

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Lynnne Melena, BPA President

Building Stronger Ties To Our Neighborhood Schools



The Barron Park “neighborhood” is many things—a network of friendships, a great place to walk, an active set of email lists, a strong neighborhood association, two donkeys in a pasture. But the real physical heart of our “neighborhood” is the neighborhood school. In Barron Park, that means Barron Park and Juana Briones schools.

Many of us have children who attended these schools, but we no longer really have any connections. How much do we really know, other than that they are nice open space areas that generate a lot of traffic two times a day? In this newsletter, we are highlighting Barron Park School. In a separate article, new principal, Magdalena Fittoria, introduces herself and writes a wonderful description of the many activities and programs at Barron Park School.

Barron Park is the smallest elementary school in the district (350 students) compared to up to 500 students in others. Its attendance area encompasses the northern half of Barron Park and the Ventura neighborhood, although some students come from further away if their neighborhood schools are at capacity. Still others have selected to come to Barron Park to take advantage of the multicultural diversity as

an asset and also the inclusive education model for special needs students.

As a neighborhood, we can build stronger ties to Barron Park School by participating in its activities. One of the easiest ways is to go out to eat on the first Thursday of each month at a local restaurant which is donating a percentage of its proceeds to the school. Watch for the announcements of the hosting restaurant on our BPA email lists. I went to The Counter a few months ago, where I ran into other Barron Park residents and will be going again. Celia’s and Su Hong have also been part of the program. Wouldn’t it be fun to make these events a neighborhood meeting place while helping the school and local businesses?

Or you can do more. Ms. Fittoria has some very specific requests for help from neighbors who want to become involved in the school.

“We can always use volunteer assistance, especially for some of our noon programs. Star Teachout oversees students in our School Garden on Wednesdays. Another Barron Park neighbor, Stephanie Enos, voluntarily manages our Noon Art Fridays. Both of these women could always use extra help. Perhaps you’d like to assist our School Librarian, Mr. Tooley, he always needs additional helpers to keep the library open during the noon hour for our

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**JOIN US FOR MAY FETE 2012!
SUNDAY, MAY 20TH AT BOL
PARK FROM NOON TO 4 PM**

Come and enjoy live musicians and dancers. They will perform all afternoon, with a Maypole dance at 2:30. Bring the family and a blanket and make a picnic of it. Hamburgers and hot dogs will also be for sale. Wear ribbons. There will also be games and crafts for the children, donkeys and donkey art, and the history exhibit. Activities will include face painting for children, donkey parade, fire truck and more. Suggestions for other activities from the Barron Park community are welcome. The fete is a volunteer effort. If you’d like to help, or if you’d like to propose a display or activity, contact the event organizer John King at johnwadeking@gmail.com or the event planner Sarah Van Zanten at sarahtherower@hotmail.com. The event email address is bpmayfete@gmail.com.

Look forward to seeing you there!

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eager readers. Do you get out for a morning or afternoon walk? Perhaps you could stop by and support us during our peak traffic periods, helping monitor crosswalks to keep our students safe!

"If you have an interest in sharing special skills or experiences with our students, we can connect you appropriately to our classrooms. Teachers like to bring in local examples of people who can give insights into the ways that school influences our career and life choices. Maybe you're an engineer working on a new project; perhaps you're a photographer with a portfolio of local flora and fauna; perhaps you are an author or a quilter or a musician. You get the idea—there are many ways that you can get involved!"

Neighbors are also invited to subscribe to

Barron Park School's electronic newsletter, eNews, to stay current on special activities and programs. To subscribe, please email: barronpark.eneews@gmail.com and indicate that you are a Barron Park resident so that the school can better include you in appropriate announcements.

On a more general level, we adults are urged to be aware of and acknowledge the kids in our neighborhood. Project Safety Net aims to build a web of support around every young person in our community. The 41 Developmental Assets of Project Cornerstone guide individuals and organizations to work together toward the common goal of supporting the healthy development of all children and youth. Barron Park School is committed to fostering these Developmental Assets in its school community.

The list below includes the Developmental Assets that feature community and neighborhood participation (you can find the complete list on the school web page www.barron.pausd.org):

#3: Other Adult Relationships—Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s).

#4: Caring Neighborhood—Parent(s) and child experience friendly neighbors who affirm and support the child's growth and sense of belonging.

#7: Community Values Youth—Child feels valued and appreciated by adults in the community.

Now that you know more about what is going on at 800 Barron Avenue, I hope you will make an effort to connect or re-connect with Barron Park School.

A Message to the Barron Park Community

By Barron Park School Principal Magdalena Fittoria



Greetings! I am honored with this opportunity to introduce myself as the new Principal of Barron Park Elementary School. I have had the pleasure of meeting

a few of you, and of course, many of you have children or neighbors whose children attend our school so, hopefully, you have heard of some of the amazing things taking place on our campus in 2011-12. This is my 16th year working in the Palo Alto Unified School District. I was a teacher in the Spanish Immersion Program for 11 years, and then an Elementary Math Specialist prior to my appointment as Principal.

One important message that I would like to share with you is the following: *Barron Park School has an extraordinarily talented and dedicated teaching staff, amazing resources to support quality programs, and a uniquely diverse student population which promotes multicultural awareness and respect like no other campus in Palo Alto.* In this semester alone, we have eight student teachers from three local teacher education programs: College of Notre Dame de Namur, San Jose State University, and Stanford's Teacher Education Program. This is a testament to

the quality of our instructional program and the talent of our teachers serving as mentors to future educators.

Recently, our staff engaged in a full day work session reviewing our school vision and brainstorming new initiatives. At the end of the day, our facilitator summarized our synergy: *"Barron Park promotes life long learning, celebrates the little things, grows relationships, is in forward motion, aspires to a feeling of peace and balance, and is alive with joyful challenge. We've got it going on."*

A Diverse Student Population

Barron Park School is unique among the Palo Alto elementary schools in that it has an extraordinarily diverse student population. It is a small school with approximately 350 students, and 50 staff members from a wide range of ethnicities, cultures, and linguistic groups. Approximately 40 percent of the students are English Learners (EL); at the district level only 9 percent are EL and only Hoover comes close at 22 percent. The largest native language represented at Barron Park is Spanish,

but 11 percent of the EL students speak Mandarin, and 8 percent speak Korean. Altogether, students represent 22 language backgrounds, including Russian, Uzbek, French, Cambodian and Portuguese.



Barron Park, Beautiful People

*On Barron Avenue there is our school
 We come every morning, the air sometimes cool
 But by afternoon the sun has warmed the sky
 The children leave their classrooms with a relieved sigh
 We've been reading, writing, and having fun all day
 We gather and talk, and each one has something to say
 But some speak different languages, and come from different homes
 These countries of origin often seem like far-off unknowns*

*France, Brazil, Georgia, the Philippines, Serbia
 China, Spain, Poland, Taiwan, Cambodia,
 Germany, Israel, Korea, Chile, Japan
 Serbia, Spain, Belarus, India, and Iran*

*Russia, Thailand, Denmark, Tonga, and Peru
 Many countries, continents, states, and cities too
 From Asia, west to India, then across the African Congo
 From Panama heading north through the ancient ruins of Mexico*

*The flags of the world hang in our MP room, and
 Represent our future, our past, and our homeland
 We've crisscrossed the globe, from far and near
 And now we say, "Palo Alto, we are here."*

*Though everyone's country seem so far away
 We all join together as one school each day
 We make up one student body in rooms 1 through 21
 Some live here their whole life, but others, not very long*

*To some, this our hometown, for others it is a new city
 We share meals, stories, culture, and our diversity
 Hair color, eye color, whatever it may be
 When we look at each other, it shouldn't matter what we see*

*Each day we are here, we learn, sing, play and laugh
 Sisters, brothers, friends, teachers, aides and staff
 Together, whether we've come from near or far
 Together, we are Beautiful People, we are Barron Park*

--Greta Gize Olbrich

Rather than see this as a handicap, the staff and parent community embrace the multicultural opportunities provided by this rich diversity. In this spirit, the campus hosts special activities such as International Reading Days, Heritage Potluck in the Fall, a Kindergarten Chinese New Year Parade in January, and Cinco de Mayo Fiesta in May. This year, parents produced an International Recipe Book to highlight

the delicious international cuisine prepared in honor of the Heritage Potluck.

Video on Barron Park School

Right now, you have an opportunity to see our campus as our students see it. A group of 5th graders, members of our 2012 College Bound cohort, produced a musical video, which portrays the joy of living and learning at our school. See Barron Park

Elementary School Video on the Palo Alto Unified School District web page: www.pausd.org Using Flip video cameras, sponsored by Partners in Education, students spent weeks filming different activities on our campus. Under the direction of their teacher, Arcia Dorosti, and Gunn High School student volunteer, Maddy Dray (Class of 2012 & herself a Barron Park alumna), they worked on editing this fabulous video.

Technology in the Classroom

In the last year, technology has helped transform our classrooms. Each one is equipped with a SmartBoard, which is an interactive whiteboard that allows large screen projection of computer features and can function as a large touch screen, as well as a Lightspeed Audio system. Our PTA last year donated a document camera to each classroom. The document camera allows the teacher to demonstrate virtually any object or document by projecting it immediately (gone are the days of overhead transparencies!). Finally, in addition



to about 100 laptop computers, we have recently purchased a set of iPads for use in every classroom, quite literally putting the entire digital world in students' hands.

As educators, we are aware that we can no longer rely solely on the traditional textbooks and pencil and paper. To engage our students fully our teachers participate in ongoing professional development to learn how to integrate these modern tools into their teaching and make learning as fun and meaningful as possible for our students.

Here are some of the other exciting activities happening on our campus:

All Day Kindergarten

Barron Park is the first and only school in Palo Alto to offer a full day Kindergarten program. While students began the 2011-12 school year attending half-day, the longer day began on November 7, with students

remaining until 2:30 p.m. four days per week and 1:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. The extended day has been well received by the majority of parents, appreciating the additional activities and resources available with the extended schedule. For example, Barron Park Kindergarten students are the only ones who receive Physical Education and Music instruction provided by district specialists.

Standards and expectations for the Kindergarten curriculum have changed dramatically in the last two decades. Students exiting from Kindergarten are expected to have basic literacy skills previously more common in first grade. The full-day Kindergarten program has allowed teachers to devote the necessary time to meaningful academic instruction, but also integrate developmentally appropriate play and social skills curriculum and activities.

Inclusive Education Program

This year, our school is featuring an inclusive education model, where students with learning disabilities are increasingly integrated into general education classrooms, providing greater interaction with their non-disabled peers and accessing improved educational opportunities. Room 9 students have been excellent stewards of this model, supporting special learners in their classroom and serving as buddies to younger students in our Specialized Academic Instruction classroom. In February, the Community Advisory Committee on Special Education bestowed Sweetheart Awards on 3rd Grade Teacher, Nick Foote, his classroom assistant, Meb Steiner, and all of the students of Room 9. This award honors shining stars who have made a difference in the life of a child with special needs.

Recreational Activities

Barron Park School provides breakfast and lunch through the PAUSD Food Service program. In addition to nutritious meals, our school also offers a menu of recreational activities. Our breakfast club features board games, books, and other entertainment for those students who arrive early on our campus. At lunchtime, we have an array of offerings including YMCA Sports, a Running Club, School Garden Club, Zumba Dance-Exercise, Noon Art, and an open Library.

Outreach Play

In partnership with the Palo Alto Children's Theater, over 50 of our 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students worked hard at rehearsing for the Palo Alto Children's Theatre Outreach Play, Percival the Performing Pig.

The play was held on March 8.

Recycling and Composting Saves Money

Finally, our campus practices environmentally responsible recycling and composting to reduce our garbage. Zea Luce, the City's Environmental Outreach Coordinator, shares the following commendation for our students and staff: "I have stopped by a couple times recently and wanted to con-



gratulate the school on doing such a good job with the composting and recycling!!! There is hardly anything in the garbage. We will be cutting the dumpster in half next week, saving the school a bunch of money. I am very impressed and hope you pass a congratulatory message on to others at the school."

New Bike Racks

In the next month we expect to install new bicycle racks that will serve our growing cyclist population. We have already altered one of the entrances to our campus to reduce the congestion of bicycle and vehicle traffic by diverting some cyclists to our fire lane. Please be conscious of our peak school commuting hours since the Barron Park neighborhood sees student traffic to a variety of other schools beyond ours.

Annual Open House

On March 20, Barron Park School hosted its annual Open House from 6:15-7:30 p.m. This was a wonderful opportunity to visit our classrooms and see how technology is transforming the teaching of reading and writing at Barron Park Elementary School.

Please feel free to send me your comments and questions.

Magdalena Fittoria
Principal, Barron Park Elementary School
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Join/Renew the BPA Today!

by Art Liberman, Membership Chair



We hope you enjoy reading this "Membership" edition of the Barron Park Newsletter. This issue, sent to all residents in Barron

Park, marks the start of our Membership campaign for 2012-2013

Your membership in the Barron Park Association supports BPA sponsored social events, such as the upcoming May Fete, our popular BPA email lists, our neighborhood's efforts on Emergency Preparedness, and our newsletter. Members of the Barron Park Association will receive three more issues during the course of the year. You won't want to miss any of these issues, so fill out the membership application, tear it out and send it in along with your membership dues right away! You can find the membership application in the center of this issue. Alternatively you can join/renew online at <http://www.bpaonline.org>, and click on the "HOW to JOIN" button.

Over the years, the efforts of the BPA have had an immense impact on our quality of life. Our history includes the creation of Bol Park and the integration into the City of Palo Alto while preserving the unique character of our neighborhood. Today, the Barron Park Association remains your neighborhood advocate with the City for resolving important issues that affect our lives.

We seek your support as a member. Even more, we seek your ideas and your vision of Barron Park's future. Just by participating in one or more of our community activities you will add immeasurably to the richness of our community life. Residents from a new generation are needed on the Board of the Barron Park Association to provide leadership. We hope you are willing to give back some time and efforts to your community as residents have done over the past 50 years.

We hope you enjoy reading this "Membership" issue of the Barron Park Newsletter and you will send in your membership dues. Join/renew today!

SHEILA MANDOLI'S LEGACY

Compiled by Lynn Melena from articles written by daughter, Dina, and friend, Lora Smith

Sheila Mandoli, a long-time resident of Barron Park, died February 18, just before her 93rd birthday. She died in her sleep at Lytton Gardens where she was recovering from heart surgery.

Sheila lived on La Para Avenue for 63 years. This is where she and her late husband raised three daughters: Marie (known to us in Barron Park as the Balloon Lady), Dina and Rita. Sheila was the pioneering director of the Downtown Children's Center, Palo Alto's first community child care center. Countless children were taught kindness, helpfulness, generosity, and adventurous inquiry through her example. Long before the idea of keeping children active was popular, Sheila made sure her preschoolers sang, danced, paraded, gardened, and learned by doing.

Born in Salt Lake City in 1919, Sheila was the eldest child of pianist Florence Brown and Edward Hoffer. While "Mother's music" sustained the souls of Sheila and her siblings, Tom and Mimi, throughout their lives, it was "The Package Grocery" owned and run by "Dad and Grandpa Brown" that kept them alive with barrels of flour and beans and meat at the beginning of the Great Depression and introduced her to myriad, delicious flavors from around the world. Sheila's lifelong love of good food, joyfully shared by family and friends around a table, trace directly to these times.

Women had unprecedented access to the workplace when Sheila graduated from UC Berkeley in 1942 with a degree in social work, and Sheila became a probation officer for the California Youth Authority in Oakland. She left the probation office in 1951 to marry the love of her life, Harry Mandoli, move to Barron Park, and raise three daughters, but she reflected, "I just felt that I was reaching them (her female charges) too late, that I had to reach young children and their parents to have a chance of making any positive change."

So she started the career that would sustain and drive her for the rest of her life: She melded her skills in social work and parenting, first teaching at Friends Nursery School, then directing the Sunnyvale Parent Co-op, and finally rising to become the founding Director of Downtown Children's Center, the first preschool of Palo Alto Community Child Care (PACCC). "I remember Mom asking we three girls in one of our 'family conferences' if we minded if she went back to work. Talk about innovative parenting! And that was 1974! Later in my life, I marveled that,



at 55, she started a second career which had such broad community impact for so many people," said daughter Dina Russell.

Sheila had a unique ability to listen with all her attention so validating and fostering the essence of the person in front of her. "She loved whoever was in her presence at the moment, as if they were the most important person in the world," reflected daughter Rita.

Although she "retired" in 1988, Sheila remained active in the child care field, serving as interim director of Sojourner Truth Child Development Center and as PACCC's Volunteer Coordinator, a position from which she spearheaded the Palo Alto Intergenerational Week, organizing many activities to promote relationships between children, youth and seniors in the community.

In a 1994 article in the *Palo Alto Weekly*, Sheila said, "So many children out here are isolated from their grandparents, many have no contact with older people." That is why she made a profession of trying to erase these lines of segregation.

Right up until the day she was hospitalized in December, Sheila was busy organizing the older adults she had recruited to tell stories at PACCC day care centers. Mark Georgia of Barron Park said the kids at the Barron Park School center loved his story about "how I came to love dirt." Bob Frost was another story-teller for Sheila, as was the late Marshall McDonald who lived on Park Boulevard. Sheila loved the story he told (and acted out with the kids) about watching a mule-driven sorghum mill in his childhood Texas.

Throughout her life, Sheila cultivated her family, her immense and constantly growing circle of friends, her active cadre of volunteers, and especially her beloved garden, which was a source for the fruits and vegetables she cooked and preserved.

"She was blessed with an optimistic and

cheerful spirit and believed in living each day to the fullest and possessed a willingness to try anything" says Lora Smith, long time friend and bridge partner of 20 years. Sheila, a frequent visitor to the Apple store on University Avenue, laptop and iPhone in tow, learned to use a computer and the Internet when in her 90's!

Sheila's most important advice? "You should have a friend in every decade, and two in their teens, and two under 10. Then you will be in touch with all ages and you will always have friends" was most important to daughter Rita, of Port Townsend, WA. Dina, on the other hand, says, "Mom's advice, to slowly become friends with my children, Eve and Sam, as they passed their teen years, was invaluable to all of us as parents, as kids, as individuals and as a family."

Sheila was also open and accepting of people from many countries and cultures. She came to the 2011 annual BPA meeting with the assistance of two young Chinese students—two of the many students and friends she hosted at her home. Sheila was also a member of the Barron Park seniors' lunch group.

Sheila's passion for community and her contributions to society were recognized by the PTA Very Special Person award, and a Certificate of Recognition from Byron D. Sher and the California Senate both in 2003; the Palo Alto Human Services Community Star Award in 2008; grants from the Packard and the Panwy Foundations to name just a few; and many, many news articles spanning 4 decades. Sheila's CaringBridge site <http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/sheilamandoli> has many testimonials to her impact around the world, sporting over 1,500 hits from people from 3 continents, countless states in the US, and countries from Venezuela to Scotland.

Sheila's survivors: siblings Tom Hoffer and Miriam Cooper; daughters Marie, Dina and Rita; sons-in-law Kenneth Russell and Charles Espey; grandchildren Ian, Kai, and Mia Cheeseman; and Eve and Samuel Russell; great-grandson Noah McFarland; and nieces and nephews and friends too numerous to name, will all hold her inspirational stories and her wise words dearly in their hearts in the coming decades.

The family requests that inquiries about contributions to a park bench and public garden/play area dedicated to her memory should be directed to Dina Russell, 4500 NE 40th Street, Seattle, WA 98105, dina.mandoli@gmail.com.

A DONKEY NAMED 'MICHI'

And Other Memories of Growing Up in Barron Park

By Dina Mandoli Russell

(Note: When Dina Mandoli contacted Barron Park Association President Lynnie Melena about a bench in Bol Park for her mother, Sheila, the conversation led to the donkey her parents bought her, the kind mentorship of Mr. Bol, playing in the creek, and "lazy afternoon riding the Stanford hills." These memories are from the late 1960s.)

Some of the deepest roots of the Mandoli Clan grow in Bol Park. When I was 11, our "Aunt Elsa" (Preminger), mom's dear friend from their student days at UC Berkeley, suggested to my mom that perhaps giving me a donkey would be a good idea. I remember being called in from playing outside one sunny day. There were both my parents, clearly a warning that I was in deep trouble. My father said, "Wouldn't you like to sit down, dear?" Resolutely, I said, "No, I'll stand" figuring that if I were standing, running remained an option. "OK," said my father, "Your mother and I have decided to punish you. Are you sure you don't want to sit down? No, dear? OK. To see who is more stubborn, we have decided to give you a donkey." My wariness turned to disbelief and then to joy within about 30 seconds. My parents bought Michi for \$50 and paid \$200 per year for his room and board. (Michi was a relative of Mickey, the Bols' donkey which inhabited the pasture during the 1970s and 1980s.)

The only caveat was that "Michi" (pronounced Mee-chee), which means "little donkey" in Italian, was not due to be born for months. It was worth the wait for I developed a relationship with Mr. Cornelis Bol, owner of the donkeys and the upper and lower pastures. Mr. Bol taught me to care for Jennifer, the 'jenny' of the small herd on their property. He told me, "Always be nice to your animals, because if you are ever mean to them, even once, they will not forgive you." One day, I arrived at the park to find a tiny baby, just barely standing, still wet with blood and placenta, being licked by Jennifer. Mr. Bol was standing there smiling. Jennifer let me walk slowly up to the baby and cradle his tiny, firm muzzle in the



palm of my hand. It was so fuzzy-soft and adorable. I was in love. Mr. Bol nodded his approval, "See, she let you come right up to her baby. You have done a good job."

Mr. Bol was a kind and sweet mentor to me in that last year of his life, teaching me many, many life lessons. Some lessons were hard—caring for Michi after his castration for example was tough, especially finding the bloodied body parts discarded in the dirt. Mr. Bol also taught me how to gently train Michi to do tricks such as bow and shake hands and eventually let me get onto his back. When Michi was a year old, he was finally strong enough to ride. We went everywhere together into the hills for a whole day. On the way home, I would often fall asleep on his back and just let him graze his way slowly home. Later, I too became a scientist partly, perhaps to emulate Mr. Bol's wonderful, gentle nature.

I was fast-friends for several years with two other girls who each had a donkey sibling of my Michi. Theresa Smith owned the black female, Nigrita, and Colleen Gilmer owned the other, slightly larger neutered male, Chico. Devon Brown was part of our mini-band even though she did not own a donkey. We rode bareback mostly with a halter, but sometimes used a bridle. We all tried to ride Christopher, the big male or "jack" who had sired all of the others in the pasture, but he was a fierce, wild thing.

We played and swam in the creek with the water was high. We crossed through the backyard of the Gilmers to go back and forth to the corral next to the barn.

In those days, the donkeys were moved from the front to the back pasture depending on the grass. They were fed hay and some alfalfa from the barn. The Bols sometimes let us four girls swim with them in their pool up near the house. And Josina Bol always made the best cookies and cakes to go with cool summer drinks.

In the tack room of the barn, Mr. Bol allowed the four of us to have a kind of clubhouse, which we called T.H.O.P. Inside, there was a little wood burning stove, a mattress, and other places to sit. It got quite cozy after burning just a little bit of wood. I even lived for two weeks by myself in T.H.O.P., walking along the railroad tracks to Gunn High School for classes and meals alike. Guess I was still stubborn! My father rented a cabin for a few months from the Bols so that was two Mandolis who lived there over the years.

Michi was in the news once. I had cross tied him to the almond tree in our back yard on La Para Avenue and he got spooked and tried to jump through the crotch of the tree. He ended up straddling the fork in the tree and we had to have the fire department come and help him kick his way free. I was frantic with worry that my animal friend's ribs were broken, and angry at the reporter who showed up and flashed lights in Michi's eyes while he struggled to get free. The firemen were gentle and put a board under Michi's back legs so he could kick himself free and all was well once again. The article ran the next day in the *Palo Alto Times*. I was still mad at the reporter!

Sister Rita remembers hearing the donkeys bray from Bol Park all the way to our home at 729 La Para Ave. For a short while, Michi stayed in our back yard, and he and the other donkeys would bray across the whole of Barron Park! Arizona may have coyotes barking and yipping, but BP has donkey

DONKEY QUESTIONS

By Mary Jane Leon

calling down pat! In an interesting twist, a few years later I fell in love with and married a New York city boy who had a donkey in his back yard known as "Bronxy, Burro of the Bronx." "Must have been fate," he said as he reminded me of this bit over dinner just now. So perhaps, in an intangibly, metaphorically, our Barron Park and New York City donkeys were braying all the way cross the country those many decades ago.

Eventually, the Bols needed to sell the property. Over many weekends, I helped raise funds by riding or leading Michi around Barron Park: giving kids rides; telling the story of the donkeys to them and their parents; asking for money to help buy the land so that everyone in Barron Park could all have a community park. Michi wore a Mexican straw hat with ear holes punched on either side! It was very satisfying way to build community and paved the way for other successful fundraising for the common good that I did later in life.

I too, grew up, spending more and more time teaching swimming to the handicapped in Betty Wright's backyard pool on Chimalus with all Betty's other "stinky teenagers" from the neighborhood. Oddly, I walked down the same railroad tracks in the opposite direction to go teach swimming, so my two childhood mentors were just down the tracks from each other, along the length of what is now Bol Park.

Realizing that I rode little any more and that Michi was lonely without that attention and those lazy afternoons wandering the Stanford hills, I sold him to our neighbor across the street, Julie Kurth. She had him for a number of years and then when she outgrew him, she sold him too. He ended his days happily in a big horse pasture up on Arastradero Road where he was mascot to the herd. He died of stomach cancer: something that still brings tears to my eyes when I think of how he must have suffered.

In years to come, I would spearhead dedicating a park bench near the swings to that other mentor of mine: Betty Wright, swim teacher and founder of what is now the Betty Wright Swim Center on Middlefield. That was another big fundraising community project that I was deeply involved in as a youth. Aunt Elsa and Uncle Ralph also have a bench there near where the barn used to stand before it burnt down. Now, we are raising funds so that my mother, another pillar of the Barron Park community, will also have a bench there. It seems a fitting place to sit, particularly as she died on Michi's birthday, February 18th, 47 years later.

There have been donkeys in Barron Park since the early 1960's. At first, they belonged to the Bol Family—the same family that sold part of their land, at below market value, to the neighborhood for the creation of Bol Park. At that point, the donkeys moved from the present Bol Park to their current location beside the bicycle path, next to Matadero Creek. When Mrs. Josina Bol passed away in 1996, her children, who no longer lived in the area, put the property up for sale. It was Mrs. Bol's wish that the donkeys remain on the land so neighborhood children could continue to visit them. Several old Barron Park families, who had enjoyed the presence of the donkeys for donkeys' years, were given the opportunity to take over ownership of the last remaining donkey from the old family herd. His name was Mickey, and he lived to be 31 years old.

But donkeys are herd animals, and it was not acceptable to leave Mickey all by himself. Fortune smiled on him. In early 1997, his farrier knew a miniature donkey, Pericles, who was looking for a home. Perry had been a companion for a polo pony, but when other polo ponies moved in, he became odd man out, and so was invited to join Mickey in his comfortable quarters.

In Spring 1998, a couple who had adopted a wild donkey from the Mohave Desert were moving away, and they could not take their donkey with them. Miner 49er moved in to keep Mickey and Perry company in 1998 and has been with us ever since.

Who really owns the donkeys?

We do. Well, sort of. Initially a group of neighbors hoped that the Barron Park Association could own the donkeys. It soon became apparent, however, that owning a pair of donkeys was a little more complex than a simple neighborhood organization was up for. The two things lacking were 501(c) non-profit status under the IRS code, and funds to afford liability insurance. In today's litigious world, it was not possible that we could be owners of lovable, sweet-tempered, gorgeous creatures who, in spite of their lovely dispositions, were big and unpredictable enough to be a possible

danger to humans large and small. What to do? Luckily, there is a local non-profit organization that has in its charter the charge to provide fiscal sponsorship for certain neighborhood activities. That organization, Acterra, became the umbrella that saved our bacon—or, rather, our donkeys. Acterra handles all donations, pays all bills, and includes our beautiful creatures under their insurance umbrella (see notice on the next page detailing how to give your support to our donkeys). Management and care, however, stay with the neighborhood, in the capable hands of Bob Frost.

Who owns the pasture they live in?

When James Witt bought the Bol homestead in 1998, he was quite willing to honor Mrs. Bol's request. The donkeys had been staying in the large pasture across Matadero Creek while the property was on the market. What better solution than to keep them on the land they knew?

In addition to the \$800 he pays monthly in taxes on the pasture (over \$112,000 to date), Mr. Witt has made other improvements to benefit the donkeys: first, he installed automatic waterers so they always have clean water, and so the handlers no longer need to haul buckets of water across the bridge (yes, we really did!); he built their handsome, sturdy shelter; and improved the front gate.

He also considers the visitors who stop by to say 'hello.' He planted a shade tree next to the gate and put a bench under it. He also improved the landscaping by planting and irrigating shrubs along the whole length of the chain link fence at the back of



Photo by Becky Thomas

Madison Thomas encourages Niner to eat his special food for senior donkeys.



Photo by Juanita Gonzales

Handler Leonard Simpson watches Perry munch grass in Bol Park.

the property, which separates the pasture from the VA hospital.

Mr. Witt's most recent improvement for the donkeys is a sturdy new shed, surrounded by a fence. The first shed initially did not have a fence and it proved no match for the donkeys when they decided they wanted more of the food within. It's not just a matter of their powerful head butts, but surprising dexterity with their mouths: The locks on the gates are necessary because the donkeys almost immediately learned to operate the latches.

Mr. Witt particularly wants to thank the artists who sometimes leave drawings and such for Perry and Niner in the "D-mail" box next to the gate. They would make a nice book, which could be used for a fundraiser.

The donkeys also have free reign of the pasture owned by the Klimps, which adjoins Mr. Witt's pasture. Perry and Niner often retreat there on hot summer days to enjoy the shade of a large oak tree.

How much do they cost to maintain?

Routine maintenance, which includes food, farrier, veterinarian, and insurance, runs around \$3000 a month. The occasional illness, like Niner's hoof infection last year, drives that cost up pretty fast.

They pay nothing for their lovely home nor for their day-to-day care, which is carried out entirely by neighborhood volunteers. The current handlers, under the management of Donkey Meister Bob Frost, are Barbara & Jerry Adams, Don

Anderson, Diane & Bill Boggie, Sarah Barakove, Tasha Brooks, Susan Carsen, Rebecca Chan, Eugene Coan, Judith Content, Jennie Daniels, Margaret Fisher, Juanita Gonzales & Gene & Leonard Simpson, Janet Gusman, Inge Harding-Barlow, Sandy & Stuart Harris, Ingrid Holding, Chuck Katz, Zakhary Mallett, Doug Moran, Margherita Pagni, Rick Salazar, Gail Schwettman & Gil Gross, Oren Shneerson, Leland Smith, Eric Struck, David & Becky & Dylan Thomas, Diane Wingfield.

Why can't I feed them carrots?

If you are one of those who stops by to give the donkeys a "little treat" of a carrot or an apple, you are not doing our guys a favor. While those are nice treats for horses, their moisture content is too high for donkeys. Besides, Perry is fat, and that is not healthy. Donkeys are desert animals; they need a dry diet and slow munching throughout the day.

Are they well taken care of? i.e. Niner looks gaunt, and Perry looks fat.

Right on both counts. Niner looks gaunt because he is an old man-28 years, which is probably about 85 in person years. As for Perry, he needs to cut out treats. Please do your part by NOT feeding them.

Veterinarian Dr. Garry Hines of Briarwood Equine Clinic, Woodside, and their farrier Adamberto Tejada of Corona Horse Shoeing, Moss Landing, come by at least twice a year to trim their hooves and give them all the necessary inoculations. Dr Hines also comes whenever one of the donkeys is sick. Last year Niner developed an infection in his hoof, so Dr. Hines came by a few

times to take care of that.

What do they do for fun?

Niner and Perry are always up for socializing. They see school children from classes at Barron Park School a couple of times a year, go to the May Fete, and, of course, weekly Sunday morning visits to Bol Park from 10 to 11 a.m., so children can get up close and pet them. They have gone to many of the BPA Annual Meetings, and they used to participate in the caroling parade and party every Christmas season. Unfortunately, that parade didn't happen this past winter, but if it can be revived, the donkeys will be ready to stroll.

Right now they need more people who are willing to take them for afternoon walks.

If you can help with that, phone Bob Frost at 493-8272 or send an email to bobfrost34@yahoo.com.

It is possible that we may soon be getting some help from patients at the VA Hospital to take the donkeys for their afternoon walk, but that plan is just in the talking stages right now. More on this in a future issue of the Newsletter if it works out.



Photo by Brandy Faulkner

Niner showing off.

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 funds 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.

What is Emergency Management?

By Lydia Kou, Emergency Preparedness Committee Chair



Emergency Management is about ensuring communities can effectively respond to disaster and other unplanned events and recover from them efficiently. Emergency Management comprises of the following cycles, Prevention and Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery.

Last year, the City Council showed its commitment to Emergency Preparedness by implementing substantial changes to the Office of Emergency Services including, selecting PAPD's Officer Ken Dueker as the Director, and making Emergency Preparedness a City Priority again for 2012. This provides us the opportunity to be continuous with our efforts.

Additionally, Ken has taken this opportunity to bring about a more cohesive team. The Emergency Services Volunteers nomenclature is an "umbrella" which includes all City-sponsored emergency volunteer programs, such as the Block Preparedness Coordinators (BPCs), the Community Emergency Response Team (CERTs) and ARES/RACES ham radio operators. The collaboration between the teams will make Emergency Management something that can be achievable. However, to be successful we need your participation. You can join us and be a part of the Emergency Services Volunteers team and be a neighbor caring for a neighbor, additionally, you can put together your emergency response plan through preparation.

To help you with Preparedness, I've previously sent out "Baby Steps to Preparedness" in hopes for gradual progress. I hope it was helpful and you have had the opportunity to work through Steps 1 through 5.

Baby Step to Preparedness #6 is most important, (in my humble opinion); we need this more than food. So, here it is:

Baby Step #6:

If you've purchased an emergency pre-

paredness kit, you should have a 3 day supply of drinking water with a shelf life of 5 years!

In addition to drinking water, you'll need additional water for other uses like cleaning, sanitation, and food preparation.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) estimates that an individual requires at least one gallon of water per day in the event of an emergency.

Today, FEMA and the Office of Emergency Services recommend a minimum 7 day supply.

If you purchase water barrels, be sure to purchase U.N. approved Emergency Water Storage Barrel, they come in 55-, 30-, 15-gallons. Some come with kits and contain a 5 year shelf-life water preserver packet, siphon pump, bung wrench and tamper caps.

If you prefer, you can also use a water rotation system using store bought water to accomplish the same thing. Here is a simple and effective water rotation method:

- Purchase a 7 day supply of water (7 gallons for each family member) plus one extra.
- Store all but one of the water containers as close to your emergency supplies as possible.
- The extra container can be used in your home for everyday use.
- When the extra container is depleted, simply take one of the 6 remaining bottles for use in your home.
- The next time you go to the store, purchase another bottle to replace the one you just used.

That's all there is to it! A simple water rotation system that's easy to follow. In the event of any emergency, you'll be glad you did.

To join us and become an Emergency Services Volunteer as a BPC or CERT and/or to receive Baby Steps to Preparedness 1-5, email me at *Lkou at apr dot com*

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION

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BPA meetings are held the 3rd

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

Call Lynn Melena for location: 493-2135

www.bpaonline.org

Eric Struck's Barron Park Garden Railway

By Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian



Photo A: Two diesels and a steam locomotive.

Almost everyone who lives in Barron Park is probably aware of the Barron Park Garden Railway (BPGR): at least, most of us have seen the quaint, hand-painted, bright yellow signs that appear on several of our streets, advertising the location and hours of operation. Many hundreds of us have visited the BPGR at least once, sometimes returning with our children several or more times over the years. Eric Struck, self-styled "Engineer," owns and operates the miniature outdoor railway for his own pleasure and that of the many visitors who enjoy the free weekend shows he puts on every spring, summer and fall (see box).

A G-scale Railroad

The railway occupies the entire back yard and loops into part of the front yard of the Struck home. It is a "G-Scale" (Garden

Scale) model, much larger than the "O-Gauge" Lionel Trains many of us were familiar with in our childhood, and completely out of the realm of the popular "HO-Gauge" railways built by most model railroad hobbyists. Eric's G-Scale locomotives are each about 18" long and stand about 4" high. They are precisely detailed and beautifully painted. He has more than 50 engines (32 diesels and 20 steam engines). A lot of these are on shelves in one room in the house. See Photo A, which shows three locomotives, one steam, one classic early diesel and one modern-style diesel. The rolling stock is extremely varied, probably including every kind of car you have ever been familiar with and many types that you might have trouble naming. He has at least 70 freight cars and 40 passenger cars (See Photo B).

A Nostalgia-Inducing whistle

The railway winds in and about the shrubbery in the yard, and crosses over itself in spots. There are sidings and rail switching yards, including one very large one that must have 50 or more cars in it. There is a village of realistic looking G-Scale houses and commercial buildings almost big enough to be doll houses, and of course a railroad station, water tower and all the usual accouterments of a working rail-

road (See Photo C). The railway is electric, although the "steam" engine puffs vapor from its smokestack. The sound effects have been recorded from actual full-sized trains. Hearing the steam train puff and strain to get up to speed, then whistle for a crossing is so real-sounding as to be a little bit eerie. You can close your eyes and almost imagine you are back in the 1940s.

How Eric Got Started in Model Railroading

Eric's grandfather worked as a Yardmaster for the Union Pacific Railroad in the Midwest during World War II, so railroading was in his family background. When Eric was a boy, he had an "HO-Gauge" railroad layout in the house, but then he saw "G-Scale" models in hobby shops and knew what he really wanted.

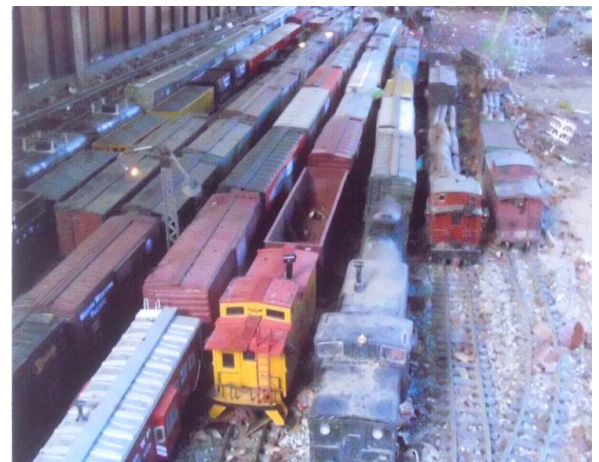


Photo B: Rolling stock in the large switching yard.

The BPGR is 30 Years Old

He started laying tracks in the back yard in March, 1982, when he was a sophomore at Gunn High School. By 1988, he was satisfied that he was ready for "prime time" and he opened it to the public for the first time. Eric joined a local garden railway club, but its expenses—mostly for a club-owned truck and trailer to haul members' systems to shows and events—were getting too high. He arranged for visits of his old club (the Bay Area Garden Railway Society (BAGRS) affectionately referred to as "Baggers"), to our May Fetes in the

<p>Come One, Come ALL to see</p> <p>THE BARRON PARK GARDEN RAILWAY</p> <p>Reopening for the 30th Season on April 21, 2012</p> <p>Saturday Noon to 4:00 PM Sunday 11:00 AM to 4:30 PM</p> <p>Running 31 consecutive weekends until November 23, 2012</p> <p>Located at 748 Kendall Avenue, Between La Donna and Josina Avenues</p>



Photo C: Station and water tank, small switching yard and village.

1990s but has been unable to persuade his new club (The Diablo Pacific Short Line, started in 2008), which has decided not to put on one-day shows.

More than 500 Visitors Expected in 2012

The railway is a popular attraction in Barron Park, but it is rarely crowded. Eric estimates that he has about 20 visitors on an average weekend. It will be open eight months this year, from April 21 through November 23, so he expects about 500–600 visitors total (assuming not too much bad weather).

Eric obviously loves his hobby and works hard to maintain it. He says “It’s kept me out of trouble” since high school days. “No drugs or bad company” he notes. One of his motives in inviting the public for demonstrations is to memorialize the Southern Pacific’s “Mayfield Cutoff,” the

railroad that used to run steam trains through Barron Park along a right-of-way now occupied by the Regional Bike Path that runs past Bol Park and Gunn High School. Eric is a student of the history of that railroad, and of many of the “scenic” (tourist) railroads of the West.

Beyond Model Railroading

When Eric isn’t working on the railroad,

he drives a delivery truck for Chic Tile Company in Redwood City. He has been making deliveries throughout the Bay Area for Chic since 1993. He is also a Barron Park donkey handler, delivering hay in his truck when requested to do so by Bob Frost. On those occasions, he has to drive across the bike path bridge and into the donkey pasture to unload the alfalfa in the shed before Niner has a chance to pig out on it. Eric has been a donkey handler since 2008. When asked what he likes best about Barron Park, Eric will tell you that it is the nice neighbors, the memories from growing up here, and the fact that “It is off the beaten path.”

Family Life at 748 Kendall

Eric lives with his mother, Barbara Struck, in the home that his parents bought when it was brand new in 1950 (See Photo D). His father, Frederick Struck was a captain in a U.S. Army cavalry unit (armored reconnaissance) and fought in North Africa during World War II. After the war he married Barbara, then went to work for Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco, and was involved in the early development of Master Card and Visa. They had four children, two boys and two girls who grew up on Kendall Avenue. Frederick died in 1970 and Eric’s brother in 2004. His

sisters live in Los Altos and Grass Valley, respectively. Barbara has lived at 748 Kendall for 62 years.

61 Years Under an Oak

The rustic, ranch-style home with many windows at 748 Kendall was Joseph Eichler’s model home, not just for the Bol Tract (Josina and Kendall Avenues) but also for his larger development up in Redwood City. Although the Strucks bought a house, they also bought a gorgeous, huge, 300-year-old Valley Oak (see Photo E). This is the tree that split apart on October 12, 2011, caused considerable damage, and had to be removed (see Barron Park Newsletter, Winter 2012, “A Tree Fell on Kendall” by Art Liberman and “It Sounded Like an Explosion,” by Jeanette Kennedy.

I hope you have enjoyed this brief chronicle of a neighbor and his interesting hobby, which he has shared with thousands of visitors over the years. A walk to his model railroad offers a unique experience right here in the neighborhood. If you have any comments or questions about Barron Park history, please contact me at 984 Ilima Way, by email at *dgrahampaca@gmail.com* or phone 650-493-0689.



Photo D: Barbara and Eric Struck on visit to Disneyland, 2002.

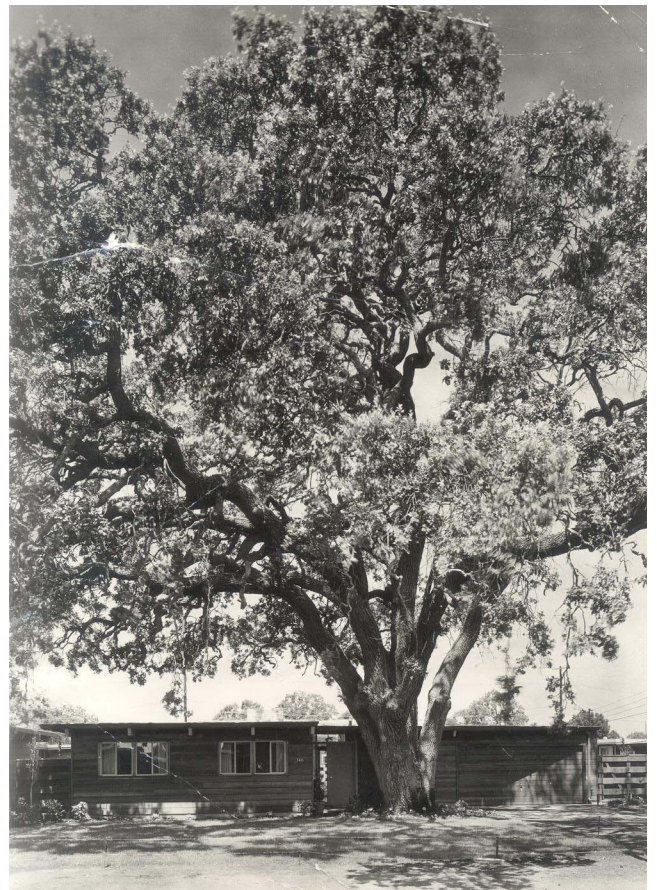


Photo E: 748 Kendall and large valley oak, 1950.

Business Beat: Pet Food Depot's New Digs

By Nancy Hamilton



Around the corner from their old location on El Camino, Pet Food Depot now has more space at 425 Portage Ave., (the road to Fry's). The new store has a warmer ambiance than the old site, and the displays have been enlarged.

They have dog and cat beds, crates, gates, cat trees, many food brands and treats, toys, and everything else found in a normal pet store except live animals (not counting the crickets). Bird feeders create colorful mobiles, and frozen goodies can be found in the freezer.

Low-cost non-anesthetic teeth cleaning for

cats and dogs—\$120 first cleaning (check prices for cats), and nail clipping (\$15) are offered at certain times each week. As soon as they can locate a good trainer, Pet Food Depot will again host puppy-training classes in the back warehouse area. Their last trainer, Gidget, moved to Alaska. My dog, and I'm sure many of yours, attended her classes over the years.

I'd like to see a "Sirius" trainer come to Pet Food Depot (Sirius is a dog training method). If you know of a good "doggie & owner" trainer who would like to hold classes there, please contact owner Harry Tashjian. Phone: (650) 852-1277. Or email him: [Harry at Petfooddepot dot com](mailto:Harry@Petfooddepot.com).



Cynthia Anderson, a long-time employee, is always ready and willing to help.



Harry Tashjian beside a wider selection of dog & cat leashes, collars and other pet paraphernalia.



Ashvin Tandel and his ready smile in front of a new display. He and his wife had a baby girl on the day this was shot (3/1/12). They named the girl Sophia.



Ashvin Tandeil and Sahag Balian (Harry's nephew).

Alison Bakery and Cold Treats

By Lydia Kou

Two newer establishments grace our community: Alison Bakery (*Alison-Bakery.com*) and Cold Treats. Both are located in the triangle between El Camino Real and El Camino Way, and they opened their doors in July 2011.

Alison Bakery came to my attention when I was given the task of providing refreshments for our Barron Park Association Annual Meeting. It all started with coffee, knowing Starbucks could very well provide, but at the same time wanting to support non-chain businesses, off I went to Alison Bakery. Surprisingly, parking was pretty easy to get in front of the establishment. Inside, it was warm, bright and clean. I was greeted by a lovely lady with a beautiful smile and accent, "How can I help you?" When I started my talk about what I was looking for, she continued to smile and was most pleasant and said words that were beauty to my ears. I was thinking, "Holy cow, this is my lucky day!" Yes, they certainly can provide coffee and they would love to provide complimentary baked goods. If you attended the Barron Park Annual meeting you had the chance to taste Alison Bakery's Cream Puffs, made with rose-water infused cream filling and their signature croissant Bread Pudding with almond and chocolate flavors. Yummy!

Alison's baked goods and desserts are made using natural ingredients, organic

flour and reduced sugar content. Their baked goods and desserts are all baked at the site and fresh—nothing is frozen and brought back out the next day. The owners want their food to touch people's senses. Mmmmmmm!

Alison Bakery offers breakfast featuring Jumbo Croissants, Sticky Buns, Apple Galettes and more. They also offer lunch, featuring sandwiches, salads and soups. Their bread is made on-site. Not only is this convenient to dash into for food for the home or office, but also has tables for meetings. Alison Bakery offers free coffee if you purchase baked goods when meeting there.

They will take orders for fresh bread, as well as special occasion cakes. They also cater. This is the wonderful aspect about working with a family-owned business; they can work with you and be more flexible and personalized.

Cold Treats is next door and offers over 16 different kinds of ice cream flavors that are sugar-free. They also have frozen yogurt, juices, shakes, sundaes and more.

Artist opportunity! Cold Treat's owner is looking for vibrant, colorful, fun art to grace their floor-to-ceiling front window with the intent that the same design or effect to be continued on the walls inside the store as a continuous theme. Please email *coldtreats at att dot net* for further information and guidelines.



Fruit Tree Tutorial

You can learn to prune. With proper care, the fruit trees in your yard can provide abundant crops of delicious organic fruits. Learn to prune to develop a healthy structure, increase yield, and manage the size of your trees My hands-on Fruit Tree Tutorial service will set you on the path to pruning independence and save you money. Topics will include:

- Fruit tree care and pruning principles
- Tools and safety
- Setting goals for your trees
- Hands-on pruning practice

Romola Georgia
650-493-1230
rgeorgia at yahoo dot com

Manzana Music School

We have openings right now for guitar, violin, banjo, and mandolin lessons, at our music school in Barron Park, and new for 2012, we are renting out guitars, violins, and banjos (no other rental instruments yet) and offering gift certificates for some kinds of lessons too! Visit www.manzanamusicsschool.com to learn more.

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Barron Park Association
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Palo Alto, California 94306

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Three Barron Park Families Take on a Challenge and Dance with Legumes

By Maryanne Welton

Three and a half years ago, I read an article in *Sunset* magazine about the “One-Block Diet.” The magazine’s staff decided to try and grow or produce all the food they would serve at an end-of-summer dinner. The idea intrigued me and I asked a neighbor, Nancy Lewis, if she was interested in doing something similar. She quickly agreed and we invited a group of like-minded friends and family to join us. A month later we kicked off our plans with an inaugural harvest feast. It was a potluck affair featuring vegetables, fruits, eggs and honey from all of our gardens, which ranged from Redwood City to Los Altos. Since we had just started out, we agreed that anything procured from the broader Bay Area could be used as well so there was butter and ice cream made with Strauss milk and cream, Marin Farms chickens and lamb, and locally sourced olive oil and wine. We even harvested seawater from the ocean and made salt. We were hooked. It was an adventure to see how much of the food we served actually came from our own hands.

For the next two years we got together quarterly for potluck meals, sharing food, recipes and seeds around the table, always with the goal of providing as much of the food ourselves as possible. My husband, Kirk, and I ripped out our lawn and planted a small wheat field, learning the true meaning of separating the wheat from the chaff as we prepared the wheat to grind into flour for making bread. We also became beekeepers and harvested our first honey. Nancy, a prolific gardener, and her husband, Patrick Coyne, grew some unusual varieties of vegetables and herbs, like walking kale and chervil. Jill and Mark Jensen from Los Altos Hills joined us and they even had a cow. Now we had access to milk from our own group. It was a casual and fun foray into a more sustainable and healthy lifestyle.

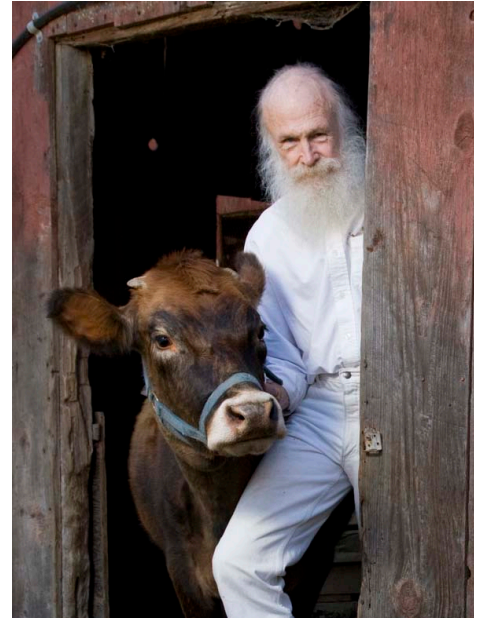
Then I heard Margo True, the food editor of *Sunset* magazine, speak at a literary event about the humor and satisfaction of raising chickens at their Menlo Park campus. I introduced myself afterward and told her how the article on the one-block diet had inspired our harvest dinner group. She asked me to send her a summary of what we had been doing, as well as pictures and menus. They were thinking of hold-

ing a contest to see if other groups might want to take on a similar challenge. Soon afterwards, *Sunset* announced their contest. They invited people to submit plans on how they would go about creating a self-produced harvest meal—and we were one of ten teams around the West selected to take part. With a bit of whimsy, we named our group Dances with Legumes.

Now we got serious. We only had five months—what could we take on that would set our group apart? We invited another Barron Park family to join us. The addition of Lisa Herndon and her family brought some young children into our group as well as Lisa’s passion for fermented foods and drink. We shared our resources and challenged ourselves. One member expanded her community garden plot, some of us added new garden beds, amending hard clay soil with compost and laying out drip irrigation lines. When we found our olive trees were infested with fly maggots, we planted sunflower seeds to produce oil. Some of us grew grains, such as quinoa and corn. It turned out to be a cold, wet, windy spring, and we thought our tomatoes would never fruit, let alone ripen in time. We debated raising chickens or a lamb for meat. Both ideas were vetoed as no one wanted to take on the slaughtering job. We gathered wild mustard seeds



Legumes about to dance into the sky.



Mark and Lucy, who is due to have her calf around August 21st.

and ground them into a batch of honey mustard. Our gardens grew, the bees made honey, and our spirits rose as summer heat finally arrived. Every month I wrote an update on our Dances with Legume’s efforts and *Sunset* posted them on a blog with those from the other teams.

And then it was time to plan for our harvest feast. Emails flew as the menu was finalized and we listed what products from our gardens could be shared among us. Squirrels had stolen every single sunflower seed so we traded honey for olive oil from a friend’s grove in Capay Valley. Our friends with the cow donated a roast beef from the previous year’s calf. Nancy carved a beautifully delicate butter knife from a manzanita branch and led some of us in making butter molds from seed pods and shells. I asked on the BPA email list if anyone could share some limes for one of my dishes and traded jars of jam for a bag of limes. We picked apples from a neighbor around the corner and pressed apple cider. Flowers were picked, the tables were set and everyone arrived carrying dishes filled with our homegrown bounty.

It was a glorious dinner as we lingered around the table in the summer twilight. We reflected on what we were able to accomplish with a little time, effort and com-



Wheat Harvest 2011.



Harvest food.

to flower, gathering pollen and nectar, and am grateful that I live where I can garden and cook and share with my friends and neighbors.

You can read more about the one-block contest in the April issue of *Sunset*. For more detail on what our team, Dances with Legumes, accomplished, visit: <http://oneblockdiet.sunset.com/team-dances-with-legumes>

Interested in growing some of your own food? Common Ground in College Terrace is a wonderful resource for plant materials, advice and classes. You can check them out at www.commongroundinpaloalto.org



Maryanne grinding wheat.

mitment. It was truly a communal undertaking and one that enriched all our lives.

Sunset announced the winning team at a wine and food festival in San Luis Obispo in October. Several of us travelled down there for the event and had a chance to meet the other teams. It was satisfying to connect with some of the other people we had been reading about since the contest

began. We each told our group's story and the lessons we had learned. The winning team was a group of families from Morro Bay with little previous gardening experience, whose lives—and those of many of their neighbors—were transformed by this one-block contest. We applauded their efforts and were glad that we had taken part in this challenge.

This adventure in gardening and food production has made me acknowledge much more the amount of effort it takes to bring food to my table. Whether it's whisking up a vinaigrette with olive oil, mustard, salt, and herbs—or making ice cream using fresh milk, eggs, honey and lemons—my perspective has changed forever. I appreciate in a different way the work that farmers put into growing our food and marvel at how fickle weather and pests can be so farmers can actually harvest what is planted so hopefully in the spring. I watch the bees make their way from flower



A bountiful feast.

Annette Puskarich: Barron Park's Recycling Guru

By Sally O'Neil

Most of us are trying hard to be kinder to the environment these days. We fill our big, blue, recycling bins with everything we can, from plastic milk jugs to old cell phones to glass jars. We wheel the bins out to the street, and, seeing the Palo Alto zero waste truck drive up, we feel good. But at least one Barron Park waste expert says we're missing the main point.

According to Annette Puskarich, recycling alone won't do enough for the environment. Instead of simply piling cardboard boxes, printer paper, and plastic bags into our bins, we need to start earlier in the cycle of buying, using and disposing. If we can create less waste to begin with, and re-use more things in our homes and at work, our blue bins won't be so full. And we'll be even better off.

"We're not going to recycle our way out of the problem," Puskarich says. She would know. An eight-year resident of Barron Park, she has almost two decades of experience in waste and recycling. After completing her B.S. degree in waste management at San Jose State University in 1996, Puskarich worked for an environmental consulting firm as researcher for clients such as banks that wanted to know the environmental report card for properties they were financing. In 1999, she began working as a coordinator for the Palo Alto City Department of Public Works in what is now the city's Zero Waste Program. Then, in 2010, after 10 years working for Palo Alto, she left to strike out on her own as a zero waste consultant. Even so, she's still hooked on waste and recycling; she consults for companies on environmental issues and continues her volunteer activities with groups such as the Barron Park Green Team and Transition Palo Alto, part of a network of groups committed to building local resilience to cope with peak oil and reducing carbon emissions to cope with climate change.

And she is the voice of waste reduction and recycling in Barron Park. Puskarich answers all sorts of recycling and waste-related questions on the Barron Park mailing list: bpa-misc@googlegroups.com. If she doesn't already know the answer to a ques-



tion, she knows how to research and find a comprehensive answer.

"I like to solve problems," she says.

She's also a co-founder of a technology startup, working on a marketing tool for small and medium-sized businesses. Puskarich continues to speak to groups about waste. Her enthusiasm is infectious, and her bright blue eyes light up as she describes the waste disposal hierarchy of the three R's: reduce, reuse and recycle. "Number one is 'make less garbage,'" she says. The goal is to extract the maximum practical benefits from the products we use and to generate minimum waste.

Reducing waste and re-using what we already have are Puskarich's "main passions," even though most of her interactions with other Barron Park residents involve recycling. That's because a full recycling bin starts a new cycle of energy use in gasoline, truck emissions, and sorting materials, and transporting them to where they will be re-manufactured into something else, using more energy and creating more waste. Plastic, for example, is transported to a recycling center and then goes to a recycling plant, where it is washed and inspected. The recyclable plastic is chopped into tiny flakes, which are melted into a liquid that is processed into pellets. The pellets then go to manufacturers who use them for new products.

Ideally, recycling would produce a fresh

supply of the original, for example, with plastic water bottles making more plastic water bottles, or office paper being converted into new office paper. However, this is often difficult or expensive, so "recycling" of many products and materials means reusing them in different materials. Plastic recycling turns the original material into lower grade plastics, such as polyester or fleece fabric, bags or carpet. "Plastic goes into fill for sleeping bags," she says. But eventually these products can no longer be recycled and they go to landfill.

Despite her enthusiasm, Puskarich is careful when working with others. She stays away from preaching or imposing her values on others. "She's enthusiastic, but she doesn't push her agenda too hard. She just provides information," says Barron Park Association President Lynn Melena, who has worked with Puskarich in a neighborhood group of environmentalists known as the Green Team. One of the team's projects is the neighborhood "mini can challenge" begun in April 2011 in neighborhoods throughout Palo Alto. The goal is to get 50% of households to switch to the 20 gallon garbage can from the 32 gallon size. So far, with 36% of residents using the smaller cans, Barron Park is in second place to the leader, College Terrace, where 45% of residents use the smaller cans. Why the emphasis on smaller trash cans? Some 43% of what Palo Altans discard in the garbage is recyclable, according to the city's website. Paper alone accounts for 14%, totaling 11,200 tons a year.

Being practical, Puskarich is aware how much we consumers value our own convenience.

"It's a tradeoff. Most cities now are aware of human factor. People have limited time and they are only willing to do so much," she says. But, she points out, making waste reduction and recycling more convenient has associated costs. For example, allowing us to pile all recyclables in the big blue bins rather than sorting the materials means these recycled materials take up more space in the truck, meaning more trucks, more fuel use, and overall less efficiency.

Puskarich has wide-ranging interests be-

yond waste issues; her goal is to travel the world, and she'd like to visit the Galapagos Islands, Peru and Alaska. She has already been to Morocco, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, England and Ireland. Vegetarian cooking and raw cuisine are other enthusiasms. Puskarich is a vegetarian, she says, for both animal and environmental reasons. A theatre fan, she goes to New York City every couple of years and will squeeze in up to three Broadway and off-Broadway shows in a single day.

A native Californian, Puskarich has a varied background. She grew up in Bakersfield and went to California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. After graduation, she moved to New York City and worked in commercial photography, as a set assistant for advertising products such as cosmetics and liquor. Then her longtime environmental interests took hold. She came back to California and enrolled at Foothill College's hazardous waste program and then finished up at SJSU, which offered a degree in environmental studies.

"I really liked waste and what we do with it as a society," she says, well aware that not everyone is as devoted to the topic.

Combining her interest in local government and waste, she worked at a Santa Clara County recycling hotline while at SJSU, managing student interns during the mid 1990's.

When she joined the City of Palo Alto, Puskarich worked mostly with businesses, visiting them and advising how to reduce garbage costs. Companies are increasingly aware of the need to reduce waste, or use available services more fully. Often companies are not aware how expensive waste disposal can be, she says.

"I helped them institutionalize waste reduction practices into their daily operations," Puskarich says.

Now the City of Palo Alto is following Barron Park's lead with a new program seeking neighborhood contacts called "Zero Waste Block Leaders" to help residents better understand not only the complexities of recycling, but how to reduce waste overall. The city announced on its website in February it is seeking local experts "resources to help answer your questions and foster neighborhood efforts." Barron Park is already there, thanks to Annette Puskarich.

Saving Money, Reducing Trash

The mini can (20 gallon) level of garbage service costs \$20.52/mo. The regular-sized can (32 gallon) service costs \$37.48 a month. Switching from a mini-can to a regular can save a household \$203.52 a year. The Downtown North neighborhood now is just behind Barron Park at 35% mini can use. Five other Palo Alto neighborhoods have above 30% mini-can garbage service.

What will it take for Barron Park to be the first neighborhood to reach the 50% goal? An estimated 150 more Barron Park households need to change their garbage service to the mini-can in order to reach the 50% mark.

"You're paying for the service. Try to get the most out of it," Puskarich advises.

For personalized help or questions, e-mail Green Team members at [barronpark at pagreenteams dot org](mailto:barronpark@pagreenteams dot org)

THE 3 RS—THE BASICS OF WASTE MANAGEMENT

Reducing, reusing and recycling are the three main categories of waste management. Generally speaking, reducing consumption up front is far more desirable than disposal and recycling. Here are some tips for the 3Rs:

Reduce—Buy less and use less. Use smaller trashcans. For every can of garbage we place at the curb, 71 cans of garbage are created "upstream" in the process of material extraction and manufacturing.

- Buy fruits and vegetables loose, not packaged.
- Buy larger sizes of products and use your own reusable packaging to separate into smaller servings versus buying individually packaged servings.
- Make your own less toxic cleaning supplies (mostly water) and use a reusable container vs. purchasing cleaning supplies and creating more plastic container waste.

- Buy milk in returnable/refillable glass bottles. Use cloth napkins and cleaning towels instead of paper.
- Grasscycle, by leaving grass clippings on the lawn instead of placing in the green bin. Select plants for your yard that don't require frequent trimming.
- Remove your name from of unwanted mailings lists (such as credit cards and catalogs).
- If you are having a party or meeting, borrow the neighborhood Zero Waste Party Pack (24 place settings) and eliminate disposables by contacting Annette at [annettepuskarich at yahoo dot com](mailto:annettepuskarich@yahoo dot com)

Reuse—Use elements of the discarded item again. Initiatives include hand-me-downs, garage sales, quilting and using travel mugs. Consider participating in "Freebie" groups, where you can offer your reusable items to someone else; send

out a neighborhood e-mail to [bpa-misc at googlegroups dot com](mailto:bpa-misc@googlegroups dot com). Put the item on the curb with a "free" sign. List the item on Palo Alto Freecycle groups.freecycle.org/Palo_Alto_CA_Freecycle/description, Craigslist- sfbay.craigslist.org, or Palo Alto Online's Fogster www.fogster.com.

Recycle—Discards are separated into materials that can be partly incorporated into new products. This is different from Reuse in that energy is consumed to change the physical properties of the original material.

- Compost kitchen and yard waste.
- Maximize your use of the recycling and yard trimmings collection programs. Visit www.paloaltozerowaste.org for info about free compost workshops and what you can place in the blue and green bins.
- Buy products labeled as made with a high content of post-consumer material, such as toilet paper, office supplies, printer paper, clothing.

Barron Park High School Student donates cake business profits to build a well for families in Cambodia

By John King

Laura King, a Gunn High School Senior, and resident of Barron Park has been running an online cake business called Caketastic Pastries, www.caketastic.biz with the goal of donating the profits of the business to build a well for families in Cambodia. A note from the executive director of Cambodian Child's Dream Organization below describes the well and who it serves:

About the well number 357 "Caketastic Pastries," it benefits 4 families and there are 34 people who use it. They live northeast of Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Husband: Heang Hon, he is 59 years old, a farmer

Wife: Lek Ten, she is 58 years old, a farmer

They have 3 sons and 3 Daughters. Other children in the pictures are their children and nephews.

Cambodian Child's Dream Organization and all members of Heang Hon's family would like to extend our sincere thanks for your generosity. This water well is very helpful to improve health, life expectancy and living condition of community at the rural area in Cambodia.

With Best Regards,

Panha Ou
Executive Director
Cambodian Child's Dream Organization (CCDO)

E-mail: info@cambodian-ccd.org
www.cambodian-ccd.org



Art in the Park Silicon Valley Open Studios

By Jen Hess

This is hopefully the first in a series of articles about the art scene in Barron Park featuring interviews with artists, who are our neighbors. If you are an artist or craftsman who lives in Barron Park—please feel free to contact me. I would be more than happy to come over, interview, and get some photos for an upcoming article

Barron Park will have the pleasure of having Rona Foster opening her studio in the upcoming Silicon Valley Open Studios. Silicon Valley Open Studios is a unique event. Homes and business locations are opened up to the public for people to just stop by and see the work of artists and craftsmen. Take advantage of this event as it provides a unique opportunity to get a window into an artist's creative process. It's also great way to see a variety of arts and crafts

The open studios run for three weekends in different parts of the peninsula. Palo Alto will be featured the first weekend of the event; May 5th and 6th. The second weekend will feature studios in the south peninsula. The third weekend will have locations open in the north peninsula.

The Barron Park location will feature Rona Foster (acrylic and mixed media painter & ceramic artist), Clare Batley (watercolor and silk screen), Anica Moss (photography) and Jen Hess (Chinese Brush Painting)

May 5 & 6 11-5pm 3858 Timlott Ct.

Stop by and check out some of your neighbors' work. They will be glad to see you.

EMAIL LISTS

The BPA has four email lists: bpa-news, bpa-issues, bpa-misc and bpa-job-postings. They are hosted at Google Groups. 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."



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