

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Lynnne Melena, BPA President

No matter how you voted, the consensus seems to be that we just lived through a historical presidential election. And if you live anywhere near El Camino Real (or just drove by), you were keenly aware of Barron Park's participation in this landmark event. In the days and weeks before the election, the excitement and activity from the Obama headquarters in the little strip mall on El Camino radiated out through the neighborhood. It turns out that Barron Park was at the hub of a huge communications network that extended all over the U.S. A.

As the election approached, campaign volunteers took over the second floor of Celia's restaurant and a large part of Happy Donuts next door—where they could be seen working their way through call lists with cell phones at their ears. The weekend before the election, tents went up in the parking lot for more phone calling under the canopies. The phone calls were going from Barron Park to Nevada, Indiana, Iowa, Pennsylvania and other swing states. Walk down the alley and you might find a caller trying to find a quiet spot behind the building.

The campaign also extended into "call centers" and "data entry centers" at three houses in Barron Park. The houses needed to be close enough to the headquarters to allow for two-way radio communication

and for runners to carry information back and forth the old fashioned way. Walk down the street and you might run into a neighbor (as I did) bringing home-made cookies to the campaigners.

And now to re-focus on our own local democracy—the annual Barron Park Association meeting has been set for Sunday, February 8, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Barron Park School multi-purpose room. The featured event is a presentation of the Veterans Administration's plans for redeveloping several buildings on their property located on our western boundary. Please see the announcement below.

Annual Barron Park Association Meeting

Date/Time: Sunday, February 8, 1 to 3 p.m.

Place: Barron Park School Multi-Purpose Room

Featured Event: Presentation on Veterans Administration building plans

This is the time and place for residents to talk about what's on their minds and to socialize with neighbors. There will be refreshments.

LIGHT BROWN APPLE MOTH UPDATE: Trap Deployment Confirms Small Local Infestation

By Sue Luttner

The Light Brown Apple Moth (LBAM) count edged past 100 this season in Santa Clara County, with the late-November total at 101 specimens captured in baited traps since monitoring began in the spring of 2007. By contrast, the state's most heavily infested counties, Santa Cruz and San Francisco, have accumulated totals of 24,452 and 17,287.

The difference is real, not an artifact of testing: Santa Clara sports more than 7,000 LBAM traps, actually twice the number deployed in Santa Cruz. Officials are keeping a close eye on the local catch rate, because we have so far been relatively unaffected despite our proximity to serious infestations. A few counties in the state—Trinity and Tuolumne, for example—have no traps, because the climate is not hospitable to the pest, a recent import from Australia.

While the state ramps up its program to fight the infestation by releasing sterile moths, please observe the quarantine in our area and don't move plants or plant materials off your property except through the City curbside composting program.

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ABC News, "The Hippy Gourmet" Both Discover Barron Park

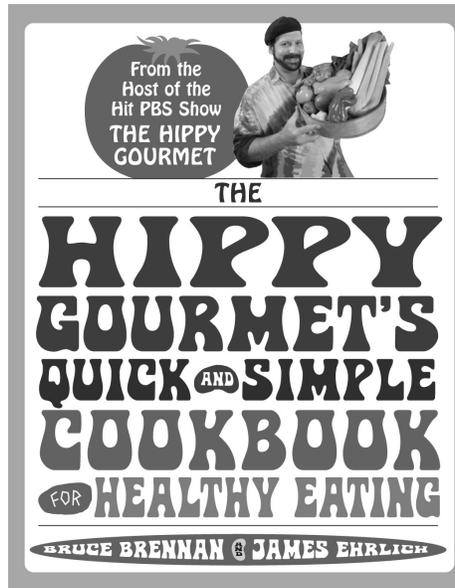
By Sue Luttner

When the ABC7 news team was looking for a serious back-yard garden, they found one on La Para, at the home of master gardener Candace Simpson. ("Urban Gardens Gain Momentum," Sept. 2, 2008, viewable at <http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/video?id=6366876>).

The resulting segment also featured the neighborhood's own Susan Stansbury, a back-yard gardener and the executive director of Conexions, a local nonprofit dedicated to sustainable living. As most of us already know, Barron Park has been growing and eating locally for years.

No surprise, then, that when the producers of "The Hippy Gourmet" TV show were looking for their own personal haven, James Ehrlich and Lena Blanc found Barron Park. "We fell in love with the neighborhood and donkeys straight away," James says. "Walking around the neighborhood is our favorite thing to do." They enjoy the "calm tranquility" of the park, they say, and they like meeting their neighbors along the way, especially their neighbors' dogs.

Living here also gives James and Lena access to the kind of wholesome, fresh food featured on the "The Hippy Gourmet." They buy produce from Hidden



The Hippy Gourmet cookbook features recipes for simple, wholesome food, ideal for people on a budget. James says he's happy to autograph copies for neighbors who contact him through their web site, hippygourmet.com.

Villa (through the "community-supported agriculture" program), Country Sun, Whole Foods, and the California Avenue Sunday-morning farmer's market.

James and his friend Bruce Brennan, a trained chef with an organic mindset, filmed their first segment of "The Hippy Gourmet" in 2001, for a public-access cable channel in San Francisco. The show spread quickly across the Bay Area and then across the country, and now reaches millions of viewers worldwide. Google Video carries selected episodes, and Bruce and James' cookbook is available at Kepler's as well as a number of on-line venues.

James says he grew

up in the wake of the hippy movement, and to him hippies were "the voice of the earth," reminding us to respect nature and each other. He took that message to heart, and he's spent his life finding ways to "make money by making the world a better place."

James' wife Lena is not only co-producer of the TV show but also a gourmet baker and master of the project's web site.

For the past few years, the Hippy Gourmet crew has been traveling the world, spotlighting the "regular people" who are quietly pursuing healthy, sustainable ways to grow and prepare food. James says he's especially excited about urban gardening programs, which not only bring city kids a sense of nature but also bring delicious, fresh produce into parts of town that don't even have grocery stores. "It's a cycle, but people are breaking out," he says, "and they're doing it with vegetables."

After all, as Candace Simpson told ABC7 news, "There isn't a single vegetable I've grown that doesn't taste better right out of the garden... they cook faster, they're sweeter, and they're more tender." It's a potent message, and one that's getting more air time, even outside the neighborhood.

You can see "The Hippy Gourmet" on KOFY TV (channel 20/cable 13) Sundays at 6 pm, as well as local PBS stations, Comcast On-Demand, and Dish Network (channel 9415).

EMAIL LISTS

The BPA has three email lists: bpa-news, bpa-issues, and bpa-misc. They are hosted at Google Groups (moved last January). To join bpa-news, go to <http://groups.google.com/group/bpa-news> and click on "Join this group." Similarly for the other lists.

For more information on these email lists, go to the BPA home page—<http://www.bpaonline.org> and click on the button "BPA Email Lists."



"The Hippy Gourmet" executive producer James Ehrlich, a proponent of sustainable living, says he's hoping for "a green phoenix, rising right out of the ashes of the fuel crisis."

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BPA meetings are held the 3rd

Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m.

Call Lynnie Melena for location: 493-2135

www.bpaonline.org

JOIN THE BARRON PARK GREEN TEAM

By Lisa Altieri

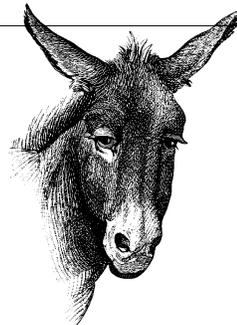
Be part of making change happen right here in Barron Park by volunteering to help launch a new neighborhood Green Team. An important part of the solution to the environmental problems we face start at home. We have Green Teams at work and at school; it's time for a Green Team in our neighborhood! Let's follow the successful Barron Park Green Tour in June, 2008 with a Green Team in 2009 to continue our efforts toward a more sustainable community.

The Green Team will plan neighborhood events to promote and encourage environmental education, awareness and action in the neighborhood. Events will also foster a dialog and communication among neighbors about the environmental challenges we face—locally and globally.

The first Green Team meeting will be held in January and will focus on developing the organization, goals and direction for the group. The Barron Park Green Team launch will be supported by the Palo Alto Community Environmental Action Partnership (CEAP) Neighborhood Group. The group can provide materials, assistance and support for developing and planning events. Come learn more about environmental solutions, share ideas, take action and get to know your neighbors. Time commitment is flexible - even a few hours once or twice a year for an event makes a difference! If you are already involved in a neighborhood environmental project, please join us and share information about your project. If you are interested, please e-mail PAGreenTeams@yahoogroups.com.

Help Support the Barron Park Donkeys!

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. Contributions for the donkeys' care may be sent to: The Palo Alto Donkey Project, ACTERRA (Action



for a Sustainable Earth), 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4303. The check must be made out to "ACTERRA-Palo Alto Donkey Fund." All of the above must be included.

For further information about making a contribution on behalf of the donkeys, or if you would like information about how to become one of the volunteer donkey handlers, please call Bob Frost, 493-8272 or email at bobfrost34@yahoo.com.

BPA NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE

We have created PDF files of past newsletters. See the complete newsletters, including full-color photos!

The web editions of the BPA Newsletters usually appear one or two months after the paper editions are mailed. The files may take awhile to download (sizes given in advance).

BPA Website: <http://www.bpaonline.org>

PDF full color newsletter archive: www.bpaonline.org/www2/BP-News/index.html

FIFTY-THREE YEARS ON LAGUNA AVENUE

By Douglas Graham, Barron Park Historian

Memories of a Rural Past

2009 will be Nick Babick's fifty-fourth year in his house on Laguna Avenue at the corner of Ilima Way. Nick, a retired postal worker, has lived here since 1955, including fifty years with his late wife Sally. He has seen many changes in the neighborhood over the years, including the replacement of the last open fields and orchards with housing tracts. He arrived in the year of the most famous flood in our history; the "flood of the century" in 1955, and was here for second big flood in 1983 that led to the development of the large underground flood channels that now protect the neighborhood. He was a close friend of the neighbor who ran one of the two private water companies serving the area. He witnessed the development of Juana Briones Park in 1968 and the conversion of the Bol "donkey pasture" into Cornelis Bol Park in 1973. He was here for the building of the regional bike path in 1978. He lived through the final three annexation and anti-annexation movements from 1956 until we joined the City of Palo Alto in 1975. Many of Nick's best neighborhood friends have now passed away or left the area, but he continues to be an active and friendly presence in the immediate neighborhood.

Nick's Family

Nick's father John Babick, an immigrant from Croatia, met and married a woman who was also of Croatian heritage, Amanda Tomaic (pronounced "Toe-MY-itch"). They were married in Gladstone, Michigan, where his uncle lived. John and Amanda lived in the Potrero Hill neighborhood of San Francisco from 1913 to 1918. Nick told me that the house had a view of Mission Valley which they greatly enjoyed. In 1915, a son, Nick's older brother Joseph, was born.

Nick was born in Wisconsin

In 1918 the family moved to Wisconsin to be with John's brother, who had lost two children in the great influenza epidemic. John worked in heat transfer metallurgy at the Allis-Chalmers factory in West Allis. Soon after they arrived there, their second and last child, Nikola (Nick), was



Nick and Sally Babick, December 1995

born on January 2, 1919.

Relocation to California

After Nick was born, the Babicks continued to live in West Allis for another eight years. John had wanted to return to California and get a job in the San Francisco Bay Area. Finally moving to San Francisco in 1927, the Babicks located at the bottom of the hill on San Bruno Avenue for a few months. Then John got a job in South San Francisco and they moved there. Nick attended elementary and high school in South San Francisco. In 1934, when Nick was fifteen, his mother Amanda died. His father John Babick remained a widower another 33 years, until his death in 1967 at age 82.

The Croatian Band

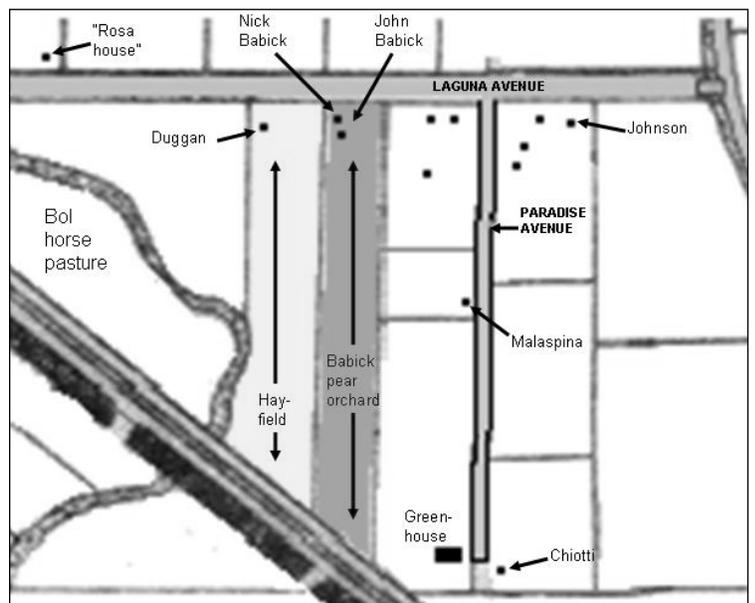
Nick and his brother Joe played in a teenage Croatian band while Nick was in high school. The band was organized and led by an older man, and played Croatian instruments made by him. They played at Croatian festivals and other events. Nick remembers the band with a lot of pleasure, and was proud of his membership in it when the San Jose Mercury ran a history story featuring it, with a photograph, in 2005.

John Babick Moved to Barron Park in Stages

Before the war, in 1941, John bought an existing house in Barron Park, at 3788 Laguna Avenue, from Mrs. Eastus. The Eastus family was the "E" in the EMWAY Mutual Water Company that later morphed into the Barron Park (or "Bol") Water Company.

Unscrupulous Renters

However, during the war, the family continued to live in South San Francisco and John occupied the Barron Park house only on weekends. At the request of some of the Barron Park neighbors, who were concerned about living next to an unoccupied house, John tried renting the place, furnished. He would occasionally drive down



Laguna-Paradise Neighborhood, 1955.



John Babick's house

on a weekend to check things out. One time the curtains were all drawn and he found out that the renters had left with all his furniture. He got the Sheriff after them and the furniture returned, but he never wanted to rent it after that. After the war one of Nick's army buddies wanted to rent it but John refused. John finally moved to Barron Park in 1948.

The Babick Property

John Babick's property extended back to the Southern Pacific Railroad. See the accompanying map of the "Laguna-Paradise Neighborhood, 1955." An aerial photo taken in 1941 shows the house close to the time John bought it. It was probably built in 1930 or shortly thereafter. The house was set well back from Laguna, straddling the current-day property line between 3798 Laguna Avenue and 905 Ilima Way. It was completely behind the area currently occupied by Nick's home. See the accompanying photograph captioned "John Babick's house."

Nick said it was like some of the other "San Francisco summer houses" in Barron Park, in that it was not built to rigorous standards. At least, the foundation was not built to John's desired standard, and the double garage was better constructed and bigger than the house. John added a room during the war so that the boys could move in with him after they came home from the war. The street address of the property was later changed to 3798, which is what it is now.

Babick's Pear Orchard

When John purchased the property in 1941, there was a young pear orchard covering much of it (see the photo captioned "Babick's pear orchard"). The orchard extended from about where 911 Ilima Way

is now, all the way back to the railroad tracks (see the accompanying map of the Laguna-Paradise neighborhood in 1955). Pear orchards had occupied many acres in Barron Park in the nineteen-thirties and forties, second in orchard acreage only to apricots. La Para Avenue was originally named La Pera, "the pear" in Spanish, for the pear orchards planted along it and

adjoining streets. Besides the pears, John planted a family orchard with fruit trees of several varieties, but he mostly picked for friends. Casual sales of fruit allowed him to get an "A" gas ration card as a farmer during the war.

Nick's World War II Experiences

Nick is probably one of our last remaining members of "The Greatest Generation," the men and women who served in the armed forces in World War II. Although Nick never saw active combat, he, like so many others, gave three years of his life to his country. Nick has told me about some of his experiences during the war. He was drafted and served in the army from 1943 to 1946. He had tried to volunteer earlier but was refused due to his eyesight. He spent much of the war as a drummer in the 387th Army Service Corps Band, stationed at Fort Mason in San Francisco (see the accompanying photo of the band).

Nick was proud to be a member of this group—many members of the band were professional musicians, one of whom went on to become Concert Master of the San Francisco Symphony after the war.

Nick was also stationed at the Presidio of Monterey for six months. At one point, he was on orders to go as a medic to Kiska in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. He was just as glad not to have to go there, as he had seen many soldiers

with frostbite wounds, coming off the troopships returning from there.

After the war

Although John moved to Barron Park in 1948, Nick stayed in the South San Francisco house (a rental) another seven years, until 1955. In 1953, Nick finally decided to make the move, and began building a house on the front end of his father's property—the house that is still there, at 3798 Laguna Avenue, on the corner of Ilima Way.

Nick's house, according to County records, was built in 1942. That was the year when John added the room for the boys to his house, and apparently this date was entered in error as the date when Nick's house was built. John's house was torn down in 1959 or 1960 after Doug Couch bought the bulk of the Babick land (and all of Colonel Dugan's) to build McGregor Glen.

Racism in Barron Park—Only "Caucasians" Were Allowed?

Nick has a copy of the title insurance issued to him on November 15, 1954 for his property at 3798 Laguna Avenue. It refers to a deed of trust for \$5,400.00. County taxes were \$156.70 for the year. Schedule B, Part Two shows "liens, encumbrances, defects and other matters affecting the title to said land or to which said title is subject. The second item covers "Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions". There is an express provision for forfeiture and reversion of title in event of violation thereof, contained in the deed from J.E. Reiter, et al, to Earl Young et ux, dated March 31, 1930, recorded April 7, 1930 in book 514 Official Records, page 265, as follows:



View southwest from the roof of John Babick's house at 3788 Laguna Avenue in Barron Park—1940s. Babick's Pear Orchard is on the left side. Ilima Way now runs along the right-most line of trees. Coyote Hill is in the background at right.



387th Army Service Force Band, Fort Mason, San Francisco. Nick Babick is the second man from the left (circled) in the first (front) row. He was a drummer. The second French horn player from the left, in the third row, is Frank Hauser, who went on to a career in musical performance after the war, serving for years as the Concertmaster for the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra. Like Frank, several other men in this band became career musicians.

"The following restrictions are hereby agreed to between the Sellers and Purchasers: That no person or persons other than those of the Caucasian or White Race shall use or occupy said premises or any part thereof, at any time prior to 25 years from date of Deed of said property, except that this provision shall not prohibit the employment of servants of any race; and provided further that any breach of any of the foregoing conditions shall cause said premises to revert to the Sellers (full copy)."

Comments: (1) This deed restriction may have been a standard provision in all of the sales that Driscoll and Reiter made while subdividing the old Barron Estate in the 1920s and early 1930s. (2) Earl Young was the "Y" of the EMWAY Water Company, and had evidently sold the property to Eastus some time between 1930 and 1941 when Nick Babick bought it.

1955—A Memorable Year

The year that Nick moved here, 1955, was a memorable one for Barron Park. The neighborhood was exploding with growth, and the year ended with the worst flood in Barron Park's history. See the box "1955."

Sally Vollans

Nick met Sally when staying at a hotel in Santa Cruz in 1954. She was introduced to

Nick by a mutual friend while she was showing her young niece around Santa Cruz. Nick and Sally fell in love and married in Virginia City, Nevada, in 1957. This was two years after he moved to Barron Park. They lived together in the house on Laguna Avenue for 50 years, until Sally's death in 2007. See the accompanying photo of Sally and Nick, taken in December, 1995

Sally was Canadian by birth: her father was brought up by French-speaking priests

in Canada. He had fought in the Boer War in South Africa and was granted a section of land (640 acres) in Alberta. Nick says "they could hear the wolves and coyotes howling." His wife, Sally's mother, was from Sweden. They tried for three years to plant wheat, but each crop was ruined by hailstorms. They then moved to Seaside, Oregon, where Sally grew up.

Friendship with the Johnsons

Water was supplied to the Babick property by Ernie Johnson's private water company, which also supplied Paradise Way, La Para Avenue and Los Robles Avenue and its offshoots, but only had a one-inch main, so the pressure was inadequate. Some Sundays it was almost like "no water." Ernie was an electrician by trade. His wife Lena was a good friend of Sally Babick, so the Babicks and Johnsons visited back and forth, sharing many dinners together. This was quite convenient, as Ernie and Lena lived just a block away at 3890 Laguna Avenue, where their grandson lives today.

On the east side of Laguna, the Mutual or Emway Water Company laid a two-inch main along Laguna as far as San Jude Avenue. Emway was the creation of five Barron Park families, including the Eastus family from which John Babick bought his property.

Land Development near Nick's Property

Nick moved into Barron Park at the height of land development. Most of the large tracts had been laid out but many of the individual homes hadn't been built yet.



Laguna Avenue in 1946.

There were still orchards along Laguna Avenue, Maybell Avenue, Arastradero Road and upper Matadero Avenue. Scattered throughout the neighborhood were orchard houses sitting on remnant lots that were quite large by today's standards; one-half acre to two acres in extent. Development of these parcels continued apace. Two of the largest were the Babick pear

orchard, about 2+ acres, and the adjoining Duggan parcel, about 3 acres.

The University Club

At some point, The University Club considered acquiring Babick's property for their pool, tennis courts and clubhouse. This is the club that currently operates the facilities on Miranda Avenue, between

Foothill Expressway and Matadero Creek. The contact was initiated by John Chiotti, who lived on Paradise Avenue, but it did not lead to anything. The proposed development would have involved Colonel Duggan's land along Matadero Creek, also (see the map entitled "Laguna-Paradise Neighborhood, 1955, which shows the parcels belonging to Babick and Duggan.).

T H E W O R L D I N 1 9 5 5

When Nick Babick moved to his new house in front of his dad's house on the Babick pear orchard property in 1955, Dwight Eisenhower was President amid some "good times" that were kicked off by the cease-fire that had effectively ended the Korean War. Earl Warren had recently left the governorship of California and had been appointed Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and led the court in its history-making decision to desegregate U.S. schools. The biggest foreign policy concern was the Soviet Union's military threat to Western Europe, and all school children practiced "drop and cover drills" in case of a sudden outbreak of nuclear war. Backyard bomb shelters were popular items in builders' supply stores. Rock and Roll had barely been invented, and Elvis was not yet King. Detroit dominated the world automobile industry, but "fins" on cars were yet to come. There were no Interstate Highways, although long stretches of both U.S. Highways 99 and 101 were slowly being converted to divided, four-lane highways. Computers were huge masses of wiring and vacuum tubes that filled whole rooms and had only a tiny fraction of the computing power of today's average cell phone. Phones were clunky black Bakelite objects that sat on desks and in many areas of the U.S. had not even been converted to rotary dial mode yet (Palo Alto got rotary dial in 1948, but I don't know if that included Barron Park). TVs were small and black-and-white only. Radio was still the more important of the two media.

Palo Alto in 1955

In Palo Alto, local Radio Station KIBE played "recordings of popular concert and show music" as well as local news broadcasts from its studio in the President Hotel on University Avenue. Stanford University was not a world-class university, although well-respected on

the west coast. Stanford Shopping Center was planned, but would not open until next year—University Avenue was still the local shopping focus. The Stanford Research Park was starting to fill in, with Eastman Kodak's film processing lab and Varian developing vacuum tubes. Palo Alto was already an important U.S. center of electronic innovations. The City was becoming a job center, growing fast and regularly annexing chunks of land on its outskirts.

Barron Park in 1955

In Barron Park, the fourth annexation attempt had been narrowly defeated when the "Barron Park Citizen's Group" filed their petition showing that 848 landowners representing 51% of the assessed valuation were opposed to joining Palo Alto. Barron Park was being developed rapidly, with most of its orchards gone and all the major tracts build up. Many of the older residents of Barron Park did not like all the new development and the traffic that it brought, and missed the quiet of orchards and fields. The Southern Pacific Railroad was still operating its Los Altos-Los Gatos-Santa Cruz-Watsonville branch line, with a tiny shelter for commuters at the "flag stop" station called "Neal," where Matadero Avenue and Laguna Avenue meet, and Nick Babick tells about how he felt a sense of belonging to a stable community when he would see the same commuters walking to and from the train every day. The Bol family's horse pasture still occupied the land where Bol Park now lies. Both Barron Park and Loma Vista (now Juana Briones) Schools were operating. The El Camino strip along Barron Park had been fully developed and featured some of the best restaurants in the Palo Alto area, since the city itself was still "dry" and provided no "fine dining" (AKA drinking).

The "Empty Quarter" in 1955

The "micro-histories" above should give the reader some feel for the larger environment when Nick moved to his new house at 3798 Laguna. The immediate neighborhood was less fully-developed than Barron Park as a whole. Laguna Avenue still looked much as it had in 1946 when Nick's father took photos of the street (see photo captioned "Laguna Avenue in 1946"). Ilima Way, McGregor Way and the cul-de-sacs off McGregor and Paradise did not yet exist. If you examine the accompanying map captioned "Laguna-Paradise Neighborhood, 1955," you will notice that the houses in the immediate area were scattered widely (houses across Laguna, beyond Duggan's property or beyond Paradise are not shown). It was the "empty quarter" of Barron Park in the mid-fifties.

The Flood of 1955

In April, 1955, Ilima Gardens was laid out on the east side of Laguna Avenue by the Trojan Construction Company. They excavated the road bed for Ilima Court and then began building homes. In December, the "Flood of the Century" hit. The construction site was flooded and according to Nick, became a "huge mess:" it was inaccessible for two months. Nick remembers the flood quite well. "A guy from the bank" got his car stuck in the unpaved street and Nick hauled him out with his jeep. During the construction delay, the asking price for the homes went up from \$12,000 to \$15,000.

On the west side of Laguna, Nick said that the water ran down where Ilima Way was later laid out, and settled (ponded) at Nick's house on Laguna, which was apparently the lowest place around. After that experience, he dug five or six sumps in the back yard to handle future problems. Nick said that, when Doug Couch laid out McGregor Glen in 1960, he paved Ilima Way before building the houses.

Chiotti was also interested in developing the land across Laguna that later became Ilima Court.

The Duggan Property

Colonel Duggan owned the long strip between Matadero Creek and the Babick parcel (currently occupied by the properties on the “north” side of Ilima Way, plus most or the entire street itself). Nick believes most of it was planted to strawberries at one time but he remembers it as “bare” (annual grasses). Cornelis Bol used to mow the colonel’s property for him each year. The mowing had evidently just been completed when the June 8, 1955 aerial photo was taken, since the mowing pattern is very obvious (see photo captioned “The Malaspina Greenhouse”).

There was a small culvert under the railroad tracks at the rear of the Duggan property that allowed drainage from the cow pasture (now the triangle below Strawberry

Hill in the back end of the Gunn High School property) to flow under the tracks and into Matadero Creek. This was later blocked off when the McGregor Glen subdivision was built, and there have been local drainage problems ever since. Following heavy rains, sheet flow occurs from the Gunn property through the residential properties at 1050 and 1060 McGregor Way.

Malaspina’s Greenhouse

There was, briefly, a large commercial greenhouse on property that is now occupied by homes on Paradise Way and McGregor Court. Construction of this greenhouse apparently caused an interesting controversy between two neighbors. See the box story captioned “The Malaspina Greenhouse,” and the accompanying aerial photograph.

Nick and Sally’s Retirement

Nick told me that his house was partly rebuilt in 1966 when he had the kitchen ren-

ovated. After John Babick died in 1967, Nick and Sally considered moving to Oregon, where they had friends and family. Sally, of course, grew up in Seaside, Oregon. They bought some property in Gresham, Oregon, and moved there for nine months from September to June. During this time they rented their Barron park home to a Norwegian couple who had been living in a motel. The husband was a Professor at the University of Bergen in Norway.

Nick and Sally’s Trip to Europe

In 1978, Nick and Sally enjoyed a wonderful trip to Europe, visiting Sweden and Croatia in then-Yugoslavia. Sally wanted to visit her cousin Anna in Sweden, which they did first. Nick speaks Croatian and was interested in finding the homes of some of his ancestors in Croatia. They visited Dubrovnik and then the Adriatic coast. His parents were from the market town of Senj, on the coast south of Rijeka

T H E M A L A S P I N A G R E E N H O U S E

Johnny Malaspina lived at 980 Paradise Avenue (now called Paradise Way), in the house that was built in 1951 and still exists there. He also owned the adjoining large parcel of more than two acres that extended southwest to the boundary of the Stanford cow pasture (the Gunn high School property). Malaspina was a carpenter by trade and had worked as a carpenter for the navy at Hunter’s Point Naval Shipyard in San Francisco.

Sometime between 1951 and 1955, he built a large greenhouse, about 50 feet wide and 100 feet long, oriented perpendicularly to Paradise Avenue. He grew azaleas in the greenhouse, for sale to nurseries and florists. The greenhouse was set almost at the back end of his large parcel, a long way from his house. It was about where the homes at 1042 Paradise Way and 1055 McGregor Way are located today. See the enlarged portion of an aerial photograph take June 8, 1955, which shows the greenhouse as a white rectangle. There is a 1957 oblique shot also, but the greenhouse does not show up well in it.

The Chiotti House

The greenhouse was very close to the residence of John Chiotti (pronounced “Kee-OAT-ee”), which was the only house in the immediate area. Chiotti’s house was a large blocky stucco structure which, inci-



The large circle contains the Malaspina Greenhouse, and the two smaller circles surround Chiotti’s house (adjacent) and Malaspina’s (halfway to Laguna Avenue).

dentally, had been built by Malaspina in 1945. At that time, Malaspina was living with his brother Emilio in the “Rosa” house at 897 Barron on the corner of Laguna. Nick Babick remembers La Calle Court originally being known as “Rosa Court.”

As of late 2008, the Chiotti house is still in the family—the current owner is a niece by marriage. It is the “1930s-Modern” style house on McGregor Way by the public walk-through access to the Gunn High School property. Another branch of the Chiotti family owned land on San Jude Avenue (the segment of San Jude that runs off of El Centro Avenue) and later developed that area.

The Standoff

According to local gossip at the time, John Chiotti was angry about the location of the new greenhouse, which was within 50 or 60 feet of his house, almost in his front yard. He knew that Malaspina did not have a building permit, and he called the County to complain. A building inspector came out and told Malaspina that, since his parcel contained more than two acres, he did not have to obtain a building permit (this is no longer true). To defend himself against any further complaints from Chiotti, Malaspina pointed out to him that his house had been divided into two separate housing units without a permit, which WAS illegal! Who could know that better than the builder? This confrontation ended the public controversy, although not the bad feeling between the two men.

(Fiume) and at Senj, Nick found a cousin. The cousin took them to meet an uncle and aunt who were in the process of remodeling their house. They stayed in the area several days, visiting their relatives, and then went up the coast to Rijeka to visit another cousin (the uncle's daughter). The uncle had lands with good soil, high in the mountains, and raised summer crops there.

During World War II Nick's father and uncle had deeded land to a niece (Nick's cousin) in Zagreb, unbeknownst to Nick. It included the house where Nick's father John was born. Before Nick learned this, he had already decided to give his rights to the land to his cousin. To accomplish this, he made a trip to the Russian Consulate in San Francisco to file papers enabling the land to be deeded over, only to learn later that this had been unnecessary.

In many of the conversations Nick had with his relatives in Croatia, Nick heard about the primitive lifestyle of ordinary people in Croatia during the 1920s and 1930s, and also a lot about how one learns

the necessity of evading the tax collector in the Balkans.

Nick's Closest Remaining Relatives

Nick's Brother Joe moved to Hawaii quite a few years ago, and eventually died there. One of his daughters lives in San Jose and the other one in Dallas, Texas. The daughter that lives in San Jose visits fairly frequently.

How to Become Part of History

I hope you have enjoyed this article about one of Barron Park's nonagenarians, World War II vets and long-time Barron Park residents, Nick Babick. As you have seen, the article contains a lot of information, both anecdotal and photographic, about one of Barron Park's mini-neighborhoods, the Paradise-McGregor-Ilima area in the 1940s and 1950s. I hope it inspires some of the readers to contact me with suggestions for other "old-timers" to interview. And please send me copies of photographs of your houses when they were young! Contact Doug Graham at 984 Ilima Way, Palo Alto 94306, 650-493-0689, or dgrahampaca@sbcglobal.net.

BARRON PARK
ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

Barron Park Association
724 Barron Avenue
Palo Alto, California 94306

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Ditch Your Disposables With the Zero Waste Party Pack

Interested in "greening" your next party or meeting by ditching the disposable plates, cups, etc? The Zero Waste Party Pack (ZWPP) may be for you and its FREE for you to borrow. The ZWPP includes washable dishes (plates, bowls, tumblers), utensils, cloth napkins and a wipeable table cloth. It serves up to 24 people. The dishes are a heavy duty plastic (polypropylene) and the utensils are stainless steel. They are dishwasher safe. The ZWPP fits neatly in a plastic tub with a lid for easy transport and storage.

The ZWPP is available to borrow—FREE and the borrowing period is up to 3 days (e.g., pick-up the day before your event, return the day after). All that is asked is that you return it on time, clean and in its entirety. Borrowing can be scheduled by contacting Annette Puskarich at

408-534-1029 and neighborhood pick-up/drop-off is made easy for you. The ZWPP is great for small parties and meetings.

The ZWPP is just one of the small things you can use to reduce waste, and you can save money by not buying disposables,



too. The ZWPP is a project of the Community Environmental Action Partnership (CEAP) Neighborhoods. The CEAP Neighborhoods and the City's Zero Waste Program partnered and the City purchased the supplies for the ZWPP. The CEAP Neighborhoods is promoting it and serving as

"keepers" of the pack. Annette has volunteered to be the point person for borrowing in Barron Park.

If you have ideas of how to reduce waste, conserve water and energy, and protect against climate change, get involved with the CEAP. The CEAP is a collaborative citywide initiative that engages the various segments of the Palo Alto community to identify opportunities and create and implement sustainable environmental solutions. Check out the CEAP at <http://www.pa-ceap.org>.

Smart Gardening Practices Can Keep Our Oaks Healthy

By Abigail Garner, Master Gardener

Barron Park has many old oaks. Unquestionably, they add value and beauty to our homes and neighborhood. However, to keep them healthy, we need to be aware of how our landscape practices affect them. All too often, well-meaning gardening practices can lead to the decline and eventual loss of a well-established California oak. The harm often takes years to show up, and by the time the tree shows signs of decline it is generally too late to help.

There are several different species of native oaks in Barron Park. California oaks are either deciduous, losing their leaves before their dormant period or in response to drought stress, or evergreen, shedding and replacing their leaves continually. The most common deciduous oak in the Barron Park is the Valley oak (*Quercus lobata*, a large one on La Para Avenue). The most common evergreen oak is the Coastal Live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*, on La Jennifer Way).

Our Mediterranean climate, with cool wet winters and dry warm summers, suit the oaks best. The development of long taproots and extensive root systems allow the oaks to survive during long dry periods. A young tree can send its taproot down 50 feet to access the ground water, and its surface roots gather water from dew. It is particularly critical that the trunks of oak trees remain dry to prevent the development of deadly fungal infections, such as oak root fungus and Sudden Oak death.

The very best condition for our native oaks is to leave the soil

around it undisturbed and the leaf litter intact. The naturally decomposing oak leaf litter is an ideal environment for beneficial microbes (mycorrhizal fungi) that return the nutrients to the trees. These beneficial fungi also protect the oak from diseases like our own immune system does. Warm, moist conditions favor the harmful fungi that can lead to death of the trees.

Since almost all of our rains come during the cooler periods (winter), the best condition for our native oaks is no summer water at all. Summer irrigation (for example, for annual flowers) or plants that take too much water from oaks (such as ivy) are bad for oaks. But our oaks do not need to be without plants under them. An area at least six feet from the trunk should be free of plants and moisture, but many shrubs, vines, bulbs and grasses can thrive in the dry shade conditions found further out. An extensive list can be found as a downloadable pamphlet titled 'Compatible Plants Under and Around Oaks' at the California

Oak Foundation website (see link <http://www.californiaoaks.org/ExtAssets/CompatiblePlantsUnder&AroundOaks.pdf>).

Periodic pruning to remove dead, weakened, or diseased branches also helps keep our oaks healthy. When pruning is necessary, prune lightly so as not to expose interior branches to harsh sunshine or stress the tree. The best time for necessary pruning is during the dry period, July and August, for evergreen species and during the winter dormant period for deciduous species. Pruning at other times can stimulate new growth, attracting unwanted pests to the succulent new leaves.

The following is a general list of conditions that promote healthy oaks:

Ensure dry conditions corresponding to our climate, ideally no summer water at all within 6–10 feet of the trunk.

Leave leaf litter to encourage beneficial microbes and insects.

Do not disturb the ground under oaks, no trenching or raising the soil level.

Avoid compacting the soil, preventing air and water from getting to the roots.

Avoid planting within 6 feet of the trunk and definitely no 'thirsty' plants.

Fertilize very sparingly if at all; healthy oaks need no supplemental fertilizer

By following these few guidelines we can keep our oaks healthy and free of diseases. In this way we can enjoy them for many generations to come.



Apology from the Editor:

In the Fall issue we ran an article about the death of the 300-year-old Oak on La Donna. The last line was omitted by the printer. The entire last paragraph should have read: "I loved my tree even though it wasn't really mine because I think of an old tree in the neighborhood as a common asset that is not so much owned by anyone, but shared by all." —Alice Prender, 2008

For further information:

Compatible plants under and around Oaks. California Oak Foundation, 1993 (<http://www.californiaoaks.org/ExtAssets/CompatiblePlantsUnder&AroundOaks.pdf>)

Living Among the Oaks: A Management Guide for Landowners. ANR Publication number 21538 (<http://www.anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/InOrder/Shop/Shop.asp>)

Plants and Landscape for Summer-Dry Climates. East Bay Municipal Utility District, 2004

Oaks of California. by Bruce Pavlik, Pamela C. Muick, Sharon G. Johnson and Marjorie Popper, 1991

T R E E P L A N T I N G

Over two years after the city removed the shade trees at the Bol Park playground, volunteers planted 10 new shade trees, supplied by the city, on November 15. Working under the direction of Canopy, a non-profit advocate for the urban forest, the volunteers planted three red oaks, four chinese pistache and three western redbuds. The trees were selected because they grow fast and lose their leaves in the winter when sun is appreciated. The volunteers are, back row from left, Pat Steck, Jeff Dean; middle row, Woodside Priory students Tom Latta, David Theis and James Hannay, Susan Rosenberg (Canopy Board Chair), Jost Alonzo, Luis Castanza; Front row, Art Liberman, Sharon Kelly (Canopy Program Director) and Mario Moralis.

Photo courtesy of James Witt

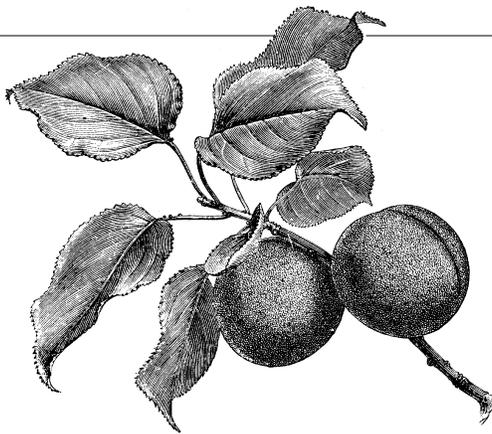


JOIN A HOME-GROWN GARDEN GROUP

By Ann Burrell

We live in a valley that was once called "The Valley of Heart's Delight" because of the diversity and abundance of crops that grew here. We have a climate that allows year round gardening and rich, nutrient laden soil. Yes, that terrible adobe soil that dries to concrete-like consistency in the summer is full of nutrients, and if lightened with the addition of organic material, will hold water well and becomes wonderful soil for growing organic vegetables, fruits and nuts. Most of the valley has been paved over but in this area most of us have the gift of land.

If you wish to learn how to start gardening, how to garden organically, perhaps how to grow crops year round, or maybe learn how to be more sustainable, Barron Park has four local garden groups of which three are welcoming new members. The



members (ranging from novices to experienced gardeners) meet once a month to discuss a topic of interest, ask questions and share ideas.

The members of the four garden networks in Barron Park are interested in organic vegetable gardening; most groups include growing fruit trees and bushes and drought tolerant landscaping. Choose a

network group based on your schedule:

BPGN1: meets the third Wednesday of the month (currently closed to new members).

BPGN2: meets the second Tuesday of the month (coordinator: Carolyn Spitz, 494-2242, carolynspitz@earthlink.net).

BPGN3: meets the last Monday of the month (coordinator: Juli van Telligan, 494-1310, julivant@pacbell.net).

BPGN4: meets the second Thursday of the month (coordinator: Kathie Underdal, 493-5046, kathieunder@sbcglobal.net).

Questions: Call Ann Burrell 494-0964 or adburrell@usa.net.

Another resource: UCCE Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, Eleanor Pardee Park, Center and Martin. Free classes 10-11 a.m. on the first Saturday of every month (except January).

Underground Water Contamination Greatly Reduced

By Art Liberman

About 25 years ago, it was revealed that volatile organic solvents had leaked from underground tanks at about dozen companies in the Stanford Research Park. Many of those companies were clustered around the intersection of Hillview and Porter Avenues, not far from where Matadero Creek passes from Foothill Expressway into the Veterans Administration Hospital property. The contaminated underground water from the leaking sites merged into a large plume, which spread outwards and reached the creek. The contamination was then carried into Barron Park and into the groundwater under the neighborhood.

During the past 15 years of clean-up efforts, the contamination in the shallow groundwater under the neighborhood has steadily decreased. The contamination in the shallow groundwater everywhere under Barron Park has now dropped

below the thresholds (the California drinking water standards for toxic contaminants) requiring active remediation. This milestone was one of the results in a recent report filed with the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), which is monitoring the cleanup activity.

The DTSC will be doing a detailed review of the last five years of clean-up activity in preparation for the next phase of work. They recently mailed a four page brochure to all Barron Park residents (see sidebar)

Contamination from leaking tanks in companies that were not near the creek, Varian for example, did not spread into Barron Park because the subsurface waters in those locations flow away from the neighborhood, towards the intersection of El Camino and Page Mill Road.

The volatile organic solvents were used in making semiconductors, and most likely

had been leaking from the tanks for some time before they were detected in the groundwater. The regulatory agencies took notice of the contamination in the early 80s, but it took about a decade for the regulatory agencies and the responsible parties (the companies and Stanford) to carry out preparatory studies to understand the scale and scope of the problem, to study the soils and water flows in the subsurface and for the remediation program to begin. Efforts by Barron Park residents Ingrid Harding-Barlow and Bob Moss were key to insure the inclusion of the Barron Park neighborhood in the clean up effort.

Creek Cleaned Up First

Cleaning up Matadero Creek was the first step, and was the quickest to be completed. An aeration system was turned on in 1993 and shut down in 1997 when the clean up goals were achieved. Cleaning up the sub-

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT DTSC CLEAN-UP

Q. What is the DTSC ?

A. The DTSC is the Department of Toxics Substances Control, the California agency that is responsible for monitoring the clean-up (remediation) of sites across the state that have been contaminated by spills of toxic materials.

Q. What does this have to do with Barron Park ?

A. Toxic chemicals used by 10 companies clustered near the intersection of Hillview and Porter in the Stanford Research Park leaked from their underground storage tanks. The contamination was carried by underground water flows and by Matadero Creek into the groundwater underneath Barron Park.

Q. What is the type of contamination and what are the clean-up goals?

A. The substances that leaked into the groundwater were chlorinated organic sol-

vents, such as trichloroethene (TCE), used in the production of semiconductor wafers. These solvent chemicals, as a class, are referred to as volatile organic compounds (VOCs). The clean-up goals are to reduce the VOCs in the creek and in the underground water to below the Federal and California Drinking Water standards.

Q. What is the status of the contamination clean-up?

A. The contamination level in the upper level groundwater everywhere in Barron Park has now dropped below the Drinking Water standards. But the contamination remains at unacceptable levels in the areas close to where the tanks leaked and also in parts of the Veterans' Administration property. Pumping and extraction and other methods of cleaning up the contamination are still underway at these sites.

Q. Why did the DTSC send this newsletter now?

A. Under the supervision of the DTSC, the companies responsible for the spill, along with the landowner, Stanford, have been working for 15 years to clean up the contamination. Every five years, the DTSC requires the parties conducting the clean-up to step back and provide a comprehensive report of the progress over the previous period, The DTSC will review the reports and make adjustments before planning the next phase.

Q. What can I do to find more information?

A. You can look at the reports already received and posted by the DTSC on their Envirostor database. www.envirostor.com. Use the directions on page 2 of the DTSC newsletter to find the information for Palo Alto. There are reports for each of the contamination sites in the Research Park, and also for the regional site, the Hillview-Porter Plume, which includes Barron Park.

surface waters has been more difficult. Several horizontal wells were drilled between Barron Park and the contamination source area to slow the flow of contamination through the subsurface waters. Many vertical extraction wells were drilled around the sites that were the source of the contamination and in a number of places around Barron Park, including several alongside the bike path.

The clean up process involves pumping out the contaminated water in the wells, extracting the organic solvents, and then draining the cleansed water into the Creek. Other wells, for monitoring the water quality, were drilled in various locations around the neighborhood.

As the ground and subsurface waters under Barron Park have improved over time, many of the extraction wells in the neighborhood have been shut down. This does not mean that the clean-up effort is complete. The monitoring will continue. In particular, some solvent tainted waters migrated into the deeper soil layers and reducing contamination there is a slow process that will take some time.

New Clean-Up Methods Tried

The contamination levels in the Research Park close to where the tanks had leaked are still well above the State water quality levels. Pumping and extracting the organic solvents from those wells continues, but it is becoming less efficient over time. The water being pumped out is extracting smaller amounts of contaminants. As a result, in the past several years, the consultants conducting the clean-up have introduced more direct methods of reducing the contamination at several sites in the Hillview-Porter area and the Varian site. . These methods involve injecting other chemicals that neutralize the organic contaminants in the ground. The effectiveness of these methods is still being investigated. They can also cause side effects that require monitoring. As a consequence, the remediation efforts are expected to continue for many more years.

The DTSC posts the reports and updated plans for clean-up on its Envirostor website, <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

Raccoons, skunks, squirrels and opossums all inhabit the hidden recesses of our yards and the creeks in Barron Park, making their presence known mostly by their nocturnal activities. If you are having trouble with urban wildlife, check the City of Palo Alto web site for what to do and where to go for help. Most of the following information was excerpted from the City's Animal Services Division web site: http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/depts/pol/animal_services.asp

Indoors or Under the House

Favorite nesting sites for wild animals include the attic and crawl space under a house. Before an animal moves into your home, check all openings (including chimneys, vents and dryer exhaust openings) and cover them with screens (see web site for specifics). Also, eliminate access routes by pruning tree branches overhanging the roof.

"If an animal has taken up residence in an attic or crawl space, block off all entrances accessible to the animal except one. Place a radio near the entrance and play music loudly during the day. Place dishes of ammonia-soaked rags near the same spot. This should annoy the animal enough to convince it to leave within a day or two.

"Place a piece of cloth (such as an old T-shirt) with your scent near the resting area. Nesting mothers are concerned with the safety of their young, and human scent will encourage her, within a week or so, to relocate her family.

"Anytime you think there are nests of young, be sure all babies and the mother have relocated before sealing up all access points. Otherwise, babies will starve, or mothers will return and destroy the seal to retrieve their young.

Outdoors

"If you have pets, bring their food and water indoors at night. Clean up leftover food, seeds, and dropped or discarded fruits and vegetables. Secure trash containers with weighted lids, or secure the lids with straps or chains attached to the handles.

"To prevent raccoons or other wildlife from digging in your garden, sprinkle cayenne pepper around the perimeter. Soak rags in ammonia or bleach and place

them in bowls or tie them to posts around the garden. This should deter uninvited animal visitors from foraging for grubs or insects. Some success has been achieved using motion detector lights.

For outdoor fish ponds, see the web site.

Protect your Pets

Keep your pets indoors at night while many wild animals are out. "Rabies is a potential threat in this area. Because of this and other diseases such as distemper, it is important to keep your pet vaccinations up to date, to protect pets from diseases that can be prevented by immunization. Please avoid direct contact with wildlife, especially if they seem sick, injured, or oddly unafraid.

"If you or your pet are bitten or injured by wildlife, obtain appropriate medical care and contact Animal Control for advice.

Humane Trapping

"Animal Services strongly discourages the live trapping of wildlife. Living in the Midpeninsula means living with wildlife. Humane trapping is a short-term solution, and never the best option. Relocating a wild animal without a permit is illegal. In addition, a wild animal becomes stressed and frantic when trapped, and might injure itself trying to escape. Trapping also separates mothers from babies who cannot survive without the mother's care.

"If you have tried the above options, as a last resort, you might be able to get additional assistance from an Animal Control Officer.

Vector Control

"Wild animals can be vectors (carriers) of various diseases. Vector Control of Santa Clara County provides information on dealing with many animal and insect disease vectors. This excerpt is from the County's vector control web site: Free home and yard consultations are available to all Santa Clara county residents for rodent, wildlife and mosquito problems. Call 408-918-4770 or 800-675-1155.

Squirrels

See the City's web site (above) for a separate description of how to deal with squirrels.

BUSINESS BEAT

By Mircea Voskerician, BPA Business Liaison

Rice Thai Cuisine Restaurant

The latest addition to the El Camino dining scene, Rice Thai Cuisine (between Ventura Ave and Los Robles), is an elegant and affordable place to savor the tastes of Southeast Asian cuisine. The owners have totally transformed a former Quiznos sub shop into a tasteful environment in which to find traditional Thai dishes and a few contemporary twists on old favorites. The restaurant serves a full range of appetizers, soups, salads, and entrees—including curries, rice and noodle dishes, all available with beef, chicken, pork, seafood or tofu and vegetables.

After seven years working to develop and operate the Ruen Pair restaurant in Albany California—and voted “Best Thai” by the East Bay Express—owner Ricky Sudchaitarm opened his eatery in mid-November. His vision was to create a chic and comfortable environment offering reasonably priced fare. The interior features burnished copper-colored walls, and a

comfortable long banquette with pillows. But it’s the food that really shines.

Among the highlights of their extensive menu are a flavorful house specialties such as Chiang Mai Noodles, with a choice of meat (or vegetarian options) tossed with lettuce, cucumber, mint, cilantro and a special dressing; a flavorful, hearty country-style hot and sour soup full of Thai herbs and local vegetables; Lemon Steamed Fish, a whole fish deliciously poached with lime juice, garlic and fresh chili; and Madam Pompano, a full, deep fried Pompano fish, quickly deep fried and topped with bell pepper, onion, and a piquant tamarind sauce. The range of curries include red, green, yellow as well as Panang and Musaman, the latter two being milder, sweeter varieties. They also make a stellar Pad Thai.

Sudchaitarm recommends the appetizer sampler, 3924 Combo, which includes an assortment of Thai egg rolls, chicken satay, chicken dumplings, blanket shrimp, and “Crispy Parcels,” a house favorite wonton-

all for \$13.50. For dessert, he points to a delightful Sweet Sticky Rice with Mango, \$6.95.

Rice Thai Cuisine offers a full lunch menu Monday through Friday, all quickly served, with options starting at an economical \$6.95. Rice plates come complete with salad, soup of the day, egg roll, and of course, rice.

All items are available for takeout, and you’ll be happy to know that Rice Thai uses eco-friendly to-go containers. No MSG or corn starch are ever among the ingredients. Beer and wine will be served in the near future, but there’s no reason not to get to know this new and welcome restaurant addition to the neighborhood soon!

Rice Thai Cuisine is open daily from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

3924 El Camino Real
Palo Alto, CA 94301
Phone: (650)812-0139
Fax: (650)812-0239

NEW BPA BUSINESS LIAISON

My name is Mircea Voskerician and I am the newly appointed Business Liaison chair for the Barron Park Association (BPA). My goal is to work with Barron Park businesses to bring awareness and visibility to Barron Park residents. I will be also very interested in supporting Barron Park residents’ concerns about existing and new businesses that are planning to move to Barron Park to ensure that our neighborhood supports these new businesses.

Personal biography: Born in Romania (Transylvania region), I lived in Bucharest, the capital of Romania for nineteen years and also served in the military during the

1989 Romanian revolution against the communist regime [Ceausescu]. Came to the U.S. in 1991 and completed my BSEE/MSEE in Cleveland, Ohio, then worked for GE Lighting and Medical Systems in Cleveland, OH/Waukesha, WI in different engineering roles. I moved to Mountain View on October 2006 and to Barron Park on January 2007.

Presently I am working as a Senior Advanced Engineer for Stryker Endoscopy in San Jose on electronic medical equipment products. I live on Chimalus Dr. with my lovely wife Adina. My main hobby is metal detecting. Email:

www2.bpaonline.org/411/mvoskerician.html



El Camino Remains Healthy and Diverse

By Bob Moss

[Editor's note: the BPA is not responsible for the opinions and data reported below.]

This article summarizes my most recent survey of properties on El Camino Real and El Camino Way, between Page Mill Road and Adobe Creek. I have taken informal inventories of retail uses for decades, trying to track vacancy rates and shifts in uses.

For the past few years El Camino has been relatively healthy and diverse, although we have lost some valued operations such as Hyatt Rickey's hotel and, more recently, Compadres restaurant.

Here are the results as of my November 30, 2008, survey.

There are a total of 175 ground floor businesses and housing developments along El Camino and El Camino Way. Of these individual locations, 15 (almost 10 percent) are vacant compared to almost 13 percent in January, 2008, and 7 percent in 1992 (for the Barron Park section of El Camino). (Note that the data is based on the number of locations, not square feet, which is the standard basis of vacancy rate data provided by realtors.)

A vacancy rate of 5 percent is considered fully occupied, since there are always some empty spaces as one business replaces another.

The 2008 vacancies include four lots owned by absentee landlords. They have been vacant for more than 35 years. Subtract them and the vacancy rate is 7 percent, not bad considering the slump in the economy the past year. In my opinion, these vacancies have nothing to do with the desirability of El Camino for commercial uses or the local economy, so they

should be discounted when discussing retail vitality and vacancy rates.

The table below shows the current uses along El Camino and El Camino Way. Generally, it indicates only minor changes since my last survey in January.

Sites in transition include the Elks Club site which is being redeveloped with a new Elks Club building on the El Camino frontage and 45 condominiums behind it; Keys Middle School which is replacing the old Mayflower Motel, and the new retail-office-condominium building at 2825 El Camino near Page Mill.

An interesting feature of businesses on El Camino is that many of them are long-time occupants. Of the 175 locations on El Camino and El Camino Way, 51 (32 percent) have had the same occupant since January 1992. A number of other sites changed occupant but provide the same service or products, for example, Straits, Taqueria El Grullen, Celia's, and Hunan Garden which have been restaurants for more than 20 years, but have changed names or owners. Including business sites that offer the same goods or services as they did 20 years ago, over half of the sites are unchanged. That shows a very stable business environment.

Recent Changes

There have been a number of recent occupancy changes in the past few months. The Maytag store at 3666 El Camino closed after many years and moved to Menlo Park reportedly due to a big rent increase. The shoe repair store/U.S. Post Office next door also closed by November 14 due to a large rent increase. Both store fronts are being remodeled. The former Quiznos next

to Happy Donuts closed quietly in October 2007 and was replaced by a Ramen Noodle restaurant. That restaurant closed in October and has been replaced by a Thai restaurant which is reviewed elsewhere in this newsletter.

Other possible changes include the 3-Day Blinds store at 2951 El Camino just south of Pepper which has a for rent sign and the European Kitchens store at 4232 El Camino which is moving to San Francisco, probably by the end of the year. These comings and goings may be more related to problems with specific businesses or the overall economy, rather than any congenital problems with retail vitality on El Camino. For example Caboodle ink and toner refill, previously at 3775 quietly vacated in September 2007 shortly after Walgreens started offering a very similar service at lower cost.

There are 415 housing units on the eight properties on El Camino including the housing underway at the Elks Club site. Thirty years ago, the City began changing the zoning on El Camino to encourage more residential (and neighborhood commercial) uses. More recently, there has been concern that the residential zoning puts pressure on existing businesses that presently offer useful products or services for the community. Last year the City Council decided that too many more such conversions were undesirable for a number of reasons, and they indicated interest in retaining current businesses rather than replacing them with housing. If conversion of current retail to housing along El Camino is discouraged, it should make it easier to attract businesses that serve our neighborhoods and improve overall vitality of El Camino.

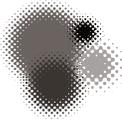
Existing Uses on El Camino and El Camino Way, November, 2008

Sector	Retail	Service	Eating/Food	Office	Auto	Motel	Housing	Vacant/In Transition	Total
Number	25	51	32	8	16	14	8	21	175
Percent	14.3%	24.7%	18.8%	4.6%	9.1%	8.0%	4.5%	12.0%	100%

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