

# BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## BARRON PARK HISTORY

by Doug Graham, Barron Park Historian

### Barron Park Pioneers

## SARAH WALLIS

### Importance in California History

Sarah Wallis was probably, along with David Packard, one of the two most notable people to have lived on the land that is now our neighborhood. She was the first President of the California Woman Suffrage Educational Association and the most prominent leader of the suffrage movement on the west coast during the 1870s. Before that, she led a fascinating life as one of the earliest overland immigrants to California, arriving four years before the gold rush. She came across in the Stevens Party—the very first to bring wagons over the Sierra. She and her first husband were said to have owned and lived on the land upon which the gold discovery was made. With her second husband, a successful merchant, she enjoyed high society life in gold rush San Francisco.

After marrying a third time, she purchased Elisha Crosby's Mayfield Farm (the land that constitutes the traditional core of modern Barron Park) and moved her family here. She built the grand "wedding cake" Victorian house that later became known as the Barron Mansion. It was then, as a Peninsula society matron, that she began her crusade on behalf of women's rights. Her home became the west coast center of suffrage activities, attracting state and national leaders such as Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and President Ulysses S. Grant.

### State Historical Monument on La Selva Drive

Sarah has been memorialized in our neighborhood by California State Historical Marker No. 969, a bronze plaque affixed to a stone monument on La Selva Drive near the site of her mansion, which burned in 1936. The monument was approved by the California State Office of Historic Preservation, following research and fund-raising by the Women's Heritage Museum and approval by the City of Palo Alto. Location of the mansion footprint was made by myself, based on information from Chatham Forbes, a local historian and college professor who grew up in the mansion during the 1920s.

Dedication of the monument was on Saturday, October 11, 1986, the 75th Anniversary of woman suffrage in California. The dedication ceremony was held at a block party co-sponsored by the Women's heritage museum and the Barron Park Association. If you have never seen the monument, you should take a walk and do so. It is the only historical monument ever erected in Barron Park, and is located near the intersection with Military Way, only a few dozen steps from El Camino Real.

### Importance in Barron Park History

Sarah Wallis was the second owner of Mayfield Farm, which had been carved from the Robles family's Santa Rita Rancho in 1856 by the first "anglo" owner, Elisha Crosby (see the articles on the Robles family in this newsletter, Winter 2002 issue, and on Crosby in the Spring and Summer issues, 2003). Sarah built her wedding cake

mansion and lived here with her children and husband, Judge Joseph S. Wallis, for 21 years, from 1857 until 1878. The Wallises planted orchards and ornamentals. They may have been the owners who channelized Barron Creek on its present course paralleling modern-day Los Robles Avenue. Either they or Crosby apparently permitted the establishment of a stage station just off the San Francisco-San Jose Road (modern El Camino Real) near Matadero Creek, and constructed barns there that later were taken over by the Strain family in the 1920s. Sarah is memorialized in our history not only by the state historical marker mentioned above, but also by Wallis Court, a small cul-de-sac in the L'Hermitte Subdivision next to Gunn High School.

### Almost Lost From History

In spite of her prominence and importance in our actual history, Sarah has nearly been lost from the written record. The process of overlooking her began in the 1880s, after she and Joseph lost their fortune in the stock market crash of 1875 and the ensuing economic depression. She had to sell her lovely home to Edward Barron, and dropped out of state and national politics. She died poor in 1898, her accomplishments already forgotten by most people. When modern local historians have tried to research her life, they have been frustrated by the fact that there are no identified photos of her or diaries or letters written by her. As Dorothy Regnery, the late historian, wrote; "...the image of Sarah Armstrong Montgomery Green Wallis must be

reconstructed from fragments of terse comments. She was diminutive and beautiful. She had a pleasing personality; few objected to her persuasiveness, because she was considerate, conscientious and helpful. Eagerness to learn helped Sarah to rise above the lack of a formal education. Survival nurtured responsibility, dominance and ambition. It took courage and conviction to lead the California suffrage movement."

### **Sarah Armstrong's Early Life**

Sarah Armstrong was born in southern Ohio in August, 1825, to Wesleyan Methodist parents from New York State. Within two years her family continued their westward movement by relocating to Indiana. They were farmers – probably not too successful, as indicated by the fact that they moved further west at least three times during her childhood. By 1834 they were in western Indiana. By 1839 they had ended up in Buchanan County in Western Missouri, close to the Indian frontier. At some point, she lost her mother. Then in 1842 her father died and she and her 8-year-old brother John were orphaned. John was apprenticed to a blacksmith and Sarah was placed as a "hired girl" in the home of Dr. John B. Townsend in St. Joseph on the Missouri River.

### **Sarah Montgomery, overland Emigrant**

When Sarah was 18, in 1844, she married a 28-year-old gunsmith, Allen Montgomery. As Regnery wrote; "It is conjecture (whether) the marriage was the culmination of romance or a means to move westward, or if (her) employer encouraged it for his own economic benefit." In any case, the Montgomeries made plans to emigrate to California along with the Townsends. They probably wagoned together for the trip to the proposed gathering place in Iowa. They left St. Joe some time in March, 1844 and probably proceeded in a leisurely manner, arriving at Council Bluffs in late April or early May. This was too soon to start westward, because the prairie grass would not be high enough to provide adequate feed for the cattle and horses. The time was well-spent in resting their oxen, making any necessary repairs to the wagons or harness, meeting their fellow emi-

grants, and organizing the train.

How did Sarah feel about trip ahead of her? Perhaps she was better prepared for the uprooting of emigration than some people were, as a result of all those westward moves during her childhood. Regnery wrote; "Journals and reminiscences reveal Sarah Montgomery as a friendly, fearless frontierswoman." Nevertheless, the prospect of a 2,000-mile trip on foot through the wilderness, over prairies and high plains, rivers and mountains must have been daunting for her, as it was for most people. The St. Louis, Missouri, *Republican* of June 11, 1844, published a letter from a western Missouri correspondent dated May 30 that is revealing in its attitude: "A small party of emigrants...crossed the Missouri at Council Bluffs last week, electing Mr. STEPHENS, formerly a resident of the Indian Country, Captain. They crossed the river without difficulty or loss, except for a few loose cattle. There were 27 wagons in all, about 40 men, and a large proportion of women and children. The latter must suffer dreadfully by the journey. As a specimen of the kind of men who are going, and of the acts to which this miserable infatuation may lead, I may mention the fact that one man whose wife had recently been brought to bed of twins in Holt County, took her from her bed and placed her in a wagon to commence the journey. The twins died before reaching the Bluffs; but whether the woman was better or not, I have not learned." The letter concluded by saying "I suppose by Spring a year (from now), we shall hear but little of emigration to Oregon" (for the mania would run out).

Such attitudes notwithstanding, the emigrants proceeded with their preparations. Their's was only the third overland emigration, and the first to leave from Iowa. The original emigration was a small party to California in 1841, who abandoned their wagons in Western Utah and barely survived starvation on a 300-mile-long walk around the southern end of the Sierra Nevada. The second one was the so-called "Great Emigration" from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon in 1843, closely followed by a small California-bound party that abandoned its wagons in Idaho and went around the north end of the Sierra

past Mount Lassen.

Now, in 1844, Sarah's party would have to break trail from Iowa to Ft. Laramie, Wyoming, because they traveled on the north bank of the Platte River. The earlier emigrations had angled up from Kansas and traveled on the south bank, where the main Oregon Trail became established later on. To add to the burden of trail-breaking, the rivers were all in flood. The spring of 1844 in the Midwest was characterized by torrential rains, which made this a historic flood year. The high water didn't make too much difference in the case of the Missouri, which was so wide and deep that it would have had to be swum by the cattle anyway, but it made smaller rivers into major obstacles.

### **West From Council Bluffs**

Finally the day arrived. It was decided to make the crossing of the Missouri River in the vicinity of present-day Bellevue, Nebraska, about ten miles south of modern Omaha. About 40 wagons were assembled. The California contingent had 13 wagons, and was composed of 23 men, eight women (two pregnant) and "about 15" children. Doubtless they were all in good spirits and glad to be finally getting underway. The wagons were ferried over the Missouri, one at a time, on a small flat-bottomed boat. The emigrants decided to swim the cattle. George Stewart tells the story in his classic history, *The California Trail*: "...the swirling river was frightening, and the animals refused to take to the water. Forced in from behind, they then began to swim in a circle, each one trying to climb upon the back of the one in front. They were allowed to return to the eastern bank, where many of them stuck in deep mud, from which some could not be extricated. As a final expedient, two men started across in a canoe, leading behind them one of the most tractable of the oxen by a rope tied around the horns. Once the ox was swimming, his course was easily controlled. The others, being crowded in, followed the lead of the first one, and swam safely over. Thus at the very beginning the company faced a serious problem and gained confidence by overcoming it."

Their route led to the Platte River, and then kept to its north bank, following the line of



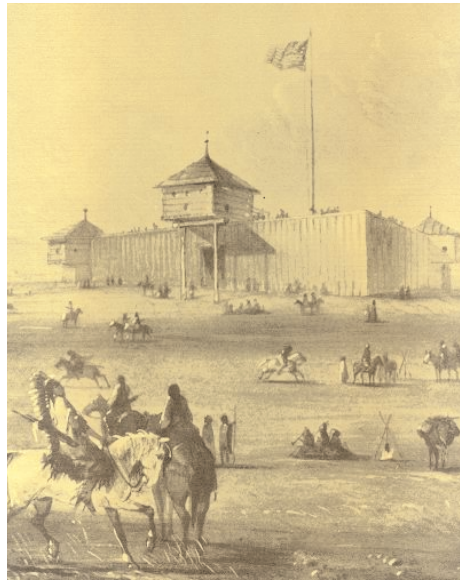
what would later become the Mormon Trail. Although a few fur company wagons had used this route as early as 1835, it was hardly an established trail when the Stevens Party used it. They came to their second test after two days travel, when they faced the swollen Elkhorn River, a major Platte tributary blocking their route. To make the crossing, they sewed rawhides over one of the wagon-boxes, turning it in a makeshift boat. They then unloaded all the wagons, disassembled them, ferried everything across, reassembled and reloaded. The animals were swum across as before. As Stewart wrote: "Again, with prodigious labor, an obstacle had been passed."

**The Easy Part**

The rest of the trip up the 500-mile long, flat valley of the Platte was relatively easy and uneventful other than an exciting buffalo stampede that they hurried out of the path of, and an indian scare just before their arrival at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. They marveled at the strange western scenery on the river's opposite bank at Chimney Rock, Courthouse Rock and Scotts Bluff. Crossing the North Fork of the Platte to reach the Fort was probably easy for them; none of the memoirs and reminiscences even mentions it. Likewise, the journey across modern Wyoming (which they called "the high plains") was uneventful. From Fort Laramie to South Pass, they followed the already-established Oregon Trail through hilly country, then back across the North Platte at the site of modern Casper. They pushed on past Independence Rock and up the valley of the Sweetwater to the broad and gentle sagebrush plain with an almost imperceptible saddle on the Continental Divide that is the famous South Pass.

**The "Dry Drive"**

Once they reached Big Sandy Creek, which flowed west, they knew they were on the west slope of the divide. They then made a risky decision to take an untried "cutoff" to avoid several weeks of travel southwest to Fort Bridger and north again to the Bear River. They decided to cut straight west-northwest across the plain to the Green River, then over some low mountains to the Bear River and re-join the Oregon Trail in modern Utah. This cutoff involved a

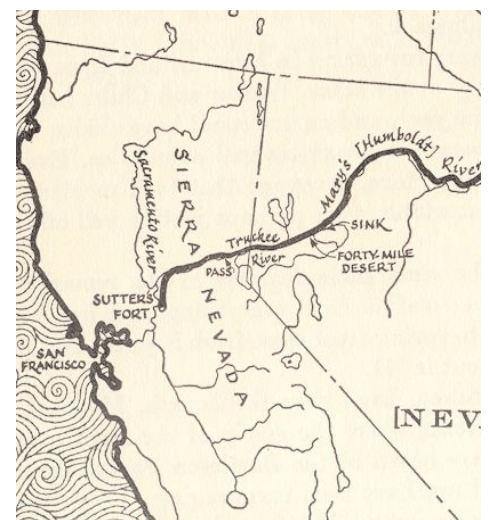


"dry drive" of 43 miles to the next water, the Green River. It took two days, which nearly led to disaster. They had thought the distance was only about 25 miles, one long day's drive, and therefore failed to carry water or feed for the oxen. They had to make a dry camp at nightfall, in a desolate place, and during the night 40 head of cattle went off on their own, looking for water. Pushing on at daybreak, the emigrants reached the river at 11 AM, much to everyone's profound relief. They spent several days there while some of the men went back to round up the strays, which they found back on the Big Sandy. On the way there, the cattle round-up party sighted a Sioux war party that (luckily) failed to sight them. Later on they had a major scare when a group of friendly Snake Indians charged down on them for a joke.

We can only guess what young Sarah Armstrong thought of all this. She was the youngest married woman in the party, hardly more than a girl, so she probably had few if any opportunities to demonstrate the leadership and management qualities that became so manifest later in her life. It seems that both she and her gunsmith-husband, however, were considered to be valued members of the group. It was noted by several people who later wrote memoirs that 19-year-old Sarah enjoyed the trek, in contrast to some other women in the party. She recalled that it was "very pleasant until we came into the mountains" (meaning the Sierra Nevada). She was in good health and unencumbered

with children, and it may have been a great adventure for her.

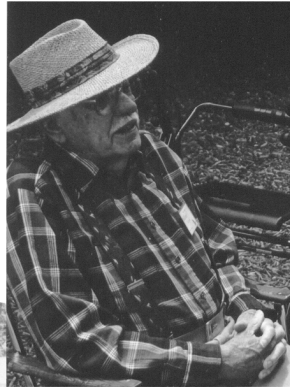
After the Green River was reached, the rest of the distance to Fort Hall, a Hudson's Bay Company fur post, was covered fairly rapidly. This was a very good thing, because the summer was almost over and only half of the distance had been covered. Fort Hall was in eastern Idaho, which was then part of "the Oregon country," claimed by both the U.S. and Great Britain. Here the emigrants stopped a few days to buy food, rest, refit and plan. This was the point beyond which they would have no guide. The Oregon contingent could continue following the ruts made by the Great Emigration the year before, but the California-bound group would soon find itself on its own. The group's guide, Caleb Greenwood, a trapper and mountain man, had hired on in Iowa with the understanding that he had never been west of Ft. Hall. It was probably a very good thing for Sarah that the overall party's leader, Elisha Stephens, intended to go to California, since his leadership may have made the crucial difference in enabling the emigrants to overcome difficulties of which they, as of yet, had little or no inkling.



**The Story Continues...**

I will continue with Sarah's story in future issues of this newsletter, including her second marriage to a man who was running away from his past in the East and her abandonment by him. This was followed by her third (and lasting) marriage to Joseph S. Wallis.





**Barron Park Seniors at Lunch in Bol Park**

*(See Senior Update column for names.)*





# SENIOR UPDATE, AUTUMN '03

By Mary Jane Leon

## Mailing for Members a Huge Success

This past spring, a few seniors volunteered to help get out a special mailing to see if we could increase our membership. Traditionally, the spring issue of the newsletter goes to all Barron Park households, with a membership form and return envelope inside. Those people who return the form, with some money, are members for the year. That's the end of the membership drive for the year.

Our new membership chairman, Don Anderson, thought we could do better. He planned a second mailing to all neighborhood households who had not returned the form from the newsletter. About 1200 forms had to be folded and stuffed, so on May 15 the volunteers gathered at Jean Olsen's home for a 'stuffing and mailing' party. Our reward was lunch brought in from Su Hong—after all the work was done.

Don's plan was right-on. Thanks mainly to that direct mailing, we have so far enjoyed a 60% increase in membership over last year, and roughly an 80% increase in income from dues. The stuffing team (see pictures) deserve a big round of applause. Thanks to you all.

## Memory Test for Lunchers

We have had two lunches since our last column. In both June and August we met in Bol Park. Driftwood Deli catered again, and we had big turnouts both times. To see some of your neighbors who attended, look at the collage on the facing page. How many of those people do you know by name? We'll give you the names in this column, then you see how many you can match up with the pictures. The real pictures, in color, will be displayed at a future lunch, with names, so you can check your memory.

People pictured, in alphabetical order, are: Patricia Eldridge, Sylvia Faso, Lila Friedman, Alice Frost, Juanita George, William George, Herb Goral, Jim Jacobsen, Rosemary Jacobsen, Barbara Johnson, Marjorie



**The Stuffing Party. Top: Pat Eldridge, Denise Atherton, Jean Olsen, Mary Jane Leon. Bottom: Bob Frost, Ann Boeckling, Harriet Moss, Jack Sutton, Herb Goral.**

Larsen, Gee Gee Lenhart, Joan McDonnell, Tom McDonnell, Dorris Miller, Harriett Moss, Jean Olsen, Bud Rubin, Ruby Schanzenbacher, Betty Seike, Julie Spengler, Barbara Stark, Fiona St. John. And Jennifer Wallin stopped by with her Jack Russell Terrier Babs.

We have a lunch scheduled at Hunan Gardens for mid-October—about the time this newsletter comes out—and then our annual holiday lunch in December. Hope to see you there.

## Services Offered

We continue to have a group of active volunteers who offer their services to Barron Park neighbors. We can run an errand for you or with you, do small odd jobs at your home, help you learn to use e-mail, stop by for a visit, or give you a daily phone call. We also enjoy finding information that you might need about any specific service available to local seniors.

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

## Donkey Stories Wanted!



Did you know that the Barron Park Donkeys have their very own web site? Take a look at <http://rosettastoneinc.com/california/donkeys>. The site is maintained by Barron Park neighbor Inge Harding-Barlow. Inge is in the process of a major redesign and updating of the donkeys' web site, and she needs YOUR help! She's looking for any stories people can contribute about their experiences with the donkeys over the years. If you have a favorite story to recount, please contact Inge by phone at 493-8146 or by email at [ihb@eskimo.com](mailto:ihb@eskimo.com).

# BARRON PARK NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL PTAS NEED YOUR SUPPORT

The new school year is now in full swing and both our neighborhood elementary schools, Juana Briones and Barron Park, are already feeling the effects of the state budget cuts.

Every year we ask each student's family to help fund programs and salaries fundamental to our children's education. For the first time we are asking neighbors who do not have children in school to donate as well. Some of you have already contributed, and we thank you again. For those of you who doubt a small donation can make a difference, please remember that **if everyone just gave a little our schools would benefit tremendously:**

- \$5 buys a field trip scholarship or 100 sheets of writing paper
- \$15 buys an instructional resource book for the teachers
- \$25 buys 15 glue sticks or a set of paint and brushes to use in art activities
- \$50 buys 3 hours of a teacher's aide time
- \$100 buys 15 books for use by reading groups at all grade levels

You can see how important even a modest donation can be. While any amount does make a difference, we are asking you to consider making a tax-deductible donation of \$50 or \$100, while we are asking \$450 or \$500 from the families of our students. Our goal is to raise \$5,000 from our neighbors for each school, and so far we have collect-

ed \$2900! What a great start! Won't you please join those who have already helped?

There are also two other simple ways you can help. **EScrip and schoolpop cost you nothing but can be very profitable for the schools.** It only takes 5 minutes of your time to benefit our schools for many years to come. Simply go to their websites at [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com) and [www.schoolpop.com](http://www.schoolpop.com), choose a school to benefit, register your grocery cards and/or credit cards, and then shop as you normally would! There are no receipts to collect and every purchase at a participating store will profit the school.

Finally, we would like to invite you to a celebratory gathering at Barron Park Elementary School on Thursday, October 23rd, to honor the many neighbors who have supported our schools. Please meet us in the reading garden (or MP room if it rains) from 5:00-6:00 for refreshments, hors d'oeuvres, and our 3rd grade choir. We do hope you will come!

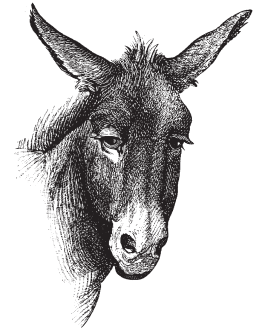
**Thank you for your consideration!**

Karen Gibson 813-1543 or Natasha Moiseyev 323-8239 at Barron Park PTA

Lynn Kidder 493-6575 or Cindy Ziebelman 852-9797 at Juana Briones PTA

Please drop off or mail to: Barron Park P.T.A. 800 Barron Ave. Palo Alto, CA 94306 or Juana Briones P.T.A. 4100 Orme St. Palo Alto, CA 94306

## The Barron Park Donkeys



Perry and Niner, Barron Park's very special donkeys, continue to greet children and adults alike in newly-renovated Bol Park each Sunday morning (weather permitting) 9:30 to 10:30. The "new" park contains some references to our donkey friends: see if you can find them!

The donkeys look forward to their annual check-up and shots, with their very special vet, Dr. Gary Hanes, who not only takes time to instruct our volunteer donkey handlers, but is very knowledgeable about this species, as he owns a donkey himself!

If you can afford to help support the donkeys, please mail a check to Acterra, 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303. Your check should be made out to the "Palo Alto Donkey Project." No gift is too small.

Acterra is a non-profit environmental group, formerly called Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation, which houses the Sierra Club and other Nature organizations. Acterra pays the donkeys' bills - for feed, farrier, etc., carries their insurance, as well as an interest-earning endowment fund.

## P.T.A. Donation Form Thank You!

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\$100  \$50  \$25  other \$\_\_\_\_ payable to Barron Park PTA or Juana Briones PTA

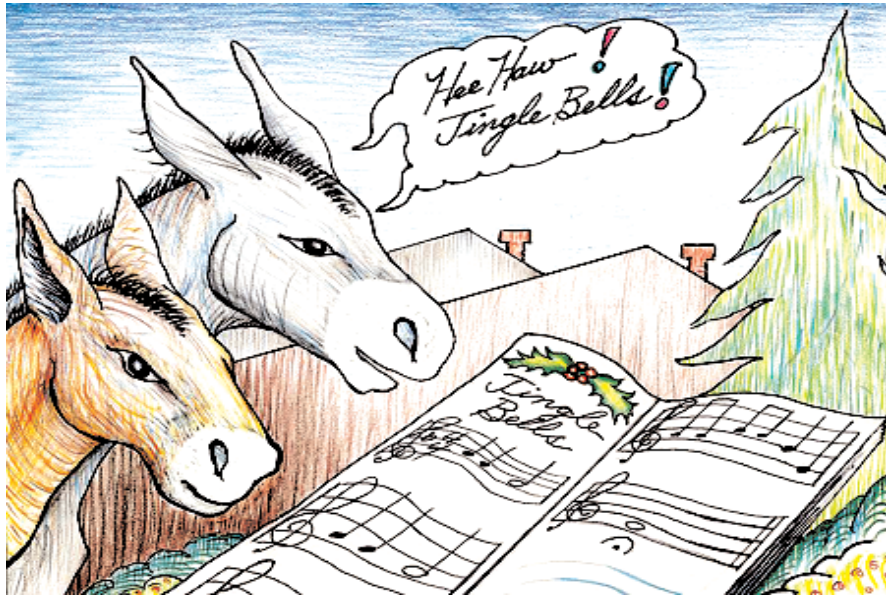
I plan to register with eScrip and/or use [www.schoolpop.com](http://www.schoolpop.com)



\* **FOURTH ANNUAL** \*

# Barron Park Neighborhood Holiday Party and Donkey Parade

*Featuring the Gunn High School Chamber Choir*



Pericles (Perry) and Miner 49er (Niner), the Barron Park community donkeys

Walk with Perry and 'Niner through our neighborhood!  
Sing seasonal favorites! Bring your kids and animals!

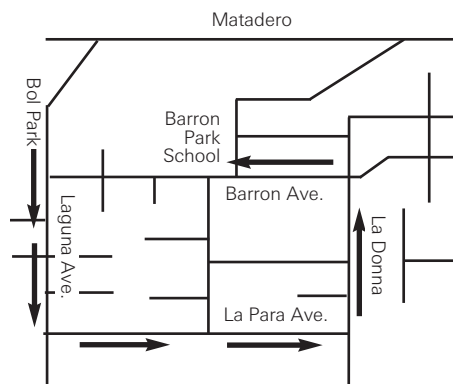
**Saturday, December 20th**

**Parade: 2:30 pm Bol Park – Rain or Shine!**

**Party: 3:15 pm Barron Park School**

## Parade Route:

Meet at Bol Park 2:30 pm  
Leave Bol Park 2:45 pm  
Laguna to La Para  
La Para to La Donna  
La Donna to Barron  
Barron to Barron Park School



Refreshments and singing at  
Barron Park School  
Multi Purpose Room 3:15 pm  
(If you can bring goodies for the  
party, please call Don Anderson  
at 494-8672)

# MEET YOUR BARRON PARK DONKEY HANDLERS!

By Don Anderson

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

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

## Jim Bronson and Judith (Zoie) Brown

Jim Bronson and Judith (Zoie) Brown feed the donkeys on Thursday mornings. Jim and Zoie incorporate their "donkey duty" into their ritual morning run around Gunn High School. For each of

them, it's a great way to interact with neighbors they might not otherwise have a chance to get to know. "It's our 7 am community. Every morning, we greet the same friendly folks who are out walking their dogs, the same group of women chatting happily in the midst of their early exercise routine and the same bleary eyed students making their way to morning activities. Sometimes our interaction may be a simply nod, and other times, we have a chance to stop and hear what's transpiring in their lives. Then, as we round the end of the playing field and the donkeys catch sight of us, they somehow know when it is Thursday morning and we are greeted by their ritual braying and gate rattling as they jostle to be the first with a mouthful of

hay." Jim and Zoie also take part in other activities involving the donkeys including the May fete, walk to school and their favorite — interactive kindergarten programs.

For Jim, who has lived in Barron Park since 1979, working with the donkeys is part of a long history of participation with the group of handlers who rescued the Barron Park donkeys when their patroness, Mrs. Bol, died in 1996. He enjoyed taking his dog, Bear, to play with Mickey while Mrs. Bol watched. Mickey and Bear played chase games where first one was in the lead and then the other took over the lead. One time Mickey caught up with Bear and picked him up by the tail, while Bear was still running full speed. Then Mickey set Bear down and they were off for more rounds of chasing.

When both Mickey and Mrs. Bol were gone and Perry and Niner became the new pasture-mates, the donkey handlers became more organized. Being a life-long jogger, Jim became a handler who specialized in running the donkeys for exercise. He also became a back-up handler who filled-in for others when he was not away on travels. Jim helped resolve the problem of who owns the donkeys and how to handle their finances and insurance—then the Peninsula Conservation Center, now ACTERRA.

For Zoie, who grew up around horses, the Thursday morning feed is part of a delightful morning practice she began after moving to Barron Park two years ago. She loves the gentle spirit of Niner, and the rather "wiley" ways of "little" Perry. "They are both such characters, and keeping up with their barnyard antics can be quite amusing." With a long-standing interest in community development, Zoie appreciates the network of people who contribute to the rather unique existence of the "community donkeys" "There is a tremendous level of commitment and contribution shared by the volunteers and, it is a pleasure to participate with the network that keeps this tradition alive. The "handlers" are a group of fascinating and wonderful people with whom I would otherwise be unlikely to connect. But the real hook for me is the occasional nuzzle of thanks from Niner

and the squeals of delight from children who have the opportunity to interact with these long-eared creatures that appear as anomalies in the hurried atmosphere of Silicon Valley.

Jim's business career includes nine years as a corporate vice president for an electronics company, 15 years running his own organizational development business (Performance Dynamics), and, in the last four years, lots of volunteer work for community organizations, including the Challenge Learning Center (which does youth development programs in outdoor settings), and Kara, a grief support organization where Jim is Director of Community Outreach and Education.

Zoie obtained a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto and a J.D. from Stanford. She practices intellectual property law and volunteers with non-profit organizations providing grief counseling and pro-bono services to the community. Both Jim and Zoie practice meditation at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City.



## Mary Jane Leon

Sometime in mid-1998, Mary Jane Leon and her dog Cody were walking along the bike path when she saw Lee and Edith Smith in the pasture feeding and grooming the don-

keys. At that time, there were three donkeys: Mickey, Niner, and Perry. Mickey was very old, needing special feedings of mash, and extra TLC. Mary Jane stopped to chat, and the next thing she knew, she was a donkey handler!

The donkeys do get under your skin. Mary Jane soon fell into the routine of feeding them once or twice a week, taking them to the park occasionally for Sunday morning visits with children. "Even when they are stubborn, which is frequent, or downright rebellious, which is less often," says Mary Jane, "you still want to hug and love them." Now she also coordinates the donkeys' yearly visits from the veterinarian.

Mary Jane grew up as an Iowa farm girl.



She attended Iowa State University, where she majored in technical journalism. After graduation, she spent a few years in Washington, D.C., learning to be a proof-reader, then worked as a copy editor for scientific journals. She moved to Menlo Park in 1965, where she went on to become an editor, technical writer, and finally documentation manager. In 1971, Mary Jane and her husband Ralph moved to their present house on Laguna Way in Barron Park.

They loved their home, and Barron Park, from day one, but it wasn't until Mary Jane retired (early) in 1996 that she really began to involve herself in the neighborhood: becoming a donkey handler, then the next year starting a column in the newsletter, then joining the Board of the Barron Park Association. As of two months ago, Mary Jane has taken on the job of BPA treasurer.

**Zakhary Cribari**



Zakhary Cribari is the youngest donkey handler in the crew. Currently age 16, Zak has been working with the donkeys for 3 years. His work and relationship

with the donkeys started when one day he was riding his bike around Bol Park on the bike path, and to his surprise he came upon donkeys in a pasture. He searched around for the "owner." He went to the VA Hospital, where he was told that they (the VA) had nothing to do with the donkeys — that they probably belonged to a private residence. He then went to James Witt's house, and James steered Zak to Leland and Edith Smith. That very weekend, Leland and Edith assigned Zak to work with the donkeys at the park. From then on, it became a routine for him to join the group of donkey handlers every Sunday.

Now that Zak has been around with the donkeys for quite some time, he has established a great relationship with them. Niner especially seems to enjoy his company, and will often approach Zak and affectionately rest his head on Zak's shoulder.

Zak has been a diligent and successful publicity agent for Perry and Niner. Last year he barraged a number of local and regional newspapers with emails about the boys, ultimately resulting in articles in the San Jose Mercury News, the San Mateo County Times, the Oakland Tribune, and

the two Palo Alto Newspapers, the Daily News and the Weekly. Not long after these articles appeared, the donkeys received a large donation from an Oakland resident, and several visitors came from all over the Bay Area to meet Perry and Niner.

Zakhary easily wins the honors as the most dedicated of donkey handlers. Since he moved out of Barron Park more than a year ago, he has traveled by bus on Sundays, all the way from South San Jose (two hours each way!), to spend his time with

Perry and Niner. In part, all this bus travel has prompted one of Zak's "hobbies." He has become something of a public transportation advocate, and he regularly attends the monthly meetings of the Valley Transit Authority Board of Directors to voice his concerns about their system. He also enjoys swimming, biking and hiking — especially wilderness hiking, far from "civilization."

## SAFE ROUTES TO THE NEW SCHOOL

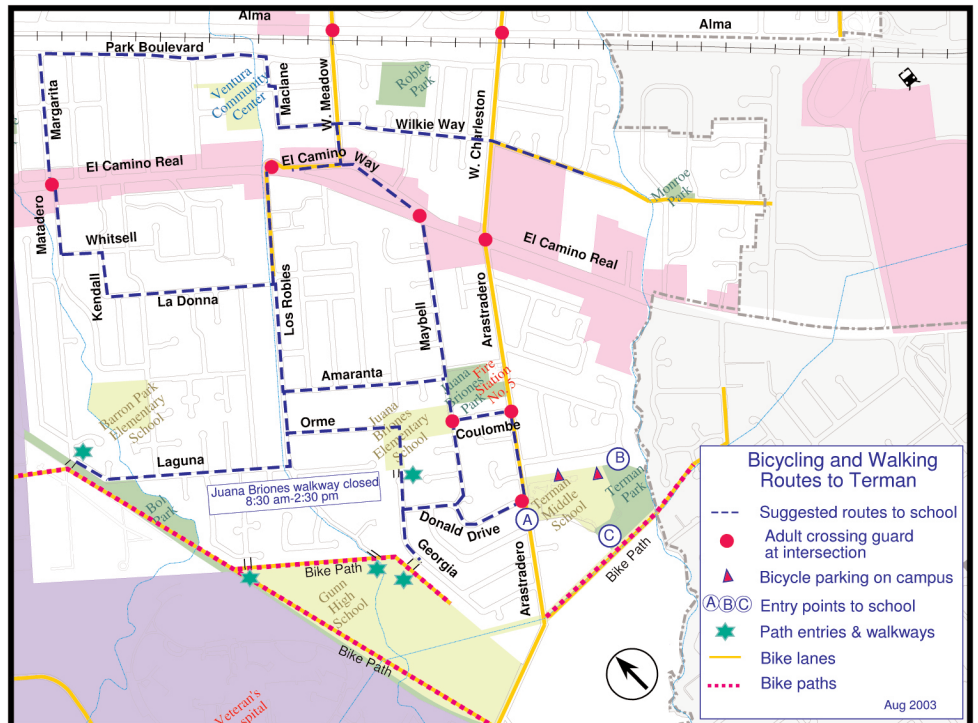
By Sue Luttner Coonen

With the re-opening of Terman Middle School in our neighborhood, everyone from the police to the PTA is focused on traffic safety. As residents know, the first week of school saw back-ups and gridlock on Arastradero, solved in the short term by police officers with whistles.

But City traffic engineers have since taken on the larger problem, fine-tuning the upgraded signal at Donald and Arastradero. They've changed the timing of the Donald-Terman phase, and inserted an "all-walk" phase during the morning and

afternoon rushes, which is clearing student walkers and bicyclists more quickly away from the intersection so traffic can flow.

For the first month of school, the City also assigned crossing guards to a number of corners that haven't had them in the past: Matadero at El Camino, Maybell at El Camino, Arastradero at El Camino, Coulombe at Maybell, and Donald at Arastradero (see map). Traffic monitors are counting the number of students using the various intersections, and the City will retain crossing guards where they're most needed.



# KIDS KORNER

by Shari Daiuto

**F**or many of us, fall brings to mind the changing trees, shorter days and cooler nights. Additionally, fall marks the start of school, a milestone in many of our Barron Park families. Many of our neighborhood children are starting Kindergarten this year and I had the fortunate opportunity to interview several of them.

From the boy who wanted to be a fireman when he grew up to the girl who meticulously and accurately detailed how many kittens she'd like, these children are intent and (mostly) enthusiastic about taking their first steps towards high school graduation.

The following questions were posed to seven pre-Kindergarteners. Their unedited answers appear in italics.

**What's your favorite book?**

- Pokemon*
- Helen's Hiding Place and I Spy*
- Winnie the Pooh*
- Comic books*
- Dinosaurs*
- Power Rangers, Mummies, Encyclopedia*
- Herb, the Vegetarian Dragon*

**What's your favorite indoor (preschool) activity?**

- Sharing time*
- Playground*
- Magnet Tiles*
- Playing house with the girls*
- Legos*
- Playing house*

**What's your favorite outdoor activity?**

- Playing toys*
- Clayboy*
- Pretending we're kitties*
- Bike*
- Sandbox*
- Playing on the swings*

**Do you have a pet? Why can't you take your pet to school?**

- A little baby cat. No, keep him at home.*
- Yes, a brown cat. No, we can't take him to school!*
- Yes, a guinea pig. Pets can't come to school. The boy who took good care of pets isn't here anymore.*
- Yes, birds. My mom won't let me.*

*Yes, a fish and cat. They would have to go on the car or bike, but there's no seat on the bicycle.*

**Do you think you'll like Kindergarten? Why?**

- Yes, because there's a Thomas [the Tank] toy.*
- Yes, a little baby caterpillar is there.*
- Yes, because there's reading.*
- Yes. I saw what they do there. Dress-up looked fun.*
- Yes, because it's fun.*
- I'll really like it when I get there. Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!*

**How do you feel about starting a new adventure in Kindergarten?**

- Happy*
- Good*
- Bored*
- Can't wait for my dad to pick me up and I hug him.*
- Excited, scared and shy*

**Pretend that you're already a Kindergartener. Which things will be your favorites?**

- Motorcycle toys*
- A big backpack. My sister goes to high school.*
- Bikes and Jurassic Park movies*
- Playing with balls*

**How old do you wish you were? Why?**

- Much bigger*
- 5!*
- 4, I don't want to turn 5.*
- 16 Then I can drive and be a teenager.*
- Old enough to ride Motocross bikes.*

*8 because Emily is 8.*

**What would you like to be when you grow up?**

- Fireman*
- A boy*
- Orthodontist Dentist*
- Race car driver*
- Doctor*
- Army*
- A piano player with seven cats-2 black, 2 yellow with orange stripes, 2 black and white and 1 gray.*

A special thank you to Alex, Alexander, Bianca, Christopher, Cristal, Hyrum and Jessica as well as their parents. Also, thank you to the wonderful teachers at Barron Park Children's Center for their help. Last, but not least, thank you, Nancy, for the fun idea!

**Kids' Korner Needs Contributors!**

Do you have any stories that are of interest to Barron Park children or families? The Kids' Korner column needs you! Writing an article is a way to share family-related topics with our Barron Park community. The only commitment is getting your article to the newspaper editor on time—it's not required that you write for each and every newsletter. However, if you were interested in regularly contributing to the column, your efforts would be gratefully appreciated. Phone Nancy Hamilton, Editor, at 494-2941 (email [jh@cyberstars.com](mailto:jh@cyberstars.com)) if you are interested.

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Come and support your neighborhood theatre where every dollar you spend on a variety of great films goes back into the theatre and Gunn High School! Spangenberg Theatre, 780 Arastradero Road at Foothill Expressway, Palo Alto; 650-354-8263. Web address: [www.spangenbergtheatre.com](http://www.spangenbergtheatre.com). Email: [Spangenberg@earthlink.net](mailto:Spangenberg@earthlink.net).

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[www.pilatescardiocamp.com](http://www.pilatescardiocamp.com) 1-866-339-4438



# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

By Patrick Muffler

## When the lights go out

Previous articles about Emergency Preparedness have emphasized four major types of disasters that could seriously affect our community: earthquakes, floods, toxic spills and terrorism. Last month's events in the northeastern part of the United States, however, have awakened us to a fifth type of disaster: a major breakdown of the electric-power grid. On Thursday 14 August, much of New York, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, southern Canada, and part of New England was suddenly and without warning left without power. The specific cause of the outage is still controversial, but for our purposes it does not matter. What does matter is that in about nine seconds 61,800 megawatts of power were lost and approximately 50,000,000 people were left without electricity.

The results of this massive outage have been reported extensively in the media, and I won't detail them here. Suffice it to say that it wasn't merely the inconvenience of no electrical lights and no air conditioning. Transportation networks, most spectacularly the subways and commuter trains in New York City, were brought to an abrupt halt. Pumping stations failed in Ohio and Michigan, depriving millions of people of tap water. Gasoline and diesel became precious commodities as electrically powered gas pumps sat idle. Phone systems, both landline and cell, were compromised. Restaurants, grocery stores, and businesses dependent on refrigeration took big economic hits. The list goes on and on.

The response to the outage was truly impressive, by governments, by the utilities, and by the public. Much of the power was restored by the next day, but it took several days for clean water to be restored in some Midwest cities, and the lingering effects of the blackout persisted for nearly a week. But this was a blackout that occurred on a sunny, summer afternoon—not in a blinding blizzard in mid January. The major lesson for us is that such a widespread blackout could happen anywhere in the United States. Our utilities indeed are owned by the City of Palo Alto

but are part of the Western Grid, which covers the states west of Denver plus British Columbia and Alberta. Electrical power is wheeled around this grid depending primarily on demand and available supply. A major breakdown of the Western Grid will inevitably affect us.

And the grids throughout the United States are sorely in need of expansion and upgrading. According to the Edison Electric Institute, even as the US economic output doubled between 1975 and today, investment in the grids fell from \$5 billion to about \$2 billion annually. Deregulation appears to be the primary culprit, leaving the electrical utilities with minimal economic incentive to improve the grids. Interstate rivalries, politics, and ever-increasing demand also are factors.

So what are the immediate lessons that Barron Park residents should learn from the August blackout in the Northeast? The first is simply a reiteration of the need for each household to provide for its basic needs for several days to a week, without any assistance from an outside government or private entity. In a major disaster, each household will be on its own. Each household needs to have sufficient emergency supplies to tide it over the period until outside assistance becomes available and utilities are restored.

The essentials of any cache of emergency supplies are water, food, a battery-powered radio and first-aid supplies. Excellent guidelines for emergency caches are presented in the 3rd edition of "Living with our Faults," published in 1994 by the City of Palo Alto—[www.cityofpaloalto.org/fire/earthquake/](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/fire/earthquake/) (see table of contents). For those who choose not to build their own emergency caches, the American Red Cross sells a wide selection of Disaster Preparedness Kits that are described in detail at [http://www.paarc.org/supplies/cat\\_disaster.htm](http://www.paarc.org/supplies/cat_disaster.htm).

The second obvious lesson comes from the graphic pictures of New Yorkers trudging across bridges, walking hundreds of blocks in blistering heat, and sleeping on the steps of public buildings. If a major disaster occurs during daylight hours, many of us

are very likely to be away from home: at work, at a restaurant, transporting kids to school or soccer, etc. We may have a wonderful household emergency kit at home, but what good will this do us if we are stuck elsewhere owing to traffic jams, blocked railroad crossings, damaged roads or bridges, etc.? I remember what a major exercise it was to get from Menlo Park to Barron Park the afternoon of the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, and that was an earthquake whose epicenter was many miles to the south and whose effect on Palo Alto was very minor. In a community like ours, almost totally dependent on personal automobiles, non-functioning traffic lights produce instant gridlock.

The solution to this is obvious: carry an emergency kit in your car. In each of our two cars we carry a small rucksack that contains the following: a flashlight, a liter bottle of water, a heavy sweater, a space blanket, leather gloves (for protection against broken glass), a small first-aid kit, protective gloves (for first aid to others), four small packages of tissue, six pre-moist towelettes, and some granola bars. In addition, in each car each of us has a pair of old hiking boots or tennis shoes (with socks). If I have to walk five miles from Menlo Park to Barron Park, I would much prefer to do it in good walking shoes. And my wife sure doesn't want to walk five miles in heels!

A major goal of the Barron Park Association and its Emergency Preparedness Committee is to greatly increase the percentage of households prepared for a disaster. The recent Northeast power outage emphasizes our vulnerability. Each household needs to take steps to assure adequate supplies of emergency water, food, etc. for a week without assistance, and to have the essential supplies in your cars so that you can cope if a disaster strikes while you are elsewhere.

**Thank you for joining the Barron Park Association. If you haven't filled out our Emergency Preparedness form, please see: <http://www.cyberstars.com/bpa/emergency>**

# Major City Political Issues: Some Background and Thoughts

Commentary: Doug Moran

This commentary addresses policy issues that I anticipate and /or hope will be major topics in the upcoming city election (it was written in early September, just as the various campaigns started). The history that shaped the attitudes, biases and concerns of the various parties in the debate on these issues often goes unexpressed. My intent is to provide some of this information, helping you to more easily understand this debate and to question various claims and statements.

This is *much* longer than articles normally printed here, but the reviewers found it worthwhile and said that they learned a lot.

Many of the issues discussed here are likely to be highlighted during the debate over Ballot Measure C (800 High Street), on which I will comment near the end.

## Planned Community (PC) Development

The concept of PC zoning is to provide a mechanism for approving development projects that don't fit within the normal zoning rules, but that are beneficial to the community. For example, the Whole Foods grocery in downtown could not have been built without the PC process to allow non-standard approaches to various problems, especially parking.

There are three basic categories of PCs: (1) the project itself is a significant public benefit, (2) the project is unusual and does not naturally fit zoning regulations, but does meet their spirit, (3) the project is allowed to exceed established zoning limits in exchange for a tangible *public benefit*, for example, public art, parking spaces or a park. Virtually all the controversy surrounding PCs involves the third category: It has a history of dubious uses and outright abuses.

The controversy typically arises because of the arrangement about what constitutes an appropriate public benefit. Different segments of the public will inevitably have

different views of the value of the trade-offs, but typically the arrangements become available for public review and comment only as the project nears final approval, and by then it can be difficult to make even small changes in the terms.

Bad deals result because the developer can tailor the offered *public benefit* to the priorities of the people at the negotiating table; the people negatively affected by the zoning variances are often not represented at this stage. In the worst cases, the *public benefit* arrangement can provide off-the-books projects—ones that would not have survived the normal budget process.

When developers perceive that they can “purchase” exemptions whose values dwarf that of the public benefits they offer, it can cause a major increase in property values in the area, because owners come to expect that they could get a similar PC and put up a more valuable building than allowed by established zoning. Even without changes to the existing building, the *perception* of higher values leads to rent increases, driving out established tenants.

On southern El Camino Real, we have a variation on this expectations scenario: re-development of many of the vacant lots and worn-out buildings has been stymied by the exaggerated expectations of the absentee owners (translation: they think their properties are worth a whole lot more than anyone is willing to pay for them).

Notice that even brief periods of exaggerated expectations can have long-term effects: Along southern El Camino there are several buildings that have been empty for over 2 years because gigantic rent increases (200-300%) drove out thriving long-term businesses; some relocated, others closed.

The problems with PC zoning have led some to call to abolish it. An interesting question for those advocating abolition is

how to handle legitimate needs for flexibility (such as Whole Foods). For those supporting the continuation of PC zoning, the question would be how to modify the process to reduce abuses.

## “Public Benefit” Value Calculation

For the value of the *public benefit* associated with a PC project, it is expected that the various parties would skew the calculations in their favor, but the differences are often astounding. For example, for projects in the downtown area, public parking spaces are commonly used for the public benefit. My inclination is to value such a space by starting with the proportional cost of a parking stall in a city parking structure (notice that this does not include the cost of the land), because this is the true cost savings to the City. There then could be some adjustments for special circumstances.

Developers have been assigning a much higher value to providing a parking stall. My suspicion is that they are using *lost opportunity* costs, for example, the difference in value between having that space as parking *vs.* housing. If so, this conveniently ignores the fact that there is no *lost opportunity*: The value of exceeding the established zoning limits far surpasses the costs of those parking stalls, otherwise there would be no economic reason for the developer to go through the considerable costs of the PC process.

A possible question for Council candidates is *how should public benefits be valued, and what is your general philosophy on how additional property value generated by the PC classification should be apportioned to the property owner and the larger community.* Note: the only discussion I have heard on the latter is that current practices give too little to the community.

## Mixed-use Developments

The motivation behind favoring *mixed-use* development is that it can provide more efficient use of the available land. For



example, housing built over professional offices (e.g., accountants) requires far fewer parking spaces than if the two were separate projects. The two uses have complementary parking needs: when clients are coming to those offices is precisely the time that most of the residents—and hence their cars—are most likely to be elsewhere (e.g., at work).

The City's zoning rules give a *mixed-use* project the right to develop more of the property than would be allowed if it was a single-use project. This bonus is partly to encourage mixed-use development, and partly to offset any complications introduced by integrating the two uses.

Just as with PC zoning, some developers are attempting to exploit the *letter of the law* in blatant disregard for the intent. Currently, the most flagrant abuse is the proposed Hyatt Rickey's project. The *mixed-use* is housing and hotel, but no complementary usage of resources has been identified. A hotel is essentially housing for well-off transients, and its business guests are likely to be traveling during peak hours, adding to traffic congestion.

Furthermore, numerous people have pointed out that the positioning of the hotel and the housing would facilitate the property being divided into two separate parcels, thereby leaving the housing portion desperately short of both parking and of green space.

*Note:* The BPA Board has taken a position against this abuse of the zoning process because it could be used as a precedent for developments adjacent to Barron Park.

### The Housing Deficit

*Everything should be as simple as possible, but not simpler* (Albert Einstein). I find that various Housing advocates have an overly simplistic view of the problem: They assume that building more housing will reduce the deficit. My assessment is that the situation is more akin to that of freeways: Building more freeways in this area provides only a temporary respite — in a very few years, congestion is back to its former levels. The explanation is that people have a *pain threshold* for traffic and

when congestion is decreased, people shift their behavior—such as living further from work so that they get better housing values—and this continues until that pain threshold is re-established.

Similarly, for housing, the controlling factor would appear to be jobs. Jobs left the area when companies couldn't recruit people because of high housing prices resulting from the housing deficit. Logic strongly suggests that providing more housing units will simply enable such jobs to return to the area. The end result could be that new housing results in little or no reduction in the housing deficit, but instead reduces the vacancy rate in office buildings.

Consequently, the policy question becomes one of what are we trading off to build more housing, and is it really worth it? Different projects may have very different answers to this question.

### Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is another area where the advocates seem to be taking too simplistic an approach. The typical argument goes like this: We want police officers (or firefighters or teachers or ...) to be able to live in Palo Alto. The salary range for officers is \$X which means they can afford \$Y for housing, so we need to provide housing at that price point. This fails to take into account that price isn't the only factor in choosing housing: People choose to endure long commutes in order to have larger houses and yards. Discussion of affordable housing needs to be realistic about who is actually likely to live there, especially in the evaluation of whether the design of the units is compatible with those expectations.

Much of the effort on providing affordable housing is directed at new construction, where state law mandates a certain proportion be "affordable." However, as has been often pointed out, the best source of affordable housing in the community is *existing* units, but the City has little or no ability to encourage the preservation of these units.

### Transit-oriented Development

*If you build it, they will come* seems to be the article of faith for the advocates of putting high-density housing near train stations and along bus routes. The belief is that housing near public transit will tend to be occupied by people who will use that transit. However, Palo Alto is not a normal housing market, and my speculation is that the selling points for this housing is not "convenient to transit," but that it is in Palo Alto (e.g., for schools) and cheaper because it is in a less desirable location (noise from the trains or from the major thoroughfare). There doesn't seem to be any data on this.

Higher density is a *necessary* condition for effective mass transit, but it is **not** a *sufficient* condition. I have lived in several places where there was effective mass transit: it was often both the fastest and least stressful way to get to many of my destinations. Here, it is rare that mass transit doesn't take significantly longer than driving: two to three times as long is not uncommon. When I worked in Menlo Park near El Camino (before 1999), circumstances occasionally forced me to use the #22 bus. The door-to-door trip by car was 12-25 minutes (off-peak *vs.* peak), 35 minutes by bicycle and just under an hour by bus (near peak hours). The bus trip was greatly lengthened by detours to the two train stations, but those two stops accounted for most of the few riders that got on/off in Palo Alto.

In all the City presentations of transit-oriented development (meaning *public transit*) that I have attended over the years, I have yet to hear any meaningful thoughts on targeting the development to the sorts of people likely to use transit. And this includes responses to my questions on this topic. My experience at work with the types of people who used the train is *not* reflected in the design of transit-oriented housing.

Consequently, I have come to view "transit-oriented development" as too often a smokescreen to justify higher-density housing—with higher profits for the developer—rather than a pragmatic

implementation of a potentially valid zoning practice.

Unrealistic assumptions about transit use can have a detrimental impact on the surrounding neighborhood—a problem we are seeing around Vista, and which has the potential to get worse. Low-ball estimates of parking requirements means that the surrounding neighborhood is forced to subsidize the developer by having their streets become the parking spaces that should have been part of the development. And low-ball estimates of traffic from the development allow the developer to avoid paying for street improvements that would have mitigated the problems that result.

**The role of the public in developing the larger vision**

In my assessment, one of the smoldering resentments underlying the referendum on the 800 High Street project (Measure C) is the repeated preemption of the community planning process in favor of developers. The SOFA-1 (South Of Forest Avenue) planning process was dragged out for years, and then largely made moot by the separate approval of the redevelopment of the old Palo Alto Medical Foundation site, the dominant property in this area. Then, just as the SOFA-2 planning process was nearing completion, Council approved the project for 800 High Street, a dominant property in that area. In both cases, people involved in those planning efforts report that the new developments seriously violated the ideas being pursued in the planning groups.

Many Palo Altans report that they now go to the University Avenue downtown rarely or never, because there are few businesses that serve their needs. This change from a local retail district to a regional destination was the vision of a small group of major developers (see Diana Diamond’s column of 8/21/03 in

the *Palo Alto Daily News*). Many cities have a business district whose core is a “destination” and a periphery that is locally oriented, but that also benefits from the spillover from the core. This latter aspect was neglected in the transformation of University Avenue, and this change has been particularly galling for those living nearby.

This experience is very relevant because the idea of transforming California Avenue into *the* local downtown (from “the *other* downtown”) has recently been receiving serious attention from influential people.

**Southern Palo Alto ignored**

In the early 1990s, the south El Camino corridor was identified as an area needing special attention, and an extensive series of planning workshops were held, producing a variety of useful results that were promptly and persistently ignored.

A traffic study of the Arastradero-Charleston corridor is finally being conducted more than a decade after the need was acknowledged by the City (A limited study was performed in 2000, but its recommendations were not implemented). And it is happening only because the Greenmeadow Community Association (whose children have to cross Charleston to get to school) “did the arithmetic” and discovered that the development in the immediate offing greatly exceeded the long-term forecast in the City’s Planning documents (Aside: it is instructive that the City wasn’t tracking this number). The prediction was for *up to* 211 units, but Rickey’s proposal has 302 units, the JCC wants to build 395 units (former Sun campus), the Elks Club site is zoned for 195 units, and there are at least 78 units on smaller parcels on the City’s inventory of anticipated future projects. That is 460% of projected (970 vs. 211).

**Property rights tradeoffs**

A major reason that land-use/zoning decisions are so complicated and contentious is that they represent an attempt to strike a balance between the rights of the individual property owner and the needs of the

larger community. It is very easy to have a tilt toward individual property rights because when decisions are viewed in isolation, it is easy to see the large impact on the property owner and overlook the smaller incremental impact on the community. An analogy is SPAM e-mail. SPAMmers, arguing for their right to send SPAM, said “*Deleting my one message is no big deal for the recipient,*” thereby conveniently ignoring that he is not the only one sending SPAM, and that deleting hundreds of SPAM messages a day is a significant burden.

The inspiration for an interesting question for Council candidates emerged at a recent hearing before the Planning and Transportation Commission on the Arastradero-Charleston traffic study (the PTC is one step below City Council on these matters). The traffic study is tasked to find the best design to handle current *and projected traffic* while meeting various usability and safety criteria. The Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce and a housing advocate (Sally Probst) advocated inserting a condition that the results of this study not be used in the consideration of future development on this corridor. They have a legitimate concern that the results of this study will be (ab)used by doctrinaire *no-growth* advocates. However, their proposal represented an equally extreme viewpoint. One of the spokespersons for the Chamber labeled the proposed development as the “paramount” concern! More important than the safety of school children who have to travel along and across the street? More important than the rights of existing residents in that area to have reasonable traffic flows? In their view, apparently so.

The question for Council candidates would be “*Suppose the traffic study reveals that the needs of the current residents and the full-range of proposed development cannot be accommodated. Would you weaken the service and safety criteria, or would you limit new development?*”

**Housing Goals and the Business License proposal**

The Association for Bay Area Governments (ABAG) assigns goals for new hous-

**Online membership form:**  
[www.cyberstars.com/bpa](http://www.cyberstars.com/bpa)  
**Online emergency prep. form:**  
[www.cyberstars.com/bpa](http://www.cyberstars.com/bpa)



ing and affordable housing to individual cities supposedly based on calculated need (based largely on the jobs-housing imbalance). However, some people studying the process think they see a very different pattern: that cities that make good progress toward achieving their goals get even higher goals in the next round, while cities that have made poor progress get small goals.

Palo Alto is handicapped in arguing about what appropriate goals should be, because no one knows how many jobs there are in Palo Alto. There is a proposal to have all businesses annually report to the City their category of business, the number of employees and a few other details. The common way that other cities do this is to have a *business license* and charge a small fee (\$25?) to cover the cost of the data collection, that is, the program is *revenue neutral*—not a tax. The cost to businesses of compiling this data is thought to be minimal: larger businesses are already required to report this information to other agencies.

Virtually everyone involved in these issues agrees that having a business license program would be beneficial for Palo Alto. In addition to providing an annual snapshot of the number of jobs, it would also provide information about turnover of businesses, which is essential for exploring how Palo Alto could be more supportive of various categories of businesses. However, many are reluctant to push for this program, being afraid that it will simply create another vituperative, time-wasting debate.

A potential question for Council candidates: *How do you view the ABAG goals, and do you see the business license as an appropriate way to obtain data, or do you have an alternative.*

**Measure C: 800 High Street**

Many of the policy issues addressed above are a significant part of the debate on the 800 High Street project. Unfortunately, people on both sides of Measure C are attempting to portray it as a proxy for decisions on larger development issues.

This was probably inevitable: 800 High is important to only a relatively small section of the city, but the supporters and opponents need a way to make it relevant to voters throughout the city.

Lawyers have a saying *Bad/hard cases make bad law*, meaning that cases that have special circumstances are not good precedents. On the other hand, I—as an engineer/scientist—have a different take on special cases: the difficulty and quantity of special cases says a lot about the quality of the basic design/law.

Question for Council candidates: *To what extent, if any, would you regard the vote on 800 High as providing guidance on how to approach other development projects, for example, Hyatt Rickey's? If it isn't a precedent, what do you see as its special circumstances?*

**The City Budget**

I despair of there being a meaningful discussion on the City budget in this election. Richard Alexander, a highly skilled trial lawyer, has already established himself as a major participant in this discussion. Unfortunately, his professional instincts and skills—to win by scoring “debating points”—are counterproductive when trying to shed light on a complex issue. The City Manager and some of the Council candidates are indicating that they will simply choose not to play his game.

Note that I do understand Alexander's frustration with not being able to get direct answers to a variety of straightforward questions.

**Summary**

I hope that this overview of the likely hot topics in the coming City elections will help you better understand and question what the various candidates and advocates are saying. I realize that this was a very long read, and appreciate your bearing with me. If you have any feedback on this commentary (for example, did I assume too much/too little knowledge), send it to me at [feedback-political-coverage@dougmoran.com](mailto:feedback-political-coverage@dougmoran.com).

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BPA meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:15 p.m. Call Doug Moran for location: 856-3302

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Driftwood Deli & Market

- Sandwiches - Fresh bread -  
- Dairy - Groceries - Magazines -  
- Liquor - Catering - Indoor and  
- outdoor seating -  
- Homemade soup & salads -  
Mon.-Fri. 8 am to 8 pm, Sat. 10 am to 7 pm

**3450 El Camino Real**  
Palo Alto, CA 94306 (near Creekside Inn)

**Phone: (650) 493-4162**  
**Fax: (650) 493-4171**

Everyone has a story to tell. Please join me for a free educational and motivational Home Show. I will illustrate how simple it is to take those stacks of family or vacation photographs that are piling up in your home and transform them into beautiful and meaningful albums. I will demonstrate the latest products from Creative Memories. Please call 650-852-9438 to find out when the next Home Show is scheduled.

**Barron Park Mosaic Tree "Lives"  
For Sale: \$5000 plus tax**

Christine Heegaard and family will soon be moving for a year sabbatical in Europe. They've sold their home and the tree — the fruit of a year of hard work — has to go, but she would love to see it stay in her beloved Barron Park neighborhood. She will take care of the moving and reinstallation of the piece. If you are interested, please contact her at (650) 494-2631, or chh@mamosaic.com

**BPA On-Line!**

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BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER

FALL 2003

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