

# BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Will Beckett, BPA President

This will be my last article for this newsletter as president of the Barron Park Association. I have been serving as president since January 1993, and will continue to serve on the board, focusing on transportation issues which is the focus I started with when joining the board in 1976. The board adopted term limits and I have reached the end of the time period and it is time for me to move on to other things anyway. I do a lot of volunteer work in the community because I enjoy the diversion from my paying job. I have met many wonderful people and have learned a great deal about the community and my neighbors through these activities. I continue to volunteer for the Palo Alto Police Department, am a member of the Palo Alto Neighborhood Disaster Assistance (PANDA), have just started as a Neighborhood Accountability Board member (Santa Clara County Restorative Justice Program), serve on the board of the Electric Auto Association and help as the Chief Supernumerary of West Bay Opera. All of this keeps me busy in a lot of areas of the community. I say this to encourage people in our neighborhood to get involved in the community in some capacity. There are many options available and it is an important responsibility of every United State citizen to participate in some way to help support the community. I first started volunteering as a board member of the BPA after being encouraged to come to a board meeting because I had concerns about traffic issues in Barron Park. I found these people to be dedicated, well organized and ready to help show me the steps

involved to work with the city of Palo Alto to help move toward a solution to this problem. Had I not taken this first step, I expect I would not be so heavily involved and would not have had this terrific education or made so many friends along the way.

### Caroling

One of our newest events, the Barron Park Donkey Parade and Caroling Party, was a big success again this year. The rains stopped just before the event began and about 100 people walked from Bol Park through the streets of Barron Park, singing along the way, until reaching the party destination at Juana Briones Elementary School. This was the events second year and we expect it will continue to be a hit with the community for many years to come.

### Streets

Our community is headed into a new year with more infrastructure improvements scheduled. In the Spring we will see Bol Park get some much needed rehab and some of our streets will be resurfaced with drainage improvements. Many will be happy to hear that this will include Matadero this year. Though development on the El Camino Real has slowed, there are still projects scheduled that have completed approval and they are expected to begin soon. There are also plans that if approved, will continue to change the appearance of El Camino Real in the Barron Park area.

### Creeks

The creeks have been well behaved this

year mostly due to the spread out nature of the storms we have had so far. I use to walk out during the storms and watch the creeks rise but now I use the City of Palo Alto creek monitors and cams to keep my eye out. Despite the amount of rain received so far this year, creek levels have been quite low.

### City Bus

The City free shuttle now travels through the Barron Park area from Midtown and Ventura. It is not clear yet what the level of ridership is at this point. Please make an effort to try the system out not only to help show support of such a system but to also give feedback about improvements that might be made.

As always, if any of you have concerns or have ideas about making our community a better place to live, please do not hesitate to contact us. Have a terrific new year!



### 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!*

# D O N K E Y N E W S

By Edith Smith



**Guests donkeys and goats**

**Niner 49er and guest**



The famous Barron Park donkeys, Perry and Niner, have had a very sociable and healthy Fall season. They are growing longer hair to fight the cold nights, they're thinning down on their new grass-alfalfa diet, and they've been observed in playful antics including tug-of-war with branches and hoses.

On Nov. 3 they hosted overnight visitors from Arcata, CA: Rick Springer, his three donkeys, two goats and terrier dog (see photos). Niner shared his manger with the goats. As our donkeys checked out one manger, Rick's three donkeys ate at the other. The mother goat was tethered overnight while her daughter, untethered, never left her side. They are both milking goats and they provide milk and yogurt for the travellers Rick takes up the canyons in Baja CA, teaching people about the 2,000 year old Indian petroglyphs and cave carvings. Of course the donkeys carry their food and supplies. We hope Rick will stop again on his way home: the stop gives the animals exercise and relaxation from their long van haul.

Perry and Niner's education program with local school children has been full and fun. On Sept. 1 they met with Room 1 Kindergarten, Barron Park School, at Bol Park. They walked to Barron Park School with handlers Mary Jane Leon and Inge Harding-Barlow and many children for "Walk to School Day." On Dec. 6 they met with the Room 2 Kindergarten. The children learned about the world-wide work donkeys do.

The Second Annual Donkey Parade and Carol Sing, with the Gunn High Chorus

directed by Bill Liberatore, was held December 22. Starting at Barron Park School the festive walk and sing ended with a concert and snacks at the Juana Briones Multi-purpose Room, with the donkeys enjoying grazing — and perhaps a bit of singing on their own — in the soccer field. The event was wonderfully publicized, with color photographs of Perry and Niner, in the San Mateo County Times, December 15 (editorial contact Zakhary Cribari).

A great delight to the donkeys is their new state-of-the-art self-filling drinking fountains, given to them by James Witt, who donates their pasture, covered mangers, etc. Thanks and kudos to James Witt! With the Winter rains, new grass is growing in the pasture, so the donkeys can graze more continuously — a natural benefit.

We also want to list and thank all the donkey volunteers this Holiday Season. Some feed, some exercise, some take part in the donkey education school programs, some just substitute when a donkey feeder is ill or on vacation or business

travel. Some just come for Sunday morning Bol Park donkey visiting with neighbors, visitors and relatives from all over the world, 9:30-10:30, weather permitting. Some Sunday morning visitors are in strollers, some are in their 90's. The old folks remember Jennifer, Negrita, and Mickey fondly. Present volunteers: Don Anderson, Barry Brewer, Jim Bronson, Inge Harding-Barlow, Susan Carsen, Eugene Coen, Norman Copperman, Zakhary Cribari, Birgit Fisher, Edith and Leland Smith, Leilla Heintzman, Stephanie Enos, Mary Jane Leon, Doug Moran, and Eric Struck.

The donkeys are fed both morning and evening. This is partly to check on possible vandalism — and even the safety of people on the bike path — and to guard against people disobeying the "no feeding" sign. The Winter may bring colds to some volunteer feeders, so we could use one or two volunteers just to SUBSTITUTE, either A.M. or P.M. feedings (perhaps on short notice). If you could volunteer to be a SUBSTITUTE please phone Don Anderson, 494-8672 or Leland Smith, 493-9386.

And do remember, please send your money donations for the donkeys' food, vet, farrier, and equipment to the Palo Alto Donkey Project, ACTERRA, 3931 E. Bayshore Rd., Palo Alto, CA 94303. You'll receive thanks and acknowledgement for your tax purposes. Peace and love in the New Year!



**Zachary Cribari, Leland Smith, Eric Struck, dogs and visitors**

**BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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\*Christian Kalar, Secretary

\*Ken Tani, Treasurer

Don Anderson

\*Shirley Finfrock

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Beautification: Shirley Finfrock

Neighborhood Businesses:

Vacant

Creeks/Flood Control: Christian Kalar

Neighborhood Safety &

Preparedness: Paul Edwards

May Fete: Doug Graham

History: Doug Graham

Membership: Don Anderson

Natural Habitat & Environment:

Jill Beckett & Doug Moran

Newsletter: Nancy Hamilton

Parks: Doug Graham

School Liaison: Will Beckett, acting

Seniors: Mary Jane Leon

Traffic & Streets: Will Beckett

Zoning & Land Use: Maryanne Welton

BPA meetings are held the 3rd

Tuesday every month at 7:15 p.m.

Call Doug Moran for location and to  
announce your plan to come: 856-3302

# BPA E-mail List Membership

By Douglas Moran

In early January, messages were sent to all current members of the various BPA e-mail lists reminding them what lists they were members of and under what e-mail address they were subscribed.

If you did not receive one of these messages, please re-subscribe to the desired lists. Your old subscription may have been removed from the lists because you changed your ISP (Internet Service Provider) or your employer, or that forwarding from your old address was discontinued.

When messages start bouncing from an address, I make an attempt to identify what the new address should be, but often this is impossible. For example, if the defunct e-mail address is *john.12345@aol.com*, I have too little information to match that to a name on the current BPA membership roles.

For information about the available lists and instructions for subscribing, please visit the BPA home page (<http://www.bpaonline.org>) and follow the link to "BPA Email Lists."

# STREET VISIBILITY

By Jenny Gardiner

Every school day brings children out into the world of traffic: Amateur bicyclists destabilized by backpacks and happy children distracted by their friends must share the road with drivers. Please be certain to use extra caution on the streets near our neighborhood schools. Safe drivers mean safe children!

In addition, Barron Park, with its narrow streets and no sidewalks, poses special hazards for children as they negotiate their way around our neighborhoods. Please take a look around your own property to see how safely pedestrians can pass. If a

child must avoid obstacles by going into the street, then they are being put at risk. Overgrown landscaping can make it hard for drivers to see children. The following can help: 1) Trim overgrown bushes and trees, 2) Park cars in driveways or well inside parking strips and 3) Keep all obstacles off of the street and ask the same of your guests (cars, recycling bins, etc.).

Finally, there is a wonderful City of Palo Alto Visibility flyer at [www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/manager/20011221/Weekllymemo.html](http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/manager/20011221/Weekllymemo.html) that people can give to neighbors as a gentle reminder who might need to do some landscape work.

## ♥Pilates Fit-Camp

@ Gunn High School in Palo Alto

Tired of the same old work-out? Join us at 6am and enjoy the following:

- Fun, motivating, indoor/outdoor workout

- Tone your body

- Lose weight

- Strengthen Your Core (abs, back)

New members receive a FREE Pilates mini ball.

**Call 408.984.3639**

Class time: 6am to 7am @ \$8 a day

## BARRON PARK HISTORY

by Doug Graham, Barron Park Historian

**Barron Park Pioneers**

(PART TWO OF A SIX-PART ARTICLE)

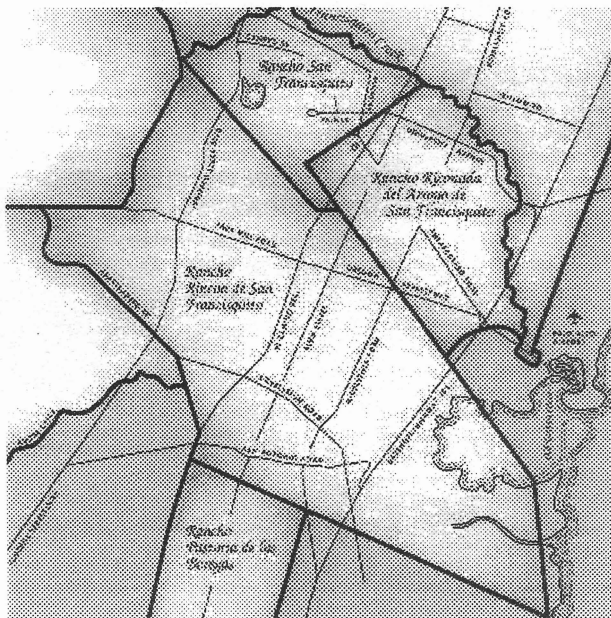
**The Rancho Changes Hands****The Second Legal Landowners**

A fantastically rich mercury mine yielded the fortune that enabled the Robles brothers to purchase the huge rancho that originally included our land—the area that eventually became Barron Park—from Jose Pena in 1847. This article tells the story of Secundino Robles and his family—the second legal landowners in our neighborhood's past. The previous issue of this newsletter carried a brief article on Pena, the old soldier who was the original 1841 grantee.

**A Rich Red Lode**

The brothers jointly owned one-sixth of the shares in the New Almaden mine in the mountains south of San Jose. The lode had been long known to the local Native American tribes and worked by them to provide a treasured bright red pigment for mixing face and body paint. The pigment was Cinnabar—a rich mercury ore, soft and easy to dig and refine.

Exactly how Robles' discovery was made and its value confirmed is uncertain, because various descendants of Secundino have related different versions. One story was that the brothers followed the tracks of

**Land-Grant Ranchos in the Palo Alto Area**

a wounded grizzly bear, accompanied by two cubs, up a gulch and found it dead outside a cave lined with strange red rocks. Thinking the rocks might be silver ore, they tried to extract the metal using quicksilver (mercury), with no success. Years later, in 1846, Secundino showed an example of the ore to a Mexican mining expert who quickly showed him a test that confirmed it was Cinnabar (Mercuric Sulfide) and was an exceptionally rich ore. Other versions of the discovery story don't involve grizzly bears, but are even more romantic.

In any case, the mine quickly became the most valuable piece of real estate in California, being valued in 1850, during the gold rush, at several million dollars—the equivalent of 30-50 million today. Mercury was the essential agent for separation of gold and silver from crushed ore. However, the original owners each failed to wait for the California gold discovery, selling out to a Mexican mining firm one by one, with the Robles Brothers holding out the longest (until 1847). We don't really know how much the brothers got for their shares, but historians' estimates range from \$3,500 to over \$13,000. In any case,

one way or another, they were able to convert their shares into full ownership of Jose Pena's Rancho Rincon de San Francisco. The 8,400 acre rancho included land that is now part of Stanford University and most of South Palo Alto.

**Robles at the "Battle" of Santa Clara**

In December, 1846, during the Mexican War and before the California conquest had been completely secured, there was an armed standoff near Santa Clara between a group of about 100 local rancheros and a roughly equal number of Americans. The Americans fired three shots from a cannon before it became hopeless-

ly mired in mud, and the Californios rode around making threatening gestures with guns and homemade lances. Rifles were fired by both groups, and, according to one account, there was one casualty—a mule.

Good sense ultimately prevailed on both sides and a "treaty" was signed at the mission the day after the "battle." In it, the Americans undertook to cease making arbitrary requisitions of Californio property and the Californios promised to lay down their weapons, to release seven American hostages (including the mayor of San Francisco), and to return to their homes. Secundino Robles played a prominent leadership role in the Californio party, and a story got started that he had broken his sword over his knee rather than surrender it to the American leader. The myth has persisted and was accepted as truth by early historians, but more rigorous modern research indicates that no such gesture was made by anyone present at the ceremony. However, the mental image of the tall, handsome rancho defying his conquerors is an appealing one and may have been true to his nature.

**The Robles Family**

Secundino Robles was an exemplar of the





### The Robles Adobe

early-day California "Spanish Don." Born in 1811 in Santa Cruz, he was tall, blue eyed and handsome. Most Californio rancheros were accomplished riders, but Don Secundino was said to be the finest in the valley. He could pick up a row of silver dollars placed six feet apart on the ground while riding at a full gallop. One of nine brothers, Secundino served briefly in the army, then was majordomo (manager) of the Santa Clara Mission property at age 30. Along the way, he had married Maria Antonia Garcia, who gave him eight children who lived to adulthood and 21 others who didn't make it. Don Secundino and Dona Maria Antonia presided over a boisterously happy household. Their six surviving daughters were renowned for their hospitality and friendliness. Secundino affectionately nicknamed his land "Rancho Santa Rita" after one of his daughters.

Gullard and Lund reported on the Robles household in their History of Palo Alto; "There were almost monthly feasts, fandangos and barbecues. Guests would feast and dance from Sunday morning through Saturday night. The men would be up at dawn to ride Don Secundino's fine horses, inspect herds, hunt grizzlies and show their skill at galloping over fields, not bothering to slow down for gopher holes, ditches, fences or gulches. The women would sew and talk. At night everyone would dance."

### The Robles Adobe

The ranch house was near the present cor-

ner of Alma and Ferne, close to the San Antonio Road overpass. The Robles family enlarged Pena's herdsman's hut to a full-sized house with three large rooms with redwood ceilings on the ground floor. The flat roof was converted to an open-air dance floor, much used of warm evenings. Railings were installed to prevent accidents to over-exuberant dancers. Later the second floor was roofed and enclosed. The adobe walls were destroyed in the earthquake of 1906, but the shingle roof and its support posts remained standing. A barn was built around them and remained to mark the spot until the early 1950s.

After the American conquest, the Robles adobe was a stage stop on the route from San Jose to San Francisco. Don Secundino was a friendly host, and the aquardiente and vino flowed freely. He drew large crowds to see bear and bull fights in the arena he built nearby. Life at the rancho revolved around the cattle herd, which was the source of their wealth. During the last years of the Rancho era, the annual roundup or rodeo was conducted jointly with the neighboring ranchos. Robles cattle were separated, calves branded and steers driven to the slaughtering place where their hides were taken for the "Boston Trade". Later, during the gold rush, the cattle were worth more as a mobile meat supply and were sold to be driven to the goldfields.

### The Ranchero Era was Brief

Very soon after the conquest, the era of the Spanish Dons ended in Northern Califor-

nia. The ranchos were overrun by squatters and the lawsuits began. The Robles ranch had a better "deed" than many, but there was plenty of room for doubt about the boundary locations. The "diseno" or crude drawing of landmarks that had served as a land survey for the Mexican land grant was ambiguous in many particulars. Much of the Robles land went in big chunks to American lawyers in payment of their fees to defend the rest. Lawsuits proliferated—there were 31 defen-

dants in one Robles suit.

Secundino's younger brother and partner, Teodoro, played only a supporting role in the story of the rancho. His undivided half interest in the property was again halved as a result of his wife's successful divorce suit - probably the first such in California and eventually both he and his ex-wife accepted land parcels in lieu of a continued interest in the whole.

The inexperienced and illiterate dons were sitting ducks for unscrupulous Americans. Don Secundino was typical—a poor money manager who sometimes sold land for seemingly trivial purposes, such as the purchase of circus tickets for his family. Land was inexpensive and seemed inexhaustible, but in fact the 8,500 acres went very fast. By 1876 the vast rancho had shrunk from 8,400 to 300 acres. Don Secundino died in 1890, a ward of the county. The last piece of Robles land still held by a descendant was a three and a half acre lot on El Camino near Dinah's Shack—it was sold and passed out of the family in 1948.

### Mayfield Farm

One of the choicest parcels of land to go to lawyers was the 250 acres deeded to Elisha O. Crosby in 1853 that he named "Mayfield Farm." With that sale starts the American era in our neighborhood's history—Crosby's farm included most of the land considered to be the core of Barron Park today. Crosby and his Mayfield Farm will be the topic of the next article in this series on our pioneer landowners.

# SENIOR UPDATE

By Mary Jane Leon

## Lunches Galore

The Barron Park Seniors got together for lunch at al Fresco on Oct 23.

The owner of al Fresco, Charles Alley, was good enough to prepare a limited menu, four different lunches, for a flat charge including tax and tip. That really simplified ordering and paying for each of us. About 25 people came to the lunch. We had the "bar" room to ourselves, which made for a relaxed atmosphere. Sorry—I forgot my camera again. This group would have made a fine photo. The group was asked if they would like to have programs after their lunches, but the response was not enthusiastic. Looks like we will stick to just chatting, which the group enjoys.

Then on December 6, a group of 20 of us had a holiday lunch at Yerba Buena Nursery, which is off Skyline Blvd. near Woodside. The food was excellent, the decorations beautiful, and the crowd in a festive mood. Thanks to Ingrid Reichert for handling the arrangements for this lovely lunch.

The group enjoyed al Fresco so much that



Ingrid & Ann at Party

we agreed to meet there again after the first of the year. By the time this Newsletter comes out, we will have had our January lunch, and probably be looking forward to another one in February or March. Telephone Julie or Mary Jane (phone numbers at the end of this column) if you would like to join our lunch bunch.

## Cookies for the Caroling Party

Did you make it to the caroling party on



Katie with Giraffe

the Saturday before Christmas? The clouds parted just long enough for our one-hour caroling walk through the neighborhood. The parade ended at the multipurpose room at Juana Briones School, where there was more singing, and cookies baked by some of the Barron Park Seniors. Thank you to all of you who contributed goodies.

## Services for Seniors

The Seniors Committee of the Barron Park Association continues to offer services for seniors. If you would like to find out more, please phone. We could

- 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.

You can reach Julie Spengler at 493-9151 or Mary Jane Leon at 493-5248. Let us hear from you.

## LAST MINUTE NEWS

Officers for the BPA Board beginning February 1, 2002, will be: Doug Moran, president; Maryanne Welton, vice-president; Christian Kalar, secretary; Ken Tani, treasurer.

### ANNUAL NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING:

The second annual neighborhood-wide meeting is scheduled for March 10, 3:30 to 5:00 p.m. Watch for details in your mailbox soon.

### MAY FETE:

The May Fete will be May 5, from noon to 4 p.m. Because the reconstruction of Bol Park may not be completed in time, it will be held at Juana Briones Park this year. Usual May pole dance, musicians playing from the bridge, plus food & soft drinks. If you would like to help, please contact Doug Graham (493-0689).

### NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY & PREPAREDNESS:

This committee will be meeting again soon. Please contact Paul Edwards, chair, email: pceiii@earthlink.net -- (493-2921) if you would like to attend.

# Bol Park Renovations

By Christian Kalar

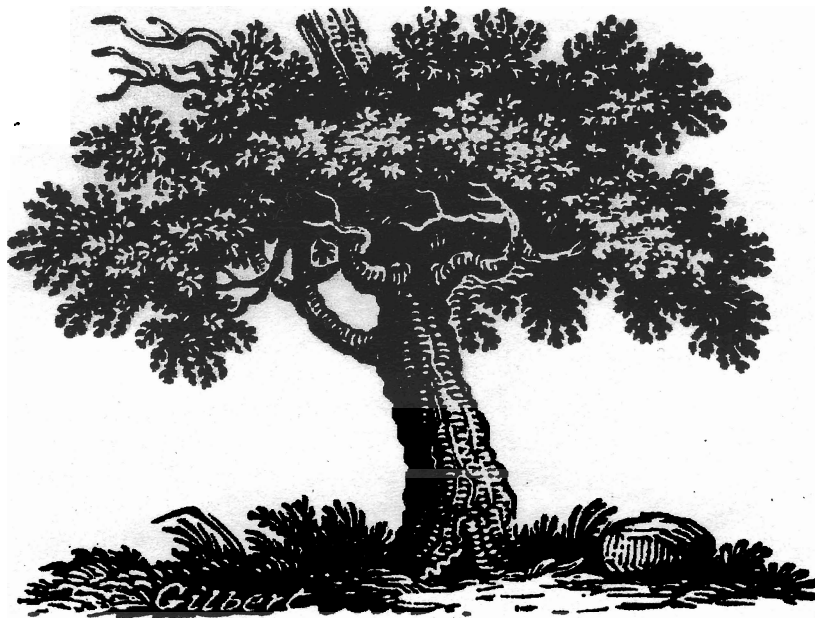
If you haven't already heard, there is exciting news about Bol Park—this winter and spring the City of Palo Alto Parks Department will be performing much needed renovations. The four major areas of improvement include 1) a new irrigation system for the lawns and planter boxes, 2) renovation of existing pathways, 3) new childrens' play area and 4) installation of drainage systems for swampy areas. Lucky for us, the Parks Department representative heading up the project is a Barron Park native—Kate Rooney.

Kate grew up on Ilima Court in the '60s and '70s and attended both Barron Park Elementary and Gunn High Schools. Kate's childhood experiences with the Bol property actually predate the creation of Bol Park. A 10-year-old Kate and friends used to scamper across the park area when it was a giant donkey pasture—with donkeys Mickey and Jenny in hot pursuit. At that time the Vasona Line railroad still ran through Barron Park providing service to Los Altos and Los Gatos. With a train stop at the corner of Matadero & Laguna, the Rooneys were able to take a train ride outing to Clint's in Los Altos for ice cream. At that time, the railroad (now the bike path) was visible all the way from the end of Ilima Court since houses had not yet been built on Ilima Way. Kate's participation in and appreciation for Barron Park's history and culture has really helped in the preparations for the park's renovations.

In terms of vegetation, the park has really evolved over the last 25 years, including patches of small saplings that have grown into large red-

wood groves. These redwood groves—which were grassy areas 25 years ago—are unnecessarily watered by the current irrigation system. Park users have also noticed that while some areas of grass are dry and parched, others are wet and swampy. To solve these problems, the new irrigation system will use 20 valves/sprinkler zones—almost doubling the current 11 valves/sprinkler zones. The new irrigation will also include remote monitoring and control with a data connection between the irrigation system controller and the Parks Maintenance Department.

The three existing pathways—the path parallel to Laguna Avenue, the path along the creek and the path on the southeast edge of the park from the creek path to the bike path—will be renovated to return them to their original condition using crushed decomposed granite in Felton Gold color. For a good example of how long it has been since the last path maintenance, take a close look at the tree halfway up the path on the park's southeast edge—note the location of the tree and the path's "border."



The last two and a half decades have taken their toll on the existing play structure and it must be removed for safety reasons. The replacement structure will meet the requirements of the relatively new Americans with Disabilities Act. To help determine the desired features and aesthetics of a new play area and park amenities, the Parks Department distributed 851 surveys to the Barron Park residents surrounding Bol Park. Surveyed residents provided a very strong response rate of 35%, with clear indicators on many of the questions. The new children's play area will consist of earth tone color materials and separate structures for children ages 2-5 and 5-12. The structures will be located such that the line of sight down the length of the park is not impacted and the park's "openness" is maintained.

The park renovation will take place within the park's boundaries: Laguna Avenue, the top of the creek bank, the southeast edge of grass/path and the bike path. Depending on core project costs, additional work may be performed. Items being considered are

benches, trashcans, landscaping, a drinking fountain, picnic tables, backflow enclosures, placing the power lines underground and raptor perches. The grassy area and paths will not be usable during the renovation but Kate is trying to have the project finished in time for our annual May Fete. Project completion by early May could be tough, so the May Fete committee is making contingency plans—watch for the May Fete announcements in the coming months. Most importantly, be prepared for a reinvigorated Bol Park for summer time!

# Barron Park Celebrations: You Juana Run?

By Linda Lui

The sixth annual Juana Run, through the streets of Barron Park, will start at 8:30 AM on Saturday, February 23, 2002, rain or shine. It offers an 8K and a 1-Mile event for adults and childrens' races (10:00 AM -11:06 AM start times) from pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. This non-profit fund raiser benefits the PTA for Barron Park School and Juana Briones School, the two neighborhood elementary schools of Barron Park.

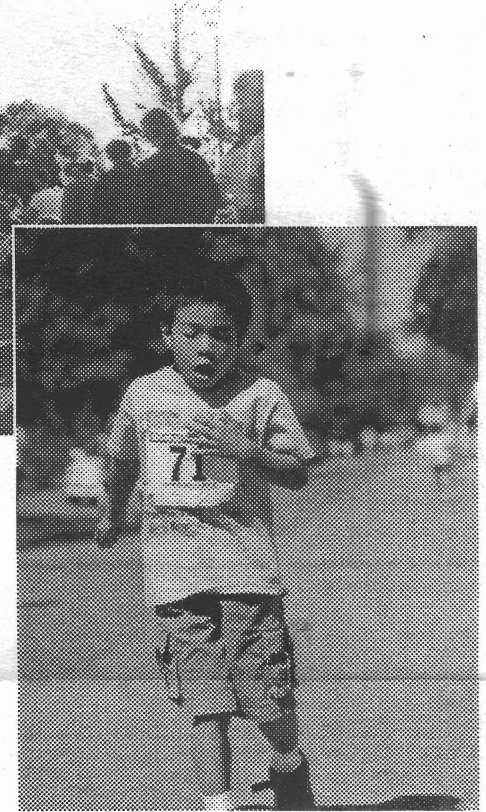
The origins of this wonderful road race started as a brainstorming suggestion from a parent at a Juana Briones PTA meeting, late in the 1996-97 school year. This was before Barron Park Elementary re-opened in 1997. Karen Saxena recalls her fellow PTA members giving her questioning looks and asking where would the cars be racing. She explained that the race would be comprised of runners in the streets. Nothing more was said about it and everyone probably dismissed it as just another pie-in-the-sky idea one hears from over-caffeinated dreamers. But if you've ever met Karen, you'd realize that she is one of those well-grounded types who does their homework and follows through. A successful road race involves more than just blocking off streets and printing T-shirts. There are considerable logistics; obtaining permits, communicating with the various municipal departments, getting sponsors to help cover the costs and donate prizes, publicizing the event to potential participants and coordinating volunteer efforts before, during and after the race. Along



with Karen, the Juana Run "core team" consists of Jake Hartinger, director of sponsorships, Baldwin Chang, design director and Sheri Sinchek, food/drink/prize organizer. Karen has two daughters attending Barron Park School, Tara in 5th grade and Moira in kindergarten. Her son Vijay is an eighth grader at JLS and husband, Dr. Amol Saxena is a podiatrist at the Palo Alto Medical Foundation, a founding sponsor of the Juana Run.

My one and only experience with the race was last year when I signed up my, then 5-year-old son, Alex for the quarter-mile childrens' run. We arrived at Juana Briones Park and immediately knew something was wrong. NO PEOPLE. There should definitely be people at a race. So I wandered around while my son waited with my husband. By the time I discovered that the starting line was at Los Robles and Orme and scurried back and hustled Alex

over to the race, it started immediately. He was in the back and worn out from his half-mile trek. We watched him helplessly from the finish line as he wilted and actually STOPPED walking. "Keep moving," we told him from the sidelines as everyone else ran through the finish. "Please, just a little more. You're almost there.



WE'RE SORRY!!," we begged. We've promised ourselves it will be different this year but I can't help but smile when I see his little name at the bottom of his division in the online results.

Early registration by February 2, 2002 is \$18 for the 8K, \$16 for the 1-mile and \$10 for childrens' races. All include T-shirts. Combination packages are available. Pre-registration (by February 18th) and Race Day registration prices are slightly higher and no T-shirts are guaranteed for the latter. For more information or to register online, check out [www.juanarun.org](http://www.juanarun.org) or call the race hotline: (650) 599-3434. Scholarships are available for the kids' races. If you want to participate in this worthy cause but have no intention of running, you can sponsor a child for only \$10-\$15. Just send a check payable to: Barron Park PTA. Write "sponsor a child" on your check and mail to: Juana Run, BPPTA, 800 Barron Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306. Your community spirit is greatly appreciated!





# Barron Park Holiday Donkey Parade is a Big Hit Again!

By Don Anderson

Saturday, December 22 marked the second annual Barron Park Holiday Party and Donkey Parade. The weather cooperated perfectly. It rained constantly until 2:30 pm, the parade starting time—and then stopped on cue. More than 100 Barron Park residents, including kids, parents, and seniors, participated. Things got started with a procession (led by Perry and Niner) from Bol Park through the neighborhood, featuring caroling led by Bill Liberatore, the Gunn High School choir director.

At parade's end there were refreshments served at Juana Briones Elementary School, and more caroling with Mr. Liberatore at the piano and members of the Gunn choir leading the singing. Many Barron Park residents stepped up to help make the event a great success.

Will Beckett contributed labor and equipment to produce publicity posters and songbooks. Ralph and Mary Jane Leon and Julie Spengler helped set up for the post parade party, and helped clean up afterwards.

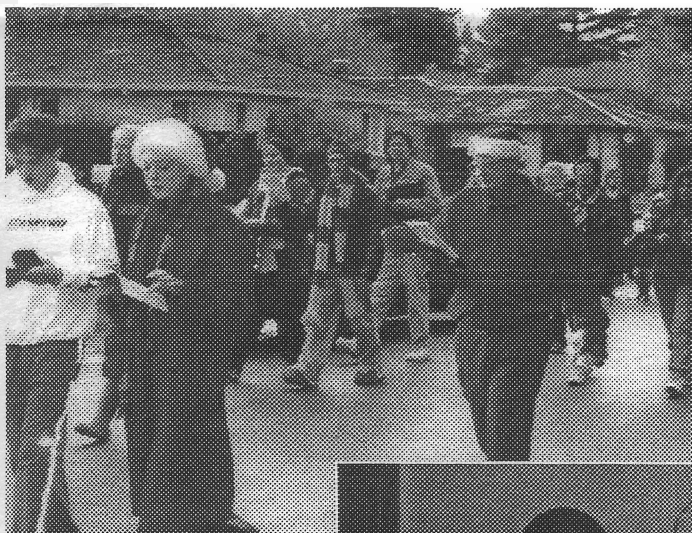
Eric Struck, Zachary Cribari, Susan Carsen, Inge Harding Barlow, and Barry Brewer walked Perry and Niner through the parade route and/or helped get them back home after the event. Katy Edwards organized Barron Park seniors to bake goodies that were served at the party.

And last but not least, goodies were provided by Harriett Moss, Ann Boeckling, Ann Knopf, Alice Frost, Katie Edwards, Mary Jane Leon, and Julie Spengler. Wow! Talk about a community event!

## SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL CAROLING LEADER!

The December 22 Barron Park parade and party really went well, and a major reason was the participation of Bill Liberatore, the Gunn choir director, as caroling leader and pianist. Several members of the Gunn Choir also participated, helping the rest of us make beautiful, on-key music. The Gunn Choir is making a trip this spring to an out of town competition. The package deal of airfare, room, meals, etc. costs each family \$1,000. Although we sometimes lose sight of the fact, there are many families in Palo Alto who can't afford this kind of money. Bill has been looking for individuals or local businesses that can make a contribution, large or small. Anyone who can help should send a check made out to "Gunn Choir Boosters," addressed to Bill Liberatore, Gunn High School, 780 Arastradero Road, Palo Alto, CA 94306. (Be sure to thank him for his participation in the Barron Park holiday event when you send the check — we want him back next year!) Thanks!

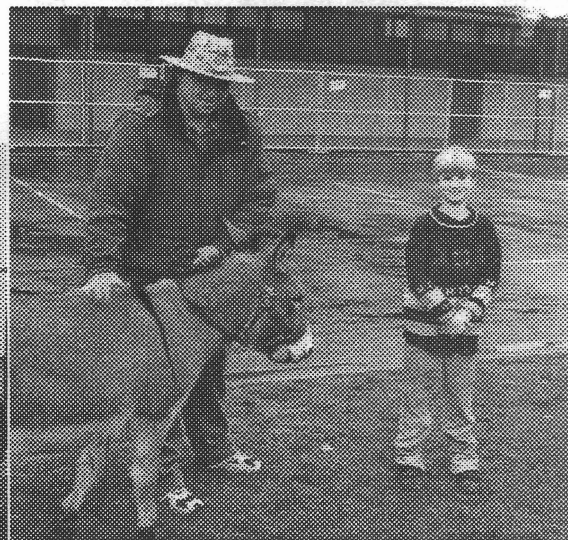
**Event organizer Don Anderson carols with other Barron Park residents.**



Photos: Leland Smith



**Bill Liberatore, Gunn Choir members and Barron Parkers sing at the holiday party.**



**Eric Struck and a young Barron Park resident keep an eye on Perry at Briones School after the parade.**

# ZONING & LAND USE

By Maryanne Welton, Committee Chair

The past year has seen a big change in the development climate in both Palo Alto and the entire Bay Area. The impact of empty office buildings and stalled residential projects can be felt by everyone who lives and works here—there's less traffic and contractors are actually looking for work now. The number and types of projects proposed for the Barron Park neighborhood has also changed. Here's an update on commercial, institutional and multi-family projects in our community:

## Children's International School on Clemo Street

A Conditional Use Permit (CUP) application has been submitted for a new school on the 1.7-acre former orchard located across the street from Briones Park. This private, non-profit school for grades kindergarten through 8th grade, now located at Cubberly Community Center, would have a maximum of 135 to 150 students.

The lot is currently zoned RM-30, which allows multi-family housing and a school as a conditional use. If the school is unsuccessful in obtaining the CUP, a residential developer will most likely build a large housing project on the property. While the site has previously been suggested as a possible location for a public library or community center, it is unlikely the City could afford the price either the school or developer could pay for it.

The BPA sponsored two neighborhood meetings last year to present the architect's conceptual plans and solicit community input. The major concerns voiced by community members were the impact of additional cars on existing

traffic congestion; access for the fire department, neighbors, and school families; parking; size and height of the buildings; and use of the park by the school. Preserving the site for multifamily housing, possibly affordable housing, was also mentioned—housing advocates are reluctant to see any of the few remaining undeveloped multifamily housing sites used for other purposes.

Various City departments will evaluate the application and hold a public hearing so all interested parties can respond to the proposal. Watch the BPA news email list for further information about public meetings concerning this project.

## South El Camino Real Design Study

The planning study looking at transportation, urban design, land use and economic factors that affect development along El Camino is underway. A draft of new design guidelines to help create a pedestrian-oriented, neighborhood-serving retail district will be presented to the community Advisory Committee (where I represent the BPA) and Architectural Review Board this month for review and comment. In addition, a new Advisory Committee is being formed to work with planning and urban design consultants as part of a

\$280,000 Caltrans grant. This study will look at the entire length of El Camino through Palo Alto and propose alternative standards to encourage improvements in the public right-of-way that enhance the streetscape. Community members can take part in design workshops and public hearings during the next year. These two sets of guidelines will impact the look and feel of all new and renovated structures along El Camino as well as the public areas, sidewalks and plantings.

## Old Blockbuster Site

A nine-unit condominium project is proposed for the site of the old Blockbuster Video store on the corner of El Camino and Vista. Preliminary review by the Planning Department and Architectural Review Board recommended design changes to encourage a more pedestrian-friendly street frontage. Revised plans have not yet been submitted.

## Subdivision at 797 Matadero

City Planning staff informed the property owners that their plans to subdivide a large parcel on Matadero into five single family house lots would not likely be approved. Revised plans have not been resubmitted.

## 4131 El Camino

This three-story, mixed-use project including ground floor retail, office, and residential units has received City approval and construction should start this spring. The developer is looking for a tenant for a cafe or other retail use on the ground floor.

## The Goodwill Trailer Site

An application to the City for a new hotel has been withdrawn after



negative reviews by the Architectural Review Board and community. A new developer is exploring the possibility of a mixed-use project to include a neighborhood market.

Last fall the City Council approved a city-wide amendment to the Ground Floor Retail Ordinance that says that any existing retail, personal service, restaurant, auto service or housing use cannot convert to office use in any Commercial Neighborhood (CN) or Commercial Service (CS) zone (which is the zoning for most of El Camino through Barron Park). Any existing office use can stay as office or convert to another type of office use within those zones. This prevents new office uses taking over existing retail spaces and enhances the possibilities of neighborhood-serving retail uses in our neighborhood.

**Albertson's at Alma Plaza**

Albertson's presented plans three years ago to the City for the demolition of the existing 13,300-square foot market and the other retail buildings and construction of a new 37,000-s.f. market.. They are currently proposing a new 29,000-s.f. market which would include a grocery store and pharmacy. In addition, they would build a new retail building to replace the existing shops and provide affordable apartments above. This project has generated intense community scrutiny and at a community meeting on November 15 about 80% of the people present expressed support for the new proposal. More public meetings will be held as the project goes through the City's approval process.

**3924 El Camino**

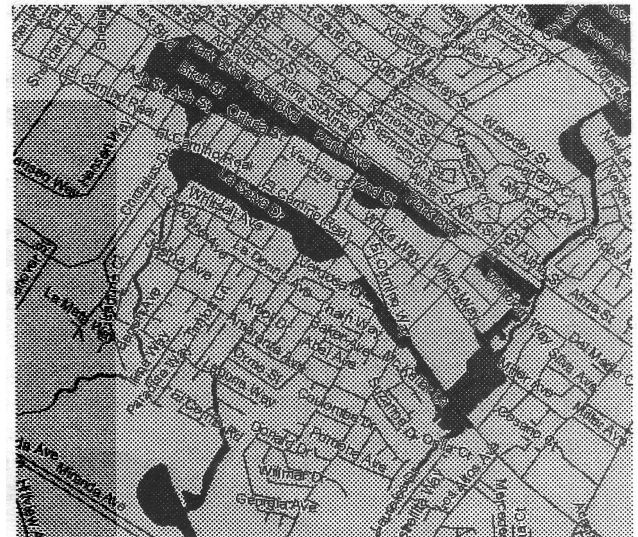
The former Armando's was closed two years ago due to code violations and has been vacant since then. Last year a developer proposed converting the former bar and restaurant into offices and renovating and retaining the house on the alley as a residence. After the required review and approval by the Architectural Review Board, an appeal has been filed protesting the project's approval and a public hearing will be held later this month to hear the appeal.

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

# RAINY YEAR SO FAR?

By Christian Kalar

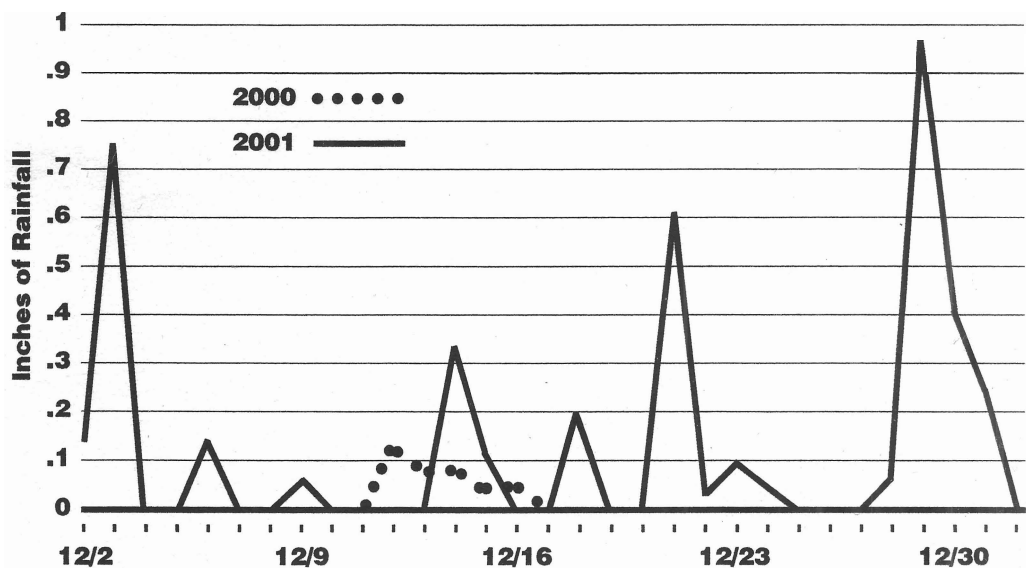
**B**y the time January 1, 2002 rolled around, many Barron Park residents were thinking more about rainfall than New Year's resolutions. It's not your imagination - as of January 1st, Palo Alto has received two times the average rainfall to date and December 2001 provided over 10 times the precipitation of December 2000! (see graph) Luckily the rainfall has been coming at a steady rate rather than deluge, providing time for the creeks to carry the water to the Bay. For real-time updates on creek levels, visit the City of Palo Alto's site at <http://www.city.palo-alto.ca.us/early-warning/creeklevels.html> or the Santa Clara Valley Water District's (SCVWD) site at <http://alert.scvwd.dst.ca.us/gagestrm.html>.



Parts of Barron Park are still included in FEMA's flood zones (see chart) but completion of the Matadero Creek "Remediation" project by the SCVWD will finally allow for a removal of the existing flood

prone areas from the Flood Insurance Rate Map. The remaining work to be completed is from Alma Street downstream to the Bay and includes replacing the Louis Road bridge. The Draft Environmental Impact Report for the project is available online at [www.scvwd.dst.ca.us/floodmgt/mb\\_index.htm](http://www.scvwd.dst.ca.us/floodmgt/mb_index.htm). Construction must fall within the April to October timeframe and is likely to take two seasons to complete—so 2003 is the likely year of completion.

**Daily Rainfall, December 2000 and 2001 Compared**



BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION  
NEWSLETTER

Barron Park Association  
696 Barron Avenue  
Palo Alto, California 94306

■  
Nancy "Jo" Hamilton  
**EDITOR**

■  
Patrick Coyne  
**DESIGNER**

■  
Shirley Finfrock  
Mary Jane Leon  
Gwen Luce  
**COPY EDITORS**

■  
Don Anderson  
Will Beckett  
Jenny Gardiner  
Doug Graham  
Christian Kalar  
Mary Jane Leon  
Linda Lui  
Douglas Moran  
Edith Smith  
Maryanne Welton  
**CONTRIBUTORS**

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Palo Alto, CA 94306 (near Creekside Inn)

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

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President: Moran@dougmoran.com

■  
Vice-president: quigleynor@aol.com

■  
Secretary: kalar@pacbell.net

■  
Treasurer: tani\_sys@ix.netcom.com

■  
Editor: NJHamilton@cyberstars.com

■  
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<http://www.cyberstars.com/bpa>

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