

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Doug Moran, BPA President

Understanding the Charleston/ Arastradero Lane Reconfiguration

This summer, Charleston and Arastradero Roads (henceforth C/A) will have their lanes reconfigured as part of an *experiment* to improve the flow of traffic and to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. This experiment is inaccurately, but widely, referred to as narrowing the roadway from four lanes to two.

During the several years that this has been under consideration, the details have been examined and discussed in a series of well-publicized public workshops. However, the rationale for what was being proposed too often got submerged by the details, so I am going to outline that rationale here so that you may better assess what the experiment is doing and whether it is succeeding.

The most important thing to remember is that traffic behavior is often counter-intuitive. Take highway entrance metering lights as an example. A decade ago, people were screaming about how they could not possibly work. Now, you see letters to the SJ Mercury News' Mr. Roadshow complaining about delays in turning on new ones. Similarly, there is a cautionary example used in computer simulation classes based on traffic congestion. Several of what seem to be the best places to add roadways to alleviate congestion have the opposite effect—they increased congestion both locally and in the broader area.

One of the lessons of this simulation is that the effects of a problem may ripple outward, with the symptoms peaking some distance away, thereby obscuring their source. An analogy is congestion on a highway caused by an accident: It can persist for hours after all signs of the accident have been removed, and the chokepoint may move several miles.

The term "traffic calming" is often misconstrued to mean slowing down traffic, when in fact its goal is to reduce the "jitters"—reducing *both* the highs and lows. For example, during a similar study for El Camino, the chart of traffic speeds during peak periods was a sequence of spikes. Despite segments where speeds reached 40-50 mph, the average speed for the full length was roughly 20 mph.

Reducing the "jitters" not only makes driving less stressful, but improves safety—for both vehicles and pedestrians—because traffic movement becomes more predictable.

One of the key elements of the C/A experiment is improved timing and coordination of the traffic lights.

However, traffic lights are not the only things that impede the smooth flow of traffic—vehicles turning on to and off of the street are another source. Highway designers minimize this "friction" by providing interchanges with long acceleration and

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Update on Matadero/Barron Creeks Flood Control Project

By Christian Kalar, Creeks Chair

As mentioned in Patrick Muffler's article [see page 8], the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) has completed its construction of the Matadero/Barron Creek flood control project. The portion of the project to fix the error was called the "Remediation Project." The following is a report from the SCVWD that was edited for this newsletter.

The contractor for the Matadero/Barron Creeks Remediation Project successfully completed all construction work within the Matadero Creek channel by the October 15, 2004 permit deadline. The project was constructed within the \$12.5M contract budget. The mitigation planting work for both on-site and off-site mitigation areas was completed in January 2005.

The Matadero/Barron Creeks Remediation Project was initiated in 1999. During the planning study, it was determined that floodwalls on some bridge crossings over Matadero Creek would have to be raised to a height of 7 feet in order to meet the FEMA freeboard requirements. Public outreach efforts indicated that floodwall height was one of the most sensitive issues for the Palo Alto community. The project Planning Consultant proposed conducting a risk-based analysis that, if successful, would reduce the floodwall heights at these crossings to a

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deceleration lanes. However, on city streets the situation is more complex: there are many more intersections—some major, some minor—and economics (land and construction costs) demands compromises.

In the title, I used the term “lane reconfiguration” because the C/A experiment involves reallocating the pavement according to the needs of the specific segment. The worst congestion is at Gunn, and a lane will be added. At the major intersections (for example, El Camino), the four-lane (plus turn lanes) configuration will remain. In other segments, the roadway will be reconfigured to having two main travel lanes, with the remaining space used to reduce various sources of friction.

An evaluation of traffic patterns during peak hours revealed that roughly one-quarter of the road capacity was lost to cars waiting to turn left. Converting one of the current (four) lanes into dedicated left-turn lanes greatly reduces a major source of friction: cars changing lanes to get around one of these cars waiting to turn. These lane changes slow down the other lane in two ways. First, adding cars to the other lane forces the drivers already there to slow to reestablish safe separation between vehicles. Second, the driver changing lanes typically cannot see that he needs to do this while he could still make a smooth transition—instead he must slow and pick his spot, causing cars now behind him to slow.

C/A is a major school corridor, and the morning peak of pedestrian crossing roughly corresponds to the peak time for vehicles. The C/A experiment is trying to use street design to enhance pedestrian safety without resorting to traffic lights. Remember, pedestrian crossing lights create major disruptions in traffic flow. For example, my experience turning onto El Camino from various side streets is that the light turns yellow for the third or fourth car, but if a pedestrian is

crossing, a vehicle can be half a block away and still get through on the green.

A discussion of the allocation of the remaining space involves too many details to be presented here.

I have no doubt that the claim “Menlo Park proves that lane reduction doesn’t work” will resurface, despite being repeatedly refuted during both the El Camino and A/C studies. First, the segment in Menlo Park where El Camino narrows from six lanes to five then four is precisely the type of configuration where traffic engineering practices say that there should be *more* lanes, not fewer. Second, the decision was not to narrow El Camino, but that widening it wasn’t worth the costs and consequences, evidenced by the many buildings in this segment that pre-date the general widening of El Camino from four to six lanes (in the late 1950s).

Work on C/A is scheduled to be started and completed during the schools’ summer break—the period of lesser traffic peaks. The implementation of the experiment is being piggybacked upon a long-scheduled resurfacing, and should thus save money and reduce overall construction time (and hence disruption of traffic).

The new C/A configuration was laid out

based upon computer simulations. When I participated in the (earlier) El Camino study, I was quite surprised at how good the simulations were (although I had my quibbles). However, since the simulation is heavily dependent on human behavior, there is potential for surprise. Consequently, this reconfiguration is an experiment, and there may be some adjustments as deficiencies and problems are discovered. However, this is *not* a risky experiment because the simulation models—and the design principles on which there are based—have been tested and validated by similar projects in other cities.

Part of my reason for not delving into details on the C/A experiment is that I am an infrequent user of that corridor, and hence do not have intuitions about the specific issues and problems. Patrick Muffler, who does have good intuitions about the corridor, was the representative from Barron Park in a group of citizens assembled to review and critique the work of the traffic engineers on this project.

I hope that this background helps you better understand the experiment. Please don’t make snap judgments about how well the experiment is working—Drivers will need some time to adapt to the new configuration.

[F L O O D C O N T I N U E D F R O M P A G E 1]

maximum of 5 feet. Following the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ (USACE) risk-based analysis procedure, the Consultant performed thousands of hydraulic runs using random combinations of flow and channel friction factors, and determined that the modified channel would pass the one-percent event with 95 percent reliability, the standards set by USACE for levee certification. FEMA has rarely, if ever, approved modified freeboard requests from agencies other than the Corps of Engineers, but it accepted the District’s application and issued a Conditional Letter of Map Revision with the reduced floodwall heights at the critical bridge crossings.

The Planning Study was completed in October 2002. The engineering design was performed from 2002-2003, and included modification of floodwalls between Alma Street and U.S. Highway 101, the replacement and raising of the Louis Road Bridge as well as channel modifications under the bridge, and excavation of an overflow bypass downstream of Highway 101 to the Palo

Alto Flood Basin to preserve the natural Matadero Creek channel but provide additional conveyance of high flows to the Palo Alto Flood Basin.

The Barron Sediment Basin and Barron Diversion Structure (located next to Gunn High School), completed in the mid-1990s to divert high flood flows from Barron Creek to Matadero Creek, can now be operated as originally designed to provide one-percent flood protection to both Barron and Matadero Creeks.

Remaining work for this project includes mitigation planting maintenance until early 2008 and mitigation monitoring until 2015. The SCVWD submitted the final application to FEMA to revise the Flood Insurance Rate Maps although FEMA requested additional information, so final approval is not expected until late March or early April 2006. After receiving approval from FEMA, the SCVWD will work with the City of Palo Alto to send letters to all residents that are affected by the flood map revision.

Summer Get-together in the Park

Come to the third annual Newcomers Party where old and new mingle together at the end of the summer. If you would like to help with the plans be sure to let us know! The date for the party, normally held in Bol Park, will be announced in the Summer edition of this newsletter. Please contact our Welcoming Committee Chair Gwen Luce at 650-224-3670 or gluce@cbnorcal.com. Hope to see you there!

SENIOR UPDATE, SPRING 2006

By Robert Frost and Mary Jane Leon



Barber Shop Quartet Entertains at Barron Park Seniors Christmas Lunch

A local barbershop quartet entertained over 30 surprised Barron Park seniors with “old favorites” at the Senior Lunch held at Cibo’s Restaurant Tuesday, December 13th. The quartet was sponsored by the Barron Park Association as a holiday treat in recognition of the service that many seniors give to community activities.

The quartet, as shown in the photo is made up of (Left to right) Al Ward, Dave Weatherford, Steve Wolf and Rolfe Folsom (Barron Park resident and long-time BPA member). They sing with the Peninsulaires Chorus, the Palo Alto/Mt. View Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society, and they perform in many local events. They serenaded the group with old favorites including “This Little Light of Mine,” “Hello Mary Lou,” and “Winter Wonderland.” Then to everyone’s delight, they led the seniors in singing “Jingle Bells,” “Joy to the World,” and “Oh Little Town of Bethlehem.”

The next Senior Lunch will be held Tuesday, April 11th. Any Barron Park senior who would enjoy attending should contact Bob Frost at 493-8272 or Rosemary Jacobson at 493-9152.

Fun and Games Close to Home

We all know that we have the best climate available. And that Barron Park is the best neighborhood around. But did you know that you don’t even have to leave the neighborhood for some entertainment? Here are four ideas, all within walking distance.

Scrabble at Boston Market

Did you know that there is a Palo Alto Scrabble Club? It meets most Monday Evenings (not holidays), 6 to 10 p.m., at the Boston Market at 3375 El Camino Real. They accept all levels of players, social

and competitive, and, best of all, there is no charge. So if you like word play, boogie on over.

PingPong Just Down the Street

A few Barron Park pingpong fans are looking around for more of their kind, to get together for social games. Please let us know if you’re interested, and if you have a table we can share. Nancy Hamilton 494-2941.

Afternoon Poker

Any poker players want to have an occasional afternoon game? Or do any of you want to learn to play poker? No age or sex discrimination here. And “cheat sheets” are available for those who can’t remember whether a full house beats four aces or vice versa. Phone Ralph Leon at 493-5248 if this is up your alley.

Jazz at the Elks Lodge

We have just learned that the Elks Lodge, down the street on El Camino, presents Sunday afternoon traditional jazz concerts,

1 p.m., once a month. Tickets are \$15. We haven’t been to one yet, but if you have been, we would like to have a report. Please phone Mary Jane at 493-5248 and give us a mini-review.

Serious Business

There is nothing much more serious than getting a reverse mortgage. They are very expensive—literally several thousands of dollars—and they cut down on whatever assets you might want to pass on to heirs. That being said, they are a good choice for some people in some circumstances.

If you are considering one, please, please start by ordering AARP’s booklet “Home Made Money: A Consumer’s Guide to Reverse Mortgages.” This is an excellent guide—heavy-going at times, but really gives you a clear picture of the mine field you are entering when you start looking for a reverse mortgage. You can get a free copy by calling 1-800-209-8085, or by going to their web site aarp.org/revmort/list/

BARRON PARK DONKEYS

Support for Perry and Niner comes completely from the generosity of their neighbors and the community (builder James Witt provides their pasture). 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. In return, Perry and Niner provide warmth and joy to those who walk by their pasture; a rural equine experience for suburban children and adults who visit them at 9 a.m.-10:30 a.m. on Sundays in Bol Park; an opportunity for humane education for children in Barron Park Schools; and a general reaffirmation for all of us of our connection to the natural world.

The donkeys are fed and checked morning and evening by a team of Donkey Handlers. If you would like to join this team please contact our co-ordinator, Robert Frost, at 650-493-8272.

General farrier and veterinary expenses for the donkeys total about \$1,000 a year. Food

costs about \$600 a year.

Funds for the donkeys are managed by Acterra (formerly the Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation), which acts as fiscal agent for the Donkey Project, providing insurance and handling donations and financial affairs. Fees for these administrative services totaled about \$200 this past year. All of these expenses are funded solely through donations. All those who care about Perry and Niner seek to guarantee their proper on-going care and shelter, as well as to ensure that assets will be available for health concerns as the donkeys age. The handlers hope that those generous neighbors who have contributed in the past will consider increasing their support this year. If you would like to help provide food, shelter and vet care for the donkeys, your tax deductible donation must be made out to “ACTERRA—Palo Alto Donkey Fund” (“ACTERRA” must be included), and sent to: The Palo Alto Donkey Project ACTERRA 3921 E. Bayshore Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303 Phone: (650) 962-9876 www.Acterra.org.

Donkeys’ Home Page: <http://www.rosetastoneinc.com/california/donkeys>

Flooding from Matadero and Barron Creeks No Longer an Imminent Danger

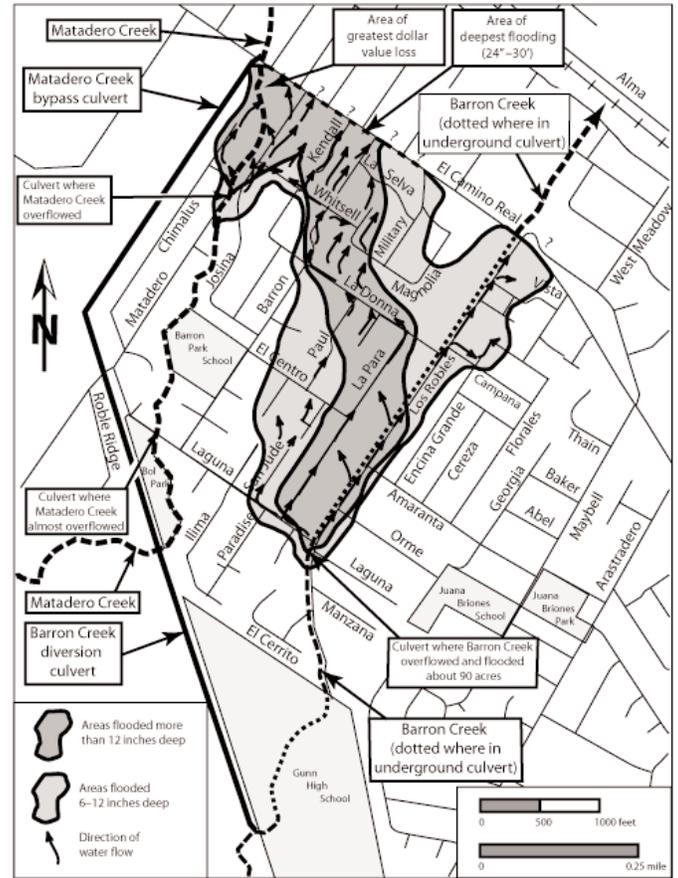
By Patrick Muffler (with substantial input from Bob Moss)

The near flood of San Francisquito Creek on 31 December 2005 has once again focused Palo Alto's attention upon the potential of creeks that drain the Santa Cruz Mountains to flood significant parts of our city. Memories of the disastrous 03 February 1998 flood of San Francisquito Creek in north Palo Alto are still vivid, and the 31 December 2005 near-flood of that creek served to remind residents and community leaders that little has been done to mitigate a repeat of the 1998 flood. Interim and long-term mitigation was discussed at the 30 January 2006 joint study session of the Palo Alto City Council and the San Francisquito Creek Joint Powers Authority Board of Directors. This was only a study session, and no decisions were made.

This recent spotlight on San Francisquito Creek led me to assess the current situation of Matadero and Barron Creeks, the two creeks that historically have flooded Barron Park many times (see accompanying map of watershed). Doug Graham's history article in the Spring 1998 issue of the BPA Newsletter¹ details flooding every few years (at least 16 floods since 1930) along our creeks. The danger from flooding of Matadero and Barron creeks was driven home emphatically in January 1983 when much of Barron Park was under water from overflow of both creeks (see accompanying map). Yet this was only a 17-year flood, not the 100-year flood that most flood-control measures address.

As a direct result of the 1983 flood, the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) implemented a major flood-control scheme designed to give Barron Park protection from a 100-year flood. This scheme consists of a 4300-foot concrete box tunnel from the sediment/settlement basin back of Gunn High School along the bicycle path past Bol Park and then along the boundary of the Stanford Industrial Park to El Camino Real. The section of culvert between the VA Hospital and Gunn High School allows diversion of floodwaters from Barron Creek into the larger-diameter culvert that begins at the bike bridge just south of Bol Park and extends to Matadero Creek at El Camino Real. This downstream section of the culvert also allows diversion of flood waters from the natural channel of Matadero Creek, providing not only flood-control in that reach but also preserving the natural riparian habitat.

Several years after culvert completion, however, review of the project by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) revealed that a serious design error left the downstream bridge at Louis Road with the capacity to transmit only a 50-year flood, not a 100-year flood. Hence, full implementation of the Barron Creek diversion could not be accomplished without endangering properties near the Louis Road bridge. Coping with the February 1998 flood, therefore, required some improvised and tricky management of the diversion gates to prevent flooding of both Barron Creek in Barron Park and Matadero Creek at the Louis Road Bridge (see the article by Christian Kalar in the Spring 1998 issue of the BPA Newsletter²).

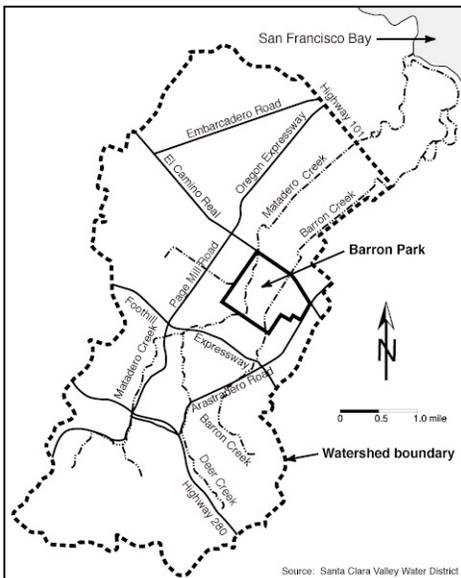


January 1983 flood in Barron Park
 adapted from the map prepared by Doug Graham in 1983
 (see <http://www2.bpaonline.org/Creeks/Maps/flooding-1983-01-map-big-dgraham.jpg>)
 with addition of the diversion culverts

Subsequently, the SCVWD addressed its error by:

- replacing the existing bridge over Matadero Creek at Louis Road with a bridge of larger cross section and resultant flow capacity,
- rebuilding floodwalls along Matadero Creek from West Bayshore Road to Alma Street,
- improving bridge headwalls at Greer, Ross, Cowper and Waverley streets, and
- constructing an overflow bypass channel downstream of Highway 101 (see accompanying article by Christian Kalar).

The net result of all these 1994–2005 activities is that the scheme to divert floodwaters from Barron Creek to Matadero Creek can operate as designed to provide 100-year (one-percent) flood protection to both Barron and Matadero Creeks without endangering properties downstream in



other Palo Alto neighborhoods. This is the level of protection that, once formally certified by FEMA, removes property owners from the zone where flood insurance may be required.

In contrast to the far more complex San Francisquito Creek situation (there are two counties, several cities and Stanford University involved), the flooding potential of the creeks traversing Barron Park has been fully addressed. The process took 23 years and was not without mistakes, glitches and political controversy. But it happened, in no small part due to the leadership and persistence of the Barron Park Association and its officers, most notably Doug Graham, Bob Moss, and Christian Kalar.

Emergency Preparedness in Barron Park no longer needs to focus on flooding of creeks.

¹ <http://www2.bpaonline.org/BP-News/1998-spring/index.html#history>

² <http://www2.bpaonline.org/BP-News/1998-spring/index.html#creeks>



Join the Maypole Dance May 7

One of Barron Park's proudest traditions, the annual May Fete, is scheduled this year for Sunday, May 7 in Bol Park, noon to 4 pm. Live musicians and dancers will perform all afternoon, with a Maypole dance at 2:30. This 28th year of the fete will also feature a community round dance, no experience necessary.

Bring the family and a blanket and make a picnic of it. Enjoy Driftwood Market sandwiches and bake-sale desserts. Wear ribbons. There will also be jugglers, games and crafts for the children, donkeys and donkey art, the history exhibit, and more.

The fete is a volunteer effort. If you'd like to help, or if you'd like to propose a display or activity, please contact fete co-chair Jean Lythcott at jlythcot@stanford.edu.

Come on out and dance—we're planning canopies this year, which will be especially handy in case of very hot weather.

BARRON PARK GARDEN NETWORK

The Barron Park Garden Network is an informal group of food gardeners who have been meeting monthly since 2001 to discuss topics related to growing vegetables, herbs, and fruits. Meetings are held in members' homes and include a walk through the host's garden, weather and daylight hours permitting; informal conversation; and discussion of a pre-determined gardening topic. Plant and seed exchanges and tastings occur seasonally. This is a lively and enthusiastic group with a wide range of gardening experience, expertise, and philosophies represented. Members of the group would like to help new groups form. If you are interested in joining a neighborhood gardening group similar to this one, focused on either edibles or ornamentals, contact Candace Simpson, cjs1008@pacbell.net or 493-1257, for more information.

BPA EMAIL LISTS

bpa-news1@BPAOnline.org : News and announcements of problems, issues, meetings . . . No discussion.

bpa1@BPAOnline.org : Discussion of issues related to Barron Park. Some announcements and news.

bpa-misc1@BPAOnline.org : Other items of potential interest to Barron Park residents, such as people organizing groups (child care, exercise) and some buy-sell announcements.

Anyone can subscribe to any of these lists. [bpa-news1](mailto:bpa-news1@BPAOnline.org) is moderated, but anyone can submit items directly to the other lists.

For more info, go to www.bpaonline.org and follow the link for "BPA Email Lists"

WHY JOIN THE BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION?

By Karen Michael

With about 400 member households, the Barron Park Association not only boasts the largest membership, the largest percentage of members, and the most extensive website among voluntary dues-paying neighborhood associations in Santa Clara County, but is also one of the most active and effective neighborhood organizations in the Bay Area.

The Association can trace its roots to 1926, when residents organized to stop the excavation of "borrow" pits for construction of the Bayshore Highway (now known as Highway 101). Known as the Barron Park-Maybelle Improvement and Taxpayers Association in the 1950s—and formed to fight annexation to the city of Palo Alto—the Barron Park Association took on its current name and purpose in 1965, including a change from opposition to support for annexation. Its focus is on community service and improvement, along with representing the interests of the residents of the neighborhood before government bodies. The Association has a long track record of accomplishments, including the following:

- Creation of Bol Park
- Annexation of Barron Park to the City of Palo Alto

- Improvements along El Camino, including median islands from Matadero to Los Robles and traffic signals at Matadero and Maybell
- Groundwater cleanup
- Street construction guidelines to address sidewalk and maintenance issues
- Participation in the creek bypass and revegetation projects
- Evacuation drills (especially for seniors—and including pets)
- Barron Park traffic studies

Your annual dues in the Association sponsor publication and distribution of the Association's quarterly newsletter, as well as funding neighborhood events such as the May Fete, Home and Garden Tour, Holiday Parade and Party, and the annual membership meeting.

When you join, you will receive all four issues of the Barron Park Association Newsletter each year, be eligible to participate in the new babysitting list (as either babysitter or recipient of the list), and be eligible to vote in matters that might be placed before the Association. Your membership and participation in the Barron Park Association will help ensure that the character, charm, and activities of our unique neighborhood will continue. Please join today!

A RAILROAD RAN THROUGH HERE

By Doug Graham, Barron Park Historian



“Next Stop...Barron Park”

These words were never heard in any railroad car. But they might be heard today if it weren't for the abandonment and removal of the two railroads that used to run through our neighborhood. The Southern Pacific ran steam and diesel trains and the Peninsular Railway Company of California ran electric interurban trolleys on parallel tracks where the regional bike path through Bol Park now runs.

Where the Tracks Ran

In our area, there was a commuter flag stop called Alta Mesa by the cemetery on Arastradero Road, and another named Neal where Matadero Avenue crosses the bike path today. From Neal, the train tracks curved north through the Stanford lands where the Varian plant is now. The westerly of the two tracks carried the PRCC (Peninsular Railway Co. of CA) trolleys. It turned northwest where the Varian parking lot is on El Camino Real and ran alongside the highway through Mayfield to Palo Alto with a spur to Stanford (the “Toonerville Trolley” of Stanford fame). The easterly track carried the SP (Southern Pacific) steam trains. It crossed El Camino near where the Fish Market restaurant is today and connected to the SP mainline in a wye near Fry's Electronics. From Neal to the southeast, the tracks ran across the Stanford lands, separating the two cow pastures that became Gunn High School and the Veteran's Administration Hospital. From the intersection with Arastradero Road south, the right-of-way was later taken by the County to build Foothill Expressway.

The Los Gatos “Cutoff”

The reason why the SP decided to build a railroad through the Barron Estate is diffi-

cult to understand. The SP had taken over the original San Francisco and San Jose Railroad, which had reached Mayfield October 18, 1863 and San Jose January 16, 1864. Much later, the SP system was extended all the way down the coast to Los Angeles. Shortly after 1900, the management of the SP

decided that they needed a new high-speed double-track “cutoff” directly across the mountains to Santa Cruz, that would bypass the San Jose-Gilroy route and shorten the distance and travel time to Southern California. It seems they did not properly evaluate the difficulties of building a fast railroad route across a rugged mountain range. The proposal may seem weak today, and one should understand that skeptics even then smelled something fishy underneath the company's optimism. It has been alleged that the route selection had everything to do with land speculation in the future town of Los Altos by top SP executives.

In the case of the Peninsular Railway, which had been created by the SP on December 21, 1895, the reasons were more complex but perhaps more aboveboard. The PRCC had been created to link San Francisco and San Jose with electric interurban service. It was involved in numerous schemes to extend interurban trolley service throughout Santa Clara County and beyond, and was constantly jockeying with rival concerns to obtain franchises on favorable terms from the county's municipalities, including Mayfield and Palo Alto. The cutoff from Mayfield to Los Gatos would connect nicely with other lines of the PRCC from San Jose to Los Gatos, Saratoga and to the orchard area that is now Cupertino. The PRCC could anticipate picking up commute traffic if the promoters of Los Altos were successful in creating a new town out of the area's prune and apricot orchards.

Construction Problems

So, the stage was set and the railroads laid out their right of way diagonally across the bucolic 320-acre Barron Estate. Soon, however, the project ran into difficulties. Construction began on the SP at Congress Junction near Saratoga, but then had to be halted in June 1905 because the stockpile of rails was needed 500 miles away in the fight against Colorado River flooding in the Imperial Valley of Southern California. Then came the San Francisco Earthquake in April 1906. Although this temporarily closed one of the tunnels in the Santa Cruz Mountains, it had a positive aspect also. In the cleanup, San Francisco had to get rid of thousands of tons of debris. The new railroad line needed fill material, and some of the earthquake debris was used in fills in the Barron Park area. San Francisco artifacts were recently turned up in excavations during the bike path construction (phase II of Bol Park) in 1977-78, and again during construction of the flood control project under the bike path in 1992-94. Actual construction on the “Mayfield Cutoff” began in April 1907, with track laying beginning in August. The work through the Barron Estate was probably finished in September.

Regular Steam Train Service Begins

Finally, construction was done and the first SP steam trains ran through to Los Altos on April 12, 1908, bringing sixteen carloads of prospective buyers to a land sale and barbeque in Los Altos.

The first regular scheduled service began April 19, 1908, with two trips a day each way starting at Palo Alto and going to Los



Gatos. Soon, service from San Francisco through Los Altos and Los Gatos to Santa Cruz was established, with the “cutoff” tying back into the main line at Watsonville Junction. By 1911 there were twelve steam trains a day using the line through the Barron Estate besides the Peninsular interurban trolleys.

Interurban Service Begins

In October 1909, work began on electrifying the westerly track to accommodate the interurban cars of the Peninsular Railway. Regular service began March 5, 1910 with gala celebrations in each town along the way as a gaily decorated five-car train of brand-new interurban cars progressed north from San Jose bearing railroad representatives and city dignitaries. The cars were two-thirds closed and one-third open (for smokers) with rain curtains. The closed section had red plush seats, while the open section had seats with slatted backs and bottoms. The following year, the cars were equipped with electric heaters, a much-welcomed improvement. The cars ran every hour between Palo Alto and San Jose, with fares ranging from ten cents between adjacent stations up to 55 cents for the entire distance, with lower rates for weekends and holidays. Monthly commuter tickets were available; Palo Alto to Alta Mesa cost \$3. After the PRCC line was completed to Los Gatos, the SPRR discontinued local stops between Palo Alto and Los Gatos. Beginning January 4, 1914, Los Altos was served exclusively by the electric railway. The PRCC bought newer, heavier 64-passenger cars painted red—the “Big Palys.” Twenty-five runs per day in each direction were made on the Los Altos branch. For awhile, the Peninsular did a modest freight business, hauling oil, fruit, gravel and other cargo, and transferring to the SPRR at Mayfield.

A PRCC or SP rider would not have had much impression of the Barron Estate as he or she rode through it in those days. The Stanford lands on either side were pastures for cattle. A cattle underpass was built behind today’s 1060 McGregor Way, that allowed the “Portugese” farmer’s dairy cows to graze on both sides of the tracks in the Stanford Lands. The leased dairy farm stood approximately where the VA Hospital laundry plant is now, just upstream on Matadero Creek from the donkey pasture. The Roble Ridge area was studded with Valley Oak and Coast Live Oak; it probably was used for grazing by the caretaker-manager of the Barron Estate (the family was no longer in residence by 1909). I speculate that the cattle-loading ramp (the

decayed remains of which may be seen today in Bol Park) was probably built to serve the Barron Estate shortly after the tracks were laid down. Car riders might have been able to catch an occasional glimpse, between the stately oaks, of the imposing, three-story mansion three-quarters of a mile away near the San Francisco-San Jose Road (El Camino).

Operations of the Peninsular Railway

The PRCC increased the number of trips in 1919, including 34 one-way trips on the section that ran through the Barron estate. That was the year that the Barron Estate was sold to Driscoll and Reiter, who began subdividing it for small berry farms. On October 1, 1921, a new daily schedule called for hourly runs northbound from San Jose from 6:40 a.m. to 7:25 p.m. with 9:25 and 11:25 p.m. cars. Southbound from Palo Alto the hourly service went from 7:45 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., then 10:20 p.m. and 12:20 a.m. plus a 6:55 a.m. run on Sundays and holidays. Most cars connected with steam trains at Palo Alto. At the peak of its expansion in 1924, the Peninsula Railway had 80 miles of lines and its companion the San Jose Railroads operated another 46 miles, for a total of 126 miles of interurban tracks in the Santa Clara Valley.

During the 1920s Barron Park became home to about 100 families, of whom probably half were engaged, at least to some extent, in small-scale intensive agriculture. Most families, however, had a wage earner or salaried person who commuted to work in Mayfield, Palo Alto, Stanford or elsewhere, a few even to downtown San Francisco. Obviously, there was a growing potential market for a new railroad stop somewhere between Alta Mesa and Mayfield.

Riders through our neighborhood would have seen berry patches, tomato fields, and apricot and prune orchards being laid out. They would have observed the construction of tidy cottages along Laguna Avenue and on Roble Ridge. In the late 1930s, they would have watched the activities of the burgeoning Bol Family, who acquired property on both sides of the line west of Matadero Creek.

Barron Park Strawberries Shipped by Railroad

George Fitzgerald, in his oral history, remembers that most of the land in Barron Park between Military Way and the railroad tracks was planted to strawberries when his family came in the 1920s. Mr. Strain, of Strain’s Dairy owned much of the land, leasing it out to “Japanese” tenant farmers.

He said that the SP had a spur track “at the Palo Alto Railroad Station” where they loaded strawberries into express refrigerator cars for shipment to the East Coast. He is probably referring to the spur at the Sutter Packing Company on Park Boulevard in Mayfield, in the building Fry’s occupies now. In any case, many, if not most, of those strawberries came from Barron Park growers operating under the guidance of Driscoll and Reiter, whose Watsonville-based company continues in business today as the Driscoll berry packers.

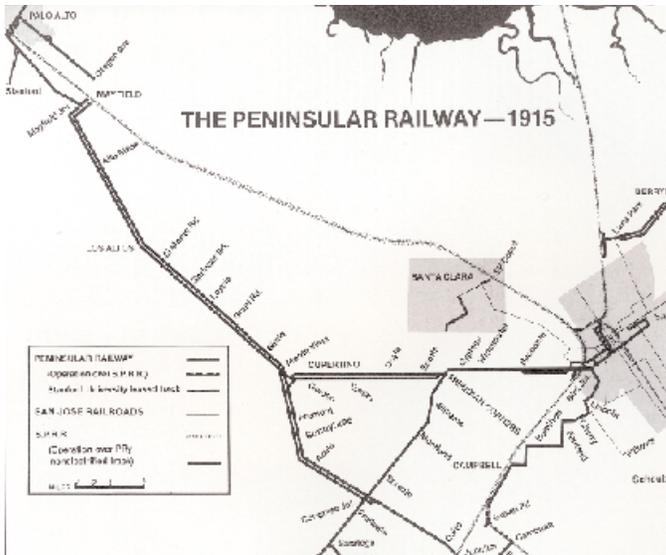
George believed that there were six commuter trains per day to and from San Francisco in the 1920s and 1930s. He says the club car was “exclusively for the use of executives who got on at Los Altos”, and it was discontinued during World War II.

Neal “Station” for Barron Park Commuters

It may have been about 1933 when Barron Park became a stop on the railroad. That was the year that the local improvement association succeeded in getting the County to build a bridge across Matadero Creek on Laguna Avenue, eliminating the previous path along the creek bank and ford where La Calle Court stands opposite to Laguna Court today. According to Ernest Johnson’s memory, when they laid out the new stretch of Laguna through the Gough property (later the Bol “donkey pasture” and now Bol Park), the railroad put in a stop where Laguna ends at Matadero Avenue. The “station” was named after James H. and Bee Neal, who owned about eleven acres in two parcels on both sides of the creek below (northeast of) the previous winding course of Laguna Avenue and Matadero Avenue. Josina Bol described it as being very small, just a shelter with a built-in bench, and painted yellow. Most of the commuters in those days were men, but Josina remembers that Miss Calderwood worked in San Francisco and took the train from Barron Park. Mr. Sherman, a lawyer, always took the train. There were others also, whom Josina did not know. Neal station is shown on one of the older USGS topographic maps. This stop, if it in fact was created as late as 1933, had a very short life as a PRCC stop, since the days of the electric cars ended in 1934. However, it continued as a SPRR commuter stop until the Los Gatos cutoff was abandoned in 1964.

Special Excursion Trains

The railroad did more than haul passengers and freight. There were numerous special excursion trains for a variety of purposes. During the warmer months many groups arranged picnic trains to pri-



It was later on when the Big Game trains began to make an impression on Barron Park residents. The SP would run trains from San Francisco and Berkeley for the game. After depositing their fans at the Embarcadero Road crossing close to the stadium, each empty train would proceed to the wye at Park Boulevard where Fry's Electronics is today, and then would back down the little-used Los Gatos cutoff to make room for the next one. They would be "stacked" on the Barron Park stretch of the line

the valley meant that the days of the orchards was almost over, and those were the last.

The "Suntan Specials"

Starting on July 3 and 4, 1927 the SPRR began running a special summer excursion train from San Jose through Los Gatos to Santa Cruz. In 1929 it was dubbed the Suntan Special, and in 1932 the origin point was changed to San Francisco. This is when the trains began coming through the rapidly developing Barron Park neighborhood. They became so popular that several sections were added, as well as Oakland for an alternate starting point. On holiday weekends, as many as seven sections would be run. At the height of its popularity, the wet winter of 1939-40 washed out sections of the line across the Santa Cruz Mountains and the line was abandoned. For two more years the Suntan operated via San Jose, Gilroy and Watsonville, but World War II shortages ended them after 1941. The Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce got the SP to start them up again in 1947, and they were greatly successful through 1960. However, they didn't pass through our neighborhood after 1939.

vate or public parks such as Congress Springs, Alum Rock, and Big Basin. There were convention trains for the Shriners and other groups. When the Republican Party nominated Herbert Hoover for President in 1928, special trains brought the SRO audience to Stanford Stadium to hear his acceptance speech.

The "Big Game" Trains

The excursion trains of greatest interest to Barron Park, however, were the trains that brought football fans to the stadium in odd-numbered years when Stanford hosted the annual "Big Game" with the University of California. The first of these were on November 13, 1909, when the PRCC was able to roll interurban cars right up to the stadium on the "Toonerville Trolley" branch spur. As Charles S. McCaleb says in "Tracks, Tires and Wires,"

"For the next two decades, every fall afternoon saw city and interurban cars rolling up to the bleachers jammed with fans from Palo Alto, San Jose, Los Gatos and intermediate points. At game's end the cars stood ready to whisk them home. For the fans these were days of great merriment. For the Peninsular, which pressed into duty all its available equipment, they were a headache but also a great moneymaker."

until the time came to pick up their fans after the game. As many as sixteen thousand fans would ride to the game this way. For instance, on November 21, 1953 there were ten trains in all, eight from San Francisco with 16-18 cars each and two from Berkeley with 17 cars each. Several longtime Barron Park residents who made oral history tapes in the 1970s and 80s spoke of seeing the trains lined up along Roble Ridge in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Josina Bol of Roble Ridge remembered that the neighborhood kids would find ways to climb aboard and amuse themselves by racing through the cars.

The Blossom Trolley Trips

In the spring of 1910 the PRCC instituted the famous "Blossom Trolley Trip," a \$1 tour of the valley when the orchards were in full bloom and the wildflowers most spectacular. Views of the valley in bloom with Mount Hamilton in the distance were renowned. You can get a good feel for the extraordinary beauty of our valley in those days by viewing the enormous mural in the downtown courthouse in San Jose. Thousands of riders enjoyed the blossom trips and stopoffs at Saratoga's Blossom Festival. The trip began in San Jose and passed through Campbell, Los Gatos, Saratoga, Congress Springs, Monta Vista, Los Altos, Mayfield, Palo Alto and Stanford, where an hour-long tour of the campus was conducted at the end of the day. In 1924, the special trains were discontinued and the blossom tours reduced to a special discount ticket book covering the same trip on the regularly scheduled cars. In 1962 and 1963 rail fans organized nostalgic \$2 "Blossom Valley" excursion trains on the SP, but the rapid suburbanization of

The End Comes for the Big Red Electric Cars

The end for the railroads came piecemeal. The spread of the automobile-based culture and economy, better roads and finally the Great Depression of the 1930s did in the Peninsular Railway. Even in the 1920s, the PRCC was uneconomical; profits were inadequate to repay the startup debts that had been taken on by the parent company, the SP. Service cutbacks were made on some lines as early as 1921, and conversion of routes to bus service began with Palo Alto in 1924. Fare increases helped temporarily, but the cutbacks and fare hikes led to more loss of ridership in a classic downward cycle. More and more people were buying automobiles and using them for their commutes, errands and pleasure travel. Corporate restructuring in the middle 1920s also made the balance sheet look a little better for awhile, but the end was clearly in sight. In 1930, as the Bay Area and the nation slid down into the Great Depression, the PRCC chose to retire its best and biggest interurban cars—the ones that served Barron Park. They were replaced by older, smaller and less comfortable cars, which only helped accelerate the downward trend in ridership. Chatham Forbes, in his oral history, remembers how uncomfortable the old cars were.

Welcoming New Residents

The Barron Park Association Welcoming Committee welcomes new residents to Barron Park with a thick packet of information brought by one of our 76 volunteers! If you would like to be greeted or would enjoy greeting new neighbors to our community, please contact Welcoming Committee Chair Gwen Luce at 650-224-3670 or gluce@cbrnocal.com.

By 1933 the Peninsular was ready to call it quits. Service ended on the Mayfield-Los Altos line at midnight on October 1, 1934. Two cars of the system, numbers 52 and 61, were preserved and still could be seen in the 1980s at the California Railway Museum at Rio Vista Junction east of Fairfield in Solano County. On June 12, 1935 the PRCC was legally discontinued and its assets, including the 17-mile long Los Gatos cutoff, reverted to the SP. The westerly track was soon taken up and from then on, our railroad was a single track served by the SPRR, which re-instituted one commuter run per day to Los Gatos. A few Barron Park commuters continued to be served via Neal Station for nearly thirty years longer.

From 1934 on, then, the story of railroading in Barron Park is restricted to the SP's track and its steam trains. An interesting footnote in the annals of local rail fans was the time the Pacific Coast Daylight, northbound from Los Angeles, detoured via the Los Altos line because of a fire on the main line north of San Jose. But the steam trains were passing, too; they were replaced with diesels in January 1957. No more would the mournful hoot of a steam engine's whistle grace the hearing of Barron Park residents.

Living by the Tracks: Josina Bol's Memories

According to Josina Bol, in her oral history given in 1977, only one train per day ran in the last years of service for commuters, up to San Francisco in the morning and return in the evening about 6:00 p.m. It was used mainly by commuters to San Francisco, and it always stopped at Neal Station. Heavy freights also used the line, hauling cement from the Kaiser-Permanente cement plant in Cupertino, and they were very noisy. Excursion trains still ran on occasional Sundays to Santa Cruz.

The younger Bol children and their friends would wait for the trains to go by and the engineers would always recognize them. The trains were always going slowly past the Bols' house because the stop at Neal Station was so close. One time the train stopped and Josina ran to find her children, fearing the worst, but the engineer had stopped it because two of the Bols' small goats had gotten on the track and one of them had gone under the train—to emerge alive. She also remembered one time when the dairy cattle found a break in the fence near their underpass, and the whole herd came along the railroad tracks. The farmer came on horseback and herded them back to their pasture.

Going to School on the Train

In another oral history interview, Laguna Avenue residents Lena and Ernest Johnson remembered sending their children to Sherman School in Mayfield on the electric cars. Sherman School was near the SPRR Mayfield Station, the present-day California Avenue Station. Their daughter took the train to school rather than walk because it was more fun. The "Japanese" farmer's children who lived across the street walked. In the primary grades, their children got home around 2:30 p.m. During fourth through sixth grades they went to Mayfield School on El Camino, and a school bus picked them up at the door. When they attended Jordan Junior High and Palo Alto High Schools they walked or rode bicycles to El Camino and met the bus there.

Ernie commuted to San Francisco during some of his early years in the neighborhood, usually driving directly to Mayfield Station to board the steam train in the morning but sometimes returning home on the 5:18 p.m. that switched to the Los Altos branch and let him off at Neal. It had a club car, which you had to join the club to use. The morning train didn't connect conveniently at Pal Alto—he would have missed the 6:35 a.m. train he needed to be on.

The Last of the Excursions

In the late 1950s several special excursions ran on this line, and the last of the famous "Blossom Specials" was run as a special on March 24, 1963. Another memorable event occurred December 21, 1958 when a fire blocked the main line of the SPRR north of San Jose, causing the northbound Daylight from Los Angeles to be re-routed through Barron Park.

The Final End of the Railroad

The final end was anticlimactic. On March 21, 1962 the SP asked the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to abandon six miles of track from Alta Mesa south to Simla in Cupertino, so that Santa Clara County could build an expressway on the right-of-way. It was granted, and the SP shut down service despite last-minute pleas from 170 dedicated commuters. The last commuter run was on January 27, 1964 with railfans in a private observation car. The following summer, the track was removed through Los Altos. Does anyone know if the track through Barron Park was taken up at the same time? I can vouch for its absence by 1972.

From Trains to Bicycles

This was not the end of SPRR influence on our neighborhood, however. About the

time that the tracks were removed, the Barron Park Association and the Bol family began to make plans for a park at the donkey pasture on Laguna. Phase I of Bol Park was finally dedicated in 1974 and the Association immediately began negotiations with the SP to acquire their right-of-way from Arastradero Road to the Stanford Industrial Park for a regional bikepath. Negotiations were eventually successful, the land was granted for a nominal fee, and construction on Phase II began in 1977. The bikepath design called for restoring, as nearly as possible, the pre-railroad contours of the land. This was most significant at "Strawberry Hill" next to the Gunn High School playing fields, where 1907 fill material was scraped up to fill the cut through the hill. At this time, the cattle underpass behind 1060 McGregor Way was covered over (the underpass was demolished and removed in 1992 to allow construction of the underground box culvert for the flood control diversion project). The bikepath construction was finished and it was dedicated in 1978.

Today the railroad exists only in historic documents and in the fading memories of a few long-term Barron Park residents. If you have any information to add to this account of our railroad, please contact Doug Graham at 493-0689, by mail at 984 Ilima Way, or by e-mail at dgraham-paca@sbcglobal.net.

This story was originally run in the Fall 1999 issue of the Barron Park Newsletter.

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KID'S KORN ER

By Suzanne McKenna and Halimah Van Tuyl



One of our neighborhood schools where children can walk to class, families get to know each other, and all ages celebrate learning—the Juana Briones School community.

Guess Who's Coming To Dinner?

How many seven year olds do you know who engage their parents at dinner in a discussion about Andy Warhol and Leonardo Da Vinci? That's been happening in houses and apartments throughout the neighborhood, thanks to the innovation and collaboration of three teachers at Juana Briones Elementary School. The enthusiastic parent community at Briones marvels at the information their children gain during this extensive artist study.

The year-long unit exposes all the second graders to lessons on ten artists, but that is just the jumping off point. Original activities designed by the talented staff invite the youngsters to become the famous painters. Visitors to the school might hear short-legged artists with smocks, paintbrushes, and berets talking about the floating people in Chagall's paintings, Georgia O'Keeffe's huge flowers, or DaVinci writing backwards to keep his inventions secret. Not only have these young scholars learned numbers, phrases, and songs in three languages, but also world geography to locate the artists' home countries. With a depth of knowledge that startles their parents, these second graders put their heads together and wrote a "To Do List" for Van Gogh: 1. Write to my brother Theo. 2. Sketch sunflowers. 3. Pack my suitcase for France. 4. See the doctor about my ear.

Spectra Art teacher, Wendy Parry, designs painting and drawing lessons in the style of masterpieces by the famous artists.

Briones is fortunate to have class sets of books on each of the ten artists, written by Mike Venezia. The paperbacks were purchased through a Partners in Education (PiE) grant awarded to the school. Teachers Sue Garadis, Pamela Dappen, and Allison Fletcher are grateful for posters, calendars, puppets and additional artist books donated by the parents. Mrs. Garadis related, "My own sons loved these biographies when I read them aloud many years ago. I

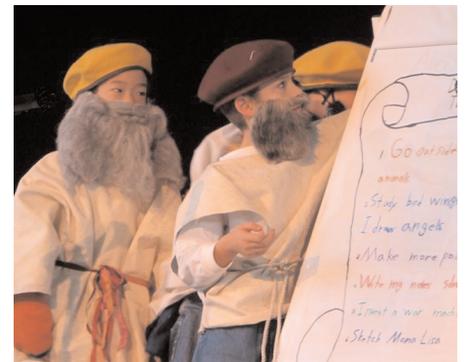


knew I wanted to use Mike Venezia's books with my students. The program we've developed encourages the second graders to be teachers at home as they tell anecdotes about the lives of the artists to their families."

Dave Miller, a reading tutor from the Avenidas RSVP program, coached kids on memorizing their parts and adding pizzazz to their recent presentation for a pri-

mary grade assembly. Dave has volunteered at Briones School for years and feels connected to the young children in this neighborhood where he lives. Dave photographed the children on stage. Elizabeth and Ileri explain the destination tags on Georgia O'Keeffe's suitcase. Sarah and Dasha tell about Chagall's paintings. In honor of Matisse, Melis shows Henri's birthday cake with 84 candles, Yui describes a still life, Sachi counts from one to ten in French, and Yuki and Francisco recite a poem about Picasso. Two photos show Alex, Kenny, and Ian in beards dressed as DaVinci.

Reading, art, poetry, geography, math, writing, public speaking and dramatic presentation are skillfully woven together to create a learning palette that students and parents will be talking about for many years to come.



The Family Vacation or We Paid for This?

By Linda Lui

Thanks to PAUSD's freshly added "ski week," our kids enjoyed a week in snowy Yosemite with off-season rates and manageable traffic.

The trip allowed me an opportunity to reflect on my family's current definition of this phenomenon called "vacation." It is tattooed somewhere in my brain that VACATION=FUN. It is dawning on me now that while it may be fun for our kids (ages three, six and ten), my husband and I are just thankful to have a decent night's sleep so we can fulfill our non-stop enter-

tainment duties the following day. And if we can squeeze in a good cup of coffee and a half hour of exercise, we are truly blessed.

It is quite a challenge to get a rejuvenating and restful sleep with five people and two double beds. Although we did bring bedding for a somewhat tolerable spot on the floor between the beds, there were the nightly negotiations of who would sleep where. (I'm flattered to say everyone wants to sleep with Mama!) We tried to rotate the troops to be fair to each of them and I think we did a pretty good job of it but Jamie,



our three year old, had a habit of crying out in the middle of the night, especially if she didn't get to sleep where she wanted.

On one especially memorable occurrence, I traded places with Jamie in the middle of the night in hopes of quieting her down. Once on the bed, she immediately fell back asleep. I tried unsuccessfully to return to my slumber in her former place on the floor. After what seemed like a fitful and miserable eternity, I crawled back on the bed. In the dark, I tried to use my feelers to figure out where the body parts lay, so as to avoid them. I finally succeeded in wedging myself between Jamie and Alex, rather uncomfortably and without a pillow. It was during the ensuing sleepless period of time, with Jamie's arm flung across my throat and the cacophony of snoring around me, that I found myself wondering how I ever came to this ridiculous place in my life. It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.

Abraham and I have definitely learned a lot about vacationing with kids these last ten years. Here's what we can offer:

1. Avoid Bed & Breakfasts. Accept that you are no longer B&B material and let the childless couples get what they paid for.
2. Aim for an industrial-strength resort facility with steel internal beams for fewer complaints from the room below.
3. Avoid anything that has the word "historic" in its description. It means everything breaks easily or there's no TV in the room.
4. Having a pool is essential. And don't forget the floaties and rubber slippers.
5. Room service can be a life saver. Pay attention to any children's menu.
6. Always pack your exercise clothes. I guess this could apply to anyone but parents especially need to keep their energy up.
7. Let someone else take a picture of you now and then so you have at least a few shots with your whole family in them. They are often among the most precious.

8. Pack lots of snacks. Every calorie is expensive and/or inconvenient. Hit supermarkets to replenish supplies if necessary. Abraham and I are divided on this one. He thinks we're missing an ideal de-tox opportunity. (No sugar and no where to go.)

9. If you rely on a predictably good cup of coffee, bring your own provisions. We've learned to pack everything, including our grinder, Abe's condensed milk and 20 oz. travel mugs. Otherwise, we feel like addicts on the hunt. Not a good way to start, with a long day ahead.

10. Lower your own expectations about having fun on the trip. The pictures and memories will bring you much joy long after. For the moment, be satisfied with the excitement of the kids. (Perhaps it's just a redefinition of fun?)

I also found a 24 hour electronic de-tox regimen is necessary to purge their little brains of television and Game Boy corruption prior to resuming normal life.

If you have any family travel tips to share, please e-mail me at lindalui@comcast.net.



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