

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Linnie Melena, BPA President



This is a short update on a couple of the projects and issues that Barron Park residents have been working on.

Matadero Well Site

A year ago, I wrote about a proposal to restate the park benches at the Matadero Well Site near the intersection of Matadero and Whitsell (or Matadero and Josina / Tip-pawingo). Since then, the Board has discussed this at almost every meeting, sent out postcards to everyone in the area and held one meeting at the site (in a down-pour). In November 2010, we voted to purchase two new replacement benches using Barron Park Association funds. (There is a precedent for doing this. The Association purchased a nice bench for Barron Park School a while back.) The City will install the benches.

Installation will probably not happen until next summer when the City completes its rehabilitation project for the well on the site. The City began that project last summer. The well is one of five City standby wells being rehabilitated in response to a State requirement that the City have sufficient storage capacity to supply eight hours of maximum demand in the event of an earthquake rupturing the main Hetch Hetchy water lines. Since the City began using Hetch Hetchy water in 1962, the Matadero well has not

been used as a source of local water.

The Utilities Department consultant has completed the well testing phase, including assessing the well casings and installing temporary piping. Now the consultant is working on the design of the rehabilitation improvements, with more construction work to follow.

Although we have gotten some wonderful ideas for more landscaping / planting improvements that could be made at the well site, we will need someone to step up and take on that project.

Cypress Lane

In the summer of 2009, Barron Park neighbors pitched in to clean up Cypress Lane, the two-block long alley between Barron Avenue and El Camino. They cleared weeds, trimmed overgrown trees and bushes and collected trash including a couch, a mattress and lots of construction debris. The City picked it all up and hauled it away. It was a fantastic accomplishment involving both immediate neighbors and Barron Park residents from much further away.

Since then, the residents bordering the alley have continued to pursue their long term goal of a permanent maintenance solution for the alley. The biggest problem is creating responsibility for the maintenance and oversight of the alley which was originally owned by the Jones Estate in the 1920s and

Annual Meeting Set for January 30

The Barron Park Association annual meeting will be held on January 30 at 2 p.m. in the multi-purpose room at Barron Park School. Our featured speaker will be of the Palo Alto Unified School District Superintendent Kevin Skelly. Mr. Skelly is a resident of Barron Park. If you have specific topics you would like him to address, please send an email to Linnie Melena, lynniemelena@gmail.com



offered as a public street during the original subdivision. The issues are complex and not easily summarized here. However, the group continues to make progress. One recent accomplishment was the construction of a fence on the mostly vacant parcel at Barron and El Camino, brought about by neighborhood complaints and City code enforcement against the owner.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]

INSIDE

2

Barron Park in the Movies

3

Business Beat

4

History: Barron Park at War—1943: Part 2

10

El Camino Business Vacancy Rate

11

Barron Park Seniors

Bike Palo Alto!

In October, the Barron Park Green Team and the College Terrace Green Team joined together to organize the first Bike Palo Alto! event. The event provided Palo Alto area bike maps and a few designated rides for the day with fun stops along the way—like free ice cream at Baskin Robbins, free mugs at Starbucks (on El Camino Way) and other treats. The event also had activities at the starting point, Escondido School, including free bike maintenance, safety information, bike registration and a free raffle for partici-

pants. The event was a great success with over 300 residents of all ages attending and many asking if the event would be held next year. The Green Teams have decided to do the event again in 2011.

It Takes Work and Commitment

The people who work on these problems and projects are volunteering their precious time, so sometimes things move slowly. Yet what I have learned is that, with commitment and a willingness to collaborate with others, things that improve our neighborhood do get done.

BARRON PARK IN THE MOVIES

Barron Park has made it into the movies, again. We all know that one of our donkeys, Perry, was the inspiration several years ago for the donkey character in the movie *Shrek*. This time it is a locale—not just an inspiration for a locale, but the actual locale itself!

The movie *The Social Network* has scenes of a house where Mark Zuckerberg and other young computer geek students lived in California while developing and enhancing their software that would become Facebook. The scenes were filmed in a house in Southern California, but the actual house where this part of the Facebook story took place is in Barron Park, at 819 La Jennifer.

The house has been owned for many years by Tom and Mary Hamilton who rented it about six years ago to Zuckerberg and sev-

eral other students. The Hamiltons had no idea what these young folks were up to when they lived there, though Tom did find their lifestyle a little unusual. Once, upon stopping by, he saw that all the furniture from the living room had been moved into the garage and was replaced with computers arranged in a big circle on the floor.

As a break from their computer coding, the group strung a zip-line from a chimney, over the roof of the house and across the pool, to a utility pole at the other end of the yard. In the movie the chimney collapsed, but this is a case, among several other examples, where Hollywood exaggerated the story for dramatic effect; the real chimney was only slightly damaged by the students' zip line capers, causing some leaks but it was able to be repaired.

Help Support the Barron Park Donkeys!

All those who care about Perry and Niner seek to guarantee their proper on-going care and shelter, as well as to ensure that assets will be available for health concerns as the donkeys age. The handlers hope that those generous neighbors who have contributed in the past will consider increasing their support this year. Contributions for the donkeys' care may be sent to: The Palo Alto Donkey Project, ACTERRA (Action



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

For further information about making a contribution on behalf of the donkeys, or if you would

like information about how to become one of the volunteer donkey handlers, please call Bob Frost, 493-8272 or email at bobfrost34@yahoo.com.

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Lynnne Melena, President

Art Liberman, Vice President

Linda Elder, Secretary

John King, Treasurer

Markus Fromherz

Nancy Hamilton

Christian Kalar

Lydia Kou

Gwen Luce

Doug Moran



Committee/ Activity Chairs

Beautification: Vacant

Businesses Liaison: Markus Fromherz

Civic Affairs Liaison: Doug Moran

Parks & Creeks: Christian Kalar

Environmental: Art Liberman

Green Team: Lynnne Melena

History: Doug Graham

Holiday Party: Don Anderson

May Fete: John King

Membership: Art Liberman

Neighborhood Safety & Preparedness:

Lydia Kou

Newsletter: Nancy Hamilton

Seniors: Vacant

Traffic & Streets: Vacant

Welcoming: Gwen Luce

Zoning & Land Use: Vacant



BPA meetings are held the 3rd

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

Call Lynnne Melena for location: 493-2135

www.bpaonline.org

B U S I N E S S B E A T

Stanford Carpet Buys American

By Nancy Hamilton

Owner and operator of Stanford Carpet on El Camino since 1994, Al Habiby says, "Fairness and honesty have kept me in business for a long time."

Using only his own installers, he sells almost entirely "American made" materials, along with some European wool brands known for their special weave. He uses only American manufactured Formica and Columbia for laminated wood flooring. "Some foreign makers have driven companies like WilsonArt out of business after 25 years." Al says, "You might pay a 30-40 percent higher price for better-made materials, but you get at least 200 percent return in quality and longevity. Support American!"

Extremely outgoing and generous, Al contributes regularly to such functions as the Barron Park Association May Fete, is a BPA member, and gives carpet samples from discontinued lines to local schools so students and others don't have to sit on cold vinyl floors when assemblies are held.

Stanford Carpet is popular with local builders, such as James Witt, as well as other neighbors like Bob Moss. Al says you can visit his listing on www.yelp.com any-time to get his reviews.

Support your Barron Park Merchants!
Stanford Carpet 650-424-1494
[Please see Stanford Carpet's ad on the back page]

Barron Park Business Advertising
In our BPA Newsletter

By Markus Fromherz, BPA Business Liaison

We encourage local Barron Park businesses to become BPA business members. Eligible businesses are those located along El Camino Real between Fernando Ave. and Maybell Ave., including home-based businesses, that are not part of a chain. A business membership costs \$50 per calendar year and entitles the business to one free ad in the regular BPA newsletter for that year (deadlines June 1, Sept. 1, Dec. 1). Donations valued at least \$50 to any BPA event also result in business membership. Business members will receive all BPA newsletters. In addition to ads in the regular newsletter, which goes to BPA members only, we also offer advertising in the March push edition, which is distributed to all 1600 Barron Park residences (deadline March 1). Ads in that edition cost \$200 (or \$150 for existing business members).

Student Business Takes Off—Literally!

By Tina Tang



Enzo Marc had a predicament. It was the worst recession since the Great Depression, and local businesses were flooded with applications from over-qualified

job seekers. Like many Gunn students, he had limited time but big ambitions. So what is a 17 year old saving up for a car and college (in that order) to do? He started his own business, Window Perfection. Testing his all-natural, non-toxic formulas at home, he perfected his technique and developed a simple pricing model.

Encouraged by his stepfather James Witt and mom Tina Tang, Enzo set out to make it on his own. He made a flyer using an

app on his iPad, posted it in the Barron Park Google group, submitted an ad to the Barron Park newsletter, and started talking up his service to friends and family.

He hired a friend Jim Norton, fellow Gunn student, as his first employee, and they tackled their first few jobs within a few weeks to rave reviews.

Besides sales skills, Enzo also learned about creating estimates and the importance of prompt invoicing, and he even found a free iPhone app to help do it. He is hoping that his company's efficiency, customer service, and fair prices will persuade local homeowners who want crystal clear windows to 'buy local' and often! Please call Enzo at (650) 387-4153.

[Please see the Window Perfection ad on back page.]



Please welcome Markus Fromherz, our new Business Liaison. His email address can be found at:
<http://www2.bpaonline.org/411/mfromherz.html>
Please continue to submit ads to the address at:
<http://www2.bpaonline.org/411/njh.html>

BARRON PARK AT WAR—1943

(HISTORICAL FICTION—PART TWO OF THREE PARTS)

By Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian

Continued from the last issue:

A story of the Home Front in World War II, set in Barron Park and Palo Alto. In California, we were far from the fighting but thoroughly involved in the research, manufacturing, food production, shipping and training that went on to make up the greatest logistical war effort ever seen on the planet. The people who were living in Barron Park at the time all shared in that effort, in their own small ways, and the purpose of this article is to bring home and personalize the story of that time.



In Part One you met the Stouffer Family, Richard and Anne and their two children, Peter and Annie. You also met Anne’s friend, Linda Maguire, and Peter’s friend, Ted Bancroft. Anne and Linda went shopping and wrestled with gas rationing, food rationing and clothing rationing. You learned about red points and blue points, and how many points it took to be allowed to buy a can of beans. You read the lyrics of “Paper Doll” and a list of 5 radio dramas for the kids. Peter and Ted had an amusing encounter with the future benefactor of our neighborhood park, Josina Bol, and one of her goats. You learned about Victory Cooking.

In Part Two, you will meet the Bancroft Family, and learn about making paper airplanes from Kix boxes. You meet a “kingpin” of the neighborhood and the Sutter Cannery, Meggie Thorpe. You attend a meeting of the venerable Stitch-and-Gab Society and find out what’s really going on behind the scenes of the Home Front. You watch the friendship of Anne Stouffer, Meggie Thorpe and Linda Maguire as it grows and deepens.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 5, 1943

(See Box#2, Palo Alto Times headlines)

The Bancroft Family

Michael Bancroft was born in 1895 and grew up in San Francisco, where he met his wife-to-be, Elizabeth (Liz) Stratton. They were married in 1915 and their first child Elizabeth (Betty) was born in Palo Alto in 1918. The Bancrofts had lived at 854 Los Robles Avenue (a fictional address) since 1923 (see map). Betty had grown up there and had graduated from Palo Alto High School in 1936 and Stanford University in 1940. She was one Stanford’s first woman engineering graduates. She was still living with her parents in 1943 and working as an electrical engineer doing “something secret” at a hush-hush lab associated with Stanford. The second child, Ted, was born much later in their marriage, in

1934, and in 1943 was in the third grade at Mayfield School.

Breakfast at the Bancrofts

As usual, all the Bancrofts were up early this morning. Michael, who had been laid off his job as a mechanic at the Paddlesford Oldsmobile dealership in Palo Alto early in the war, had taken a much better job at a war plant. He was working on one of the warplane assembly lines at Hammond Aircraft on Bayshore Boulevard in San Francisco (he was not allowed to say which model of aircraft was being built). He took the Southern Pacific to work, but didn’t ride the same train as Richard Stouffer. Liz was working for the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company as a long-distance operator at the Palo Alto Central Exchange, a job she had taken after Betty reached the sixth grade in 1928. Betty, of course, had her confidential job at the secret lab. Ted had to get himself to

school, so everyone ate fast and cleared out. Liz was first out the door at 6:30 a.m. so she could be home when Ted came home from school. She drove the family car and dropped Michael at the Palo Alto train station on her way to the main telephone exchange downtown.

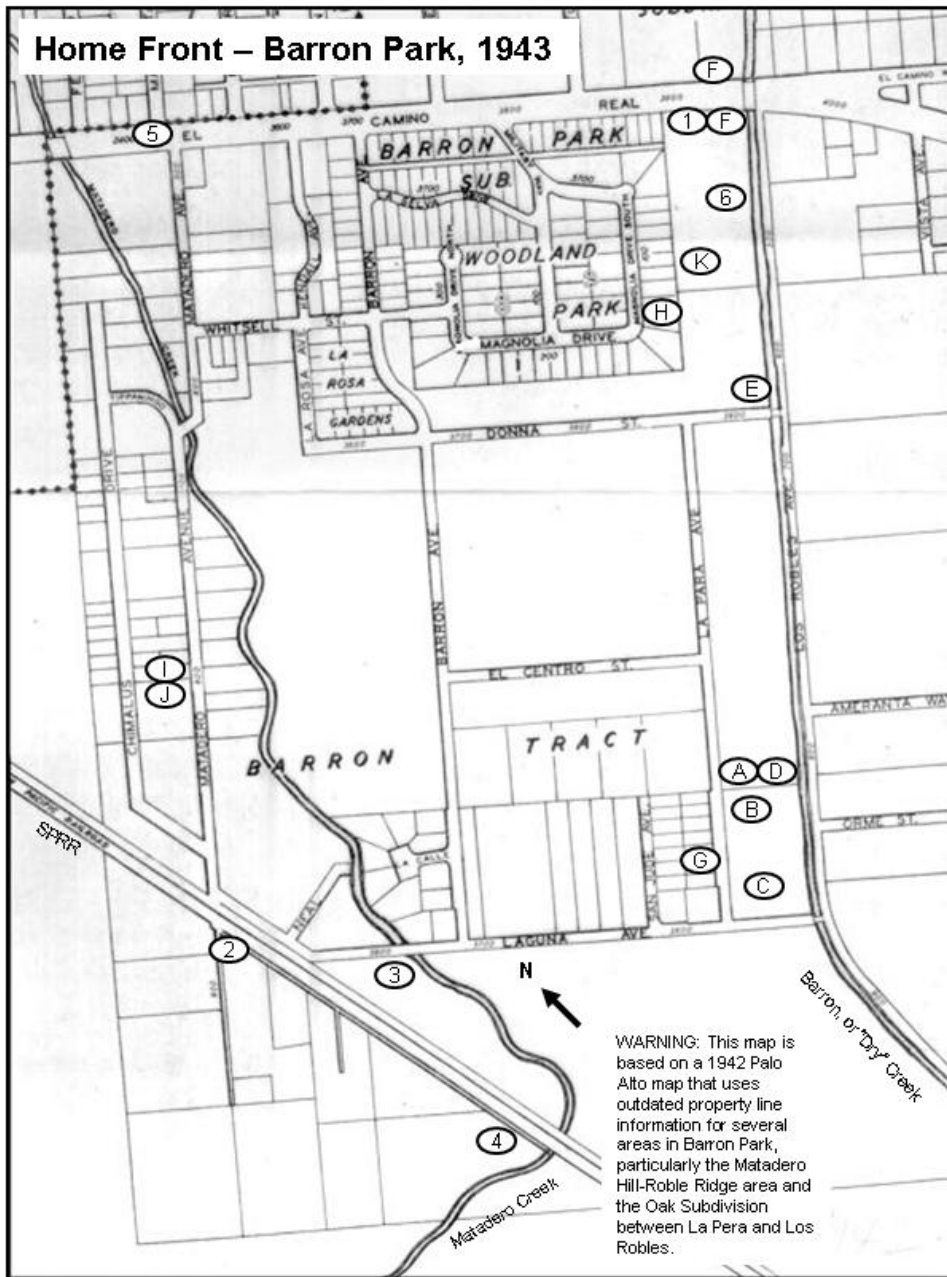
Paper Warplanes from Kix boxes

Breakfast was a hurried affair, often just cold cereal, and this was fine with Ted. He was trying to consume as much Kix (a puffed corn batter cereal) as he could possibly stomach. The Kix boxes had paper warplanes printed on the back. You cut out the airplanes like paper dolls, rolled their fuselages around a pencil to give them shape, and stuck the wings, tail fin and tail stabilizers into pre-cut slots. The result was a reasonable facsimile of American warplanes, like P-40s, P-38 Lightnings, and so forth. They were about 2-3 inches long with a similar wingspread when assembled.

He had a fleet of about six right now, and Peter Stouffer was ahead of him. He was trying to get Betty to eat Kix instead of her favorite Rice Krispies, but she wasn’t biting. He said “It’s not fair: Peter has Annie to eat for him so it’s two to one against me. Annie will do anything for him.” Betty remarked coolly “So, why

Box 2: Headlines of the Day

Palo Alto Times
 Wednesday October 6, 1943
 Allies crack main Nazi line
 in march on Rome
 Opening guns of
 Cardinals blast Yanks 4-3
 Pre-Pearl Harbor fathers will be
 included in the California draft call
 for October with induction starting
 October 26



Historic Locations

- 1 Barron Park Texaco Station
- 2 "Neal Station" S.P. flag stop
- 3 Bol family horse pasture
- 4 Bol family residence

Fictional Locations

- A Stouffer home
- B Stouffer victory garden
- C Yoshimura home (presumed location of historic family's residence)
- D Bancroft home
- E Spot where Peter waited for Ted to walk to the bus stop
- F Bus stop on El Camino
- G "Gold Star" home
- H Woodburn home—"Stitch-and-Gab Society meeting place
- I Thorpe home
- J Thorpe victory garden
- K Maguire trailer home

don't you try being nice to Annie now and then, and maybe she'll eat some of yours." Ted glared at her: how exasperating sisters could be, especially much older sisters! He said: "Peter has already sent away for his airbase. It unfolds and there is an entire atoll, with places to park all your planes, and defensive positions against the dirty Japs."

Japanese-American tomato growers

Liz broke into the conversation: "Ted, we don't speak that way about the Japanese. Whatever is wrong about their government and their army, they aren't dirty." Betty remembered well the Yoshimura

family that lived catty-corner behind them on La Para, growing tomatoes for the Sutter Cannery. She remembered a pretty, poised, intelligent girl about six years younger than herself: Cherry Yoshimura, Palo Alto High School class of 1942, who was now living in Camp Jerome, Arkansas. The Yoshimura family's values were leagues apart from those of the Japanese militarists. Liz interrupted her reverie: "Betty, are you going to walk Ted to the bus? You better hurry, or you'll both miss your buses."

Buses to school and work

Most weekday mornings, Betty walked with Ted along Barron Creek, that ran in a straight channel in front of their house and paralleled Los Robles Avenue about six feet away. They crossed a little wooden bridge on their driveway and walked left (northeast) to El Camino Real. Ted usually felt comfortable talking to Betty and told her things he wouldn't tell his mother or father. This morning as they walked he talked about his bike ride with Peter Stouffer. "Did you know that the Bol horses are really nice? One licked my hand yesterday and it was really neat. And Mrs. Bol is so nice. She let us help her make her goat go back in the pasture."

Now they could see Peter ahead, waiting where they usually met, at the corner where Donna Street (now La Donna Avenue) crossed the creek and intersected with Los Robles (see map). Ted didn't say anything more about his little adventure, and soon the two boys were chattering about what they might do after school today. At the bus stop across the highway from the Chat and Chew Restaurant on El Camino, the two boys joined the other Mayfield School kids to catch the bus for a mile-and-a-quarter ride along the highway to Mayfield School (see Illustration E).

Betty took the Palo Alto City Line bus that took her along El Camino to University Avenue, where a lab truck picked her and other employees up for the ride onto campus and their lab (the exact location of which she wasn't supposed to reveal to anyone). The buses were always grossly overcrowded, "packed to the ceiling" as someone had put it. When she saw the

city bus coming this morning, it looked to her critical engineer's eye as if the springs were squashed flat and the body was essentially riding right on the undercarriage. She said to herself: "I certainly hope it lasts out the war, because I sure don't know where the city could get another one."

The Blue Star and Gold Star Flags

While Betty was waiting for the bus, Richard Stouffer was walking the other direction on La Para, making his way toward Neal Station. It was a lovely crisp fall morning, bright and sunny (the summer fog season was finally over), but promised to be warm, maybe even a little hot, at midday. Of course, he would be in the City then and it would probably still be cool and windy there, even at noon.

As he walked past the houses at the end of the block near Laguna, he noted a change in the front window of one. He noted with dismay that the flag with a blue star centered in a white field and surrounded by a bright red border, which signified that a member of that household was serving in the armed forces, had been altered. There was now a gold star covering the blue star, which meant that the service member had been killed. He tried to remember the boy who had grown up in that house and left to join the marines about three years before, but couldn't conjure up the boy's face. "What a shame" he thought, "I'll have to remember to tell Anne in case she doesn't see it today. She will want to send a card."

The next house had a blue star flag, too, and he knew it stood for the homeowner's daughter, who was flying replacement bombers across the Atlantic to England. There, the regular Army Air Force pilots picked them up and flew them in bombing missions against Nazi-run industry in Europe. He hoped she would come through the war alive and unhurt. He turned on Laguna and tried to think about what the post-war world might be like. How many young Americans might never see it? He knew, when his train came, that it would be an uncomfortable ride in a dirty and overcrowded car, but his discomfort would be nothing compared to

that of the millions of service men and women overseas.

The Stitch-and-Gab Society Anne Stouffer had gotten Peter off to school and Richard off to work, and then Annie to her nursery school class. Now it was a quarter to nine and time for her to start walking to the meeting of the Stitch-and-Gab Society. This regular Wednesday morning session would be held where it usually was: in Cynthia Woodburn's house at 3876 Magnolia Drive South. Cynthia was a moderately well-to-do widow "of an uncertain age," as the Victorians used to write. She was built on your basic fireplug body plan, had platinum-bleached hair that was turning faintly pink, and a personality that reached out to everyone like a kiss on a sunny day. She was the heart and soul of her little society, about a dozen "regulars" and many "occasionals." They were women with a wide spread of backgrounds, education, age and temperament. All they had in common was a minimum level of devotion to handwork, and residence in or near Barron Park. Anne could truthfully say that about half of them were among her best friends.

It was about a 15-minute walk to Cynthia's house, along a twisting route the length of La Para, then two blocks on Donna, a block each on Barron and Whitsell and then two blocks on Magnolia (see map). Anne noted that yellow leaves were beginning to appear in the pear orchards to her left as she walked down La Para. Then she turned on La Donna Street, which was more built up, and Anne noticed that several houses were now displaying Blue Star Flags. She must remember to comment on that to Richard, because he might never notice on his own. She loved him dearly, but you know how men are: they're not always good at noticing the human-interest things. Just ask Richard anything you wanted to know about the next War Bond Drive, or how successful the past ones were, and he could tell you everything. But would he notice which family had a member overseas? Betty Bancroft had probably gone to school with some of them: maybe she would have a chance to ask her sometime soon.

Meggie Thorpe

As Anne reached the corner of Barron Avenue, a pickup truck drew up alongside her and stopped. It was Meggie Thorpe's dark green 1929 Model A Ford, which she used to tend the apricot orchard she leased over on Maybell Avenue (see Illustration F). There was not much orchard work to be done in September or October, and the truck looked shining clean as if it had just been washed. Meggie leaned over and rolled the passenger side window down. "Want a ride?" was her question. Anne smiled and hopped in, always glad to see Meggie.

"So, shall we get there early, or just sit here and talk for awhile?" said Meggie, who was a small, wiry fifty-ish woman with a horsy looking but pleasant face and grey hair rolled back in a bun. She was dressed in a neat skirt and blouse, which surprised Anne, because Meggie was usually seen in clean but well-worn farmer's overalls and a denim shirt to match. Meggie was considered to be the ultimate local authority on gardens and agriculture by her Barron Park women friends. Anne had gladly taken all her advice on the Victory Garden, and it seemed to have paid off.

This morning they sat and exchanged news about their families. Meggie laughed when she learned how Peter was convincing Annie to eat Kix for all her snacks, and Anne was sorry to learn about Meggie's husband Fred's accident at work. "Well," said Meggie, "I sure don't need him hangin' around the house, so I'll be glad when the doctor tells him he can go back to work. And now, it's time for us to get along to the meeting."

A well attended meeting

The Stitch-and-Gab Society meeting was so well attended this morning that Cynthia had to bring out some folding chairs. Cynthia's large "common room" was filled with ladies doing handwork. Most of the handwork involved making over clothing for themselves or their children, or knitting wool socks, scarves or vests for the troops.

One lady, working on a pair of long wool socks for her nephew who was in the army fighting in Italy, commented "My Uncle Frank fought in the First War" (World War



Illustration E: Mayfield School—Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA) archive, 1936 (essentially unchanged in 1943)

I). "He told me if it hadn't been for the wool socks his sister - my mother - sent him he would have lost both his feet to trench foot. There was a major German attack, the front line units were all shot up and undermanned, and the General wouldn't let anyone be evacuated to the field hospital for trench foot. As long as a man could stand up and hold a rifle, he had to stay."

The meeting had other functions, too. For the women who did not work outside the home, this was one of their best chances to catch up on neighborhood news and gossip, and on the latest war rumors. Everyone knew that you weren't supposed to pass on war rumors, but when the government tried to keep such a tight lid on everything, how else was a body to know what was really going on?

Rationing worries...and hopes After the news of overseas relatives and friends had been covered, and word of new babies and romances brought out, the talk turned to the general situation. One woman said "Did you hear that they might lift some of the rationing next year, even if the war is still going on? I heard that the ranchers around here are trying to get the government to allow more slaughtering and let us have more meat for our ration stamps. They are afraid that they will run out of cattle feed this winter and have to slaughter a great many at one time."

Another chimed in: "I heard that they are going to cut down on the number of points required for a lot of the canned vegetables,

soups and fruit. Apparently the can shortages are easing because we are making a lot more steel now." A third woman said, "Wouldn't it be nice if they would just allow us more gasoline?" There were smiles all around and Cynthia Woodburn reminded her that the "real reason" for gasoline rationing was to reduce wear-and-tear on tires, because the rubber shortage was acute. Someone else reminded the group that the Japanese armies had conquered the Southeast Asian countries where most of the world's rubber plantations were located, and the Germans submarines were sinking shipments from Brazil, where the wild rubber trees were harvested. Apparently our efforts to synthesize rubber from oil had not worked very well yet (this last was supposed to be a secret, but almost everybody had heard it).

The tire hoarder

At this point, Anne spoke up and said "Do you know that we have a real tire hoarder, right here in Barron Park?" There was dead silence. After a moment, she went on "You know the lawyer who lives in the big house up on Rincon Circle?" Most of the ladies apparently didn't know the house, probably because they never had occasion to walk all the way up to the end of Los Robles Avenue—there were mostly apricot orchards up there and only a half-dozen houses.

Anne said, "Well, one day last week when I was walking Annie there, the garage door had been left open and I glanced in. You wouldn't have believed it! The entire

rear wall of the garage had stacks and stacks of brand-new tires leaning against it! There must have been dozens of them. And this at a time when the entire Palo Alto allocation is only about 10 a month for the whole town!" Most of the women looked shocked, and Mrs. M. said, "Someone should turn him in to the OPA." (The Office of Price Administration controlled prices and rationing of consumer goods).

Submarine shelling and balloon bombs

Mrs. N. caught everyone's attention when she said, "My cousin Jimmy works at Hunter's Point, in the Navy Yard, and he says the sailors tell him that there are Japanese submarines patrolling our coast every night. They come in close enough to see houses and cars and trucks." "And oil tanks, like they shelled at Santa Barbara," added another of the ladies.

Old Miss T. was knitting a brown sock for a grandson who was stationed in England with the army, presumably training for the big invasion of France that everyone expected soon. She spoke up in her high, quavering voice and said, "My nephew Edward lives in Oregon. He wrote to me that the Japanese are launching balloons that carry fire bombs, from their submarines. He said they've already set some forest fires up there, and in northern California, too."

Another lady remarked, "Yeah, that got in some of the papers for about one or two days before the government squelched it.

But the Palo Alto Times didn't run that story. Neither did most of the newspapers." (The names of these rumor-mongers are disguised, because I do not want to expose anyone to an FBI investigation for aiding the enemy by passing rumors: I really don't think there were any Axis spies in the meeting.)

Then Los Altos got shelled

"OK, ladies, here's one you can talk about—and it just happened, too!" said Mrs. M. You know those explosions that we keep hearing, from near Page Mill Road up in the army camp area? Well, they've set up a tank firing range there, near the machine gun and rifle ranges that we hear the firing from all the time. And get this, ladies: last Thursday morning a 3-inch shell went through the wall of a house in Los Altos! Honest to God! There were people in the house, too, and they called the camp to complain.

Right away some soldiers came and said 'Yes, that was one of ours alright'. They apologized to the people in the house and brought work crews in and fixed up everything real fast. Nothing about THAT got in the newspapers—not yet, anyway!" Mrs. E., who knew the local area very well, said, "You know, some parts of Barron Park are closer to that camp than any part of Los Altos is." Everyone else shook their heads in bemusement and uneasily wondered what they might do if a shell interrupted their breakfast one morning.

Back to gripes about rationing

At that point, Cynthia brought out her tea kettle and poured everyone cups of tea. Someone else had brought little half-sized non-sweetened corn muffins for a mid-morning snack (there was a sugar shortage, as well as the stringent rationing), and the mood changed. Small groups of women started separate conversations, many of them on rationing topics. In one group, all the women had kids in school, and the talk turned to clothing shopping and kids' fashions. One woman said "You can still get girls' sweaters down at the "Trend O' Fashion" store on University Avenue. I was there just the other day and they've got those 'Sloppy Joe' pullovers, the ones with the pull-up sleeves, for two or three dollars, and classy-looking cardigans for a dollar

more. They didn't sell out during back-to-school month because everyone is so short on clothing rationing stamps."

Another chimed in, "If you have a teenage daughter, all you need to get is blue jeans and a couple of men's shirts, large size, which she will wear with the tails hanging out. Just go to the Peninsula Creamery, or to our Chat-and-Chew, at 4 p.m. any day and they'll be in there, listening to Frank Sinatra or one of the big swing bands on the juke box. They'd be jittersbugging, too, if there was room for it."

The meeting started to peter out after 11 a.m. when women said their goodbyes and started to drift out the door in twos and threes, stopping for awhile on the front walk or in the street to finish a conversation. The day was quite warm now, the Bay Area equivalent of "Indian Summer" in the east.

The suicide lane

Meggie Thorpe and Anne Stouffer left Cynthia's house together. Meggie offered Anne a ride home if she would ride along with Meggie on a short errand first. "I've got to pick up a pipe elbow at the hardware store, for the irrigation system in my Maybell Avenue orchard," Meggie explained. Anne said "that's OK; I'd like to hear what's going on at the cannery. You haven't told me anything about your

job for quite awhile."

As Meggie turned left on the State Highway (El Camino Real—see map), she used the third (middle) lane for merging into the one lane of northbound traffic; another driver came at them in the middle lane, using it to pass a slower-moving southbound truck. Just as Meggie merged into the right lane, he whizzed by, only a second before there would have been a head-on collision. Anne broke out in a sweat, but Meggie remained calm. "Its jerks like him that give it the name 'The Suicide Lane,' she said with a scowl.

A tent city on El Camino

Then she pointed to the left, the west side of El Camino, at rows upon rows of four-person tents in the Stanford-owned cow pasture between Barron Park and the railroad crossing. She said, "Here is where a lot of the people I supervise are living. We rent them the tents real cheap, and provide hot showers, hand laundry facilities and toilets for no extra charge." Anne noticed larger tents interspersed between the rows, and large tanks with water trucks hooked up to some of them. There was even a fenced playground for kids near the center of the "city." She said, "So, how is it working?" Meggie answered, "This is our second year doing the tent city, remember, and we've made improve-



Illustration F: 1929 Model A Ford Pickup (similar to Meggie Thorpes' truck)

ments. Originally it was only for 300 single night workers, four to a tent, but now we have a lot of families that came for the summer. It worked out real well for them and for the cannery all summer."

As they passed the driveway to the cannery (which is now Portage Drive), the spicy aroma of boiling catsup permeated the midday air. "Wow!" said Anne, "Isn't that smell enough to knock you over?" "Oh," replied Meggie, "I don't even notice it anymore." Anne said "I bet you can hardly smell anything else for blocks around."

Too many tomatoes, not enough workers

Meggie paused in thought, frowning. She was still thinking of labor problems. "Some of the summer workers who lived in the tent city have left already. We are up to our eyeballs in tomatoes, and they will be pouring in like this for the rest of the month. It is the biggest and best tomato season anyone has seen in a long time. Did you see our ad in the Palo Alto Times last week? We needed 75 more workers for a rush pack of tomatoes, but only about 50 showed up. We were still finishing up pears then, too." Meggie stopped talking as she negotiated the right turn into congested California Avenue, with its two narrow traffic lanes and diagonal parking in both directions.

Anne knew that Meggie was the most senior line supervisor that the canner had: she had worked at the Sutter Packing Company since it opened in 1918 as the Bayside Cannery. She worked some afternoons, but mostly on night shift. Meggie said "I just wish some more of the women in Palo Alto and Barron Park could find their way free to work; even half-time would help." Anne couldn't help but feel that was a dig aimed at her. It was true; she could work in the mornings, five days a week. But Anne wasn't sure the "nursery school" thing was stable enough to count on, so she didn't want to start work and have to suddenly quit right away. So she said nothing but murmured polite noises and just let Meggie ramble on.

Anne went in the hardware store with Meggie and browsed through the leftover seed packages but decided not to buy any

—the 1943 seed harvest would be working its way through the packing and distribution system and would be in the stores after Christmas. They would be fresher than these.

Worn-out loaders and teenage pickers

On the way home, Meggie was still filling in the silence with cannery tales, all of which seemed to touch on labor shortages, one way or another. She told of management arranging, with the Palo Alto City Lines, a special midnight bus service between Palo Alto and the cannery. This enabled more potential workers to come forward for the evening and night shifts during the peak canning season in August and September. The Office of Defense Transportation (ODT) in San Francisco had to approve this. The ODT was also involved, all season long, in tightly coordinating fruit and vegetable picking with the cannery's packing schedule, because of the shortage of trucks. "They told us we HAD to keep 'em rolling," Meggie told Anne with a grin. "I've never seen men so worn-out as the workers unloading the trucks at the cannery dock after a week of 12-hour shifts."

Anne asked, "Where are the orchardists and farmers getting the pickers for this glut?" This set Meggie off on a paean of praise for the local teen-agers. "Do you know that Palo Alto High School students are picking lima beans and tomatoes, as well as other crops Sutter doesn't pack, like cucumbers and prunes? Trucks leave the high school every morning for the fields, carrying as many as 60 or 65 volunteers. Other kids only work after school, but every little bit helps. And it puts money in their pockets. With their men gone to war, a lot of families around here need any paying work that they can get." Again, Meggie's truths were making Anne feel guilty for having such a comfortable life in the midst of a world cataclysm that was changing everything.

Volunteers answer frantic appeals

As Meggie turned off El Camino into Matadero Avenue, she mused some more about volunteers. She told of an Atherton couple who, although they had been plan-

ning to leave the next day on a vacation trip, changed their minds and instead joined the workers at the cannery after reading an urgent appeal in the Palo Alto Times for 500 more helpers. A Palo Alto policeman put in his vacation packing fruit, and five firemen responded by giving five hours of night work each evening.

A 78-year old woman showed up for work, and, when told she would have to get a Social Security number, disappeared but returned an hour later with the card in hand. She had walked a mile to the post office and another mile back. Anne said, somewhat defensively: "I know this is going on—some of our neighbors have put in weeks on the cutting and canning lines."

Floor Lady in two wars

Meggie's last story was the best. Mrs. J.N. Thompson, of 456 Olive Avenue, who was working as a Floor Lady at the Sutter Cannery, was one of these amateur volunteers. But she had some relevant experience - she had worked as a Floor Lady in the same cannery during World War I when it was the Bayside! She told the Times reporter, "I never thought I'd find myself back here again!" The two women rode the last couple of blocks in a companionable silence. I think I'm worn out from talking and listening, Anne thought. I hope it will be refreshing to listen to Annie, although she is starting to become a motor-mouth. And then there is the eternal question: what can I cook for dinner? I'd hate for Richard to sit down to a meatless dinner.

Continued in the next issue

I hope you have enjoyed this fictional glimpse into the lives of Barron Parkers on the Home Front during World War II. In Part Three, You will learn how the Maguires came to live temporarily in Barron Park, You will experience Meggie Thorpe in her role as super canner and mother of Victory Gardens, and you will go through an emotional crisis with Linda Maguire. In the end, the bonds of friendship will shine through the tragedy of war. If you have any questions or comments, you can contact me at; Douglas L. Graham, 984 Ilima Way, Palo Alto CA 94306, 650-493-0689, or dgrahampaca@gmail.com.

El Camino Vacancy Rate Remains Low

By Bob Moss

The El Camino business area has had an interesting and sometimes checked past. In the mid-1970s about 45 percent of the store fronts were vacant, and a dozen of them were taken over by “massage parlors” which were strongly linked to prostitution. At the time, Palo Alto had over 30 massage parlors, but El Camino had the highest concentration. After several years and lots of effort by the Barron Park Association and the Ventura neighborhood, all of the “massage parlors” were closed when laws were enacted making it almost impossible for any such activity to ever return to Palo Alto.

Around that same time, Palo Alto adopted a new Comprehensive Plan which led to rezoning of some El Camino parcels to multiple-family housing. The Montage apartments replaced Rudolfo’s restaurant; townhouses replaced the Cameo Club card parlor at 4120 El Camino and a veterinarian, and The Hamlet offices and condominiums on El Camino Way replaced a small shopping area. Other areas were changed from service (auto-oriented) commercial to neighborhood commercial, and a number of auto repair businesses were phased out. El Camino actually is quite viable for commercial uses and for neighborhood-serving businesses. I have been tracking and

reporting on uses and vacancies along our section of El Camino since 1975. Only recently have I been able to obtain the square footage of lot sizes and floor area on each commercial parcel on El Camino. Before that, my reports had been based on the number of storefronts or potentially commercial spaces without regard to their size. My data now uses square footage of land area and floor area of buildings. It comes from County Assessor records and was supplied by the Palo Alto Planning Department. It covers El Camino from Adobe Creek to Page Mill Road. The vacancy figures and rates given here do not include El Camino Way, which I may be able to get from staff later.

I have prepared detailed tables on site occupancies from 1992, 1996, 2001, 2008, plus several data points for 2010. My detailed data covers commercial land on the Barron Park (even) and Ventura (odd) addresses along El Camino, the ground floor area of buildings on those lots, the amount of space vacant and available for rent in those buildings, and the vacancy rates for each side of the street and for the total section of El Camino over more than 18 years. Please contact me at bmoss33@att.net for the detailed data.

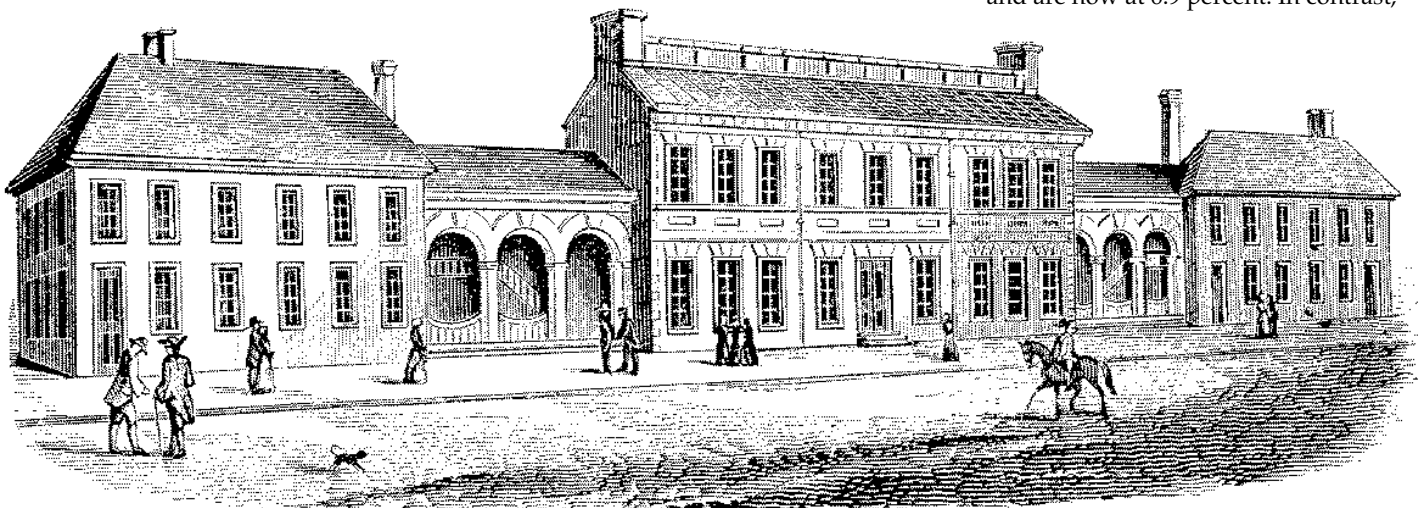
Here is a summary of the historical vacancy rates. The vacancy rates are based on square footage of ground floor commercial space available and occupied.

Historical Vacancy Rates On El Camino Real

January 1992	2.1%
February 1996	3.8%
December 2001	2.5%
January 2008	5.8%
November 2010	6.9%

Major changes in commercial land area on the Ventura side include conversion of Hyatt Rickey’s to residential plus some minor removal of commercial spaces such as the Old Pro near Page Mill Road and a couple of used car lots. In 2010 lot and building area was reduced again when the Mayflower motel was converted to Keys School. Major changes in commercial land area on the Barron Park side include removal of Rudolfo’s, the veterinarian, and Cameo Club and replacement by housing.

Vacancy rates over time are important. Note that in 1992, 1996, and 2001 overall vacancy rates were between 2.1 and 3.8 percent. Commercial vacancy rates below 5 percent are considered fully occupied. In January 2008, the start of the Great Recession, vacancy rates were up to 5.8 percent and are now at 6.9 percent. In contrast,



vacancy rates downtown were 4.7 percent in August 2001 and over 10 percent in late 2009, by far the worst in 25 years. Unlike El Camino, Downtown is considered prime commercial and retail space, so it is significant that commercial vacancies there were almost twice the rate on El Camino. Another point in favor of El Camino commercial vitality is that, so far this year, sales taxes in the El Camino corridor were about double the sales taxes from Town and Country.

In 2010, there were a number of tenant changes along El Camino. In June, the florist at 4050 El Camino closed after more than 35 years and was replaced by Cross Fit Exercise. This month Cross Fit moved to Grant Avenue after less than five months and the site now is vacant. Another exercise business opened at 3516 El Camino, the former location of Service Auto Supply location which has been vacant for more than 10 years.

The building at El Camino and Page Mill that housed Polly and Jake antiques many years ago was replaced by a new building this year. AT&T had occupied the Polly and Jake building in 2007, then temporarily moved to a new building at 2865 El Camino Real (that replaced the Old Pro) and then moved back to the new building that replaced the Polly and Jake's building in November.

In August Super Cuts at 4232A El Camino lost its lease and moved out. They had been there since at least 1991. In November the entire site which included the former European Kitchen site at 4232 was being converted to a preschool. European Kitchen moved to San Francisco the end of 2008.

Early this year the floor covering store at 3489 El Camino moved back from the corner, leaving a small space that was occupied by Sprint for less than four months. After a short occupancy by the "No on 23" campaign headquarters, the space is now vacant.

Another election-related occupancy was 3898 El Camino which was the local Democratic Party campaign headquarters from early September to mid November, and now is vacant again.

BARRON PARK SENIORS

Barron Park seniors have a lunch together bi-monthly at various neighborhood restaurants. They lunches are held the second Tuesday of alternate months. The December luncheon featured a sing-a-long of Christmas music led by Barron Park accordion players Jena and Gary. Please contact Bob Frost at 493-8272 or bobfrost34@yahoo.com for an invitation with further details.



LUNCH FOR SENIORS AT AVENIDAS

Are you sixty or over? The best kept secret for you is La Comida, the dining room located in the Avenidas Senior Center, 450 Bryant. For only a suggested donation of \$2.50 you can have a three course hot lunch with milk, coffee or tea included! Lunch is served Monday-Friday, from 11:15 a.m-12:30 p.m., in a beautiful dining room with flowers on the table and music from the piano. Great place to meet people! Join us!

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Barron Park Association
724 Barron Avenue
Palo Alto, California 94306

Nancy "Jo" Hamilton
EDITOR

Patrick Coyne
DESIGNER

Gwen Luce, Lynn Melena,
Doug Moran
COPY EDITORS

Markus Fromherz, Douglas Graham,
Nancy Hamilton, Lynn Melena,
Bob Moss, Tina Tang
CONTRIBUTORS

EMAIL LISTS

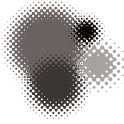
The BPA has four email lists: bpa-news, bpa-issues, bpa-misc and bpa-jobpostings. They are hosted at Google Groups (moved last January). To join bpa-news, go to <http://groups.google.com/group/bpa-news> and click on "Join this group." Similarly for the other lists.

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

BARRON PARK'S LOCAL COPY SHOP

DESKTOP PUBLISHING • LARGE FORMAT
SELF SERVICE ON 100% RECYCLED PAPER
LOCALLY OWNED AND OPERATED

**Professional • Friendly • Reliable
Affordable • Convenient**



**Copy
Factory**

650.856.2020 • copyfactory.com

3929 El Camino Real, Palo Alto

Between Los Robles and Ventura, next to Star One

B&W • COLOR COPIES • FULL BINDERY

Driftwood Deli & Market

- Sandwiches - Fresh Bread -
 - Ice Cream Bar - Dairy - Groceries -
 - Catering - Espresso Bar -
 - Indoor and outdoor seating -
 - Homemade soup & salads -
- Mon.-Fri. 8 am to 8 pm, Sat. 10 am to 7 pm
Buy 2 sandwiches - get 3rd FREE - exp. 1/31/11

3450 El Camino Real

Palo Alto, CA 94306 (near Creekside Inn)

Phone: (650) 493-4162

Fax: (650) 493-4171

www.DriftwoodDeliandMarket.com



NEW HOMES FOR SALE

"Barron Park Style"

Modern California Farmhouse Simple Green & Clean

Three new "Barron Park Style" homes coming in 2011



JAMES WITT

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

TEL: 650.494.2041

WWW.JAMESWITT.COM

Al Habiby

Stanford Carpet

*Carpet * Vinyl * Hardwood Floors * Laminate*

Lic# 886777

3780 El Camino Real, Palo Alto, CA

650-424-1494

Cell: 650-269-6677

**Jim Davis
Automotive**

[http://www.merchantcircle.com/business/
Jim.Davis.Automotive.650-493-1371](http://www.merchantcircle.com/business/Jim.Davis.Automotive.650-493-1371)

Serving Barron Park for over 28 years!

3972 El Camino Real

Palo Alto, CA 94306

650-918-798

WINDOW PERFECTION
WINDOW PERFECTION

FAST & EFFICIENT
WINDOW CLEANING

ECO FRIENDLY

FREE ESTIMATE!!!

CALL (650) 387 4153

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

W I N T E R 2 0 1 1



www.bpaonline.org

724 Barron Avenue

Palo Alto, California 94306

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
PALO ALTO, CA
PERMIT NO. 143