

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Doug Moran, BPA President

Volunteers Needed

A call for more participation in BPA activities may seem to be routine for this all-neighborhood issue of the newsletter. The BPA is faced with a seeming contradiction: this past year was an all-time high for membership, but we are at an all-time low for membership on the Board of Directors. A caroling party during the holidays was an occasional event, but has now become a regular—and much bigger—event (under the leadership of Don Anderson).

However, the House and Garden tour has been suspended indefinitely due to lack of organizers. Also in abeyance are previous activities in neighborhood beautification and in enhancing the natural habitat along the bike path in Bol Park.

The BPA needs new people to help keep the current activities going and to be ready to take leadership positions when the current volunteers move on. When people ask me "What do you need me to do?" my answer is "What do you want to do, or what do you think is most important for the neighborhood?" because volunteers are most effective when they follow their passions.

BPA has strong finances, derived from a strong membership base, especially after last year's all-time high for membership (kudos to Don Anderson who led the effort to remind people to renew). If residents have a good idea for an event that would benefit the neighborhood and is willing to organize it, the Board is interested hearing from you. We would also consider helping fund one-time projects that are clearly related to the neighborhood. For example, the BPA donated a bench for the reading garden at Barron Park School.

City Politics

Zoning Ordinance Update: Palo Alto is in the midst of updating the Zoning Ordinance. This specifies what are appropriate uses for various parcels and governs how those parcels will be developed. There are lots of problems with the current version. For example, it gives developers significant bonuses for *Mixed-Use* developments, under the theory that *Mixed-Use* can result in shared resources, such as parking. However, it does not *require* that the different use actually complement each other. The proposed development at Hyatt Rickey's combines housing and hotel and gets a bonus of requiring less parking, even though both uses have similar parking patterns, rather than the intended complementary patterns.

Code enforcement: One of the interesting undercurrents in the many neighborhoods is dissatisfaction with the enforcement of city ordinances. There is a sense that too many people are getting away with thumbing their noses at the ordinances. For example, there is an office that moved into a retail-only space and after ignoring numerous citations may receive an exemption to stay in that space.

Even with the experience that Barron Park has with reporting and pursuing complaints (especially Bob Moss'), it is too often a slow and frustrating experience.

Part of the problem is that the City's Code Enforcement Officers are few and overloaded. Part of the problem is with the City Attorney's office, which makes the decisions about penalizing the offenders. This issue is arising at a propitious time: The City is in the process of getting a new City Attorney, and hence this is an opportune time to visit this issue.

Mayor's Ad hoc Committee on Retail: Sales tax revenues are a significant portion of the City's budget and there has been a significant decrease. Symptomatic is the closure of Stanford Nissan (El Camino, just south of Page Mill) at the end of 2003—it was one of Palo Alto's largest generators of sales tax revenue.

Last summer, Palo Alto Neighborhoods (a loose association of the neighborhood associations) held a forum on the problems facing retail in Palo Alto, and I served as moderator. The City focuses on the University Avenue "downtown," and this forum attempted to highlight the needs of the California Avenue downtown and of neighborhood-serving retail.

Mayor Beecham has created a committee to explore how Palo Alto could be friendlier to retail. I have been invited to serve as one of the representatives of the neighborhoods. I expect to push balancing the different types of retail, for example regional retail that generates high amounts of sales tax with neighborhood-serving retail that is more important for the services it provides residents.



SEE THE DONKEYS

Every Sunday morning, weather permitting, the donkeys visit with people of all ages from 9:30 until 10:30 in Bol Park.

Bring your kids and dogs!

High-Density Housing and Community

By Doug Moran

The issue of high-density housing is likely to continue to be a hot topic in the coming year, with several developments in the offing, and changes to zoning of parcels to allow higher densities.

This is likely to continue to be a highly contentious debate because the major parties are talking past each other. The advocates tend to be visionaries and “big picture” people. When confronted by people who worry about details of individual projects, they can show little or no patience for those concerns, and may even see those questions as a mask for obstructionism. My being an engineer puts me squarely in the camp of those who sweat the details, and in writing this column, I found myself dissatisfied with my attempts to present the perspective of these advocates because their perspective is too foreign to me. So please forgive that bias in this presentation. And bear with my roundabout path through this topic.

A concern about the mix of people who make up the community underlies most discussions of how much of what types of housing to build and where. And it is these people who produce the characteristics of the community. Housing costs are barely a starting point. Architecture of individual houses plays a surprisingly large role. Research in suburban design goes back at least three decades, powered in part by the perception that many of the post-WWII suburbs were “sterile.” Houses in many of these tracts were oriented towards a fenced-in backyard and presented virtually a blank wall (and garage doors) to the street. Front yards tended to be buffers between the street and the house rather than space that was actively used. Eichlers are but one local example of that trend. Houses that faced the street—front porches, living room windows—engendered more interactions between neighbors and a stronger sense of community. In essence, such designs extended the local *public space*—places where people could meet people they knew to be their neighbors. Barron Park residents are quite aware that our neighborhood has a very different feel than other Palo Alto neighborhoods, but most people are hard pressed to describe

why (beyond that “It has a rural feel”).

Why the above tangent in a discussion of high-density housing? Because, by their very nature, such developments make it harder to provide the public spaces needed to create a community. For example, some have housing units with no living space on the ground floor—it is all garage, storage and utility room. I suspect that many of us have, at one time, lived in such a place and that most of our contact with our neighbors centered on noise and parking spaces.

Public space, both within the development and in the nearby neighborhood, is critical for residents to be part of the larger community. In reviewing plans for high density developments, the BPA has consistently opposed proposed walls that would have cut off the development from the surrounding neighborhood. During the debate last fall on the proposed development at 800 High Street, its advocates touted as an advantage that it was far removed from existing neighborhoods. While they were focused on traffic impacts, I found it strange that they did not regard this isolation as a negative.

One of the strange aspects of land-use planning is that many of the aspects of a new development that will influence how the residents interact with the larger community are not—nor should be—under the control of the City. However, Public space is one that is. Traffic is another.

Traffic is analogous to *indicator* or *keystone* species in natural ecosystems. The Spotted Owl is probably the most (in)famous indicator species: as a top predator of old-growth forests, the health of such species is regarded as a good indicator of the health of the overall ecosystem, and the thousands of other species there. Keystone species are ones that play an inordinate role in shaping a particular ecosystem. In some places, it would be beavers; in others, it is ants, rats... Traffic congestion warps people’s activities: People modify their schedules to avoid the peaks, and reduce activities farther from home. If a new development has a significant impact on the traffic, it may simply indicate that the development is too large, or it may indi-

cate that the site is a bad choice because residents will be driving to too many of their destinations. And just as it is easy to ridicule protections for the Spotted Owl by ignoring the context, it is easy to ridicule concerns about traffic impacts of new developments.

One of the problems I have with the advocates for high-density housing is that they often seem to be on “auto-pilot”: Many of their arguments have not been adapted to Palo Alto’s high housing prices. For example, it is not uncommon to hear one of these advocates argue that a project is needed so that children of current residents can live here, and a few sentences later claim that opposition to a particular project is based upon current residents wanting to exclude “those kind” of people from Palo Alto. Another example: critics have repeatedly pointed out that their incomes are essentially the same as the people who could afford these units (We just got here when housing was less unaffordable). But, the advocates persist in attributing “exclusivity” to the critics.

Another frustration I have with the advocates is their simplistic view that who will live in the proposed units is determined solely by price. They argue that they are needed so that the City’s service providers, such as police and firefighters, can live here rather than a 2–3 hour commute away. But when surveyed, those service providers have said that the problem was not the absence of *any* housing in their price range, but the unavailability of housing that would support their desired lifestyle. People with children often decide to sacrifice and commute long hours so that their family isn’t cramped into a small apartment.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)

The higher-density housing is targeted for “transit-friendly” areas, such as around the train stations. Whether this includes major bus routes, such as El Camino, is highly contentious.

TOD is touted as a way to reduce traffic congestion, but there is startlingly little, if

any, data on how well this works in places comparable to Palo Alto. The examples that the advocates bring up are places like downtown San Jose and downtown Oakland. Arlington, Virginia, has also been cited—it is a city just across the river from Washington, DC, and is served by an excellent subway system (the Metro—in my experience it is vastly superior to BART). A real estate agent trying to palm off such examples as comparable listings would be fired on the spot. *Aside:* If you know a student majoring in Urban Design, this unstudied circumstance presents an

opportunity for an interesting thesis.

In the Fall 2003 issue of this newsletter, I wrote on related items (in the second half of my column). It is available online. go to the BPA home page (<http://www.bpaonline.org>) and click on "Newsletter Archive."

A Question of Priorities

My sense is that many of the advocates for greatly increasing high-density housing want to allow more people the opportunity to live where they want, presumably nearer to their employment. They are often dismissive of the desires of existing

residents to maintain essential characteristics of their community, and often label their opponents as people who are afraid of change.

Within the City (staff and Council), I think there is developing realization that the conversion of retail properties along El Camino to high-density housing has produced a deficit of walkable services. However, this is likely to be an on-going battle because developers will push for such conversions: housing has higher value than commercial use for a property.

ZONING AND LAND USE

By Maryanne Welton

There has not been much development activity on El Camino for the last two years. Here's an update:

4131 El Camino

This three-story, mixed-used project on El Camino Island should be completed by the time you read this. It contains two levels of underground parking, ground floor retail and office spaces, and residential units above. The owner reports that a Starbucks Cafe, Subway sandwich shop and cabinet-maker are planning to move into the ground floor. Finally – a new project with ground floor retail in our neighborhood!

Old Blockbuster Site (El Camino and Vista Way)

The plans for a 9-unit condominium project for this site have been scrapped. The Emek Beracha congregation is in the process of purchasing the property and obtaining a Conditional Use Permit to renovate the existing building into a synagogue. The zoning code allows a synagogue as an approved use on the site, but a Conditional Use Permit must be obtained that determines hours of use and proposes ways to mitigate any impacts on the neighborhood.

The BPA organized a public meeting on March 1st to allow neighbors the opportunity to hear about the congregation's plans and to voice concerns or recommendations before the City's formal review process. Many members of the congregation already live in or near Barron Park because they walk to the synagogue on holy days.

Because members do not drive to the synagogue during these peak hours of use, there will be no impacts from traffic or parking on the neighborhood. Classes during the week will be planned to not exceed the existing 28 parking spaces. Neighbors were supportive of the proposed plans and asked that the congregation work with the community on ways to slow traffic nearby to increase pedestrian safety.

Albertson's at Alma Plaza

Last year the Planning Commission approved the proposed redevelopment of Alma Plaza to include a new and expanded grocery store, additional retail space and housing. This project was part of the moratorium for all new development along the Charleston corridor pending the completion of a traffic study. No word on whether Albertsons will follow through with their proposal.

Ricky's Hyatt (at El Camino and Charleston)

This project was also included in the moratorium for all new development along the Charleston corridor. At this point, a new application has not been submitted to the city, although there are rumors that the previously proposed project would be changed to all housing.

Matadero Bike/Pedestrian Path

The section of Matadero between El Camino and Whitsell is part of the school commute corridor connecting students from the Ventura neighborhood with Bar-

ron Park Elementary, Terman and Gunn. Anyone who has biked or walked along this stretch of Matadero can attest to the hazardous conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. The BPA and Barron Park Elementary School PTA have been working with the City's Transportation Dept. for many years to find a way to provide a protected path for pedestrians and cyclists here. Several public meetings have been held to solicit input and solutions during the last year. A proposal for a path on the south side of the street that would connect with an existing sidewalk seemed feasible.

When the City paved Matadero and installed valley gutters last year, this section was left unimproved until some type of solution could be found. Unfortunately, the public right-of-way varies for each parcel. An acceptable path could only be created by obtaining easements from several of the property owners, which did not occur.

At a public meeting on February 27th, the consensus was for the City to go ahead with repaving and installing valley gutters. They will push the paving to the north side of the street as far as possible to allow a path on the south side in the future, if easements can be obtained. The City will now look at the possibility of creating a more protected route along Kendall Avenue.

Check this column for project updates in or near our neighborhood or contact me if you have any questions on development in our neighborhood at 493-3035 or mare@robquigley.com.

B P A E - M A I L - L I S T S

By Doug Moran

Membership Confirmation

It is easy to lose track of what e-mail lists you are subscribed to and under what address. It is not uncommon to inadvertently drop off a list because you subscribed under a former address and messages are no longer being forwarded from there to your new address. As list maintainer, I try to identify the resident associated with a dead email account and notify them, but it is often hard to do because the login names are too disconnected from real names.

To deal with this problem, it is a common practice to send out periodic reminders. The BPA does this annually in conjunction with this issue of the newsletter. Shortly before this issue is expected to arrive in your mail box, a message is sent to each member of each mailing list confirming their membership on that list. For example,

if you are subscribed to each of *bpa-news*, *bpa* and *bpa-misc*, you will receive three messages, one for each list. If you have not received a message for a list that you thought that you were subscribed to, please resubscribe.

The BPA Lists

To review the purposes of the various BPA e-mail lists, go to <http://www.bpaonline.org> and click on the button *BPA Email Lists*. **Note:** These lists reject long messages—currently anything over 20,000 characters—as a means to block a large class of SPAM messages. However, you can run afoul of this limit if you attach a photo or if you compose a message with various fonts. See the above page for more detail.

SPAM and AOL

From time to time, the AOL SPAM filters decide to block e-mail from the BPA lists.

I have no similar problems with any other ISP (Internet Service Provider). For an overview of these problems, visit <http://www.dougmoran.com/Admin/aol-problem-overview.html>

Request: If a piece of SPAM slips through the SPAM filters for the BPA lists, please do **NOT** click the button for *This is SPAM* because a few instances of this may blacklist all of the BPA lists for yourself, and possibly for all customers of your ISP (I say “may” because it is extremely difficult to find out even roughly why a site gets blacklisted). This situation occurs because SPAMmers routinely forge the address for the origin of the message, and one trick is to list the originator as simply relaying the message from an uninvolved third party. Hence, ISPs cannot distinguish actual relays (such as the BPA lists) from SPAMmers using this trick.

Fiber to the Home (FTTH)

By Doug Moran

A decision on whether the City should push forward with Fiber-to-the-Home (FTTH) is near. A report has been issued by the Utilities Department (see the February 11 issue of the Palo Alto Weekly, online at www.paloaltoonline.com/weekly/morgue/2004/2004_02_11.index.shtml). In the coming months, there will be a series of meetings to present and discuss the proposal. If there is sufficient interest and support, the anticipated next step would be an advisory measure on the ballot for the November election.

The issues are too many and too complex to be adequately covered here, but here are some basics. FTTH is commonly viewed as providing higher speed Internet access than the current broadband provides (DSL and Cable). However, the system will also provide cable TV and telephone service. The cost projections are that subscriber bills will be noticeably less than from the commercial providers (Comcast and SBC). Financial feasibility

does not require that all Palo Altans, or even a majority, sign up for these services. The basic risk of FTTH is that not enough residents will switch to pay back the bonds used to build the system.

The driving force behind this proposal has not been the potential for low prices, but the opportunity for a better set of services. Although the City has moved forward very slowly on this, the commercial companies have been moving even slower. The ongoing consolidation of companies in the telephone and cable TV industries means that there will be even less competitive pressure to keep prices down and to roll out improved services. While FTTH would provide competition in the local marketplace, there are the risks of a small system going against the giants.

There is also a philosophical argument: Should government be trying to compete with commercial companies? City of Palo Alto Utilities already does compete with PG&E, and we get our gas and electricity

at lower rates and with better customer service than PG&E customers. However, some people would write this off as a historical artifact. As I see it, the practical issue is whether a system might be overly responsive to the desires of customers (the residents) at the expense of cold business decisions.

There are several cities that already have their own successful FTTH, and not surprisingly, they are in high-tech areas. One of the advantages touted for FTTH is that it would provide an infrastructure that would easily support leading edge services developed by local companies. I learned long ago to try to contain my enthusiasm for being a pioneer: “You can always tell the pioneers – they’re the ones with the arrows in their backs.”

From what I have seen of the FTTH proposal, it has enough advantages that residents should seriously consider it, and it has enough risk that we need to carefully consider it.

DAISY / SENIOR VALENTINE TEA

By Jessica Rothberg

In mid-February the girls of Barron Park's Daisy Girl Scout Troop 688 hosted a Valentine's Tea for some women from the Barron Park Seniors group. After sharing tea, cookies, stories, and a craft with their new senior friends, many of the girls commented that this was their best Girl Scout meeting ever.

The newest level of Girl Scouts, Daisy Girl Scouts, was introduced in 1984. This introductory level to Girl Scouting for kindergarten and first grade girls was named for the founder of the organization, Juliette Gordon Low, whose childhood name was Daisy. Daisy Girl Scouts, who are at an age where they are exploring the world with eager curiosity, are encouraged to expand their horizons through the warm, nurturing world of Girl Scouting. As they participate in activities close to home, Daisy Girl Scouts discover that they are special and that the world offers new and exciting challenges and opportunities.



Daisy Girl Scout Troop 688, from Barron Park and Juana Briones Elementary Schools, includes 17 curious and energetic 5-7 year-old girls, two fearless leaders, and many very helpful parents. Like other Daisy Girl Scout troops, Troop 688 has been spending much of this year learning, understanding, and putting into action the Girl Scout Promise and the Girl Scout Laws. Once a Daisy Girl Scout has learned the Girl Scout Promise, she earns a Daisy Promise Center to iron onto her official uniform, a blue tunic. For learning each



of the ten Girl Scout Laws a Daisy Girl Scout earns a colorful petal to place around her Promise Center.

One of the Girl Scout Laws is to be "considerate and caring." Troop 688 decided that a great way to practice this would be to host a Valentine's Day Tea Party for some of the members of our own Barron Park Seniors group. With Mary Jane Leon's help, we were able to find a dozen local women who were Girl Scouts or Girl Guides in their youth, or who were Girl Scout leaders for their own daughters at Barron Park school.

On February 11th, 2004, 17 girls and 10 seniors shared an hour of crafts, cookie decorating, and tea. Each senior was paired up with one or two girls who



acted as her host during the event. The seniors shared what Girl Scouting was like for them when they were young. Many of them even brought old badges or pins to share with the younger girls. The girls showed the seniors how to decorate a Swedish Love Knot, and each girl and her guest got to decorate one and take it home.

(As a side note: Thinking Day, February 22, is a special day in Girl Scouting/Girl Guiding. On this day Girl Scouts and Girl Guides all around the world get together in their local communities to think about their sister Girl Scouts/Girl Guides around the world. Especially in the United States, Girl Scouts use this opportunity to learn more about scouting in other countries. Troop 688 has chosen to learn about scouting in Sweden this year. Hence the craft—a nice juxtaposition of something Swedish and Valentine-y.)



After making their Swedish Love Knots, the girls and seniors decorated heart shaped cookies. But before eating their beautifully decorated cookies, the girls again demonstrated their ability to be courteous by politely serving their guests tea and pastries, and serving each other milk.

The girls and the seniors had a fun time together. Each was able to learn something new from the other. Hopefully this can be a good start to an ongoing relationship between some of the youngest members of our community and those full of interesting life experiences to share.

BARRON PARK HISTORY

By Doug Graham, Barron Park Historian

A Little History of Juana Briones Park

If you could go back forty years in time to the spring of 1964 and walk along our side of Arastradero Road from El Camino Real to Coulombe Drive you would see apricot orchards on your right. The orchards had presented a beautiful mass of white blooms in February and would be heavily loaded with orange fruit in May and June. Barron Park youngsters would enjoy stealing a few of the ripe fruits when they thought the orchard owners were not watching. These orchards, where the Arastradero Park Apartments, Tan Apartments and Juana Briones Park are now located, were among the few sizeable orchards remaining in south Palo Alto in 1964. Conversion of our area from agriculture to suburban development was nearly complete at that time.

The last orchards went fast. For example, the Tan Apartments were built in 1965 on a 2-acre portion of the parcel at 580 Arastradero. This was right in the middle of the stretch you had walked the previous spring. Apartment houses were going up along El Camino and the streets that run off of it, such as Matadero, Kendall, Barron, Los Robles, Vista and Maybell, as well as on the Ventura neighborhood side of the boulevard.

Neighborhood Politics

The neighborhood political situation at the time was complex and somewhat contentious. The City of Palo Alto had only recently annexed a large part of the Barron Park neighborhood in the Maybell Tract area. This "Foothills Two" annexation in 1959 split Barron Park in two, leaving the larger part, the residents of which had opposed annexation, remaining under the jurisdiction of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. Foothills Two included the 7-year old Greenacres 2 tract, as well as the small cul-de-sacs opening on to Arastradero and Maybell. It also included the portion of our neighborhood bounded by Amaranta, Los Robles, Laguna, part of Shauna Lane, and the line between the properties on Paradise and those on El Cerrito. In 1964, the entire section from Greenacres 2 over to the Los Robles and El Cerrito area was viewed by realtors and residents trying to build neighborhood

cohesion as the "Loma Vista" neighborhood, after the school of that name, which is now known as Juana Briones.

About 1960 or soon thereafter, several community-minded people formed the Loma Vista Association (LVA), which was active for a time but which never achieved the critical mass or staying power of the Barron Park Association (BPA). The existence of the LVA from about 1960 until 1975 is presumably one of the main reasons why the BPA did not take the lead in working with the City on establishing the new park in 1965. The other reasons probably were: (1) the BPA's predecessor, the Barron Park-Maybelle Improvement Association, had gone through a bruising battle with the City over the 1959 annexation, (2) the reorganized BPA was still sore about the annexation but was interested in following a new strategy of non-confrontation with the City, and (3) anyway, the City wasn't very interested in working with neighborhood groups whether they were inside the City or out.

When Sam Sparck, the last LVA President, merged the LVA with the BPA after the final Barron Park annexation in 1975, he brought only a financial statement, so we have no records of any dealings the LVA may have had with the City over the formation of Juana Briones Park. We can only speculate that they probably did provide some citizen input, however unwelcome that might have been to the City staff and Council of those times.

The City Acts to Create a Park

This was the neighborhood situation when the City of Palo Alto initiated its effort to save open space and provide a local park for the residents of its latest acquisition. On January 18, 1965, the city council unanimously selected a site for the proposed new park between Arastradero and Maybell, to be known as "Arastradero Road Park." The selected site was a 4.4-acre undivided parcel owned by Giacomo Sambuceto, consisting of about three acres of apricot orchard and somewhat over an acre occupied by six houses fronting on Maybell. Sambuceto lived at 595 Maybell, just across Clemo from the selected parcel. The City Manager, Jerry Keithley, noted that three acres would be "below the normal standard", and that "the park should

have open frontage on Maybell." Marion Hill, representing the Greenacres Citizens Association, said the fire station site was the best of the four alternatives presented by Keithley. "It's flat and accessible and the fire house will be a stabilizing influence, a kind of silent supervision", Hill said. He suggested a development similar to Mayfield Park on Park Boulevard (Mayfield Park is one of the four small "parkettes" in College Terrace). Enid Pearson, spokesperson for Palo Altans for Recreation and Conservation of Open Space (PARKS) also endorsed the fire station site. Keithley noted that Sambuceto was not anxious to sell the property and that condemnation would probably be required. The council had budgeted \$150,000 for the project.

A Photograph Shows the Land in 1965

An aerial photograph is available that shows the park land and surrounding neighborhood shortly before the park was developed. Although the photograph is undated, by internal evidence I have determined that it almost certainly was taken in 1965. The part of this photograph covering the park is reproduced for this article (see illustration). The 4-lane boulevard on the right side of the photo is Arastradero Road, with the El Camino direction (north-east) at the top and the Foothill Expressway direction at the bottom. Coulombe runs along the bottom and Park Avenue (since renamed Clemo) along the top. The street to the left, paralleling Arastradero, is Maybell, with Amaranta intersecting it from the left side of the photo. The gazebo and pool at the Tan Apartments can be seen near the upper-right-hand corner, with the Arastradero Fire Station just below it, across Clemo. The large open space to the lower left was the part of the Loma Vista School playground and is now occupied by the Orthopedically Handicapped (OH) wing of Juana Briones School. The three acres of orchard show clearly in the center, with a checkerboard pattern of trees and farm machinery tracks crisscrossing between them. Along Maybell you can see the roofs of the six houses that were later removed to make the park. Conversations I have had with long-time Barron Park residents suggest that these were



Park Planning and a Library That We Didn't Get

From that time, the park project moved inexorably, if somewhat slowly, forward. By June 1967, the new City Manager, George Morgan, was being asked to "expedite" detailed planning and to submit the names of three architects to the finance committee. The total expenditure was now approved for \$375,000. Morgan told the committee that the park would have areas for tots, play apparatus, games, open turf and some picnic areas. It would serve resi-

either small homes for hired farm workers, like the ones that existed on Abel Street, or were weekend summer cottages built by San Franciscans escaping the fog, like the ones built in the original Barron Park Sub-division on Barron and La Selva Avenues.

The Condemnation Suit

By October of 1965, City Manager Keithley's prediction had been realized and the City was embroiled in an eminent domain condemnation suit against the landowner. The City had offered \$175,000 for the land but Sambuceto's asking price was \$365,000. Judge M. G. Del Mutolo warned the jury that the trial might last 15 days. It was noted that attorney John Lynch of the San Mateo legal firm of Wilson, Jones, Morton and Lynch was representing the city. Evidently the trial didn't last 15 days, however, because it ended in a mistrial when Lynch became ill. The same parties and attorneys then met for a second trial before a new jury in March, 1966. That jury awarded Sambuceto \$259,000 based upon the supposition that the property could have been rezoned from single family residential to multi-family, thereby increasing its value. In April, the City Council grumbled but gave in and approved the purchase by an 10-2 vote (with 9 votes required for capital expenditures). The alternative was to turn down the purchase, get nothing, and pay more than \$30,000 in legal fees and court costs. One of the dissenting votes was cast by Council Member William Rus, who protested that "...this is a good example of the Great Society of Palo Alto that we are being led down the primrose path to." This is obviously in reference to President Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" slogan, then current.

dents within a half-mile radius. No baseball diamonds or other organized sports areas were planned. It was also noted that a branch library proposed earlier would not be included in the final planning. Council Chair Raymond Rohrs explained that "There's just not enough land for a library and a half-way decent park."

No Parks to be Named for Scoundrels

Up until October, 1967, the new park-to-be was referred to as "Arastradero Road Park." However, the city was in the process of renaming parks to honor people prominent in our local history, and was moving away from geographically oriented names. The new proposed name had been "Miranda Park", for Juana Briones de Miranda. Juana was the owner of Rancho Purissima Concepcion, which included the land now in the Palo Alto Foothills and some of Los Altos Hills. But, claimed Council member William Clark, the head of the naming committee, further research had disclosed that "Miranda was sort of a scoundrel." Not Juana Briones, that is, but her legal husband Apolinario Miranda. Apolinario and Juana had five children and were apparently happily married for about 17 years when Apolinario lost his job as Ensign and his profession as a Mexican soldier, when the Presidio of San Francisco was practically abandoned as a military post. Apolinario fell to drinking heavily and soon Juana and he were fighting. She moved out in 1837 and established her own home at North Beach in San Francisco. The area soon became known as "La Playa de Juana Briones."

She was the second or third civilian resident of the community that would soon become Yerba Buena, then San Francisco. She became very prominent and was much respected in the young community that

grew up around Yerba Buena Cove. However, Apolinario reacted poorly to Juana's separation from him and continued to bother her. In 1842 the Alcalde (Mayor) took steps to "avoid the impertinences of Senora Briones' husband...." Finally, in 1843, the Alcalde confiscated his property for "...not living harmoniously with his wife." So Juana has come down in history as the hero of this particular domestic conflict, and Apolinario as the villain. Council member Edward Arnold said he would back the change (from Miranda to Briones) "...even though he hadn't heard Miranda's side of things." And so, on October 2, 1967, Palo Alto took an official stand against naming any parks for scoundrels.

Juana Briones' Story

Juana Briones was definitely one of the most interesting characters in the history of southwest Palo Alto. She was a self-made woman of independent character who made a good life for herself and her family after leaving her abusive husband. Her ability to manage on her own was a rarity in her day and culture. She became known as a midwife and herbal healer and for providing sanctuary to runaway sailors from the whaling, sealing and trading ships that visited Yerba Buena Cove. After her husband died in 1844, she moved her family to her hilltop Adobe that still exists on Old Trace Road in Palo Alto, just off Arastradero across from the Roche pharmaceutical plant.

The bronze plaque set in the granite boulder on the Maybell Avenue side of the park tells a little of Juana's story:

"Rancho La Purissima Concepcion was granted to a former Santa Clara Mission Indian, Jose Gorgonio, by Governor Alvarado on June 30, 1840. In 1844 Gorgonio and another Indian, Jose Ramon, sold the grant to Dona Juana Briones de Miranda, who lived with her seven children in an adobe house on the top of a hill nearby, at Fremont Avenue and Arastradero Road. Ox-drawn carretta, drying hides, bull and bear fights, vaqueros herding cattle, and family barbeque festivities were familiar sights on the rancho."

Park Construction in 1968

The City Council approved, November 29, 1967, a contract for the landscape architectural services of Jack W. Buktenica to design Briones Park. Jack was a Barron Park resident, living at 918 Matadero Avenue. Later on, Barron Park hired him to design our community-founded Cornelis Bol Park. The final size of Juana

Briones Park, after deducting land dedicated to widening Clemo and Maybell Avenues, was 3.7 acres. Construction costs were estimated at \$80,000, and construction was expected to begin in May or June. In the park next to the fire station is displayed the old fire bell from the town of Mayfield (now the California Avenue business district).

When it was opened to the public in 1968, Juana Briones Park was the only public park in the Barron Park neighborhood. It was the first park south of Page Mill Expressway and west of El Camino Real. Although the park development eliminated one of the last remaining apricot orchards in this area it saved some open space for the neighborhood, that might otherwise have gone to apartment developments. It was generally seen as a very welcome addition to Palo Alto's locally renowned city park system.

Playground Renovation

During the next thirty years, the young trees, including the 1-inch diameter spindly redwood saplings, grew impressively fast and began to shade significant

portions of the park. The walks, irrigation systems and other park structural elements aged and became worn. By 1996 the original "Railroad Train" play structure needed replacement. Once again Briones Park was in the news when a revamped playground was opened. The dedication was held at a special Twilight Concert held on June 25, 1996. Paul Diaz, the Parks Division Director said the City was "...very proud to be able to retain the history of the train park as everyone calls it, by perpetuating it for generations of children in the future." The concert featured children's music performers and a ribbon-cutting ceremony with Mayor Lanie Wheeler. More than 1,000 kids got rides on a motorized train brought in for the occasion.

The renovated playground had a problem—the sandbox was unshaded and proved to be too hot for children during the middle of summer days. In February, 1999, Canopy, Palo Alto's nonprofit tree-planting group planted four silver linden trees along the sandbox and seven Chinese pistache trees along Clemo Street where old trees had been removed.

May Fete in Briones Park in 2002

In 2002, Bol Park was being renovated by the City. Although the schedule called for completion of the project before May, the BPA decided to hold the traditional Barron Park May Fete in Briones Park that year. The Fete was a success and in some ways Briones Park proved to be a better locale than Bol. Many neighbors from the one-time Loma Vista neighborhood attended the Fete that year for their first time and greatly enjoyed having it in Briones Park. The Fete Committee and the Board agreed that it would be a good idea to alternate locales for future Fetes.

Juana Briones Park in 2004

As this is being written in February, 2004, the City is planning a more ambitious renovation of the park, similar to what was done with Bol Park in 2002. A public meeting was held in the park on January 29, at which neighbors had a chance to see plans and provide feedback to City staff. It appears that construction will begin this summer and be completed before the onset of the winter rainy season. We hope to see all our readers on Sunday, May 16, when May Fete opens in Briones Park for the second time.

BPA News: Opt-out e-mail list: The rationale

By Doug Moran

In the Spring 2003 issue of the BPA Newsletter, we announced our intention to change the BPA-news e-mail list from *opt-in* to *opt-out*, that is, from a list that you had to choose to subscribe to a list that new members were automatically put on and had to choose to unsubscribe. We have been slow to implement this (volunteers overloaded with other tasks), but it has recently taken effect. The other BPA e-mail lists remain as opt-in lists.

The reason for this change to opt-out was the number of members who forgot to subscribe and wound up missing important announcements. The reasons that we believe that opt-out is not unreasonable are:

The list has a very narrow purpose and low volume: news likely to be of significant interest to the neighborhood. Any discussion takes place on other lists.

This list is moderated, that is, one of the moderators must manually approve any message sent to the list.

Message to this list have the prefix "[bpa-

news]" on the subject line so that they can be easily identified. This prefix can be used by e-mail sorting programs to prioritize messages or file them in a designated folder.

The importance of being able to notify residents of important issues has been demonstrated by two situations that are still generating considerable "heat" in the local newspapers, especially in *Letters to the Editor*. The first was the traffic barriers in Downtown North (north of University, west of Middlefield). This issue had been slowly moving forward for many years, with articles in the newspapers and residents getting leaflets on their doorsteps and first-class mail from the City announcing major meetings. Despite this, many residents claimed not to be aware of the whole topic.

The second was the Arastradero-Charleston corridor study. Its creation was heavily covered in the newspapers, but the announcements of the public meetings to explain the proposals and to gather feed-

back were easy to miss. Because the City was trying to move expeditiously to a decision, there was relatively little lead time for announcements of these meetings, and e-mail was the only practical way for us to inform the neighborhood.

Aside/Personal observation: It is unrealistic to count on announcements in the newspapers to alert people to such upcoming decisions. First, too many people don't read about issues until they have become headline news. This is not an unreasonable strategy: Part of "The Palo Alto Process" has been to repeatedly postpone decisions to give groups that missed the earlier rounds of meetings a chance to give their input. Second, since newspapers get their circulation from covering controversy, the cynic in me says that it is counter to their business interests to inform people of issues so that they can be dealt with in an orderly manner. Several of the recent local controversies have been propelled by the passions of people who were misinformed on the issues or had an overly simplistic view of the problem.

Barron Park Donkey Parade and Party a Big (Wet) Hit!

By Don Anderson

Saturday, December 20 marked the fourth annual Barron Park Holiday Party and Donkey Parade. It was a very successful enterprise; more than 150 Barron Park residents, including kids, parents, and seniors, participated. There were also many dogs, bikes, scooters, wagons, and skateboards involved, in addition to the Gunn High School Chamber Singers, and of course two donkeys. The event was a success despite the fact that the entire outdoor part, the caroling parade through Barron Park, was conducted in a driving rainstorm. Things got started with a procession (led by Perry and Niner) from Bol Park through the neighborhood, featuring caroling led by Gunn Chamber Singers Kyle Garson and Reggie Knopoff. At the parade's soggy end there were refreshments served at the Barron Park Elementary School, and a wonderful performance by the Gunn Chamber Singers. Refreshments included home baked cookies provided by members of the Barron Park Seniors group.

This was truly a community event! Special thanks are due to Alice Frost, who organized the cookie baking efforts (and baked 4 dozen cookies), and to cookie bakers Mary Jane Leon, Fiona St. John, Sheila Mandoli, Patty Eldredge, Dorris Miller, Jean Olsen, Rosemary Jacobsen, Sylvia Faso, Gwen Luce, and Julie Spengler. In addition to baking cookies, Gwen Luce provided several gallons of delicious hot mulled cider. Thanks also to Will Beckett, Nanci Thomander, Jean Lythcott, and Boy Scout Troop 52 for major league help with party setup and cleanup. Last but not least, appreciation is due Inge Harding-Barlow, Eric Struck, Zakhary Cribari, and Patty Emmett for taking care of Niner and Perry during and after the parade, and to Edith Smith for running the t-shirt concession during the party.



Cookies baked by Barron Park Seniors went fast!

Gunn High School Chamber Singers perform, with event organizer Don Anderson (left) looking on.



Carolers brave the elements with good cheer.

Support the Choir

The December 20 Barron Park parade and party really went well, and a major reason was the participation of Director Bill Liberatore's Gunn High School Chamber Singers. The Gunn choir is making a trip in April to a competition in New York City. The package deal of airfare, room, meals, etc. costs each family \$1,000. Although we sometimes lose sight of the fact, there are many families in Palo Alto who can't afford this kind of money. Bill has been looking for individuals or local businesses that can make a contribution, large or small. Anyone who can help should send a check made out to "Gunn Choir Boosters," addressed to Bill Liberatore, Gunn High School, 780 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto, CA 94306. Thanks!

Emergency Preparedness and Response in Palo Alto

By Patrick Muffler

In this article, I shall identify and give an overview of some of the entities in Palo Alto that deal with emergency preparedness and emergency response. This overview is not encyclopedic and the treatment is inevitably uneven. It draws primarily on my personal experience and interactions this past year as the BPA Board member focusing on emergency preparedness. I shall also define and explain some of the many acronyms that float through this business.

Office of Emergency Services

The Palo Alto Office of Emergency Services (OES) is organizationally under the Palo Alto Fire Department but works in close coordination with other city departments, in particular the Police Department, Public Utilities, and Public Works. Day-to-day OES activities are directed by the Disaster Coordinator, Barbara Cimino.

Emergency activities of the OES will follow the Palo Alto Emergency Management Plan, a huge and detailed document available at <http://www.pafd.org/emp/index.html>. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC), located in a dedicated facility in the basement of the Palo Alto City Hall, will be activated in an emergency under the Incident Command System (ICS). The City Manager (Frank Benest) has the authority to declare a Local Emergency and to make a Disaster Designation. He (or his designate, if he is not available) appoints the Director of the EOC; depending on the incident, this person could come from the Fire Department, the Police Department, or Public Works. Activities of the EOC during the emergency are divided into Operations (Law Enforcement, Fire and Rescue, Public Works, Utilities, and Care and Shelter), Planning and Intelligence (Situation Status, and Resource Status) Logistics (Supply, Communications, Transportation and Personnel), and Finances and Administration (Cost, Time and Claims).

Palo Alto OES also maintains a flood-

information page (www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/cgi-bin/floods.cgi) and a page giving real-time creek levels for sites on San Francisquito, Matadero and Adobe Creeks (www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/earlywarning/index.html).

City-Wide Training Exercises

The City of Palo Alto recognizes that an Emergency Plan is an essential, but not sufficient, part of emergency response. City personnel must be trained in their possible roles in an emergency, and City departments must practice working together in emergency situations. Accordingly, Palo Alto carries out realistic training exercises in which the Fire Department, Police Department, Public Works, and Public Utilities respond to simulated disasters. The most recent of these, held in October 2003, simulated response to a terrorist attack on a business.

PANDA

An important activity of the Palo Alto OES is the Palo Alto Neighborhood Disaster Activity (PANDA), a program designed to assist the OES and the Fire Department in a major disaster. In such an event, City personnel on duty inevitably must focus on the major facilities (e.g., Stanford Hospital). Realistically, individual dwellings in residential neighborhoods will have to be on their own, at least for 72 hours. A major earthquake, particularly on the Hayward fault, may well make freeways and bridges impassable for many days, preventing Fire and Police personnel who are off-duty to even reach Palo Alto (many live far away). In such a scenario, this 72 hours may lengthen into a week or more.

PANDA consists of Palo Alto citizen volunteers who have undergone a training program in emergency disaster assistance and are prepared to supplement the activities of City personnel during an emergency. This training

includes :

Utility control, damage assessment, and hazardous materials

Disaster medical operations

Disaster fire suppression

Light search and rescue

Disaster psychology

Team organization

Logistical coordination with the City.

PANDA's can draw on dedicated caches of emergency equipment in trailers at each of the six city fire stations. Each trailer is also equipped with an amateur (HAM) radio for emergency communications with the EOC and with other PANDA trailers.

PANDA training involves six evening sessions and an all-day Saturday session. If you would like to become a PANDA, contact Barbara Cimino at Palo Alto OES (650-617-3197; Barbara.Cimino@CityofPaloAlto.org).

Community Disaster Preparedness Meetings

In a major emergency, Palo Alto must coordinate with other entities, both governmental (neighboring cities, Santa Clara County, the State of California, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency) and non-governmental (e.g., the Red Cross, Stanford Hospital, Stanford University, Stanford Shopping Center, Palo Alto Unified School District, Avenidas, Palo Alto Community Child Care, the VA hospitals, and major employers). To enhance this coordination, the City Manager's Office hosts quarterly Community Disaster Preparedness Meetings to coordinate the emergency plans of these entities and to address specific topics such as communications, evacuation and prioritizing resources. Two neighborhood associations (Barron Park and Midtown) participate in this group. The meetings are chaired by Chris Mogensen (Chris.Mogensen@CityofPaloAlto.org)

ARES/RACES

The Amateur Radio Emergency Services (ARES) handles communications during emergencies that are not yet declared as a formal disaster. Once a flood, earthquake, fire, etc., is declared a formal disaster, this communication role shifts to the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services (RACES), the communication branch of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). In Santa Clara County, these two amateur radio functions have been joined since 1978 (http://www.scc-ares-races.org/ares_races.htm), and most amateur radio operators are members of both ARES and RACES. The distinction between ARES and RACES in most cases is legal, primarily having to do with what entity insures the operators.

Forgetting about the bureaucratic alphabet soup, the salient fact is that the amateur radio operators under either ARES or RACES provide critical communication services during emergencies, when telephones, cell phones and other normal means of communication are inoperative. ARES radio operators also provide important community service at planned events such as air shows, parades, fairs and bike rides.

Red Cross

In any disaster, the American Red Cross is a major contributor, providing shelter, food, medical care and mental health services, as well as assistance to help victims resume independent living. The Red Cross also provides education in first aid, disaster preparedness, disaster service functions, and training for Red Cross Disaster Volunteers. In addition, the Red Cross has an outreach program for personal and family preparation, sponsoring emergency-preparedness fairs, selling emergency-preparedness kits, and developing family disaster plans. The Palo Alto Chapter of the American Red Cross has a superb web site at <http://www.paarc.org/> that presents an enormous amount of information. Notable is the on-line store for purchase of emergency-preparedness and first-aid kits (<http://www.paarc.org/supplies/index.htm>).

KIDS KORNER

By Linda Lui

Across the Street from Barron Park Preschool

Five years ago, when my family moved into our house on La Donna Avenue across the street from this preschool, I was wondering what I could expect. Would it be noisy? Would the traffic be annoying? Would they be cold, commercial, impersonal neighbors? I read somewhere that it was an "alternative" preschool. That term being a foreign concept to me, I wondered if really wild critters would emerge from that unassuming Eichler. I was curious.

As it turns out, they are just another wonderful and charming facet of living in Barron Park. Aside from never encountering any of the anticipated inconveniences, the kids are a delight to watch as they centipede down Kendall Avenue to play at Bol Park. The school has a fresh and creative atmosphere. I think much of this comes from Craig Price, the long-time director, with his commitment to education, along with a relaxed and philosophical approach. I look forward to learning more about this little preschool when my daughter, Jamie enrolls in the fall. (Talk about convenience!) With his permission, here is an excerpt from his essay on parent/child bonding:

One of the most meaningful things in my life is my connection with my 11 year old son, Alei, and keeping that relationship alive and flowing.

This can be challenging and elusive at times. It's easy to get caught up in the busyness of work and not make it a priority to spend quality time with my child.

I have found a profound and simple way to deepen that intimacy between father and son. We go on a nature hike along a winding trail in a wooded area on the Peninsula. We get lost together in the wilderness, as we observe the scenery and discover the emerging wildlife. We surrender to the presence of nature together. . . .

. . . I believe this sharing of discoveries in nature has created the trust and openness to communicate and be more forthcoming with Alei's trials and tribulations of life.

This ritual of gently presenting a newly found creature to examine and admire mimics the act of emotional sharing.

I feel this is important for parents to create this trusting, vulnerable space, especially for boys, to share what's going on with them emotionally and socially.

Being with him in the outdoors, and seeing through a child's eyes allows me to see more than I ever would on my own. This focus moves me away from the fragmented complications of life and distills and simplifies the moment to essential elements.

I not only experience more of nature's wonders, but a broader perspective on the relationship between my son and I as we walk the trail together.

—Craig Price

For more reflections on children or information on this preschool, check out their website at <http://barronparkpreschool.com>.

May Fete Location

Two years ago, the May Fete was held at Juana Briones Park instead of Bol Park. We had a large crowd and positive comments, so this year we are going back to Juana Briones. We are considering alternating, going to Bol Park one year, then Juana Briones the next.

Some of you may prefer one park over the other for all future May Fetes. If you do, please indicate your choice by checking the appropriate box on the Membership Renewal Form. You can also submit a brief note when you mail your form to the BPA.

MEET YOUR BARRON PARK DONKEY HANDLERS!

By Don Anderson

This is the fourth in a series of articles introducing the community volunteers devoted to the care, feeding, and parental nurturing of the Barron Park donkeys, Miner Forty-Niner (Niner) and Pericles (Perry). Niner and Perry are the most recent in a long line of donkeys that have become a neighborhood institution in Barron Park over the years.

Our neighborhood's trademark donkeys are cared for entirely by volunteers from Barron Park and the surrounding community. In addition to feeding the boys twice a day, keeping their corral and shed clean and orderly, taking them for occasional walks, and bringing them out to meet the neighbors in Bol Park every Sunday morning, these volunteers also pick up and deliver loads of hay, make sure the donkeys receive regular attention from the vet and the farrier (horse shoe-er), and keep them clean and well curried. Read on, to meet more of the terrific crew that cares for the Barron Park donkeys!

Terry Jacobs



Terry Jacobs is a special education teacher at Gunn High School. She has lived in Palo Alto on and off since 1963, attending Crescent Park Elementary, Jordan Middle School, and Paly. She first encountered

Perry and Niner on the weekends, when she bicycled or rollerbladed past their pasture. She learned that volunteer handlers were needed when she participated in this past year's Barron Park holiday donkey parade and party, and she has been caring for them every Tuesday afternoon beginning in January. Terry says she would like to get some of her special needs students involved in helping her care for the donkeys, as well.

Terry received her undergraduate degree in journalism at San Francisco State University and completed credential programs in multiple subjects and special education at San Jose State University. Her 21-year-old daughter, Sonya, attends UC Santa

Cruz. Terry lives on Middlefield Road near Addison Elementary School. In addition to teaching, Terry enjoys hiking, dancing and spending time with her friends and family. She is looking forward to spending six weeks in Norway over the summer, and she's hoping that another volunteer will step in to feed the donkeys during her absence.

Susan Carsen



Getting attached to animals can become an addiction. Susan Carsen started small, first with kittens as a child, quickly moving on to her first dog when she was eight; and there was no holding her back when she finally insisted

on having a horse when she was 13 years old. This was a horse she'd taken care of for someone else, and ultimately had to earn her way to having as her own. So she learned early that there could be just as much joy in mucking stalls, grooming a horse, and generally being responsible for its health and well being as there was in the fun of riding.

Susan carried on in much the same way when, much to her parents' dismay, she turned her back on attending an east coast college, going to UC Davis instead so that she might at least bring her dog along. At Davis, she majored in English and volunteered in the Vet School handling and socializing foals born to mares that were part of a breeding research program. She also managed to adopt a healthy horse there who was doomed to be euthanized simply because he could no longer race.

Older now, Susan wouldn't think of living without a dog and several cats in her home, but continuing to get her equine "fix" was a little more difficult. For a time she exercised for other horse owners in Woodside, but eventually work demands eliminated that opportunity. So when she

moved to Barron Park eight years ago, she was delighted to be able to see Mickey, Niner and Perry munching hay in the pasture when she walked her dog, Sarah, on the bike path each morning. As soon as she moved her office from San Francisco to Palo Alto, eliminating the daily commute, she signed on to be one of the donkey handlers. Since then, the opportunity to feed them one or two mornings a week, smell the hay, rub them behind the ears and kiss them on the muzzle has completely satisfied the ever-lingering longing to have an equine in her life.

After working for many years for major non-profit organizations, Susan now serves as a management consultant helping non-profits structure fund-raising programs and capital campaigns (and would like to take this opportunity to encourage others to donate to the Donkey Fund for the care of Niner and Perry through Acterra). Much of her free time is spent hiking in the hills and at the coast with her dog. She is also an avid gardener, spending long hours tending the roses, trees and other flowers in her Barron Park home. The gate that leads back to her garden includes a peephole specially placed so that Sarah can watch who's passing by – and bark at the other dogs who get too close to her fence.

Meryl Urdang



Meryl and her daughter, Sara Tannenbaum (freshman at Gunn) moved to Barron Park last summer after 15 years in Menlo Park. Meryl had read about the donkeys while still living in Menlo Park, and had driven

around looking for them a few times over

the years without any luck. When exploring Palo Alto to help decide which area to move to, Meryl and Sara discovered Bol Park, Niner and Perry, as well as the sheep and chickens—and the decision was made—they had to move to Barron Park. It didn't take long after the move to Barron Park before Meryl volunteered to be a donkey handler. She has learned that the boys don't respond to commands that Monte, her Bernese Mountain Dog, responds to. Niner and Perry just don't know what "stay" or "back-up" means. But they sure are little love bugs!

Meryl grew up in New Jersey. She attended Washington University in St. Louis, majoring in Psychology and Education. Later, she completed her master's degree in education at Harvard and her doctorate at Rutgers, with a focus on special education and program research and evaluation. After working as a consultant to local school districts, Meryl wanted to be able to help create cost-effective educational programs. She decided to pursue her MBA at Wharton. After Wharton she moved to San Francisco to work in one of the big-eight accounting firms in their healthcare consulting practice. Although quite a change from education, Meryl felt very comfortable with the switch. In her 20 years of consulting, Meryl has focused on quantitative analysis to support strategic and financial decisions of healthcare organizations, as well as research in healthcare quality and patient outcomes. Meryl started silkpainting a couple of years ago and is now hoping to grow her Judaic art business.

Jean Lythcott



Jean moved to Barron Park four years ago with her daughter and son-in-law. Not long after, they built a beautiful new Barron Park house, and moved in during the summer of 2002. As soon as she found out about Perry and

Niner, she wanted to volunteer to work with them. She finally made the plunge and became a donkey handler this last fall.

One compelling reason Jean works with the donkeys is that she loves the presence of Earth's living things in her life. It doesn't really matter what it is that lives: worms, tomatoes, skunks, redwoods; Jean likes the

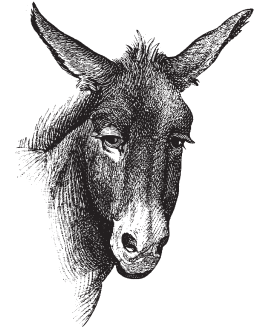
feeling of being active in the community of living things. Another reason she enjoys being a Barron Park donkey handler has to do with settling in to a new "village." Jean has moved a lot during the course of her life, but has the feeling now that she'll be in Barron Park for a good long time. She wants to actively put down roots, to give back or to put into the "village life" in Barron Park. The donkeys may be just a beginning of finding a way to be a part of it all! A third reason Jean enjoys her duties is that an early morning walk is a truly grand way to start a day on a weekend. Since she knows someone is counting on her, it gets her out of bed and onto the exercise trail... and Niner and Perry certainly let her know they are counting on her.

Jean was born and grew up in Yorkshire, England, in a tiny little village called Ryhill, between Leeds and Sheffield. After graduating from Manchester University with a degree in Botany and Chemistry, she taught mathematics and the sciences in Yorkshire for two years. After this she went to Accra, Ghana to teach the sciences. There she met an American physician (and his four teenage children). Four years later they married and went on to Nigeria, Jean to teach in the American International School in Lagos, and husband George to direct the program to eradicate smallpox in the twenty contiguous countries of West and Central Africa.

After seven years in West Africa, they came to New York, and Jean became a U. S. citizen. Jean and George went from New York, to Wisconsin, and eventually to Washington DC. George was appointed Assistant Surgeon General and Health Services Administrator by President Carter. Back in Wisconsin once more, Jean resumed her doctoral studies and was awarded the Ph.D in chemistry education from the University of Wisconsin. From there, it was on to Teachers College at Columbia University where she became Associate Professor of Science Education. After George's death, Jean became involved in a new Charter School on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts.

The call to California was the arrival of Jean's new grandson. Jean is now involved in being a full time grandma as well as teaching and working part time at Stanford in the Secondary Teacher Education Program, and gardening, reading, following politics, knitting, writing letters, and going to movies.

HELP SUPPORT THE BARRON PARK DONKEYS!



Perry and Niner, Barron Park's very special donkeys, greet children and adults alike in Bol Park each Sunday morning (weather permitting) from 9:30 to 10:30. In addition, the "boys" provide warmth and joy to those who walk by their pasture; an opportunity for humane education of children in Barron Park Schools; and a general reaffirmation for all of us of our connection to the natural world.

Support for Perry and Niner comes completely from the generosity of their neighbors and the community. The donkeys receive no tax dollars, no government funds, no funds from the City of Palo Alto, no grants from any animal welfare or humane organization. They are a part of the neighborhood simply because people who live here care about them and care about continuing this unique opportunity.

The donkeys look forward to their annual check-up and shots from the veterinarian, and to the frequent visits from the farrier to make sure their hooves stay healthy and in good shape. Of course these visits, and the hay that Perry and Niner enthusiastically devour each day, cost money.

If you can afford to help support the donkeys, please mail a check to Acterra, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303. Your check should be made out to the "Palo Alto Donkey Project." No gift is too small. Acterra is a non-profit environmental group that acts as fiscal agent for the Donkey Project, providing insurance, handling donations, and making payments.

For further information about making a contribution on behalf of the donkeys, please call Edith Smith at 493-9386. If you would like information about how to become one of the volunteer donkey handlers, please call Don Anderson at 494-8672 or email Don at don@donanderson.us

UNSAFE DRIVING BEHAVIOR ON MATADERO

Feedback requested, and the design philosophy being undermined

By Doug Moran

In fall 2002, Matadero Avenue was resurfaced and had valley gutters installed. Speeding was a problem with the old broken pavement, so a major criterion for the design was that the resurfaced street not further encourage speeding. Another criterion was that it be safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. The technique used is called *visual narrowing*. This technique was first used in Barron Park when Los Robles was rebuilt (over 20 years ago): Speeds shot up dramatically with the smoother, wider surface, but came down when shoulder lines were painted to create narrower lanes.

Even during the repaving of Matadero, speeding was a problem, with the construction workers complaining about unsafe behavior by drivers. The speeding peak occurred just after the next to last layer of asphalt was applied — the street became a virtual race way. However, immediately after the final layer was laid

down, a center line was painted on the road and speeding dropped noticeably. Many residents think current speeds are slightly less than before the repaving, which is remarkable when you consider how rough Matadero used to be (one nearby auto mechanic cited it as his favorite street for finding those hard-to-diagnose noises).

The Problem

During the design process, whether or not to have the center line was debated, and subsequent experience (above) demonstrates that the decision to have a center line was correct. The argument against having a center line was that we wanted to encourage drivers to shift to the middle of the street when there was no oncoming traffic, giving more room to pedestrians.

The effect of the center line has proved far stronger than expected, even though it is a sparse dotted line. There has been a constant stream of complaints about cars pass-

ing very close to pedestrians when there is no other car in sight. I have personally seen a car blowing by a baby carriage with a separation of less than two feet and have heard of multiple similar instance (carriage and mother fully in the valley gutter, the car very close to the edge of the pavement). One of the City's traffic engineers was evaluating pedestrian access and was "astonished" at how close cars were coming to pedestrians. However, for bicyclists, cars seem to be giving more space than anticipated. Go figure.

Request: If you have any insights on why so many drivers don't shift to the middle of the road to give pedestrians more space, please send me an e-mail at feedback-matadero-2004@bpaonline.org I am aware that there are a substantial number of drivers who do shift to the middle, the question is why is the group that doesn't shift so unexpectedly large.

It is important to make visual cues work, because they are the least disruptive way of controlling speed: best for drivers and pedestrians alike.

Similar Problems Elsewhere?

The problem of cars passing too close to pedestrians is hardly unique to Matadero—I hear reports of similar incidents from all over the neighborhood. However, most of these reports seem to represent individual incidents rather than a design problem with the street. If a problem with the design can be identified, that is something that the BPA can push to get fixed.

More on Visual Cues in Traffic Design

Visual cues on appropriate speed for a road have been found to be far more influential than posted speed limits, and are increasingly being used when streets are redesigned. Visual narrowing of lanes (as on Los Robles and Matadero) is but one technique. Another technique involves the strategic use of trees, and has been a factor in the designs proposed for El Camino and for the Arastradero-Charleston corridor. To visualize the effect, think of yourself driving down a straight, flat road bordered by open fields (say in the Central Valley), and then change that to a tree-lined road (with the same fields on the

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Returning to Juana Briones Park

May Fete 2004

Sunday May 16, 12:00 noon – 4:00 pm

Maypole Dancing * Live Music
 Food and Drink * Face Painting
 Artists and Exhibits * Barron Park Donkeys
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other side of the trees). Most people drive slower in the latter situation. Locally, in the segment of El Camino between Los Robles and Page Mill, speeding is a substantially greater problem in the north-bound direction. At first, this seemed very strange, but when I drove the segment, I realized the visual cues were very different. Try it for yourself!

There are also “optical illusions” that trick the driver into thinking he is going faster than he really is, but these tend to be more appropriate for major roads and highways.

Stop Signs

Studies have shown that stop signs are not an effective mechanism for reducing speeding. Unless they are closely spaced, peak speed can actually increase—drivers try to make up time lost at the stop. And stop signs installed simply to reduce speed can *increase* the number of accidents. The City now has strict criteria for installing new stop signs. Barron Park was a local pioneer in this approach—you may have noticed that there are far fewer stop signs here than in the rest of the city.

SENIOR UPDATE

By Mary Jane Leon

Reverse Mortgages

Be careful” is the advice of the day if you are looking into a reverse mortgage. It is a good way to fund your later years, but there are more pitfalls than you can imagine. And we have found a great web site to give you clear, concise guidelines if you are considering one. (If you are not a web wanderer, see two paragraphs down.) The web site is http://www.help4srs.org/money/reverse_mortgages.htm. They tell you things like the fundamentals, tax implications, impact on public benefits (Medical and SSI), and how high up-front costs make a reverse mortgage way too expensive for short-term needs. Why should you get a HUD-insured loan? Why do you need a counselor, and how can you find a good one? Do you need to pay for a referral? And why should you not use a reverse mortgage to buy an annuity? Really important questions, and they are all answered by the Help for Seniors web site given above.

The main web address for Help for Seniors is <http://www.help4srs.org/>. This site is a gold mine of well-written, valuable information about all sorts of financial and legal issues for seniors. It is written and maintained by a seniors agency in Torrance, California, and they seem happy to serve people outside their immediate area.

Non-web users: If you are not a web user, let us know and we will print out information for you or help you find it another way. Web searching is part of our services to seniors—about the easiest one we offer, so feel free.

Group Lunch Time

We have now had two good lunches at Cibo, and are planning a third there before we move into Bol Park for our summer lunches. The food is good, and we have the luxury of a private room, which really contributes to socializing. The February lunch was the noisiest yet, and that’s a good sign.

If you want to join the group for lunch in April, just let us know. There is always room for a few more.

Volunteers Needed

Have you got an hour or two a week—or even just occasionally—when you could spend some time helping out a neighbor? Our cadre of volunteers has become depleted since we started this whole thing four years ago, and recently we have had to turn away a few people who needed some help. Telephone either Mary Jane or Julie if you would like to join our volunteering group. (Current volunteers, don’t bother to call. We know who you are.)

Services Offered

Even though we can’t always provide the kind of help we would like to, we still want to hear from you if you have need of a phone call, a ride, a visit, or a small household task. If we can’t do it, we can always help to connect you with the local agencies that offer services to seniors.

You can reach Mary Jane Leon at 493-5248 or mjleon@earthlink.net; Julie Spengler at 493-9151 or julie.899@juno.com

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BPA meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:15 p.m. Call Doug Moran for location: 856-3302 <http://www.bpaonline.org>

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Nancy "Jo" Hamilton
EDITOR



Patrick Coyne
DESIGNER



Mary Jane Leon
Gwen Luce
Doug Moran
COPY EDITORS



Don Anderson
Doug Graham
Mary Jane Leon
Linda Lui
Doug Moran
Patrick Muffler
Jessica Rothberg
Maryanne Welton
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