

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Doug Moran, BPA President

There are two major issues affecting Barron Park that are likely to have critical decisions being made in the coming months: Alma Plaza (Albertson's grocery store) and the Arastradero-Charleston Corridor Traffic Study. A third issue, the El Camino Real/Caltrans Design Study, may or may not see any action—it has been in the City Council's queue since April and still has no firm date for a hearing.

As in earlier instances of this column, I will attempt to explain what I see as the critical questions and some background on various positions. The BPA does not have an official position on much of this.

One of the frustrating aspects of debates on these issues is that they have gone on for so long that people can forget how they arrived at their positions: The "code phrases" and "sound bites" have taken on independent existences. This makes it difficult to determine if their concerns are still relevant, and whether there are alternate ways to address them. However, challenging such people to reconstruct their chains of reasoning too often has the opposite effect of hardening their position. An approach that can be successful is to present options that would ameliorate their concerns and let a mediator or moderator push them to address your proposals and thus indirectly their position.

A second major frustration in these debates is the participants who refuse to appreciate that although their examples and experiences have useful similarities to the situation under discussion, that there are also substantial differences. For example, during one of

the forums for City Council candidates, a candidate who is a strong advocate for high-density housing in transit corridors (bus and train) was asked about lessons learned in areas comparable to Palo Alto. Her response cited downtown San Jose and Oakland!

Another example occurred during the discussion of the redesign of El Camino and involved the possibility of reducing the number of lanes in two carefully selected segments. The criteria for where this would and would not work were detailed, and the lane reductions in Menlo Park were shown to violate several of the key criteria. Nonetheless, people persisted in citing Menlo Park as an example of why this very different situation would not work. One participant—a well-known activist—directly proclaimed that there was nothing that could be said to or shown to her that would change her mind.

The only effective antidote to such people is having enough reasonable people present to demonstrate that those people are not representative of the citizenry. One of the problems of the Palo Alto Process is that it is so drawn out that it wears down the reasonable people. If they don't drift away, they often come to use "code phrases" thereby becoming hard to distinguish from dogmatic advocates. But enough philosophizing—on to the issues.

Alma Plaza (Albertson's)

The revitalization of Alma Plaza was put on hold last spring as part of the 6-month moratorium for the Arastradero-Charleston Corridor Traffic Study. I have heard no credible argument for

why it would have any impact. Various Council members have said that their rationale was to have better data to address concerns about traffic impacts. There is widespread suspicion that this was done to avoid the possibility of the Alma Plaza decision becoming intertwined with the 800 High referendum in last November's election.

The current proposal expands the Albertson's to 29,000 square feet, with space for some small independent shops and a little housing in the remainder of the Plaza. The most-mentioned argument against this proposal is that Palo Alto has a zoning limit of 20,000 square feet for such stores. There is nothing magical about the 20,000 square foot limit: According to people involved in the decision many years ago, they looked at the size of the existing stores and decided that that size was a reasonable limit. Since then, the situation has changed dramatically, and there are a host of reasons for dismissing any arguments about the size limit and instead focusing on the impacts of the actual design.

First, the size limit was a proxy for a range of constraints. It was intended to prevent an "arms race" between the existing stores, where each felt it needed to expand to remain competitive. Today, their competition is not each other, but the mega-stores in Menlo Park and Mountain View. Second, it is false that it would be the only grocery store over 20,000 square feet—some of the existing stores are in different zoning categories and thus not subject to this limit. Third, calculating comparable sizes is highly contentious. For example, how do you count the 4000 square feet for a pharmacy in the proposed Albertson's: some of the other grocery stores have a similar pharmacy, and others have only some of

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 2]

P R E S I D E N T ' S M E S S A G E C O N T I N U E D F R O M P A G E 1

the related merchandise. Another example is that the effective size of one other grocery store is understated because it has inadequate storage space inside and uses its loading dock and surrounding pavement as temporary storage for merchandise.

The second most-mentioned argument against the current proposal is that the store would be a "regional draw." When talking about shopping, "regional" means "beyond the city's boundaries." For example, the restaurants of University Avenue are a regional draw. Even when the proposed store was much larger, it was hard to understand why people would drive past the mega-stores in Menlo Park or Mountain View to get there. I haven't seen a credible argument that significant numbers of people would drive past the existing Palo Alto grocery stores to get to this one. My personal expectation is once people drive a certain distance, they will continue on to a mega-store.

However, be aware that some of the opponents of the current proposal who have made slips that revealed that they were using the word "regional" to mean other neighborhoods within Palo Alto.

So what are the legitimate issues? The most important one is the impact on the surrounding neighborhood: noise, traffic, ...

The proposal is very tight on parking spaces. The neighbors have concerns that substantial numbers of customers will park on their streets (behind the store). There seems to be a simple technological remedy: Grocery stores are increasingly using automatic wheel locks to prevent shopping carts from being taken off the premises. Being unable to take the cart to their cars would likely make parking on the residential streets too inconvenient for most customers.

Part of the traffic concern is that left turns into and out of the store will create traffic problems on Alma during peak hours, pushing some traffic onto the residential streets. The timing of the traffic lights at the entrance is a balancing act of not significantly impacting travel along Alma and yet not creating too much delay (inconvenience) for customers. I haven't seen a recent proposal about the lights to have a judgment on how practical this is.

Noise from delivery trucks is another concern of the neighbors. Because of the limited parking space, deliveries will inevitably be pushed to off-hours, typically the times that the noise is the most intrusive. Design of the unloading area can only do so much, and a "curfew" on deliveries is of limited utility. First, the local store manager would be hard pressed to turn away a delivery truck that arrived during the curfew, whether that truck is from the Albertson's warehouse or from a vendor that stocks its own shelves. Second, violations would occur when no code enforcement official was on duty, and complaints from residents have lower weight than violations observed directly by an official.

Underlying the perception of whether the proposed grocery store is too big is often an interesting philosophical question of what is the right mix of business for this site: A larger grocery store means less space for other merchants. This question is more complicated than it first seems. Grocery stores are typically the "anchor store" in these types of shopping centers, and it is not unusual for them to have "non-compete" clauses in their leases with the center's owner (in the case of Alma Plaza, Albertson's is also the owner). For example, if the grocery store decides to expand its Deli counter to offer sandwiches, it can request that the lease for a sandwich shop in that same center not be renewed. By allowing the anchor store to "cream off" high-margin items, it keeps that store strong, and in turn keeps customers coming to the shopping center. But for the customers of the displaced businesses, the offerings by the anchor store are rarely more than a pale shadow of what was formerly available.

Arastradero-Charleston Corridor Traffic Study

I have few intuitions about traffic on this corridor: I live at the north end of Barron Park and rarely travel these streets during peak hours. Patrick Muffler has been the BPA representative on the advisory board to the City's Transportation Division.

One of the biggest problems with traffic studies and design projects is that everyone thinks they are traffic experts. Traffic can be very counter-intuitive. As an example, take metering lights for free-

ways. Even after it has been explained to them, many people cannot believe that the wait to get on the freeway is typically more than offset by faster speeds on the freeway. Aside for those who don't know the explanation: The maximum flow of vehicles on a freeway occurs somewhere between 30 and 40 mph, depending on various conditions. As more cars enter, the decreased separation between cars causes drivers to slow down, and this decrease in speed more than offsets the increased number of cars.

However, this is not to say that residents should meekly accept what the traffic engineers propose: The models and simulations used by the engineers involve a lot of simplifying assumptions which may or may not be valid. Residents who understand the local patterns can often spot these flaws—I was an advisor to on the El Camino study, and I know that we provided multiple "reality checks."

On residential arterials such as Arastradero-Charleston, "friction" is an important concept: The flow of traffic along the street is slowed by cars turning onto and off the street, by cars, pedestrians and bicyclists crossing the street, and even by cars slowing when passing bicyclists who have a separate bike lane.

The current proposal for Arastradero-Charleston reduces the street from 2 lanes in each direction to a single lane with left turn pockets in the (new) center median. This configuration reduces the friction generated in the current configuration which has left turns being made from the main travel lane.

One of the goals of this study is to make the street safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, especially children going to school. This involves reducing the peak speeds of cars on the street. To offset this reduction, another goal of the design is to move traffic along smoother by reducing waits at traffic lights and various sources of friction between those lights.

One of the major weaknesses of this traffic study is that it completely ignores the effects of the train tracks. I have been told that the effect on traffic flow from the passage of a train takes 4 full cycles of the traffic lights to disappear. With potential increases in the number of trains, this could be the determining factor in traffic flows on this corridor.

ANNUAL NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING COMING THIS SPRING

By Maryanne Welton

At the time of this writing, there is an unexplained situation in the data from the model. With the proposed development, it shows substantial increases in peak traffic along Charleston, but negligible growth along Arastradero. One explanation is that Arastradero is saturated (can handle no more traffic). Another is that they modeled the new commuters as overwhelmingly going to the 101 corridor.

When considering the effect of new developments, the rule of thumb is that roughly two residents work outside Palo Alto for every resident that works in town. Thus, development at the old Sun site (San Antonio between Charleston and 101) is likely to put far less traffic on Charleston than development at Hyatt Rickey's (Charleston and El Camino).

The Chamber of Commerce has expressed concerns that changes will harm local businesses. This seems to be a non-sequitur. First, the few businesses in this corridor are at major intersections. Second, the purpose of the study is to improve traffic flow, and residents along the corridor want better flow to get to such destinations. My suspicion is that the Chamber's real concern is to allow developers to maximize their housing projects along the corridor. Although questions of feasible levels of development are explicitly outside the scope of this study, the data and analyses developed during the study will inevitably become part of the discussion of those development projects.

Summary

As these issues move forward, we will attempt to keep you informed of meeting and developments via email to the bpa-news list. My expectation is that the details of both of these projects will be controversial enough among residents that the BPA Board will not take a position on a specific proposal. However, the Board may take positions of reiterating support for some of the general goals and priorities of these projects.

I encourage you to participate and to be prepared to deal with people who have become set in their positions. I hope that my earlier comments are helpful to you in understanding and working with such situations.

The BPA has sponsored an annual Neighborhood Meeting each spring for the last several years. The goal of these meetings is to provide an opportunity for members of our community to hear about updates on BPA activities, city programs or projects that impact Barron Park and to solicit input on issues that are a concern to the neighborhood. These informal gatherings typically involve presentations by BPA board members and City staff about a wide variety of subjects. A question and answer period provides the opportunity for participants to get more information or bring up issues for discussion. The meetings are typically well attended and representatives from the City Council and staff are often present. The BPA board records the topics discussed and uses that input to help guide our efforts during the year.

While the topics vary from year to year, the issues that most brought up involve traffic and development. Thanks are sometimes expressed for different projects around the neighborhood, such as the renovation of Bol Park. We have found these meetings to be useful to inform the board and City on issues of concern for our neighborhood.

The Annual Neighborhood Meeting is a great opportunity for members of our community to hear what is going on in Barron Park. It's also a good way to meet your neighbors.

Watch the next newsletter and BPA email list for information about this spring's Annual Meeting. If you are interested in helping at the meeting or have specific topics you would like to be a part of the agenda, feel free to contact me at 493-3035 or mare@robquigley.com.

ZALU

The slowdown in development along El Camino continues. Here's an update:

4131 El Camino

A three-story, mixed-used project on the Island is nearing completion. It contains two levels of underground parking, ground floor retail and office space, and residential units above. The owner reports that a coffee shop, sandwich shop and cabinetmaker are planning to move into the ground floor. Construction should be complete in the spring.

Old Blockbuster Site

A revised plan for a nine-unit condominium project had been submitted last year for the former Blockbuster site at the corner of El Camino and Vista Way. Neighbors have voiced concerns about auto access and adequate parking for the project so that on-street parking is not unduly impacted along Vista. The City has not yet received a final application; we will continue to monitor the parking and access issues.

Albertson's at Alma Plaza

After the Planning Commission approved the proposed redevelopment of Alma Plaza last fall to include a new and expanded grocery store, additional retail spaces and housing, this project was part of the moratorium for all new development along the Charleston corridor (see President's column).

Ricky's Hyatt (at El Camino and Charleston)

This project was also included in the moratorium for all new development along the Charleston corridor.

Check this column in each newsletter for project updates or contact me if you have any questions on development in our neighborhood at 493-3035 or mare@robquigley.com.

BARRON PARK HISTORY

by Doug Graham, Barron Park Historian

Barron Park Pioneers

SARAH WALLIS

Part Two—Continuing the Story

Sarah Wallis was one of the most notable people to have lived on the land that is now our neighborhood. Part One of her story appeared in the Fall 2003 edition of this newsletter, and covered her importance in California and Barron Park history, her early life, and the first half of her overland emigration to California. Part Two covers her adventures during the last half of her trek in 1844 with the Stephens Party, the first emigrant group to bring wagons across the Sierra Nevada. Part One concluded just as they were preparing to leave the Oregon Trail and cross 1,000 miles of trackless wilderness to California.

Striking Into the Unknown

Two days travel west of Fort Hall was the Raft River, a tributary of the Snake. Here it was that Stephens and the "Californians" took leave of their Oregon-bound friends and struck off into the unknown. Their knowledge of the route was based on accounts previously related by other trappers to their guide, Greenwood, and was brief in the extreme: Leave the Oregon Trail at Raft River. Go southwest for a number of days (or weeks?) until you hit Mary's River. Follow the river until it gives out in a desert sink. Head west from there and you will find California. Armed with this and their blessed ignorance of the desert and, above all, of the Sierra Nevada, these intrepid people said their farewells and set out to break 1,000 miles of trail through an unmapped wilderness. Has there ever been a bolder move made by a group of ordinary Americans?

Notwithstanding their ignorance, they found the way relatively efficiently and reached Mary's River within several weeks. The 400-mile trip down the river (the Humboldt River of northern Nevada, which I-80 now follows) was so uneventful that only one memoir even mentions it, covering it in two sentences: "*The journey down the Humboldt was very monotonous. Each day's events were substantially a repetition of those of the day before.*" Dates started to become critical as the year's calendar was running out. They had left Fort Hall about September 1 and reached the Sink of the Humboldt about October 8. These dates are inexact because none of the emigrants kept a diary or journal or wrote a contemporary letter. Sarah would not have been able to keep a journal, because she had had no formal schooling and could neither read nor write at the time. There was a journal of the trip that was being written by Dr. Townsend (Sarah's former employer) and his stepson Moses Shallenberger, at Stephens' request. It was intended to be material for a book, but was forever lost near the end of the journey. The dates given here have been worked out logically by modern historians, balancing each memoir against others. They were all written many years after the journey, and in general, people are not good at remembering dates, so these memoirs are each inaccurate in one respect or another.

In any case, they reached the sink in early October. They stayed there about a week, resting their cattle, washing clothes and repairing equipment (a near-endless task) while the leaders scouted and planned what to do next. Fortunately, a local Paiute Indian, with whom they communicated through sign language and gestures, told them of an eastward-flowing river nearby.

He told them they could follow it up into high mountains, which they would have to cross to reach California. They named him "Truckee," which was a word he used frequently (meaning roughly, in Paiute, "OK"). They took him along as a hostage and verified his story that the river existed, forty miles across a barren desert. They named it Truckee's River and organized a two-day long dry drive. Every person and all the cattle were successful in reaching the river, where again they halted for several days to recover. It was mid-October and they received a blunt warning of the rapidly approaching winter, in the form of the first snowfall. Now began the hardest part of their journey.

They Start Up the Truckee

They started up the river, along the route of modern I-80, on October 21, during a snowstorm. It was probably a good thing that they didn't know that this was the beginning of five straight weeks of unrelenting bad weather in the Sierra. They spent four of those weeks struggling up the canyon of the Truckee, crossing the river repeatedly when the bank they were following became precipitous as the river twisted and turned, swinging from side to side in its canyon. It snowed nearly every day, heavily at times, burying the grass, and the cattle began to starve. Their hooves became soft and sore from walking in the river for hours on end, and they had to be led by hand or they would not enter the water. The men fed the cattle the only fodder available, bullrushes, which made some of them sick.

Most critical of all their problems was the fact that they really did not know where they were going or what lay ahead of them. The open valley at Truckee Meadows (now Reno, Nevada) gave them a brief respite, but the

upper canyon above Reno was much worse than the one below. By this time, food supplies were growing short and they knew they had to push ahead as fast as possible or end up starving.

The First Split

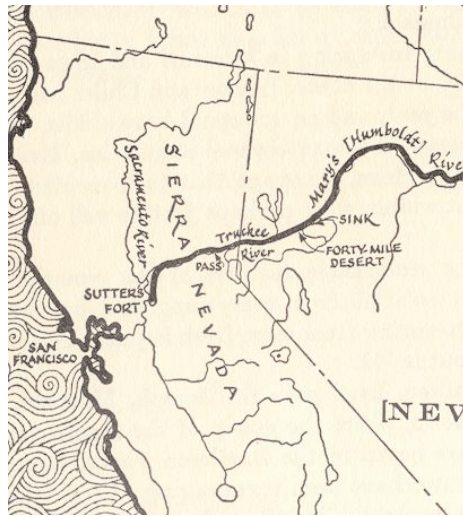
Sometime around November 20, they broke out into the relatively open country around the modern town of Truckee. Here, at nearly 6,000 feet elevation, the snow was already a foot or more deep on the flats. They looked at the forbidding main Sierra crest that lay ten miles ahead and several thousand feet above them. Here occurred the first split in the party since they had left the Oregon Trail. A group of six—two men, two women and two boys—went ahead on horseback with a small amount of food and a couple of extra horses. Doctor's Townsend's wife was one of them. We can only speculate that they were sent ahead to reach Sutter's Fort rapidly and organize a relief party. We cannot know for certain where they went, because there are two entirely different and conflicting stories, but they may have been the first non-Indians to reach Lake Tahoe.

The Second Split

The main body moved a few miles west and stopped at the lake that nestles under the rugged granite cliffs that lead up to an obvious pass through the summit ridge of the Sierra. At the lake—later named Donner Lake—they made their final preparations for the assault on the pass. Six wagons were left there, and they planned to “double-team” the oxen to get the remaining five over the mountains. Two men, Allen Montgomery (Sarah's gunsmith husband) and Joseph Foster, and a boy, Mrs. Townsend's son Moses Shallenberger, volunteered to stay with the wagons through the winter and support themselves by hunting. Thus, the party split again.

The Assault on Donner Pass

On or about November 24, the main



Map of the route of the Stephens Party down the Humboldt River, up the Truckee River and over the pass into California.

body moved their five wagons all the way to the top of the 7,200 foot pass in one hard day of furious labor. They started by carrying all their food, gear and the children about three miles over the snow and ice-slicked rocks to the top of the pass. Returning to the wagons, they double-teamed them all the way. They could get over a 10-foot vertical rock ledge only through a combination of oxen and brute manpower. The oxen were led one at a time through a narrow crevice in the ledge, then re-yoked to pull from above. Below, the men pushed and lifted the wheels over protruding rocks. Amazingly, by the end of the day, everyone and everything had been pushed, pulled and carried to the summit.

This pass, which they discovered and pioneered, later became the main route for the subsequent wagon emigrations. It was the route of the first road built across the Sierra, the first railroad and finally of modern I-80. However, it did not get named for Stephens. It is now known by the name of a much less competent group who followed in their tracks two years later and met complete disaster during an even worse winter—the Donner Party. The subsequent notoriety of the Donners

has completely obscured the steadfast courage, tenacity and organized competence of the Stephens Party.

The Third Split

At this time, on November 24, there was still only a foot or two of snow in the pass. The emigrants believed that the worst was behind them now and that they would be in California in a few days, not realizing that 70 miles of rugged mountains, canyons and foothills still lay ahead of them. On November 27, about three days rough travel west from the pass, at the big bend of the Yuba, they stopped to camp. One of the women's birth-time had come, and they waited while she had her baby. Then a big storm hit on the 28th, and they were snowed in. After about a week of more snowstorms, they began to understand that there was no possibility of the wagons going forward until spring or a major thaw came. The men then butchered the cattle and left most of the meat at the camp for the women and children. Also leaving two men with them, the other seventeen men began a desperate trek to the Sacramento Valley. They arrived at Sutter's Fort (modern Sacramento) about December 13, three days after the mounted party had finally reached there.

The Fourth Split

Back at the lake, the three wagon-guards had built themselves a small log cabin (which was used two years later by one of the families in the Donner Party). And then, on the 28th, it began to snow again—three feet in the night. And it kept on snowing. After a couple of weeks of this, the men realized that they would not be able to survive by hunting—the game had all gone to lower elevations—and that the only thing to do was to try to get across the mountains on their makeshift snowshoes. They made it to the pass, but Moses Shallenberger, who was only 14, was exhausted, crippled by muscle cramps and could go

no further. He urged Montgomery and Foster to go on without him, saying he'd go back to the cabin and get by somehow. With deep misgivings, they left him huddled in the snow and made their way west. The two men stumbled into the camp at the big bend of the Yuba River about December 9. Sarah must have been glad to see her husband Allen safe, but probably grieved for Moses, whom most people assumed was dead. After a couple of days at the camp, the two men went on to Sutter's Fort, reaching there some time in late December.

The Micheltorena War

But when they got there, they found none of the men from the Stevens Party. California was undergoing a "revolution" against an unpopular Mexican Governor, Micheltorena. The men from the mounted party and main body of the Stevens Party had arrived at Sutter's just when "General" John A. Sutter, loyal to the governor, was enlisting an army to fight the rebels. He knew a god-send when he saw one, and he immediately drafted the twenty-one American riflemen into his unit. They started south for San Luis Obispo, where the governor was thought to be gathering forces to attack the rebels in Los Angeles. Sutter held out the hope that they would be back soon and that he would then help mount a relief party to rescue the women and children. However, the "war" proceeded slowly, and eventually sputtered out with a compromise allowing the Governor to return to power. Disgusted, the Stevens Party men were released from the army (or deserted) early in February, and some of them raced back to Sutter's Fort to organize a relief party.

The Fifth Split, and the First Relief

At the women's camp, the winter dragged on, seemingly interminable, and no relief party showed up. The women must have been despairing for the lives of their husbands and brothers, for they knew nothing of the



The struggle to cross the pass in deep snow.

Micheltorena War diversion. They must have feared that their men had become lost and died in the snow. In later years, neither Sarah nor anyone else chose to write about the conditions in that camp, but it must have been truly cold, wet, miserable and squalid. The beef supplies ran low, the other food was gone, and at least one family was reduced to boiling rawhide for what nourishment it provided. Finally, on February 20, James Miller and his son left the camp to find Sutter's and organize a relief. One man, old Mr. Martin, remained with the women and children. This was the fifth split.

On the way to Sutter's, the Millers met Dennis Martin with a few mule-loads of supplies, heading for the women's camp. Martin had not waited for a larger effort to be organized, but had come on alone, worried about his father. Exchanging greetings and information, the Millers and Martin parted and continued on their separate ways. About February 24, Martin reached the Yuba Camp.

You will remember that Montgomery and Foster had arrived at Sutter's in December. So it had been known, ever since then, that Moses Shallenberger had been left at the pass to find his own way back to the lake cabin. Before Dennis Martin started on his relief

effort, Moses' mother, Mrs. Townsend, who had been in the mounted party, made Martin promise that he would not stop at the Yuba Camp, but would go on to the lake and help Moses if he was still living.

So, after briefly resting, Martin pushed on alone on snowshoes to the pass and down to the lake. Incredibly, as he neared the cabin, he met Moses. This was about February 26. Shallenberger had quite a story to tell. Left in the snow of the pass, exhausted and crippled by muscle cramps, he had still managed to hobble back down to the lake cabin before nightfall. The next day, he was contemplating the grim prospects before him when his gaze fell on some traps left in the cabin by one of the emigrants. He thought of foxes. Within a few days he had laid out a trap line and had begun taking foxes regularly, along with an occasional coyote. The foxes he ate all winter, but the coyotes proved as inedible as the crow he shot. He read books left behind by Dr. Townsend, and managed to stay sane and reasonably healthy.

The Second Relief

While Martin was going to the lake, the second relief, a larger enterprise, had reached the Yuba Camp and gotten the women and children on the trail towards Sutter's. At the lake, Martin made Moses a better pair of snowshoes, and together they were able to cross the pass and reach the women's camp in two day's travel over the now hardened snowpack. The camp was now on the move, and they found it considerably farther west and lower in elevation than before. The next day's travel brought them below the snow line, and two more brought them safely to Sutter's Fort, on March 1, 1845. They marveled at the lush green grass and spring wildflowers in the Sacramento Valley. One can imagine the reunions and story sharing that transpired when they arrived at the fort. One also might like to be a time-

traveling fly-on-the-wall and listen to Sarah quizzing Allen as to what on earth he did between late December, when he reached Sutter's, and March 1, when she finally got there.

The total elapsed trip-time for the women and children from their former homes in Missouri to Sutter's Fort was almost twelve months, and the wagons in the Sierra were not retrieved until the snow had melted in July, 1845. By then, the ones at the lake had been stripped of all articles except the firearms, which the Indians evidently feared.

Sarah's Life in the Foothills

In that spring of 1845, with the Micheltorena war over, the emigrants scattered to look for work or land to settle on. Most of them went to the San Francisco Bay Area. Captain Stephens settled in the area now occupied by modern Cupertino, where "Stevens" Creek is named for him. The Montgomerys, however, stayed in the Sierra foothill region. Allen Montgomery took employment with Sutter to cut lumber for him, on the South Fork of the American River. The location was probably near the site of the sawmill that John Marshall built for Sutter in 1847—the mill at which gold was discovered in January, 1848. At least one source, written much later in the 19th century, says that the Montgomerys "owned the land" upon which the gold discovery was made. This is probably a mistake—certainly Sutter would not have built his mill on someone else's land. In any case, they lived on the South Fork in a small cabin. During the winter and spring of 1846, Sarah occasionally made trips to Sutter's Fort on her own—a distance of more than 50 miles on the rough trails of those days. This was certainly a two-day and more likely a three-day ride in each direction. Evidently, however, there were a few other families living near their lonely cabin, as it was recorded that, in January 1846, Sarah

hosted a quilting bee, quite probably the first in California history. Sutter let most of his American employees at the fort attend the bee, which was definitely "the social event of the season."

The Bear Flag Rebellion and Fremont

This quiet domestic interlude came to an end in June, 1846 when the American-led "Bear Flag Rebellion" broke out. This was followed in July by a U.S. naval force arriving at Monterey and Yerba Buena (San Francisco) to seize California for the United States. The famous "Pathfinder," Captain John C. Fremont of the U.S. Army had been in Northern California with his exploring party since the preceding autumn, antagonizing the Mexican authorities. He first backed the Bear Flag farce, then persuaded the Navy to appoint him Governor of the conquered province. Commodore Sloat approved of Fremont's enlistment of Americans in his self-styled "California Battalion." In the autumn Fremont was ordered to Southern California to put down a rebellion which had broken out against American rule.

Montgomery Joins the California Battalion

Allen Montgomery joined Fremont's rag-tag bunch and went with them to Los Angeles, where the battalion was described by another American as a "motley array of drunkards in the ciudad of wine and aguardiente." This was the second time that Allen had left Sarah to fend for herself. She spent the autumn and winter at Sutter's Fort. Making good use of this time away from Allen, Sarah learned to read and write by watching and listening while another woman taught a five-year-old girl.

Allen Abandons Sarah

After the rebellion was quelled and Montgomery returned to northern California, he and Sarah moved to San Francisco, where Sarah added to the

family income by taking in boarders. Six months later, Montgomery abandoned Sarah. Allen took ship on the *Julia* to Honolulu, apparently in search of more profitable employment. However, he never wrote to Sarah, and for a long time it was believed that the *Julia* had been lost at sea. This was, effectively, the third time that he abandoned Sarah, and it was the last. Dorothy Regnery has written that, "As a respectable "widow" Sarah pursued almost every acceptable means of livelihood: (she) fed boarders, rented rooms, took in washing and did sewing." Fortunately for the 22-year-old Sarah, San Francisco was growing rapidly and there was a steady demand for her services.

The Gold Rush Begins

In January, 1848, John Marshall discovered gold dust and nuggets in the mill race of the sawmill that he was building for Sutter. At first, Sutter tried to keep the discovery a secret. But the news was out in San Francisco by April, and in Hawaii and the West Coast Mexican ports a few weeks later. More than half the able-bodied men in California dropped what they had been doing and took off that spring for "the mines," as the Sierra foothill region placer deposits became known. In Honolulu, the news brought Allen Montgomery flying back to California on an early ship, but he by-passed San Francisco and avoided meeting Sarah. The fact of his return was not generally known until years later.

The Story Continues...

I will continue with Sarah's story in future issues of this newsletter, including her second marriage to a man who was running away from his past in the East and her abandonment by him. This was followed by her third (and lasting) marriage to Joseph S. Wallis, the building of her beautiful mansion in the future Barron Park, and her leadership of the woman suffrage movement on the West Coast.

CITY EMPLOYEES WHO LIVE IN BARRON PARK

You may be interested that there are several city employees who live in Barron Park. Many of you met Kate Rooney, who lives on Ilima Court and works in the Community Services Department, during the renovation of Bol Park. Here's an introduction to several others:

Nick Marinaro, Deputy Chief with the Fire Department, has 30 years of professional experience in the job. He started in the fire service at Stanford as a student, and has worked for the City for 27 years. He's been a Barron Park resident since June 1994 (nine years+), and has two sons—both currently living at home on Matadero. The oldest just graduated from college and the youngest is halfway through college. You may have seen Nick walking the neighborhood with his black terrier/poodle mix canine named Kingsford (aka son #3).

Dave Matson, who lives on Campana, has worked for the City of Palo Alto since 1984. He has lived in Barron Park with his wife and son since 1989. After working in Palo Alto's Public Works Engineering Division for 12 years, Dave assumed full-time management of the city's Geographic Information System (GIS). The GIS is a computer resource which accurately maps the location of the city's infrastructure (things like parcels, pipes valves and manholes) and links these features to information about them, such as size, material, installation date, voltage, and countless other pieces of information.

Kate Rooney grew up on Ilima Court and remembers when Bol Park was still a donkey pasture and the train still ran there. She babysat the Arutunian kids and had a tree fort in the oaks above the creek. Ken Arutunian designed the original Bol Park. It was a real pleasure for her to renovate Bol Park and meet the great people in the neighborhood again. Now, she and her son, Kieran (4 1/2) live with her dad on Ilima Court, with their black lab, Major Commotion. As Project Manager in Capital Improve-

ment Program, she works with the Parks and Open Space team to renovate Community Service facilities. She's been with the City 10 years. If you see her walking the dog, please say hi.

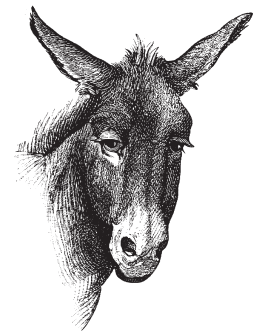
Joe Saccio, Deputy Director of Administrative Services, lives on San Jude. Joe arrived in California in 1983, and has lived in Barron Park since 1992. He started working for the City in 1992; before that he worked in the Finance Department at Stanford University Hospital. Joe and his wife Kathleen have a dog (Walden) and a cat (Henry); his daughter Eva attended Palo Alto H.S. and now attends Brown University. Joe is responsible for management of the City's Revenue Collections, Treasury (cash management), and Warehouse operations. He also oversees the City's investment portfolio, debt, revenue analysis and projections (the Long Range Financial Plan), utility risk management, and a variety of other projects.

Heather Shupe, Administrator Planning and Community Environment, has lived in Barron Park since 1987. Her husband Steve was raised here. They now live in the home Steve's grandfather built in 1949 on Cereza Drive. Heather and Steve have pictures of grandparents Ken and Vi working on the foundation—Ken was a contractor and built many homes in the Palo Alto area with his brother Les Shupe. Though their first Palo Alto house was on High Street, Steve's mother Mary grew up in Barron Park, as did both Steve and his brother. Heather and Steve's sons Ryan & Kenny have attended the same schools as their dad, though a few school names have changed over the years.

Sharon Winslow Erickson, City Auditor, lives in the house she grew up in on Laguna Way with her husband Leif and five chickens (sons Will and Peter having flown the coop). Her parents, Don and Lorraine, bought the house in 1958. Sharon is an active member of the Barron Park vegetable gardeners group. She was appointed City Auditor

in Palo Alto in July 2001, after having worked in the San Jose City Auditor's Office for more than a decade. As City Auditor, she is responsible for reviewing the efficiency and effectiveness of City operations, and contracts for the city's annual external financial audit. You may have seen reports of her audits of the City's development review process and overtime use in the local newspapers recently.

Randy Baldschun, Assistant Director of Utilities, recently retired from the City after 33 years. As Assistant Director of Utilities, Randy was responsible for the Utilities Customer Service Center, field service operations, meter reading, credit and collection, energy and water efficiency programs, and utility ratemaking. He has lived in Barron Park since 1986. He lived on Paul Avenue until 1998 when he moved to Cereza Drive with his wife Laura and two children Taylor and Jack. The boys attend Juana Briones Elementary and Laura is active with the PTA. Randy enjoys making custom cabinetry and furniture. Randy and his family plan to move to Portland, Oregon this spring.



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!

KIDS KORNERS

By G. Reynolds

A Well-Kept Secret

How Juana Briones School delights parents, to the surprise of anyone but other Briones parents.

When my daughter entered Kindergarten at Briones in 1999, I had my doubts, frankly. I had graduated from the school myself in 1972 and it hadn't changed physically in any way except that some of the more lethal play equipment had been replaced with modern, plastic structures. The desks, the linoleum tiles, even the exterior paint was exactly as I'd remembered it (a color scheme that didn't improve with age).

I'd seen other campuses in Palo Alto and they were far prettier than Briones. They had vast lawns, well-tended gardens, and they didn't sit at the intersection of four streets. You could actually drive past these schools, not into them.

But a school is, of course, more than its chalkboards and fluorescent lights, so I decided to look further to try to find the essence of Briones. I didn't know anyone whose children attended the school, nor did I know any of the teachers. And so, as the year began, all I knew was that I was sending my daughter to a school whose only clear benefit was that it was within walking distance from our house. I had to ask myself if it was worth it. I knew of several families in my immediate vicinity who sent their kids to Hoover. What did they know? And what about the families who did go to Briones? Why did they go there, and why did they stay?

Once school started, I began, gradually, to understand. I met some parents who were fervent in their support of the school. They volunteered in the classrooms, raised money, spent untold hours decorating, cooking, recruiting, and selling, and they worked to providing funding for classroom aides and essential programs, like art and PE. I found out later that Briones parents are active in the district as well. The co-president of PAFE, president of the Palo Alto

PTA Council, a PAUSD school board member, co-chair of the new ASF are all Briones parents. I was impressed by the dedication to education that far exceeded the coffee klatches I'd foolishly expected.

I got to know staff members, too, and discovered how well they knew the kids and how they, too, were instrumental in their success and safety. I'll forever be grateful to Jack, the school's custodian of more than 20 years, who kept a watchful eye on my daughter who was terrified of the dogs that occasionally wandered onto campus.

Above all, I got to see what happens in the classroom and on the campus, and it was a revelation. Our Kindergarten teacher (and, incidentally, every teacher since), was a veteran who had a remarkable rapport with the kids, while carrying out the serious business of teaching them language, reading, mathematics, science, social studies, visual and performing arts. I don't know what I was expecting, but graham crackers come to mind. And naptime.

I don't recall exactly when it happened—perhaps a few weeks into the year—but I finally discovered what other Briones parents knew: my child was in great hands.

While any Palo Alto school would provide my daughter a rich curriculum and skilled teachers, there's something about Briones that captivates me in ways I can't explain. I just love the place. Maybe it's the students' diversity: Briones has kids from around the world who speak at least a dozen languages. We have economic diversity, too, and physically and mentally challenged kids who enrich our classrooms and teach us empathy and tenacity. Maybe it's the way principal Gary Dalton is such a presence on campus, inspiring students to do their best and empowering teachers and parents to do theirs. Maybe, as a formerly reticent child, it's the focus on buddies and student teams that strictly enforce a "no bullies" policy. Or maybe it's the fact

that our teachers are so gifted that they can seamlessly support the students who struggle the most while challenging those who excel.

Today, four years after my daughter entered Kindergarten, Briones has spruced itself up considerably, thanks to B4E. A beautiful new library, refurbished classrooms, and, yes, a new paint job have gone a long way toward beautifying the campus. A parent-teacher committee is going even further, creating gardens and re-establishing the "life-lab" program in several campus locations.

But I know now that the essence of the school is something beyond the campus itself, the teachers, the students, the staff, parents, curriculum. It's not something you can identify immediately during a campus tour, nor can you read it in a SARC report. You have to let it reveal itself to you and then, like me, you will be hooked. And you'll find yourself volunteering to type, paint signs, make copies, and bake pies, and you'll dedicate a month of weekends toward planning a fundraiser or promoting the Juana Run (www.juanarun.org), a fantastic family event that supports the Juana Briones and Barron Park PTAs. See what I mean?

Last year, a boy I know entered Kindergarten at Briones and I could see in his mother's face the same trepidation I'd had in 1999. The school was in the thick of construction and the grounds were a mess. Though Briones was only a few blocks from the boy's home, the family had tried, unsuccessfully, to get him into Hoover. Now you can see in the mother's face how glad she is that they didn't make the list.

Perhaps at some point families will petition to send their kids across town to attend our school, so they can experience educational excellence in a learning environment that's uniquely Briones.

For now, it remains our little secret.

Learn more: www.briones.paloalto.ca.us

MEET YOUR BARRON PARK DONKEY HANDLERS!

By Don Anderson

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

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

Barry Brewer and John Dompe



Barry Brewer & John Dompe moved to Barron Park in 2000. Prior to that year, they lived in Los Altos Hills for many years. They can always be seen feeding the donkeys Monday afternoons along with their three dogs, Tillie, Millie, and Mollie. The donkeys and the dogs get along very well. Barry and John have been donkey handlers for about three years. They are both animal lovers and really enjoy

Perry and Niner's affectionate reaction each week at feeding time. John and Barry usually feed the donkeys together, and/or cover for each other when one or the other is out of town.

Barry keeps busy running his insurance agency in Cupertino. John is retired and spends his time gardening, playing tennis, and caring for his mom & dad who live in Sunnyvale. John is a UCLA grad and worked for Loral in Palo Alto for 34 years. Barry attended SJSU and has been with his

firm for 27 years. Barry's son Matt is a freshman at Gunn and his daughter Katie is a senior at the Middle College program at Foothill.

Ellen Whitmore



Ellen Whitmore has lived in Barron Park since the donkeys had the run of the "pasture," now known as Bol Park. That's a long time! Niner and Perry share top priority in Ellen's life with her

one-year-old granddaughter, Maggie, who requires lots of visiting in Washington State. Not really; the donkeys actually have to take a back seat to Maggie.

Prior to becoming a semi-professional donkey handler, Ellen was an ESL teacher in the PAUSD adult school for 17 years. She and her husband, Dick, raised two children, Christopher and Sarah, in Barron Park. Both Christopher and Sarah now live in Seattle. Ellen and Dick have had lots of dogs and cats over the years, so Ellen has spent a fair amount of time walking her pets at Gunn and along the bike path. Since her own animal family has dwindled in recent years, Ellen has become the "neighborhood dog walker," taking over temporarily for neighbors who are away on business, who are ill, or who are otherwise unable to get out and exercise their pets. So, caring for and walking Niner and Perry is just a natural extension of Ellen's life in Barron Park! When she's not caring for her animals or someone else's, or visiting granddaughter Maggie, Ellen is an avid home gardener.

Inge Harding-Barlow



Inge Harding-Barlow is the youngest of five children of a judge/law professor and a suffragette mathematics teacher. She grew up in South Africa, and obtained her advanced degrees, including a

PhD in toxicology, from Capetown University. Inge chalked up several firsts for women in the 1950s, and was awarded one of the then only nine international post-doctoral AAUW fellowships in 1961, to

study at Oak Ridge, Tennessee and at M.D. Anderson Cancer Hospital, Houston, Texas. By profession Inge is an internationally known toxicologist specializing in trace elements. Related professional activities have included helping to analyze the first "moon rocks," and advancing the performance of laser analyzers.

Inge is the consummate community activist. She served on the Barron Park Association Board from 1986 to 1999, has been in the vanguard of the fight to promote clean groundwater and to save the creeks in the neighborhood, has successfully advocated for planting of native vegetation along the bike path, and has made major contributions to efforts to improve neighborhood safety and emergency preparedness.

After the death of Josina Bol in 1996, Inge joined Edith and Leland Smith as the first Barron Park donkey handlers, to take care of Mickey (the donkey), who was then an old man approaching 30 years old. Because Mickey was in declining health, Inge's duties in those days included binding up his leg, giving him injections often twice day, and feeding him hot bran mash morning and evening. Inge recalls: "We thought the only way to keep Mickey going was to get him a companion." Luckily, Inge and the Smiths heard about a donkey called Pericles (Perry for short), who was at the time companion to a stable of thoroughbred racehorses, but who needed a new home. A deal was struck, and Perry and Mickey eventually had eighteen months together. Then Miner 49er joined the gang, just three weeks before Mickey departed for "donkey heaven."

Inge coordinated the donkey handlers for several years; this responsibility was passed along to Don Anderson a few years ago. Inge recently organized the Barron Park donkey handlers to sponsor mistreated donkeys in the Holy Land, under the auspices of a foundation called Safe-Haven-4-Donkeys. In the name of Perry and Niner, sanctuary is being supported for an elderly donkey named Lily. Anyone wishing to contribute can contact Inge by email at ihb@eskimo.com, by telephone at 493-8146. Inge now feeds Perry and Miner 49er on Thursday afternoons, walks them one Sunday a month and takes part in most of the "special" donkey events.

SENIOR UPDATE

By Mary Jane Leon

Cheap Eats

A fact of life as we put on a few years is that our appetites get smaller. There are both a good side and a bad side to that reality. The bad is that most restaurant meals have all together too much food, and many of us are too shy to tell the waiter that we want just a salad or a bowl of soup—or even just the main course without appetizer or other extras. So we waste a lot of food, or we carry home the well-known “people” bag.

On the other hand, small appetites mean that we can eat well on the cheap. Here are a few of my favorite penny-pinching meals from our local Barron Park eateries.

My personal favorite, and also least pricey, is a Jumbo Jack from Jack in the Box. It is just \$1.39, plus a few cents tax. The secret is to avoid all that expensive, tempting stuff that goes with it. No fries, no flavored sugar water, no milkshake or cookies—just the hamburger, please. It has liberal lettuce and tomato along with the well-done hamburger, so if you get a piece of fruit at home for dessert, you have yourself a well-rounded meal. And it’s filling. Now where else can you get a meal for under a buck fifty?

Another favorite, if you have someone to share with, is a lunch from Su Hong carry out. Order one of the Luncheon Special Combination Plates from the back of the carry-out menu—and split it with a partner or friend. The Combination Plates come with soup, spring roll, fried rice, and chow mein. My husband takes the soup and I take the spring roll, but each could also be split. Believe me, we are both full on just half of one of those lunches. They vary in price from \$5.95 to \$6.95, so in effect you get two meals for between \$3.00 and \$3.50 apiece, plus tax.

How about Taco Bell’s new Chicken

Bowl (\$3.00) or Beef Bowl (\$3.50)? A layer of beans, then rice in the bottom, topped with a sizeable salad and the beef or chicken. Served in a bowl, not a fried tortilla, so you avoid a lot of fat that you probably didn’t want in the first place. More than enough food for a meal.

Then there is a Senor Taco grande burrito, cut in half and shared with a friend or half saved for another meal.

Who says you can’t eat well at a fast-food restaurant?

Do you have any favorite “cheap eats?” Please share your ideas with us.

Group Lunch Time

Barron Park Seniors are going to have (or have had) our holiday lunch at Cibo (formerly Al Fresco, next to Driftwood Deli) before this newsletter hits your mailbox. The turnout promises to be large—37 reservations so far. We will give you a report in the next newsletter.

Our October lunch was a Hunan Gardens—one of our best, and Simon gave us a great price for a wonderful meal. Should you be dining at Hunan Gardens any time soon, mention what a good meal they prepared for the Barron Park Seniors.

If you want to join the group for lunch in February, just let us know. There is always room for a few more.

Services Offered

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

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

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BPA meetings are held the 3rd
Tuesday of every month at 7:15 p.m.
Call Doug Moran for location: 856-3302
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**Become a Member of the
Barron Park Association!**

Last spring marked the beginning of the annual Barron Park Association membership drive. If you haven't already signed up for this year, you can print a copy of the form from the web site <http://www.cyberstars.com/bpa/bpa-membership-form.html>, complete it, and mail it with your check to the BPA membership chair, Don Anderson, at 4185 Alta Mesa Avenue, Palo Alto 94306.

Why Become a BPA Member?

Your annual dues sponsor publication and distribution of the BPA quarterly newsletter, as well as neighborhood events such as the May Fete, Home and Garden Tour, Holiday Parade and Party, and community meetings. The BPA is about building community, and each association membership makes us that much more successful. For a full description of the Barron Park Association, its purpose and activities, see the BPA web site: <http://www.cyberstars.com/bpa/>

**Membership Categories
(Amounts are per household)**

- Fellow \$100 ■ Patron \$50 ■ Sponsor \$35
- Member \$20 ■ Senior (65+) \$10
- Business \$50

Questions? Contact Don Anderson at (650) 494-8672, don@donanderson.us

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