elected bodies to meet in public except for specified matters."

"The justification for the closed session, 'current litigation,' is not valid," the email says. "The appeal by the Menlo Mandarin Immersion Charter School is not litigation under the definition provided in the Brown Act," the email continues.

That opinion was supported by attorney Jim Ewert of the California Newspaper Publishers Association, who is a Brown Act expert.

The Brown Act was originally passed in 1953 and requires that actions of elected bodies "be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly."

When asked about the basis



Students from the Menlo-Atherton High School choir performed holiday songs at the annual party of the Menlo Park-Atherton District of the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors.

## Bellumori auction raises money for M-A Partnership for Success

Local Realtors raised more than \$18,500 in an auction honoring the late Steve Bellumori at their annual holiday party, which also celebrated the life of the longtime Realtor who died in August. Funds will go to the M-A Partnership for Success, of which Mr. Bellumori was a strong supporter.

Mr. Bellumori was an early Menlo-Atherton High School Foundation Board member and remained committed to supporting economically challenged students in the community throughout his life. Partnership for Success is a project of the Menlo-Atherton

### ■ AROUND TOWN

High School Foundation for the Future, which connects at-risk students with services on and off campus.

### Top Realtors

Keri Nicholas and Hugh Cornish of the Menlo Park office of Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage are ranked among the top 200 Realtors in the U.S. by Real Estate Executive Magazine.

Ms. Nicholas and Mr. Cornish are two of eight Bay Area Coldwell Banker agents listed

in the top 200.

### Hewlett Foundation

Vidya Krishnamurthy is the new director of communications for the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

She comes to the foundation after nearly a decade with the Pew Research Center in Washington, D.C., most recently as its communication director.

She holds a master's degree in public affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University

See **AROUND TOWN** page 8

See **MANDARIN**, page 8

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## Hearing set for alleged repeat drunken driver

By Sandy Brundage  
Almanac Staff Writer

A preliminary hearing is set for Jan. 16 in the case of a driver charged with four felonies related to a string of collisions in Menlo Park and Palo Alto.

Daniel Gere, 73, of Menlo Park, was arrested on Saturday, Jan. 3, around 7:30 p.m. after he allegedly struck three cars in two different locations before hitting an electrical box.

According to the police report, his 1995 tan Infinity G20 hit a black Range Rover in the Safeway parking lot off El Camino Real, then a 2008 Mercedes Benz and a gray 2010 Toyota Corolla parked on the street.

He allegedly drove away without stopping, and officers located him in the Stanford Shopping Center parking lot after his vehicle had col-

lided with the electrical box. Although the other drivers complained of pain, none required transport to the hospital, police said.

District Attorney Steve Wagstaffe said Mr. Gere has been charged with felony driving under the influence, DUI causing injury to multiple victims, and hit-and-run causing injury. The suspect's blood alcohol level was not yet available.

According to the DA, when asked by police why he fled the scene, Mr. Gere reportedly responded: "Why do you care? Everyone is full of insurance."

He had a case pending for misdemeanor drunk driving at the time of his Jan. 3 arrest, the DA said. Mr. Gere failed to appear for the arraignment on Nov. 18, 2014, and had a warrant out for his arrest when the new offenses occurred. Bail was set at \$100,000 following the most recent events, and he remains in custody. ■

## New hours for police substation

The Belle Haven police substation, otherwise known as the neighborhood service center at 871 Hamilton Ave., has new operating hours.

The new hours are: Monday, 1 to 7 p.m.; Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 7:30 to 11 a.m. and 1 to 7 p.m.; and Fri-

day, 1 to 7 p.m. The substation is closed Saturday and Sunday.

According to the city, the new schedule for the substation, which opened about eight months ago, is based on the most frequent hours of use by the community.

*You can quote me...*



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Photo by Michelle Le/The Almanac

**Drivers wait** for vacant spaces near Trader Joe's in Menlo Park. Some residents eager to improve downtown are advocating longer parking times and underground garages.

## Group seeks to 're-vitalize' downtown Menlo Park

By **Sandy Brundage**  
Almanac Staff Writer

Menlo Park is notorious for conducting endless studies of the same issues: Traffic. Downtown parking. Traffic. Downtown vibrancy. Some residents hope to break that cycle and move forward with actual change.

Dana Hendrickson, coordinator of what he has dubbed "Re-Imagine Menlo Park," said he's hoping to capture the momentum raised during the downtown/El Camino Real specific plan debate in 2014 to revitalize the city's downtown district.

"People have said, 'I'm tired of all this voting stuff, what can I do? How do we do this? When do we see stuff?'" Mr. Hendrickson said.

While implementing the specific plan and other bureaucratic processes are underway, and developers Greenheart and Stanford are planning mixed-use complexes along El Camino Real, he said he didn't see any central coordination between all the different pieces.

"How do we work with the city so they view this as being supportive and not out of sync with what they're trying to do?" he asked.

The 'how' remains a question in search of an answer for the time being, although he hopes within the next three months to have a formal structure, perhaps a different name, and a way for people to see how they can help out.

So what does this ideal re-imagined downtown look like? It has a focal point, for starters, something that gives the area an

identity. "Some sort of beautiful spot that says visually and aesthetically, 'this is downtown,'" Mr. Hendrickson said.

Also: More parking. One idea the group is kicking around is combining the two goals: Build the parking spaces underground, and above ground, create a park with trees, fountains, seating. "It would solve the parking problem and create a hub, an identity. Something to be proud of."

**'People have said, I'm tired of all this voting stuff, what can I do? How do we do this? When do we see stuff?'**

DANA HENDRICKSON

Mayor Cat Carlton said she's excited to get input from the community, perhaps via an advisory board. "Whether informal and resident-led, or whether the city runs it, I don't know at this point," she said. "Regardless, I want to make sure that we are listening to people. It benefits everyone to have good, open, honest conversation. What that animal looks like, I can't tell you right now."

Downtown has already seen some revitalization, with the Off the Grid weekly food truck event, the temporary paseo for movie screenings, and expanded outdoor dining.

Ms. Carlton seconded improving parking downtown as a logical next step. At a recent convention of mayors, which she said

she paid out of pocket to attend, there was much talk of building underground parking structures with parks on top.

"I'm sure it's going to be controversial, but I'm really looking forward to talking about it," she said. "The (Menlo Park Presbyterian Church) has offered to help pay. We could put in electric car chargers, and have places for downtown employees to park and a permit program."

While that's a longer-term project, there are also fixes that could be made in the immediate future — such as changing the default parking lot time limit to three hours instead of two.

"Two hours is just not enough time to go do what you need to do downtown and shop," Ms. Carlton said. "We want people to have enough time. We do it over Christmas and the world doesn't end. If you're going to have a problem you're going to have it over Christmas, right? So we've had our test run."

Other changes, well, those are harder to sort out. While the city would love to see "cooler, better stores" downtown — it's "a chicken-and-egg problem. They want more foot traffic, and we're not going to get the foot traffic until we get cool stores."

There's also the delicate issue of how to work with the family trusts that own many downtown buildings and who aren't interested in selling or in change, according to the mayor. Part of that work entails making it easier for the owners to fix up their properties by taking steps such as revising the fire code,

See **MENLO PARK**, page 12

## REAL ESTATE Q&A

by Monica Corman



### The Offer Process

**Dear Monica:** We have not bought or sold a property in more than 20 years and are just about to list our residence. How is the offer process usually handled? Jeff C.

**Dear Jeff:** There is no one way to handle the offer process but here is what typically happens: Once your house is on the market and an interested buyer makes an offer, your agent will either set a time for you, the seller, to hear the offer, or she will summarize the offer for you. If there is more than one offer, she will set a time for agents to present their offers to you or to her, and then summarize them for you.

If you don't like the offer you receive you can prepare a counteroffer to change

the terms that are unacceptable to you and present this to the prospective buyers. If they accept, you will reach an agreement. They may like some but not all of the terms in the counteroffer and counter you again. This can continue until you and the buyers either reach agreement or an impasse.

Sometimes sellers decide to neither accept an offer nor counter it. The buyers and sellers may be too far apart for sellers to feel that it is worth the effort to counter. That is an acceptable response but one that usually cuts off the chance of further negotiations. Your agent can help you understand the pros and cons of not responding and you can decide what works best for you.

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Interested families are encouraged to attend our Open House and fill out an application. Applications will be available online beginning February 1st. For more information, visit our website at [www.woodside.k12.ca.us](http://www.woodside.k12.ca.us) or contact Lisa at [ldayeh@woodside.k12.ca.us](mailto:ldayeh@woodside.k12.ca.us), (650) 851-1571 ext. 250.

# County plans fresh look at Mandarin charter school

By Barbara Wood  
Almanac Staff Writer

Once again a crowd packed a hearing room to listen and speak about the Mandarin immersion charter school that has been proposed in the Menlo Park City School District. On Wednesday night, Jan. 7, the San Mateo County Board of Education took the testimony.

Backers of the Menlo Mandarin Immersion Charter School have asked the county to approve their school after the Menlo Park City School District's governing board unanimously denied the charter school's petition on Nov. 12. The county board is scheduled to vote on the charter on Feb. 4.

About 150 people filled the county boardroom in Redwood City. More than three dozen spoke about the proposal after presentations by the charter backers and the Menlo Park City School district.

The county board's attorney, Claire Cunningham, told county board members that the county office of education is conducting a fresh review of the charter.

"The charter petition review committee, comprised of staff at the county office of education, is conducting an independent review of the charter petition," Ms. Cunningham said. "So it isn't dependent on whether the Menlo Park City School District team got the correct answer or not. It's conducting its own independent review of the petition."

The county staff's review will evaluate the details of the charter school's proposed program "based on our teams' professional judgment," she said.

Ms. Cunningham also told the county board that the charter petition does not need to be perfect to be approved.

"A charter petition could still be granted even it doesn't meet certain aspects of the elements that are laid out in the education code," she said. The county's report on the charter proposal is "what you'll be reviewing and making your decision (on), in addition to the information that's being presented and the public comment," Ms. Cunningham said.

County board member Ted Lempert agreed. "We're going to do our own analysis here," he said.

The board will also have to take into consideration the strong opposition to the charter school, some of which was voiced at the hearing.

Oak Knoll reading teacher Jacqui Cebrian said she fears the school will promote inequality in the district. "It seems to me that it only serves to widen the opportunity and achievement gap

that over three years our school has narrowed," she said. The proposed charter school, she said, "seems designed to provide a boutique experience for a small number of mostly privileged students."

"They should not be a vehicle to further

advantage already advantaged children, while further disadvantaging our neediest," Ms. Cebrian said.

A number of supporters of the charter school also addressed the county board. Jennifer Yeh, one of the school's founders, shared the vision she has for the school.

"Imagine standing in the schoolyard where children of all ethnicities are speaking fluently in Mandarin and English," she said. "This is what I actually saw when I toured our neighboring school's Mandarin immersion program in Oakland."

Ms. Yeh said that when the district turned down their proposal for a Mandarin immersion program within the district, "without any other recourse" supporters researched charter schools and their impact on local communities. "Our team decided that the benefits of the Menlo Mandarin far outweighs any potential risk" to the district, she said.

"We respectfully ask that the county approve our vision, a school that would create a progressive learning environment, and a school that would prepare students to be lifelong learners and engaged global citizens," Ms. Yeh said.

Under the proposal, the Mandarin immersion school would eventually have 450 students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

The presentations made by the Menlo Park City School District and the Menlo Mandarin Immersion Charter School can be seen on the county's website, <http://www.smcoe.org/about-smcoe/board-of-education/meetings-agendas-and-documents>. ■

**The charter school 'should not be a vehicle to further advantage already advantaged children, while further disadvantaging our neediest.'**

OAK KNOLL READING TEACHER  
JACQUI CEBRIAN



**The leadership** of the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors, Menlo Park-Atherton District, stand by a poster made in honor of the late local real estate agent, Steve Bellumori. From left, they are SILVAR president David Tonna, district chair Lehua Greenman, district chair-elect Davena Gentry, and SILVAR president-elect Chris Isaacson.

## AROUND TOWN

continued from page 5

and a bachelor's degree in journalism from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

## From jockey to artist

Tom Chapman will speak about his life, "From Professional Jockey to Full-time Artist," at 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 24, at the San Mateo County History Museum, 2200 Broadway in Redwood City.

Mr. Chapman was a pro-

fessional jockey in the Bay Area for 20 years, competing in more than 20,000 races. For the past 21 years he has painted in oils, specializing in horses, pets and wildlife. He teaches weekly classes in oil and acrylic painting at University Art in Redwood City.

The talk is free with the price of admission to the history museum (\$6 for adults and \$4 for seniors and students).

## Licenses online

Business owners in Menlo Park can now apply for a license

or renew it online.

See [tinyurl.com/l2mfrfx](http://tinyurl.com/l2mfrfx) to process your license. According to the city, the goal is to have make the process completely paperless by 2016.

## Bag fee

If you didn't bring your own, expect to pay 25 cents per bag provided by the retailer in the new year. "Got Your Bag?" reminder stickers and reusable bags are available while supplies last at City Hall, located at the Civic Center at 701 Laurel St.

## MANDARIN

continued from page 5

for the closed session, which was also used by the district as the basis for a closed session held on Monday, Jan. 6, Superintendent Maurice Ghysels had said in a Jan. 9 email: "This is a proper use of closed session. The Brown Act's definition of 'litigation' is not limited to court proceedings, but also includes 'adjudicatory' and 'administrative proceedings.'"

However, the Brown Act does not define litigation as "administrative proceedings." It does say litigation is any "adjudicatory proceeding ... before an administrative body exercising its adjudicatory authority."

An adjudicatory proceeding, Mr. Ewert said, involves acting as a judicial body. The county board's consideration of the charter school proposal "does not fit that definition," he said. The county is acting in "an administrative capacity" in this case, he said.

The San Mateo County School Board's counsel, Claire Cunningham, has confirmed that the matter before the board is not an appeal of the

school board's decision that the board must adjudicate, but is, according to Ms. Cunningham: "a request to the county board to approve the charter petition. ... The County Board conducts an independent review of the petition and makes its own decision about whether it should be approved or denied."

The district has been working with John Yeh, an attorney specializing in charter school law, from the Mountain View offices of Burke, Williams & Sorensen LLP. Mr. Yeh said the district believes the county school board's consideration of the charter application is litigation because it "involves the application of facts to the statutory criteria, as well as due process and the opportunity to be heard in the form of a public hearing," which are criteria given in an opinion by the California Attorney General's office in 1986.

Mr. Ewert said that attorney general's opinion was issued years before major changes were made to the Brown Act in 1994. The opinion, he said, "refers to the status of the law in 1986, which is substantially different

from what the law is now."

The school district also does not meet any of the four criteria set out in the section of the Brown Act that the school district used to justify its closed meeting, Mr. Ewert said. Those criteria include:

■ Formal litigation is underway.

■ Legal counsel believes the agency has "significant exposure to" litigation.

■ The agency is meeting only to decide whether it should be holding a closed session because of exposure to litigation.

■ The agency is deciding whether or not to, or has decided to, initiate litigation.

The exception allowing closed meetings for litigation "is not as broad as their attorney is arguing it should be," Mr. Ewert said. "There is no legal precedent for this interpretation."

Mr. Ewert said such a closed session would also violate the state's constitution, specifically Article 1, Section 3b. That section says: "A statute, court rule, or other authority ... shall be broadly construed if it furthers the people's right of access, and narrowly construed if it limits the right of access." ■

# Presidential adviser Martin Anderson dies

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Martin Anderson, an author, Hoover Institution scholar at Stanford University, and adviser to Republican presidents, died Saturday, Jan. 3, in Portola Valley. He was at home and died in his sleep, his family said. He was 78.

Mr. Anderson advised Richard Nixon on domestic policy during his 1968 campaign for president. The Vietnam War was raging, and Mr. Nixon made a campaign promise to end the military draft — an idea attributed to Mr. Anderson, who was on the faculty at Columbia University at the time. Mr. Anderson went on to become a director of research for the Nixon campaign and later worked as a special assistant to the president.

Mr. Anderson joined the Hoover Institution as a senior fellow in 1971. During his long tenure there, he continued advising presidents and presidential candidates, including Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Pete Wilson and Robert Dole, according to a Hoover bio. At the time of his death, Mr. Anderson was the Keith and Jan Hurlbut Senior Fellow, emeritus.

During Mr. Reagan's 1980 campaign, Mr. Anderson served as a senior policy adviser. After the election, he was an assistant for policy development

and was said to be "a major contributor" to Mr. Reagan's economic and missile defense policies, including a proposal — the Strategic Defense Initiative — to develop a missile system that would shoot down incoming missiles.

He is the author of "The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962," and "Revolution: The Reagan Legacy." He and his wife and co-author Annelise Anderson wrote "Reagan's Secret War: The Untold Story of His Fight to Save the World from Nuclear Disaster" and "Ronald Reagan: Decisions of Greatness."

In addition to many scholarly papers, Mr. Anderson is the co-



Martin Anderson

editor of "Reagan, In His Own Hand" and "Reagan: A Life in Letters."

Mr. Anderson served on many committees and commissions, including the Commission on Critical Choices for Americans, the Committee on the Present Danger, the president's Economic Policy Advisory Board, and the California Governor's Council of Economic Advisers.

He was a native of Lowell, Massachusetts, and graduated summa cum laude from Dartmouth College. He had a master's degree in engineering and business administration and a doctorate in industrial management from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Mr. Anderson is survived by his wife, Annelise, of 49 years and his half-brother, James McHugh Jr. of Rye, New Hampshire. ■

# Jacquelin Mitchell, community volunteer

A memorial service will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, Jan. 23, at Trinity Episcopal Church in Menlo Park for Jacquelin Baumgarten Mitchell of Atherton, who died Dec. 29 after a brief illness. She was 82.

Ms. Mitchell was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania, and graduated from the Packer School in Brooklyn Heights, where she made her debut in 1949. She also graduated from Southern Seminary in Buena Vista, Virginia, and the Denver School of Education.

She met her husband on Friday, Oct. 13, 1961, when he was



Mitchell, Jacquelin

OBITUARY  
*Obituaries are based on information provided by the family.*

a third year student at Stanford Law School. They were married two and a half months later on Dec. 29.

"Miss Baumgarten" taught kindergarten at Hillview School and then Encinal School from 1955 to 1961. She subsequently substituted in the Menlo Park and Palo Alto school districts from 1962 until 1969.

She was active in the Palo Alto Mid/Peninsula Junior League and joined the Woodside-Atherton Auxiliary to

See MITCHELL, page 10

## Woman on walk grabbed by man

An early morning walk to work turned frightening for one woman in Menlo Park on Tuesday, Jan. 6.

Shortly before 6 a.m., the woman was walking near Partridge Avenue and El Camino Real when a man approached from behind and grabbed her breasts, yanking her toward him. When she resisted, the man fled north on El Camino Real, according to the police report. An area search by officers came up empty.

The woman, who was not hurt, described the suspect as a stocky Caucasian or Hispanic man in his 30s, about 6 feet tall. He wore a blue sweatshirt with a hood pulled over his head, and blue jeans, police said.

— Sandy Brundage



My life here

Hal Oates, joined in 2011

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LET'S DISCUSS:

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## MITCHELL

continued from page 9

the Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford in 1977. She was complex director for Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park from 1994 to 1996 and in 2002. She also chaired Friends of Allied Arts in 1998, 1999 and 2001.

She and her husband, and often their daughter Rebekah, cruised their 26-foot boat in

the Pacific Northwest during most Augusts for 40 years. They were members of the Delta Yacht Club and Ladera Oaks Swim, Tennis and Fitness Club.

She is survived by her husband, Lincoln A. Mitchell; daughter Rebekah Ann Mitchell of Kentfield; sister Rebekah Ann Bashford of Idyllwild; nephew Morris D. Mitchell and niece Elizabeth D. Mitchell, both of Soquel.

## Cecil Temple Thomas, Jr.

June 7, 1922 – December 23, 2014

It is with great sadness that the Thomas family announces the passing of Cecil Temple Thomas, Jr., at the age of 92, in Palo Alto on December 23, 2014. Known as "Papa" to some, and "CT" or "Oso" to others, he will be deeply missed by all who knew him.

Oso was born at Cottage Hospital in Santa Barbara on June 7, 1922 to Gladys and Cecil Thomas, and grew up on the family ranch in Carpinteria. He graduated from Santa Barbara High School in 1941 and attended the University of California, Berkeley where he was a member of the Chi Phi Fraternity. His college career was interrupted by 4 years of US Army service, during which time he was stationed at the San Francisco Presidio. After being honorably discharged from the Army at the end of WWII, he continued his college career at UC Berkeley where he was the Student Manager of the Golden Bears Football team. It was at Berkeley that he earned his nickname "Oso".

After graduating from Berkeley in 1950, Oso went to work in the San Francisco Bay Area and started his long and very successful career as a stock broker with Irving Lundborg, Kidder Peabody and Paine Webber. Oso met the love of his life, Sue, at a Halloween party in downtown San Francisco in the late 1950s. Oso and Sue married in Carmel in 1959 and settled in Portola Valley, where they raised their children Brad and Julie and where Oso lived until his passing.

Over the years, Oso was an active member of a number of charities and community service organizations, including Chi Phi Fraternity, Rotary Club, Alpine Little League, The Atherlons, and Sons in Retirement.

Oso was well known to all of his family and friends as extremely gentle, kind, loving, caring, funny, perpetually optimistic (to a fault), and passionate. His lifelong passions were led by the love he had for his family, friends and neighbors, followed closely by his passions for Cal Bears Football (missing only 6 home games over 60+ years), Napa Cabernet, world traveling, tennis, skiing, photography, fruit growing, and chocolate in almost any form. Other than a few opposing college football coaches and politicians, Oso never had an unkind or harsh word to say about anyone.

Oso also had an amazing memory for facts and statistics of all kinds, and was well known for turning the subject of the most mundane conversation into an interesting story about a Cal football player, a tasty wine or a memorable tennis match. His optimistic spirit, broad smile, deep laughter, warm hugs, bushy eyebrows, bald head and clever sense of humor will survive in the hearts of all his family and friends.

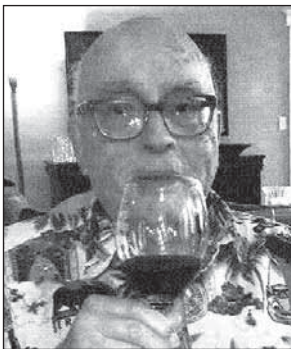
Oso is survived by his wife of 55 years, Suzette Thomas; son Brad and wife Krissy of Santa Barbara; daughter Julie and husband Steve San Filippo of San Carlos; sister Jacquelyn Law of Honolulu; nephew Robert Law of Sonora; nieces Cecily Woods of Newport Beach and Kathy Czar of Maui; and grandchildren Patrick and Charlotte Thomas and Marisa, Dominic and Joseph San Filippo.

Should friends and family desire, memorial contributions may be made in Oso's name to Cal Football through the Cal Athletic Development office (Bear Backers). Checks should be made to "UC Regents", with Cal Football on the memo line, and mailed to 195 Haas Pavilion, Berkeley, CA 94720.

Arrangements are in the care of Welch-Ryce-Haider Funeral Chapels in Santa Barbara.

GO BEARS!

PAID OBITUARY

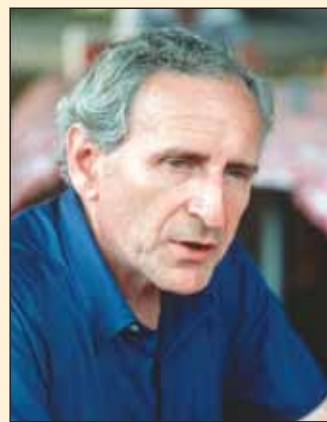


## Marcel Vinokur, folk dance teacher

A memorial in honor of Marcel Vinokur, who taught dance classes in Menlo Park for decades, will be held from 6 to 10 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 18, in the Lucie Stern Community Center ballroom, 1305 Middlefield Road in Palo Alto. He died Nov. 14 in his Palo Alto home at the age of 85.

Mr. Vinokur was instrumental in building a large international folk dance community on the Peninsula through 60 years of teaching. He taught his final class at the Burgess Recreation Center in Menlo Park in 2012. He also staged monthly parties, including an annual New Year's Eve celebration, in the rec center, say family members.

In 1965, Mr. Vinokur and his wife, Kathryn, kicked off an annual Mother's Day folk dance campout weekend in Yosemite that continued until this past year.



**Marcel Vinokur** was also a pioneer in aeronautical engineering.

Mr. Vinokur was a pioneer in aeronautical engineering. Born in Ostrava, in what is now the Czech Republic, he and his parents came to America in 1939. He taught his first folk dance class at Cornell University, where he earned a degree in engineering physics. He was one of the first to

## OBITUARY

*Obituaries are based on information provided by the family.*

earn a doctorate at Princeton University, during Albert Einstein's tenure there.

Moving to California to work as a research scientist with Lockheed Missiles & Space Co., he later worked at NASA Ames Research Center at Moffett Field, including the day he died.

Mr. Vinokur is survived by his wife, Kathryn; son David of London; two stepsons, Christopher Sloan of Portland, Oregon, and Robert Sloan of Sunnyvale; and eight grandchildren.

Memorials may be made to the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry, either online or to P.O. Box 703, Amherst, NY 14226-0704.



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## Homicide suspect nabbed in Menlo Park

A missing license plate led police to arrest a man in Menlo Park who is suspected of homicide in Merced County.

A Honda Accord driven by 23-year-old Hugo Hernandez of Modesto was pulled over at Willow Road and Newbridge Street shortly after 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 3, according to Menlo Park police.

After a records check showed

he was wanted by the Merced County Sheriff's Department for the potentially drug-related shooting death of a 21-year-old Hilmar man in August, Mr. Hernandez was taken into custody. Police spokesperson Nicole Acker said the suspect's reasons for being in Menlo Park were unknown. ▣

— Sandy Brundage

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# Isaacson named president of real estate association

Chris Isaacson is the 2015 president of the Silicon Valley Association of Realtors (SILVAR). Mr. Isaacson, who grew up in Portola Valley and graduated from Menlo-Atherton High School, is a Realtor with the Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Woodside office.

After attending UC Santa Barbara and graduating from Pepperdine University, Mr. Isaacson worked in banking and finance. Before becoming a Realtor, he was employed at Montecito Bank & Trust in Santa Barbara. He later moved to San Diego, where he served as a branch manager and commercial loan officer for California Bank & Trust and Citibank.

After a number of years, he returned to his roots. He joined his mother, Jean Isaacson, in the real estate business in 2006. Mother and son form a team at the Coldwell Banker Woodside office.

The ability to be your own boss, having more control of your daily schedule and build-

ing relationships are aspects of the business Mr. Isaacson says he enjoys.

It can also be intense. He recalls negotiating the sale of property belonging to the deceased parent of five siblings who could not agree with each other. It took over a year to sell the property.

“The family dynamics, it’s different all the time. You never know because each transaction, each client is different,” he says.

Mr. Isaacson is past chair of the Menlo Park-Atherton District of SILVAR and the district’s service volunteer program committee. He has served as a director at large and as a California Association of Realtors Region 9 director. “If I was going to invest in my career, I wanted to have a voice,” says Mr. Isaacson.



Chris Isaacson

## ■ POLICE CALLS

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

### WOODSIDE

**Theft:** A resident of Normandy Lane, while reporting the theft of a credit card to a deputy dispatched to the home, added that a necklace had been stolen from the master bathroom drawer. Estimated loss: \$3,000. Jan. 2.

**Drunken driving:** In a solo-vehicle accident, a driver taking a left turn while traveling north on Mountain Home Road near Winding Way applied the brakes too abruptly, lost control of the vehicle, crossed into the southbound lane and drove up an embankment. Jan. 4.

### MENLO PARK

#### Residential burglaries:

■ Someone cut the lock on a gate at a residential construction site on Holly Avenue and stole re-bar cutters, two drills, laser levels and plate compactors. Estimated loss: \$700. Jan. 7.

■ An unlocked front window let someone enter a house on Partridge Avenue and steal three rings and \$10 in cash. Estimated loss: \$200. Jan. 8.

#### Commercial burglaries:

■ Two people walked into the Safeway supermarket on Sharon Park Drive, put

24 bottles of wine in a basket, covered them with packs of paper towels and walked out with the wine, but without having paid for it. Estimated loss: \$5,000. Jan. 6.

■ Three women entered the Safeway supermarket on Sharon Park Drive, put 24 bottles of baby formula into a duffel bag and left without having paid for them. Estimated loss: \$594. Jan. 8.

#### Auto burglaries:

■ Someone entered an unlocked vehicle on Burgess Drive and stole a pair of sunglasses, five compact discs, a charging cord and \$20 in cash. Estimated loss: \$245. Jan. 7.

■ An unlocked vehicle parked on Roble Avenue showed evidence of having been entered unlawfully, but the owner found nothing missing. Jan. 8.

#### Thefts:

■ Two pairs of ski boots were stolen from an unlocked vehicle parked on Chester Street. Estimated loss: \$1,000. Jan. 8.

■ At Mike's Camera at 715 Santa Cruz Avenue, someone stole a camera lens from the store. Estimated loss: \$599. Jan. 8.

■ A man entered Mike's Camera, picked up a camera and left the store with it without having paid for it. Estimated loss: \$499. Jan. 8.

■ Someone stole a parking sticker from a vehicle parked on Curtis Street. Estimated loss: \$592. Jan. 7.

■ Someone stole a package containing

children's toys and an Apple TV from the front porch of a home on Creek Drive. Estimated loss: \$300. Jan. 8.

■ A woman working at JobTrain on O'Brien Drive left her purse unattended at her desk and came back to find that someone had stolen her wallet. Estimated loss: \$186. Jan. 7.

■ A canvas bag and a GPS unit were stolen from a vehicle parked on Sharon Park Drive. Estimated loss: \$101. Jan. 8.

■ Someone stole items from the glove compartment of a vehicle parked on Morey Drive, but the owner did not provide a list of the items to police. Jan. 7.

■ A pair of sunglasses was stolen from an unlocked vehicle parked on Kenwood Drive. No estimate of loss. Jan. 7.

■ A spare ignition key was stolen from the glove box of an unlocked vehicle parked on University Drive. Estimated loss: \$5. Jan. 7.

■ Someone entered an unlocked vehicle parked on Kenwood Drive and rummaged through the glove compartment but did not take anything — because the vehicle had nothing of value in it, the owner said. Jan. 8.

**Fraud:** Two men approached a third man and asked him to cash a \$4,400 check, made out to the third man, in a bank on Santa Cruz Avenue. In exchange, the two men promised the man some of the money. The bank cashed the check and “cash exchanged hands,” police said. The bank later declared the check to be fraudulent. Jan. 7.



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# Me and my BMW: a match just meant not to be?

By Barbara Wood

**DISPATCHES**  
from the home front

Somehow I feel I am being punished for being too smugly happy about the fact that with all my children gone from home, I allowed myself to take advantage of a fantastic deal on a BMW convertible last spring, and for the first several months spent all my driving time with the top down, smiling.

At first, I smiled whenever I drove the metallic baby-blue two-seater, even when I had to cram much of a Costco haul in the front seat, or had to take the top down to get a new patio umbrella home from the store.

I kept a sweater behind the seat for those times when other drivers let a little fog convince them to leave their tops up, and I carefully covered the car whenever we were at home because there's no room for it in the garage.

But my smile became a little strained around the time I had to duct tape the car together while waiting for my friend who owns a body shop to return from vacation and do a few thousand dollars' worth of work to replace the duct tape.

Before he made a house call to tell me how bad the damage was, Dan, the auto-body man, warned me on the phone: "You will start driving it more carefully. You are going to have to pay a lot of money and you will drive it more carefully." Yes, I will, and I have. It's that or go back

to driving a dull, ordinary car again.

But really, it was hardly my fault. There's a small dip between the street and my driveway, a low spot that carries water down the street when it rains. Every time I drove in and out, the ground-hugging bumper of my sweet car scraped on the pavement.

It's a bad design, BMW.

And almost every time I parked it in a lot with one of those concrete stops, I'd scrape the bumper on it before backing up a tiny bit to where I was supposed to be.

As a consequence, one day I noticed that a strip of fiberglass on the bottom of the bumper was hanging off. I gave it a pull and tossed it to the side of the garage.

Not too long after, my husband and I noticed a horrible scraping sound as we were on our way to pick up burritos for dinner. We pulled over and he pushed something under the car back into place before we continued on our way.

Not too long after that, however, the scraping returned as I was making a desperate, last-minute run to try to pick up dog food before the dog noticed it was dinner time. I pulled over, looked under the car, and saw what I later learned was the engine cover, dragging



Photo by Dan Fitzpatrick.

Barbara Wood's metallic baby-blue BMW convertible, which she got for a steal, is now stealing from her.

**'I am trying very hard not to believe that the universe is telling me I shouldn't be so happily driving such an impractical car.'**

on the pavement.

The car and I drove very slowly, and loudly, back home and my husband picked up the dog food, even though it made him late for his softball game.

Dan, the auto-body man, who made a house call to look at my car for me either because he's a very nice man, or because he was afraid I would start crying in his shop and embarrass him when he told me what the damage was, did not have good news.

It seems that with the little strip of fiberglass gone, the engine cover came loose and started dragging. With the engine cover loose, a piece of plastic that sits beside the headlight fell off and was lost. Then the headlight, no longer snugly held in place, broke from its

mounting bracket.

A BMW headlight, it seems, is very expensive, to say nothing of the engine cover, or side piece. While to do the job right would require a new front end, Dan, the body man, agreed we could get by with some brackets and a little tinkering on his part.

"You are going to do it again," he said. He apparently knows me a bit too well.

But I completely agree. Why replace the front end if it would just have to be done again later?

So, while the damage to the car was virtually invisible without crawling under the car, the total bill was several months of my salary.

Since then, I have been parking very, very carefully, and trying very hard not to believe

that the universe is telling me I shouldn't be so happily driving such an impractical car.

I'm also ignoring the fact that I just had to buy the car four new tires. The old tires, one at a time, went flat on me. It turns out that even though they are special tires that can be driven on when flat, and therefore can't be repaired, only replaced, that they were the original 11-year-old tires for the car and should have been replaced quite some time ago.

I'm just not ready to give the BMW up quite yet. Because I sort of figure that after 12 years driving a Volkswagen van, followed by nine years of driving a Prius, I deserve just a bit more time to drive with the top down. ▣

## Board eyes themes for high schools

By Dave Boyce  
Almanac Staff Writer

Themes for two new small high schools will be up for discussion at the Wednesday, Jan. 14, meeting of the board of the Sequoia Union High School District.

The proposed new schools — at 150 Jefferson Drive in Menlo Park and 535 Old County Road in San Carlos — will have themes, such as a focus on technology or the arts, in part to make them attractive and draw students away from Carlmont and Menlo-Atherton high schools.

Current enrollments in ele-

mentary and middle schools are expected to build pressure at M-A and Carlmont over the next several years, peaking in the 2020-21 school year. For the two small themed schools, the district plans to start with freshman classes and build enrollment year by year to a maximum of about 400 students each.

The board meets at 5:30 p.m. at the district office at 480 James Avenue in Redwood City.

The board is also set to discuss spending to expand capacity on each major campus, including M-A and Woodside high schools, in advance of

the surging enrollment. Voters approved Measure A in June, giving the district authority to borrow up to \$265 million on the bond market to build new classrooms and related facilities.

Also on the agenda: In what may be an unprecedented development, the board will examine a district budget formatted to be readable by the average person. In the past, a Sequoia district chief financial officer explained the inscrutably formatted annual budget by blaming software requirements that forced the district to eschew other more readable formats. ▣

**MENLO PARK**  
continued from page 7

and by hashing out the city's economic development plan.

"Someone had the bright idea in the 1970s that wouldn't it be awesome if MP was the town for home decor and they actually worked on that. That was their goal!" Ms. Carlton said. "How many times, honestly, can you re-do your house? That doesn't make for an exciting downtown for the people who live here. I love the (furniture) stores that we have, but we have enough. We're full. That's why we're working on the economic development plan."

Go to [mpcdforum.com](http://mpcdforum.com) to see the "Re-Imagine Menlo Park" website. ▣

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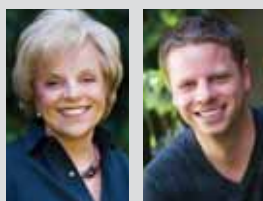
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## WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

All letters must include a home address and contact phone number. Published letters will also appear on the web site, [www.TheAlmanacOnline.com](http://www.TheAlmanacOnline.com), and occasionally on the Town Square forum.

### Town Square forum

Post your views on the Town Square forum at [AlmanacNews.com](http://AlmanacNews.com)

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**Call** the Viewpoint desk at  
223-6528.

# School district was right to cancel meeting

A reader posted a comment on the Almanac's Town Square about last week's cancellation of a closed-session meeting of the Menlo Park City School District board, an action taken after the Almanac raised questions about whether the meeting would meet Brown Act requirements. "The Brown Act is a trap for the unwary. I'm not opposed to it, but for those who are subject to it, it is very very easy to accidentally cross lines," the poster wrote. To which we can say, "How well we know."

The school district had received an opinion from its attorney that a closed-door meeting to discuss "existing litigation" over the Mandarin Immersion Charter School proposed for — but rejected by — the district would be legal under the state's open meeting law, the Brown Act. But the big problem, in our mind, was that there is no "existing litigation" to justify such a closed meeting, and the Almanac wrote to the district asking it to cancel the meeting. It did so, and deserves credit for the action.

The question centered on legal interpretations of the Act by John Yeh, an attorney specializing in charter school law. The district had hired Mr. Yeh to help with the complicated issue of whether to grant organizers' request that the district charter the proposed Mandarin immersion school. In our original and subsequent emailed letters, we challenged Mr. Yeh's interpretations.

We were backed by attorney Jim Ewert of the California Newspaper Publishers Association, a widely recognized expert on the Brown Act and other laws dealing with public access to government. In an interview with the Almanac, Mr. Ewert reviewed the four criteria set forth in the Brown Act regarding when a public agency's elected board is legally permitted to meet in private over litigation matters; he asserted that the district didn't meet any of those criteria.

Superintendent Maurice Ghysels said in an email to the Almanac that he and the board decided to act "in an abundance of caution" once the question was raised, and they postponed the meeting within about two hours of receiving the Almanac's first letter. He said that there are no current plans to reschedule the meeting, but left open the possibility that Mr. Yeh's analysis was correct, noting that "this is an area where legal opinions may differ."

While we're pleased that the district has taken this course, we're also aware that it's far from uncommon for public agencies seeking legal advice on open meeting questions to receive overly broad interpretations of the Brown Act — no matter how tortured the reasoning — to justify excluding the public from the process. Mr. Ewert also told the Almanac that, if the scheduled meeting had taken place, he believes the closed session also would have violated Article 1, Section 3b, of the California Constitution, which states that a statute, court rule, or other authority "shall be broadly construed if it furthers the people's right of access, and narrowly construed if it limits the right of access."

The Town Square poster was correct in saying that it's all too easy to inadvertently violate the Brown Act, and we give the school district and the board the benefit of the doubt in believing that they didn't intend to flout the law. Elected officials are required to take an online course on the Brown Act, but one must wonder, with the number of violations and possible violations that come to light, how effective the online instruction is. In the past, public agencies arranged workshops for newly elected officials on the Brown Act and other open government laws, with a legal expert who could field questions and clarify areas of confusion. That's a practice we'd like to see local agencies return to.

## EDITORIAL

The opinion of The Almanac

## LETTERS

Our readers write

### Definitions of violence are distorted and inflammatory

Editor:

In a recent letter, the meaning of "acts of violence" was expanded to include judicial misconduct, racial profiling, unaffordable health care, underfunding of elementary education, poverty wages, restricting voting rights, and insufficient food, shelter, and clothing for the poor. As unjust and destructive these policies and practices are, they are not acts of violence.

Instead of promoting constructive change, such distorted and inflammatory discourse could even backfire, leading to the rationalization that actual violence is warranted in righting these wrongs (e.g., the random shooting of police officers, killing first-graders because of being socially ostracized or not able to get adequate psychiatric care, shooting employers for unfair labor practices).

Lou Moffett

McKendry Drive, Menlo Park



Woodside History Committee

## Looking back

Woodside Store owner Jack Williamson is shown behind the wheel of his delivery wagon in this 1915 photo. He's ready to drive a group of church members to a picnic at the Huddart estate, according to Thalia Lubin and Bob Dougherty, who include the photo in their Woodside history book. The Huddart sisters were Sunday school teachers at Woodside Village Church, and they organized picnics and children's activities at their estate, which later became Huddart Park, according to the historians.

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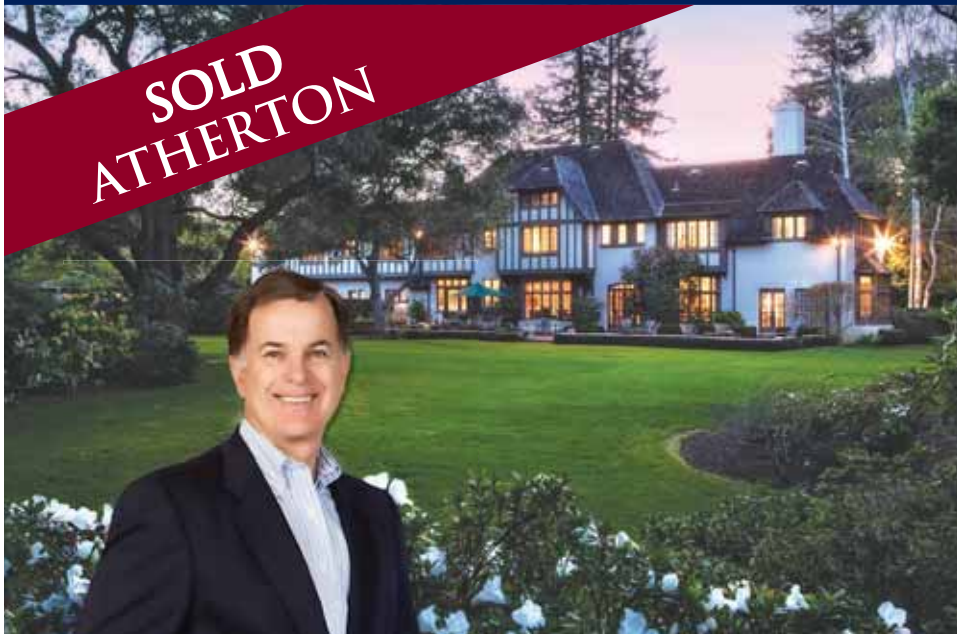
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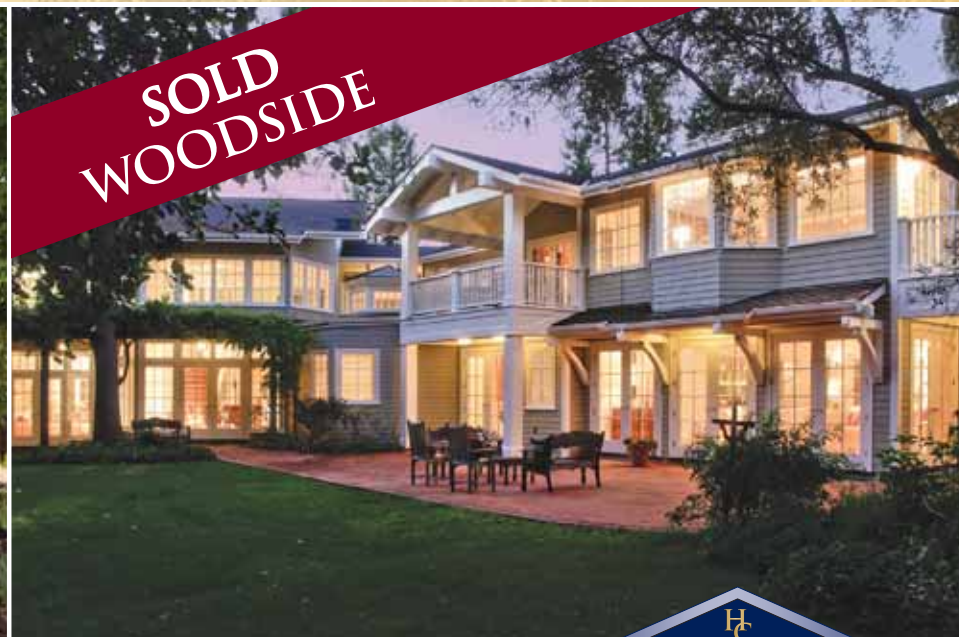
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