



BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Will Beckett, BPA President

The rains have started and the sun is lower in the sky. It is a great time for getting out for a walk and taking in the fresh air. On that point I would like to remind people that despite our upbringing, and the good memories we all have of the smell of wood smoke in the air at this time of year, burning wood is a major source of air pollution. Be aware of the still nights when you consider this option and if you do it at all, consider only doing it when there is a good wind blowing. Unfortunately, the coldest nights are those when there is no wind. Other alternatives are natural gas fireplaces or pellet wood stoves, which burn much more efficiently and therefore produce lower levels of pollution.

Safe Streets

A new campaign to make our streets safer has begun in the City of Palo Alto. Some of you may have noticed inserts in the Palo Alto Weekly and seen news stories on the "Share our streets as if..." program the City has begun. This is a new way to try and improve street safety by focusing on the choices street users make everyday which may be unsafe choices. The idea is that you may get away with it most of the time but it will only take one time when your unsafe choice results in an accident. Choosing to J-walk, or a bike not stopping at a stop sign, or a car stopping at a stop sign but not really looking carefully to be sure it is safe to proceed. Not to mention speeding or all the clearly illegal activities that all of us see daily. We all share the streets. Be more aware of what is going on around you when you drive, walk, bike, skate, or scoot around town.

New Middle School

Most of the focus lately has been on the new middle school and where the new community center might be located. The BPA would like to see the middle school at the Terman site but would also like to see a new community center in the southwest part of town. Suggestions continue to include the Mayfield, Roche site at Arastradero/Foothill Exp, or the Elks Club at this point. Much of this may fall out after the county board of supervisors review the General Use Permit for Stanford which has not happened as of this writing.

Increased Traffic

New construction seems to continue to be on a fast track. Much of this is residential and means a continued increase in traffic and school population. As a neighborhood effort, please take the time to talk to your neighbors about traffic safety, car pooling, and reducing single occupant car trips in the neighborhood. We have many other options most of the time, and it takes very little effort to give these a try. The VTA 88A is a great option to and from JL Stanford middle school and there soon might be a free shuttle as well. Help solve the problem rather than being a part of it!

Recycling

All of us now can recycle mixed paper at the curb. If you don't know what this means, feel free to contact me and I will be happy to go over it with you. Let's all do our part to Reduce (when we buy), Recycle (what we can) and Reuse (purchase things made from recycled materials).

Community Preparedness Chair Needed

Finally, I would like to put out an appeal for a Community Preparedness Chairperson. This position has been open for a long time and needs someone willing to act as the contact between the community, Police, and the Fire department. Many in the community already have disaster preparedness training and some do volunteer work for the Police Department but we need someone to meet monthly with the Police and Fire departments, and communicate important information to volunteers in the Barron Park area. Please contact me directly if you are interested. Thanks, and have a great holiday season!

COMMUNITY EVENT



Would you like to parade and sing through the neighborhood, with the donkeys the 23rd of December around 2:30 p.m.? If so, please contact: Inge Harding-Barlow at (650) 493-8146 email: ihb@best.com, or Gwen Luce at (650) 424-1960 email: gluce@coldwell-banker.com

Z O N I N G & L A N D U S E

by Maryanne Welton, committee chair

The biggest news about development along El Camino through our neighborhood is the start of a study by the City of Palo Alto's Planning Department. The City's Comprehensive Plan calls for a multi-disciplinary planning study to look at transportation, urban design, land use and economic factors that affect development along El Camino. The study was scheduled to begin in 8 years. In response to increased interest by property owners in redeveloping or renovating their properties and efforts on the part of neighborhood groups, the timeline has been moved up.

The City has already allocated \$15,000 to begin the study. Grants from Caltrans and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) are expected to fund over \$300,000 to hire a consultant team and begin work early next year. Caltrans is interested in developing prototypical alternative design standards on state highways that run through urban areas, such as El Camino. Their typical standards are highly restrictive and make it difficult to create pedestrian-oriented streetscapes, with wider sidewalks or plantings. This study would look at the entire length of El Camino through Palo Alto and propose alternative standards to allow improvements in the public right-of-way that enhance the streetscape. In addition, the City has applied for a grant from MTC to look at urban design and land use issues along

El Camino. The goal would be to craft a set of new design guidelines that would impact the look and feel of all new and renovated structures along El Camino.

These studies will involve extensive community participation. A steering committee is being formed with representation from various neighborhoods, including Barron Park, Ventura, Greenacres, and Charleston Meadows. Representatives from Barron Park include myself and Lynn Melena, a planner working for the City of Mountain View. Community workshops will also be conducted to allow any interested residents and property and business owners to take part in shaping these standards and guidelines. Watch for announcements of future meetings and let your voice be heard. Or let me know you're interested and I'll make sure you get notices about the meetings. This project has the potential to transform El Camino into a neighborhood-serving, pedestrian district—let's work together to make it happen.

Other ZALU news in the neighborhood

4131 El Camino: This three-story, mixed-use project including ground floor retail, office, and residential units is in the process of obtaining final approvals from the City Council and Planning Commission. Construction would start next year.

The Goodwill Trailer Site: After meeting

with City Planning Staff and ZALU committee members, the property owner realized that his proposed hotel project was not well-received by the community and withdrew his plans. No word on future plans at this date.

Future of Single Family Homes: Mark Kriss from the BPA board has been an active participant in this city-wide committee to look at preparing guidelines and a review process for renovation and new construction of single family homes. They will soon be making recommendations for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council.

Subdivision at 797 Matadero: Plans are proposed to subdivide a large parcel on Matadero into five single family house lots. The developer held a public meeting and about 40 neighbors attended to review the plans and voice their concerns about the number of homes, off-street parking, privacy from second story rooms, and other design issues. We have met with the neighbors and discussions with City staff and the developer have been taking place to address their concerns. The application to the City for a subdivision map is not yet complete and formal City review will take place during the next several months.

If you are interested in zoning and land use issues or want to participate on our committee, you can contact me at 493-3035 or quigleynor@aol.com.

DONKEY DONATIONS

Please send donations for Perry's and Niner's maintenance to
Palo Alto Donkey Project, Peninsula Conservation Center Foundation,
3931 E. Bayshore Rd, Palo Alto, CA 94303. Hee Haw! Thanks!

D O N K E Y N E W S

by Edith Smith — Donkey Volunteer

The Barron Park donkeys, Perry and Niner, are thriving in their pasture, come hot weather or cool. This Winter their hair will grow a bit longer, to protect them from rain and wind. They have been socializing a lot this season, guided by their present corps of 17 neighborhood volunteers. Accompanied by dog owners and dogs, the donkeys patrolled the bike path on Friday and

Saturday evenings (through October.) This is the second year of the walks, which give everyone good exercise and socializing, but also keep a watch on possible vandalism. The donkeys continue a 3-year tradition of visits to Bol Park every Sunday morning 9:45 to 10:30, weather permitting. They visit with neighbors and often visitors from distant [CONTINUED ON PAGE 3]

parts of the world. Many newcomers first meet their neighbors at the donkey Sunday get-togethers. Children learn to pet, curry, and feed Perry and Niner, as well as learning about Barron Park donkey history, which goes back to 1934. (Do read the donkey history now on the Bol Park kiosk).

This Fall the donkeys began their third year of programs with Barron Park School children. In addition to their participation in "Walk-To-School Day" (with flattering newspaper photos and publicity), they walk to Bol Park to visit with the Room 1 Kindergarten Class and their teachers, Kathy Clarke and Joan Barksdale. Curriculum includes anatomy, habitat, songs, original poems and original paintings of the donkeys. The childrens' donkey paintings and poems have been exhibited at the PAUSD Offices. This Fall, Room 2 Kindergarten, Grace Porras, teacher, will visit the donkeys for a similar educational program.

Here is a list of our dedicated and able crew of donkey volunteers, who feed, walk, and care for the donkeys come rain or shine. Many thanks to Don Anderson, Jim Bronson, Aimee Cardwell, Zakhary Cribari, Susan Carson, Eugene Coen, Norman Cooperman, Stephanie Enos, Brigit Fisher, Inge Harding-Barlow, Lela Heintzelman, Mary Jane Leon, Doug Moran, Edith and Leland Smith, Eric Struck, and Yvonne Walters. Thanks also to James Witt who donates free pasture land.

NEW TRACK AT GUNN

by Martha Shirk

In a ceremony October 24, the Gunn High School Sports Boosters Club officially dedicated a new, state-of-the-art soft-surface track around the football field. The track is open for use by the community during non-school hours.

The track has been named in honor of Hal Daner, Gunn's track coach for 30 years and a two-time "California Coach of the Year" winner.

Construction of the \$330,000 track was made possible by a 2 1/2-year fundraising effort by Sports Boosters, which resulted in 341 individual donations ranging from \$25 to just over \$90,000. Donations came from students, parents, alumni, and members of the community. In addition, the Palo Alto Unified School District kicked in \$50,000, and Sports Boosters contributed some of the proceeds from its annual "Clash of the Titans" silent auctions, held each spring in the school gym.

The new track is the first major improvement to Gunn's athletic facilities since the school was built more than 30 years ago. Many of the other facilities used by athletic teams and the Physical Education Depart-

ment are in disrepair. Gunn Sports Boosters has commissioned an ambitious master plan for the school's sports complex, which calls for improvements to the existing baseball, softball and soccer fields as well as construction of a second gym and a new Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Barron Park residents who wish to run on the track are asked to observe the following rules:

- Run in the outer lanes to help preserve the surface of the inner lanes, which get heavy use during track meets and team practices.
- Wear appropriate soft-sole shoes.
- No dogs. Their nails can damage the surface.
- No bicycles, scooters, or skate boards. Their wheels can damage the surface.
- No running during P.E. classes or practice sessions for athletic teams.

Anyone with questions about the track or the master plan should call Bob Cranmer-Brown, Barron Park resident and Sports Booster President, at 949-2020 or e-mail him at bobcranmer-brown@mortgage.com.



SEE THE DONKEYS

Every Sunday morning, weather permitting, the donkeys visit with people of all ages from 9:30 until 10:30 in Bol Park.

Bring your kids and dogs!

BARRON PARK HISTORY

by Doug Graham, Barron Park Historian

Barron Park vs. Palo Alto**Annexation Battles**

(PART THREE OF A FOUR-PART ARTICLE)

A Three Decade Saga

This is part three of the three-decade-long story of Barron Park's attempts to be annexed to Palo Alto. Part One told of the early movements in 1947-48 that were defeated by Palo Alto's anti-liquor groups led by the Women's Christian Temperance union. It went on to cover the abortive 1951 attempt, the battles within the neighborhood during the 1954-55 annexation movement, and the successful Ventura annexation of 1954. Part Two told of the "Foothills Number Two" annexation in 1959 that brought inter-City maneuvering between Los Altos Hills and Palo Alto. The annexation was approved in a controversial election in spite of Barron Park Leader John Silvey's "Declaration of War." It divided the neighborhood and left the core of Barron Park an island surrounded by Palo Alto. Following the Foothills Two election debacle, the remaining Barron Parkers either continued to enjoy our independence or brooded in our isolation, depending upon your point of view.

The Barron Park Citizens for Annexation is Formed in 1965

All was then quiet on the annexation front until 1965. In that year, two separate annexation proposals arose. The first was another citizen movement originating within Barron Park—the sixth in our history. In May, 1965, the Barron Park Citizens for Annexation, a group headed by resident Mike Golick, asked the City Council for staff help on preparing a brochure comparing services and costs. Golick's group planned to mail a postcard "ballot" along with the brochure. This was Golick's second foray into battle over annexation—he had been involved in the pro-annexation group that included the two fire district commissioners in 1954-55. His Barron Park Citizens for Annexation included Doug Pigott, George Poe, and others. City staff asked Golick to make the group's intentions known publicly so that the city

would not be accused of working behind the scenes to push the annexation. Apparently they had learned that any move they might make towards annexing Barron Park was the political equivalent of poking an angry bear with a stick.

The Council Turns Golick Down

Golick had been able to get the question of financial support for his brochure agendized. But, by midnight, when his modest proposal came up for discussion, no one on the council was receptive to his arguments. The council voted him down, and this ended Golick's "movement." After the measure failed, Golick reflected. "The City does not want any more headaches. It wants more definite proof—a petition signed by 50% or more of the residents of Barron Park, indicating that the area favors annexation."

The Barron Park Improvement Association was Also Involved

The Palo Alto Times had noted on May 24 that "Golick's group is the second one which has discussed the possibility of annexation. The long-established Barron Park Improvement Association is studying annexation as one alternative course of action while developing a general plan for the area." The group was led by its President, Mrs. Russell Riley. The maverick John Silvey was no longer involved in the association. This effort was proceeding in cooperation with the County Board of Supervisors, and was primarily aimed at solving growing land-use problems, particularly along El Camino Real. Of greatest concern was, first, the turnover of neighborhood-oriented businesses to such

"undesirable" enterprises as muffler shops and used car lots, and second, the replacement of R-1 properties with apartment houses on Matadero, Kendall, Los Robles and Maybell Avenues.

The day after Golick's appearance at the Council meeting, Riley talked with the Times and denounced his move. "A number of things should be accomplished before Barron Park even thinks of annexation," Riley said. Her group was studying annexation, "but only as one of many, many items and only as an item of study. The people of Barron Park," she added, "should be much more united in how they want the area developed" before seeking annexation." Mrs. Riley said the association had taken a poll of 10 per cent of the residents to determine their feelings on certain issues and found that 72 per cent of those polled did not favor street improvements. She added that "over half" of those sampled wanted to be able to keep livestock such as chickens, which they wouldn't be able to do if they were part of Palo Alto.

Overtones of Foothills Two?

The 1965 movement seemed to have overtones resonant of the Foothills Two Annexation, when younger families occupying newer, larger, more expensive homes favored annexation while old-time residents living in smaller, older homes tended to be in opposition. Golick's group intended to concentrate their efforts on convincing these newer residents that they would be better off in the city with better services at low cost, particularly for utilities. As Bill Klink stated in his 1967 history, "This provided a financial reason for annexation, but esthetically no reasons were given. Improved parks, recreation and streets were not mentioned." Richard Placone, of Chimalus Avenue, Chairman of the Barron Park Improvement Association's Planning Committee observed, "Nobody wanted to be annexed merely for a savings of \$100 a year."

Meanwhile, Another Scheme Surfaces

During this period, Palo Alto took another



nibble off the front of the neighborhood. On June 8, over protests from both Riley and Placone, the County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) approved a 5-acre annexation involving six properties at El Camino Real and Maybelle. Placone argued that the annexation should not be allowed because the Barron Park Improvement Association was undertaking a general plan study of the entire area. He objected to "piecemeal annexation" and said "sensible community planning is hampered when parts of the community are here today—gone tomorrow." Riley and Placone essentially asked for a moratorium on Barron Park annexations.

What makes this small annexation especially interesting is the fact that four owners who favored annexation were lumped with two who didn't. In the election on September 27, 1965, the four with 50.08% of the total valuation outvoted the two with 49.94%. The principle owner then challenged the election in the courts, claiming that the value of some "mum houses" (portable greenhouses) hadn't been counted. If they had been, she and the other dissident would have controlled 52.12% and the election would have swung the other way. Four years later, on June 10, 1969, the District Court of Appeals upheld the election, ruling that the mum houses were movable and therefore could not be counted as part of the real estate.

The Thain Flower Farm

The target of this annexation almost certainly was the Thain flower farm, which constituted about half of the total acreage involved. The property had not been built upon, with the exception of a farmhouse that had stood for two generations on the 4100 block of El Camino. The property was, in the eyes of real estate developers, a prime target for conversion to rental apartments or condominiums. Eventually, the major part of it was developed in 1977 into the "Barron Square" townhouses on a private road, Thain Way, off Maybell Avenue.

Janet A. Thain, who figures high in the memory of many people who grew up in Barron park in the 1940s and 50s, was a beloved teacher for 47 years, first at Mayfield and then at Barron Park Schools. After her parents died, Janet continued to live in their farmhouse, a small two-story frame on the property, which had been first a prune and apricot orchard and then a flower farm. Living with Janet was her

brother Alex, a civil engineer retired from the California State Bridge Department. Alex appeared at the LAFCO hearing to protest the annexation. It is interesting to note that this was the very same Alexander Thain who was active on John Silvey's "Truth Committee" and who protested the ballot counting at Loma Vista School in the Foothills Two election. By the time of the appellate court decision, Alexander Thain was a semi-invalid. He died in 1978 and his sister Janet passed away in 1985. Her house continued to stand until the mid-90s.

A Watershed in Barron Park Affairs

The period 1965 to 1967 turned out to be a watershed in Barron Park Community affairs. As Bill Klink said in his 1967 paper, "...The Barron Park-Maybelle Taxpayers Improvement Association was undergoing a change of constituency. New and younger residents began to make their more progressive ideas known. The new Executive Board of the Association was elected from this group of people. In 1965, the name was changed to the Barron Park Association (BPA). The Board declared itself an open forum for all viewpoints and said it would work for preservation of Barron Park's rural and country charm, and for better relationships with the governments of the City of Palo Alto and Santa Clara County." Over the next two years, the BPA emerged as the primary voice of the community. The new group of leaders coalesced around Richard (Dick) Placone of Chimalus Avenue, who became the BPA President in 1967.

During this same period, the residents of the "seceded" portion of Barron Park that joined the City in 1959 were forming and building the Loma Vista Association to perform similar functions. The two associations worked together on some issues affecting the broader neighborhood.

An Indirect Approach

The new BPA leadership was determined to take a proactive, progressive stance to protect and improve the community. It's

methods were, first, to take to take an indirect approach to the issue annexation by studying it objectively. Annexation would be looked at only in comparison to the two alternatives, which were defined as (1) a continuation of the existing, unincorporated status, or (2) incorporation as a town. The underlying assumption was that the citizens of Barron Park would make the correct decision if a strong factual basis could be developed and the emotional level of the political atmosphere could be lowered. Secondly, the BPA made every possible effort to include representatives of each area of the neighborhood and each major opinion group in the deliberations. It attempted to conduct those deliberations in an open and balanced manner. This was very difficult to do, given the super-charged emotions engendered by twenty years of controversy and six major political battles.

The Community Reaches Consensus on a General Plan

During 1965 and 1966, annexation was not the primary focus of the BPA. The leadership's main effort was in working with the community to establish a consensus on what Barron Parkers wanted their area to be like in the future. The most immediate threat to well-being of the neighborhood seemed to be encroachment of apartment developments along the streets opening off the El Camino commercial strip. New apartment developments had been built or were in the process of being approved on Matadero, Kendall, Los Robles and Maybell Avenues. Other properties on all four of those streets, as well as on Barron Avenue and Military Way could be considered for similar development in the near future. The other major threat was Palo Alto's evident intention to upgrade our streets if and when the area was ever annexed. This, while having obvious benefits, would have been extremely expensive and would have meant the removal of most of our street trees—a significant reduction in our greenscape that would have completely changed the appearance of the neighborhood.

The general plan was finished and presented to the County on October 8, 1965. BPA leaders said that the plan "stated for the first time what Barron Park residents wanted their area to be like. Almost unanimous [CONTINUED ON PAGE 6] agreement was achieved. It demonstrated



that the residents...when working together could pull off a major political accomplishment based on needs and not emotion. It (also) demonstrated that the residents...could work harmoniously and constructively with officials of both governments" (County and City). And, finally, that the "effect of the new blood in the area was beginning to make itself felt."

The Bol Park Project

Concurrent with the General Plan effort, the BPA was taking on a project that would culminate in its crowning achievement, the acquisition and development of Bol Park. Unlike the General Plan effort, the park project was not even indirectly related to annexation. However, it helped build the Barron Park Association's reputation as a group of achievers and establish its credibility as a group that welcomed diverse points of view and then moved slowly but surely towards community consensus before taking action. This growing acceptance by the community positioned the association to take the lead in the next annexation movement.

"Not an Effort to Annex"

By early 1967, the renovated BPA was ready to take up the issue of annexation. The previous year had seen an exchange of views with the City Staff and Council. Now a public meeting was called for February 10 at Loma Vista School. This was the first announcement to the community that annexation was once again being considered by a community group. In an interview with the Palo Alto Times on February 7, Dick Placone, BPA President, "stressed (that) the move is not - repeat, not an effort to annex the area to Palo Alto." Placone said that the association would remain neutral on the annexation question throughout the committee study. "This definitely shouldn't be construed as a push toward annexation or an annexation drive - it is not that," he said. "It is simply the opening of the question: What should be the governmental status of the area?" At the meeting, a 9-member committee of pro- and anti-annexation members was formed and named the Governmental Status Committee. Its charge was to study the three alternative futures - status quo, incorporation, or annexation to Palo Alto.

An Attitude Check

The committee set to work in the Spring. One of the early activities was to distribute

a five-question public opinion survey throughout the neighborhood. Responses generally expressed strong feelings and attitudes, some of which are still characteristic of Barron Park at the turn of the Millennium. Pride was a common theme; "They (the City) want us. This is a desirable area." So was hostility; "They could not care less: there is not enough wealth here." Isolation and independence were common themes; "This is a little haven in the midst of a metropolis." Some felt resignation, and perhaps a sense of weariness with the issue; "We know annexation is coming. We may as well go in graciously instead of kicking and screaming. You cannot stop progress when it is slapping you in the face."

A Desire to Tap into Barron Park's Energy and Talent

Committee Chair Paul Wolff interviewed Palo Alto City Manager George Morgan on April 27. Morgan stated that Barron Park, if annexed, would be a financial liability for twenty years, until the cost of annexation was paid off. Politically, and for the extension of services it would be an asset. He felt that Palo Alto would react favorably to a poll of Barron Park residents. He personally was in favor of annexation and considered the neighborhood to be a part of Palo Alto logically, culturally, socially and geographically. He wanted to tap the Barron Park energy and talent in contributing to the growth of the entire Palo Alto community. He regretted that there is no City Council representation west of El Camino. (There still isn't today, 33 years later, and has never been during the 25 years following the final annexation of the remainder of Barron Park in 1975).

An Intellectual Approach

In August 1967, the San Jose Mercury interviewed Dick Placone on the progress of the annexation study. Placone felt that annexation "is just an inevitability," and

thought that Barron Park had changed greatly since the last annexation movement collapsed in chaos. "Many of the old diehards have moved out and we have a much younger community now," he said. "Some of us feel it would be better to decide on annexation ourselves than wait until it is forced upon us." He also said that "The city is following a policy against annexation unless a substantial part of the area wants it."

Dick predicted that the neighborhood would be ready to make a decision in 1968. "If we find that 65% of the residents favor annexation, then we will ask the Palo Alto city council to start proceedings," Dick said. "We will have the information printed up in booklets with the pros and cons of annexation clearly spelled out. Then we'll mail one to every resident," he said. Public hearings, debates and panel discussions will follow. Finally, a house by house poll will be taken to learn what the area's attitude is about annexation, the newspaper reported. "If less than 65 percent favor annexation, we've decided it wouldn't be worth stirring up the community by trying to start a movement," Placone said, pointing out that the Barron Park Association study was being conducted with an "intellectual approach" aimed at cutting off the emotional arguments of the past.

"Which Way Barron Park?"

The Government Status Committee's fact-filled, 15-page report, "Which Way Barron Park?" was ready in June, 1968. The Santa Clara County Supervisors provided \$200 to help print 1,200 copies, enough for distribution to each household. Paul Wolff stressed that the report was completely objective and made no recommendation regarding possible annexation to Palo Alto. The report was made only to correct "a great deal of misinformation" that was prevalent among the neighborhood residents. Well-organized, smoothly written and nicely printed on good stock, it is still today the most comprehensive document ever compiled on the neighborhood. The study focused on the two alternatives that the committee considered reasonable: the status quo (remaining an unincorporated area under the county) and annexation to the city. The report also briefly covered the other two alternatives, considered less feasible; incorporation as a city or forming special service districts (or a unified district) under the county.



A County Service Area?

One of the additional alternatives investigated by the Government Status Committee had been the establishment of a County Service Area. A special service area could provide extended police protection, fire protection, local park and recreation districts, other miscellaneous authorizable government services such as the quarterly trash collection, and extended library facilities. Consolidation of all these services could be provided under a single governing agency, which could be either the County Board of Supervisors or an elected board resident in the area. However, the latter option would require establishment of a community service district, which would not be as easy to establish. The report judged that "The principle disadvantage of this procedure is that the service area ...(would be) assuming many responsibilities of a "city" government with few of the powers normally vested in local government."

"The City of Barron Park"?

The other alternative was incorporation. Although some residents were excited about the idea of creating "The City of Barron Park," most believed that the tax base (about \$7 million in 1968) was too small to support incorporation. Most officials and city planners agreed. The committee was careful to acknowledge that it had not made a detailed study of this alternative. This was to lead to a small and short-lived "incorporation movement" seven years later.

Residents' Opinion

During the course of the study, the committee received many letters from Barron Park residents, both pro and con on annexation. Annette Mott of Kendall Avenue wrote; "As for their 'Foothills Park' which they typically padlock and patrol, they can have it with the snakes and poison oak." Katherine Mott of Matadero Avenue was concerned that Barron Park was "increasingly neglected by our County government. As the demands of other areas increase, the Supervisors will necessarily give less concern to this area. We are increasingly becoming of less and less importance to the overall county picture...politically." She had previously lived in the area annexed as part of Foothills Two and wrote; "Not only was it

(annexation) financially advantageous to us...but we found the services of the city outstandingly satisfactory." Doug Piggott of Ilima Way based his "pro" opinion on the need for better police and fire protection, more direct association with the city that surrounds including a voice in the city council, and substantial savings in utilities costs.

"That Rural, Unimproved Look"

The report was delivered to Barron Park residents by volunteers during the summer of 1968. The San Jose Mercury published a background article on August 1 in which Dick Placone stated that the volunteers had reached about 75% of the area. The Mercury characterized the BPA's study as "painstaking" and said that it "...seems to show Barron Park residents would gain services and save money by becoming part of Palo Alto." The Mercury went on to say "To the casual observer, Barron Park might look like a cluster of unimproved streets branching off one of the tawdriest sections of El Camino Real. However, that rural, unimproved look actually is what most Barron Park residents cherish. It certainly is a major reason why past annexation attempts have failed."

They May be in for a Shock

A public meeting to discuss the BPA's study report was held September 13 at Barron Park School. About 200 residents attended. Following the meeting, the plan was to have committee members and other volunteers conduct a door-to-door poll of their neighbors. Four questions would be asked: Whether the person has read the report; if he is a registered voter; if he rents or owns; and an opinion on annexation versus remaining unincorporated.

On September 17, a story appeared in the Mercury that must certainly have disappointed annexation advocates. Under the headline "Won't Cut Standards the Mercury reported that "Residents who favor annexation of this large unincorporated area to Palo Alto may be in for a shock if

they think the city will lower its standards to snare Barron Park. There was strong indication Monday from Palo Alto officials that most, if not all, city standards for street improvements would be required in Barron Park..." Mayor Edward Arnold said he believes Barron Park "...should be substantially brought up to city standards" if it annexes to Palo Alto "...I, for one, feel that the city should remain firm," Arnold said. The Mercury opined that the comments "seemed to set a grim tone for the new annexation poll to be conducted in the next 10 days by the Barron Park Association." Richard Placone confirmed that the BPA will not ask Palo Alto to start annexation proceedings if the door-to-door poll shows less than 65% of the residents favor it.

The Ending is an Anticlimax

The results of the straw poll were not released until the end of the year. On December 30, 1968, the Palo Alto Times reported that the results were inconclusive - 757 favored annexation, 714 wanted to remain unincorporated and 196 didn't know what they wanted. It was certainly too close to go to all the trouble of holding an official election. Placone indicated that, while many residents wanted to take advantage of Palo Alto services, many others were afraid that the city would destroy Barron Park's rural atmosphere. "Many people feel once annexation is approved, the city comes in with bulldozers, knocks down trees, widens the street, puts in sidewalks and curbs, and hands everyone a big tax bill," said Placone.

So ended the seventh attempt, the best-organized and most carefully-conducted annexation movement yet, with, as the Times said, "so-so results." Barron Park would remain an unincorporated island for another seven years.

This concludes part three of the annexation story. In the winter newsletter I will conclude with the story of the last movement. The eighth attempt in 1973-75 was the one that finally succeeded in bringing our neighborhood into the city. If you have any personal knowledge of any the annexation movements, or documents from them, please contact me. I am temporarily working and living in the East, but can be reached at P.O. Box 98, Tannersville, PA, 18372, telephone and fax 570-619-7306, email: doug.graham@aventis.com.



SENIOR UPDATE

By Mary Jane Leon

The Greatest Generation

As a way of honoring our local veterans of World War II, we present here three brief sketches of neighbors who served in that war. These are the people who put their lives on hold and went off to serve their country, however they were asked to. Their assignments were as varied as they might have been in civilian life. As Tom Brokaw says in *The Greatest Generation*, "Not all of them were on the front lines, or even in a critical rear-echelon position, but they were fused by a common mission and a common ethos." To paraphrase Brokaw: There are so many other people whose stories could be told, who embodied the standards of greatness in the everyday that give this generation its special quality and distinction.

Others in Barron Park who served include Bill Grusonik, Art Bayce, Ralph Leon, Bill Cranor, Nick Babick, Jack Witt, to name a few. If you know veterans whom we haven't mentioned, let us know, and we will acknowledge them in future issues.

George E. Conner



George Conner, 1944

George Conner, just out of high school, went to work in a planing mill in Burlingame in 1939. When the war started, he went up to Mare Island and worked there until he enlisted in the Sea Bees on September

12, 1942. He was called up November 12 and shipped by train across country to Danisville, Rhode Island, for boot camp. He was assigned to the 55th Naval Construction Battalion, the Seabees. He was a youngster among oldtimers. Many of the men were experienced engineers or construction workers. The average age in the outfit was 35.

On March 5, 1943, he left from Port Hueneme, near Oxnard, for Brisbane, Australia. The initial success of the Japanese in the

Far East caused the Allies to fall back to Australia, and facilities had to be built there to serve as a secure base to support naval and military counter-offensives. The 55th NCB arrived in Brisbane March 24. They established a base for themselves 5 miles northwest of Brisbane, which later became the staging camp for the Seabees in the Southwest Pacific.

The Battalion was split into four companies. George, in Company D, was sent to Kana Kopa, New Guinea, to construct a PT advance base. In four months, in spite of excessive tropical rains and adverse soil conditions, this small detachment installed facilities for housing and feeding 800 men, shops and storehouses of Quonset huts, three 15,000 gallon water tanks, a tank farm of four 1000 barrel fuel tanks, a timber pile wharf, and two pontoon dry docks for PT boats. They experienced disease and adverse weather conditions; some places the men worked waist-deep in the churned earth, and the excessive rain often made it necessary to work in knee-deep mud. The rain was so severe that temporary shelters had to be erected for the pouring of concrete slabs. Quonset huts were built from the top down: the shell and roof were erected, then the concrete floors and foundations were poured inside. From 23 to 39 % of the men of this detachment were incapacitated from malaria, combined with tropical skin disease.



George Conner, 1999

Company D went back to Brisbane, and the battalion was reassembled in June. They all went to Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea, and then on to Mios Woendi, a triangular island one mile long and about 3000 feet across. It had a natural harbor, but the rest of the island was surrounded by sand and coral, providing a natural barrier to attack.

This is the men's own description of the Mios Woendi development: "Civilization came to the island with us. We built thoroughfares crossing the island, rows of tents, warehouses, stores, offices, living quarters, docks, ramps, parking areas for planes, towers, radio stations, a hospital, a jetty, PT finger docks, all naval base facilities. The island was alive with rugged Yankee civilization; electric lights, refrigerators, radios, movies, graded roads, automobiles, all alien to the fictional romance of the islands. We had built it, this base from which invasions were started, this base at which war ships and war planes licked their wounds and rested."

The Battalion served 22 months outside the continental US—all of which were spent in tropical climates. They returned to Camp Parks, near Livermore, in January 1945.

When the 55th Battalion was disbanded, George was sent to Pearl Harbor. He was standing in line, waiting to get his shots before leaving for Japan, when word came that the war was over. He came home in December 1945. George's comment on his war experience is "We used to gripe—complain a lot—but we did what we were supposed to do. We got our work done...and I don't regret any of it."

After discharge, he had various jobs, even went back to Australia as a civilian for a few months. Eventually, he went to work for the Post Office, as a letter carrier at Stanford University, where he stayed for almost 20 years. George has been an active member of Post 2310 of the VFW ever since the war. He and wife Mavis have been active volunteers in several capacities at local Veterans' Hospitals since 1950. They have lived in Barron Park for 50 years.

Leland Smith



Leland Smith, 1943

Lee grew up in Oakland, where he began studying piano in his early childhood. He expected to be a concert pianist when he grew up, but when he was 15 he decided to broaden his musical horizons. His

high school in Oakland had a wonderful music program, and each semester he studied a different instrument—clarinet, bassoon, oboe, french horn, cello. This turned out to be a beneficial decision.

Lee graduated from high school just after turning 17. They were recruiting for officers' training at school, so he decided that was a good idea. Unfortunately, during the preliminary physical, he couldn't even find the eye chart on the wall without his glasses, so no officers' training. That was the end of that.

He had eight or nine months to go before turning 18, so he joined the musicians' union and started playing in night clubs in San Francisco, mostly playing the tenor saxophone. It was a marvelous time for a young musician, since most of the musicians were in the service. As soon as he joined the union and bandleaders learned that he could read music and was reliable,



Leland and Edith Smith, 1995

he had constant work. He started out playing in night clubs, and within six weeks he was playing in the Fairmont hotel.

Lee heard that instead of waiting for the draft, if you signed up for what was called "voluntary induction" they would give you the service of your choice, so just before his 18th birthday he enlisted. Since his grandfather had been a sea captain, he chose the Navy. Within a couple of weeks, he was called up. He went through another physical exam, again he could not find the eye chart. They classified him for "special assignment," which meant that he could go into combat areas, but he could not have combat duties. As he says, "That meant I could not have weapons, since if I lost my glasses I would be likely to shoot the wrong people."

In September 1943, Lee was sent to Faragut, Idaho, to Navy boot camp. Something like 60,000 men were in this one camp. (Lee says that the food was surprisingly good.) They were all given standardized tests for IQ, aptitude, and knowledge about trades. After three or four days, they started assigning the young men to their spots in the Navy. Since Lee had done well on the tests, he was told that he could choose any of the navy schools he wanted. His older brother was doing radar research for the Navy in Washington, D.C., so Lee chose radar school. He went home on leave, and when he came back, found that he had been assigned to the Bremerton Naval Yard in Washington to play in the Navy band. As Lee explains, "When I said no, there must be some mistake, I am supposed to go to radar school, they replied that if a sailor already had a trade, the navy would not train him for a second one. My trade was music, and I had no choice in the matter."

"Off I went to Bremerton, where I reported to the band master, and found I had been labeled a bassoon player—as had two other men. None of the three of us had any experience playing the bassoon, but that is what the band needed, and so that is what we were."

While at Bremerton, Lee played many instruments in the concert band, the marching band, symphony orchestra, even in combos in the officers' club and in the non-com officers' club. The hardest duty

was playing on the docks when the ships from Asia came in, bearing the bodies of the men who had been killed in action.

After being discharged, Lee went to graduate school at Berkeley. His new wife, Edith, and he both got fellowships to study in Paris, so spent a year there. After that, and a few months in New York, they went to the University of Chicago, where Lee taught for six years. When he heard through the grapevine that he would be offered tenure, he and Edith, both native Californians, foresaw a lifetime of Midwestern winters, and opted out.

They came back to the Bay Area, where Lee played in bands and orchestras in the City and all around the Bay area. He got a temporary assignment to teach composition at Stanford, which turned into 34 years on the faculty there. Edith and Lee have been in Barron Park since 1958.

Oliver A. Ryder



Oliver Ryder, 1942

Oliver grew up in Alexandria, Va., and had two years of college in Chapel Hill before the war. After basic training, he was chosen for Officers' Candidate School and so spent three months training at Ft. Benning, then a month at paratroop school.

He was a brand new 2nd Lieutenant in Camp Croft, South Carolina, when General Donovan put out a request for 250 French-speaking, infantry-trained 1st or 2nd lieutenants. Oliver was sent up to Washington for a series of interviews. Finally, a major asked "Would you be willing to accept extremely hazardous duty overseas?" Oliver said "Well, yes . . ." and he was in the new Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA.

The men selected for OSS went up to President Roosevelt's Shangri La in western Maryland to train for duty in France. A few of the first group, including Oliver, were held back to help train subsequent troops. By July 1944, the pressing need for OSS people in France was pretty well over. Oliver's training job was done, and he was

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 10]

sent out to Burma, to Detachment 101 of the OSS, the first American unit ever assembled to conduct guerrilla warfare, espionage, and sabotage behind enemy lines.

Oliver was sent to Nazira in Assam, India. He worked with flight personnel, flying from India to drop supplies to American and British guerrillas, as well as Kachan (native) troops in Burma. Loads included rice & salt, weapons, medical supplies. As Oliver explains, "The pilots were leery of flying those long flights. Perhaps my most important function was flying with them, after I learned where these targets were. We had to leave India very early in the morning, go over the hump (the Himalayas), down into Hukawng Valley, frequently over ground fog. We could find the target area by navigation, then look for the drop spot, which would be marked by panels—big sections cut out of used parachutes. The chutes were red, white, blue, yellow, so the colors were a key. Everybody was nervous. For example, we would go in to a closed-end valley in a C-47 that was overloaded, the gas gauge would be dropping all the time. We would find the drop point and go down to 400 feet. Those pilots would pull up like they

were flying fighters—testing the plane's capability. I was never shot at by Japanese aircraft or ground fire, never had to abort, never went out on one I didn't come home from." Oliver logged over 600 air hours from early September 1943 to January 1944.

After a short leave in Ceylon in February 1944, Oliver was sent to NCAC—Northern Combat Area Command, in a small village near Bhamo, Burma. Here he performed a



Oliver and Louie Ryder, 1998

staff function & liaison. On a daily basis, he worked with Operations during the day, then attended the General's briefings, reporting the details of where the OSS-supplied forces were, everything a commander needs to know to most effectively utilize his resources charting this stuff.

Oliver summarizes the progress of the 101: "We started out as a guerrilla operation, which doesn't take a lot of men. After the battle of Myitkyina, we changed into a rolling operation of battalions driving the enemy out of Burma. The British had no more men, nor did we. If it hadn't been for the native people, we couldn't have done it. We ended up with a force of ten thousand guerrillas."

In June 44, Oliver came down with polio and was sent to a hospital in India for the summer, then back to Richmond, Va. He was discharged in February 1945 and walked out of the hospital. After completing school, he spent five years as a stockbroker in San Francisco, then went into sales for a publishing firm, where he ended his career as a Senior Vice President. He and his wife Louie have been in Barron Park since 1969.

Self-Help Projects for Senior Citizens Being Investigated

An exploratory meeting was held October 26 to address concerns common to local senior citizens. The people present represented a cross-section of Barron Park senior citizens. Each person had an opportunity to explain what he or she felt were the most important problems facing local seniors.

The Concerns Are Many

The issue mentioned by the most people was transportation. Even people who still drive find there are times when they don't feel up to it, or reasons why they can't drive at a given time.

Another concern was the possibility of accident or illness felling those who live alone. Some neighbors already make it a habit to phone one another once a day to be sure all is OK. Questions were raised

about possibly formalizing a program of checking on one another. We need to find out how many people in Barron Park would welcome such a service, and whether we have enough volunteers to sustain a program.

A third concern mentioned by more than one participant was the need for occasional assistance with everyday tasks like changing light bulbs in high fixtures, unloading or moving bags of compost or garden soil, or other small tasks that are not large enough to require a handyman.

Although—many would love to have a neighborhood handyman.

People also mentioned the need for a way to obtain library books, social visits for shut ins, and locating homes in which seniors or infirm people might need assis-

tance in a widespread emergency.

Present at this exploratory meeting were Art Bayce, Pat Eldridge, Denise Atherton, Mary Alice Grieshaber, Julie Spengler, Oliver and Louie Ryder, Mardell Ward, Michael Markakis, Harold Stephenson, Ralph Leon, John Rooney, Leland Smith, Barbara Johnson, Rachel Vasiliev, Stephanie Sussman, Evelyn Gruzinski, and Mary Jane Leon.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Please voice your opinion. Did this initial meeting hit the problem areas of concern to you? And equally important: are their people out there who would be willing to volunteer to investigate and plan solutions? Let us hear from you. Phone Ralph or Mary Jane Leon at 493-5248, or send e-mail to rmleon@msn.com.

BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE

A note from Sue Luttner



Barron Park has lost many of its "street trees," that is, trees planted in the right-of-way between our houses and the street. Some of our older street trees have started to die, and others have been removed or damaged during the recent spate of construction. Replacing these trees will restore precious wildlife habitat, moderate the summer heat, and improve the aesthetics of the neighborhood.

A nonprofit group called Canopy plans to conduct a series of street-tree plantings this winter, using volunteer labor and saplings

supplied by the city. If you'd like a street tree in front of your house, Canopy requires only that you agree to keep the young tree watered until it's established, usually about three years. Canopy is especially interested in groups of properties that could support several street trees on a single block.

For a list of available species, see <http://www2.bpaonline.org/Beautification/streetTrees.html>

To request a street tree, or to find out more about the program, contact Canopy at 964-6110, info@canopy.org.

BPA BULLETIN BOARD

www.cyberstars.com/bpa/bulletin-board

We have a Bulletin Board, free to Barron Park residents! This is a community bulletin board and is not to be used as advertising for businesses.

We have a separate listing on the BPA Website for Barron Park businesses: www.cyberstars.com/bpa

Listings will be accepted only via email, as part of your email message (not as attachments) to: njh@cyberstars.com

HTML coding will be appreciated, but not necessary. What is necessary, is a date on your ad. Phone numbers and email addresses are OK, and you must include your Barron Park address. **Your address will not be published!**

Ads will be added, and automatically deleted about every two weeks, or whenever we have time to do it. You can resubmit your listing up to three times.

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Zoning & Land Use: Maryanne Welton

BPA meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday every other month at 7:15 p.m.

Call Will Beckett for location and to announce your plan to come: 494-6922

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER

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Wanted: Rental—cottage or rooms. Life-time BP resident, husky 48-year-old single male, N.S., sight impaired. Maintenance, protection, pet & garden care + modest rent. Excell. refs. Call Charlie, 494-3258.

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