

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Markus Fromherz, BPA President



As you know, one of the BPA's functions is to track community developments of relevance to the neighborhood and to get involved if necessary. In

recent years, that has typically meant the board plus a few active residents, usually those directly impacted by a concern (e.g., Chimalus Drive residents who live close to the CPI property). This past quarter has been a pretty active one for BPA board members in that regard, so I thought I'd use this column to give an update on some activities of interest to Barron Park.

One of the more visible new projects is the construction at the VA hospital right next to the Bol Park Bike Path. Art Liberman wrote a good summary of the events and status on our website, so I won't go into details. While the VA had announced the project ahead of time, the extent of it didn't become clear until it started. After a few meetings with concerned residents, a VA liaison, a city liaison, and a BPA Board member, we believe we have a good handle on what is happening, and we have emerging ideas for how to improve the land between the VA and the bike path in the future. We are also planning for a community meeting early next year.

A project entering its next phase is the improvement of the Charleston and Arastradero corridor toward a "complete street" (a street suitable for all means of transportation, not just cars). The BPA

Board has always been represented on the city's stakeholder group, and we also participated, with other residents, at the recent community meeting to provide feedback on the final proposals for car lanes, bike lanes, and permanent plantings. Several more such meetings are planned.

A BPA board member also participated in the city's Housing Element Update Community Panel, which was an almost yearlong process of meetings and reviews of the city's updated housing element plan. The main goal was to provide feedback to the city, taking neighborhood concerns into account. Lisa Landers has provided updates about this to Barron Park. See also the city's website on this topic.

A new development project has just been proposed for the Maybell/Clemona site that was subject to the citywide Measure D vote last year. BPA Board members, together with a few other residents, will have met with the developer by the time you read this in order to gain an understanding of their plans. The city's Architecture Review Board will review the plans in December or January, and this will potentially go multiple rounds, so there will be time to provide feedback as appropriate.

New developments are also planned for Bowman School along Arastradero. We have been in contact with the Head of School, and a BPA Board member attended the recent community meeting. The school is essentially adding a second site further

down toward the cemetery, which seems to represent more of an expansion in space than in enrollment. I believe the actual construction is still at least a year out. The Head of School has provided overviews of this to BP residents and will continue to do so over time.

Finally, the BPA Board, together with local residents and a city liaison, recently revisited the "question" of Cypress Lane, the alley behind El Camino businesses both North and South of Military Way (e.g., behind Happy Donuts). The alley has been a source of repeated complaints over the years because of overgrowth and occasional garbage dumping. However, the alley is not a city street. North of Military Way, it is owned 50/50 by the property owners on each side; South of Military Way, it is owned 100% by the El Camino businesses. Since those businesses benefit from the access, for both themselves and their customers, we hope they will (continue to) take responsibility for its maintenance. The city promised to provide some enforcement.

We have also been keeping tabs on developments concerning the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park.

In addition to these larger projects, we regularly hear about individual, neighbor-to-neighbor concerns (e.g., about unsafe trees or the desired preservation of trees on an adjacent property, or a large new family home construction, or a historic preservation interest). Realistically, the BPA Board cannot get involved in all of those, although we often can point residents to city resources. But more could be done with greater participation on the Board by BPA members. Without more people

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Farewell to Alice and Bob Frost—Volunteers Extraordinaire

By Lynnne Melena



By the time this newsletter is published, two of Barron Park's most valuable volunteers and community leaders, Alice and Bob Frost, will have moved to Portland where they will "retire" (which is not really possible for them). They lived in Barron Park for 54 years, most of them on El Cerrito Road. In the fall of 2010, I wrote an article for the newsletter that enumerated their many volunteer activities inside and outside of Barron Park. Below, are several brief summaries of how they have so positively impacted a few of the institutions in our neighborhood.

Barron Park Green Team (By Lynnne Melena)

When the Barron Park Green Team held its first meeting in January 2010, Alice and

[PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FROM PAGE 1]

willing to volunteer their time and skills on behalf of the neighborhood, the BPA just doesn't have enough resources to attend to everyone's concerns. We welcome new volunteers!

While I have focused on street and development activities in this column, there are several other areas where you can get engaged, such as Neighborhood Safety & Preparedness and Civic Affairs. Where we could use the most help next year is with the organization of events. Help us put the next cultural event together, present a movie in the park, or organize a dance evening. Please send me an email if you're interested. Your Barron Park neighbors will cherish your efforts!

Bob Frost were the first ones to come to the door. As it turns out, they were more "senior" than most of the group, but it never seemed that way. For the next five years they responded to any need that the Green Team had, no matter how lowly, or unsung—from staffing Green Team tables at the May Fete, to putting up and taking down event signs all over Barron Park, to hosting many meetings (with Alice taking minutes) and, most importantly, opening their home for the Green Team's annual holiday party.

They were stalwarts. They showed up to clear poison oak (Bob is immune) and plant native plants at Bol Park. Alice helped Barron Park School PTA with their Goodwill donation collection in its first year. Alice and Bob attended public meetings to demonstrate support for various environmental issues. They helped plan and organize the first Bike Palo Alto!, now an annual Green Team event, and contributed to it in many ways. In fact, just as they were preparing their house to move, they volunteered to spend a whole afternoon at Bike Palo Alto's refreshment stop at Whole Foods Market when there was a last-minute change in staffing.

They weren't just reliable volunteers, they acted on their environmental values—riding their bikes as much as possible and driving Priuses. In fact, Bob and Alice rode up on their bikes for a Green Team goodbye party in mid-November, even though it meant riding home in the drizzle.

The Barron Park Green Team will really miss them.

Barron Park Seniors (By various contributors)

Organizing senior lunches every other month was another one of Bob's contributions to our Barron Park neighborhood.

He wrote up the notices which were sent to the participating seniors explaining all the details of the upcoming lunch ... date, location, menu choices, cost and any other pertinent information, and asking those who were planning to attend to get back to him with their food and drink choices.

He then tabulated all the information and gave it to another member of his committee, who was the contact person with the restaurant, so she could make the proper reservations, while a third member of the committee prepared name tags for everyone.

Neighbor Barbara Stark, from the seniors group, provided another testimonial on behalf of the Frosts: "Since my family has lived across the street from the Frosts for many years, my comments are that they are delightful neighbors, involved in not only community projects, but also most interested in helping the planet. El Cerrito Road will not be the same without them. I wish them God speed, and may they live contented lives in Oregon."

The Donkeys and Holiday Party (By Don Anderson)

Bob Frost succeeded me as "donkeymeister" for Perry and Niner, the Barron Park donkeys, in 2003, and has served admirably as organizer and overseer of the volunteer donkey handlers for eleven years until this month. Bob took the task seriously and did a wonderful job. Many times when



Farewell event for Bob and Alice in Bol Park on Nov 22. Many of those shown are donkey handlers.

Photographs by Peter Mueller

one of the handlers was unable to take his or her regular turn caring for the donkeys, Bob would step in himself to fill the gap. He made sure the "boys" had regular vet visits, and that food and supplies for them were always available on schedule. But Bob did much more. He worked with James Witt, owner of the their pasture, to improve the donkeys' environment, he helped negotiate an agreement to assure their long term access to the pasture, and spent hours recruiting and orienting new volunteers to the rigors of donkey handling. Bob will be sorely missed—it will be hard to replace him.

Alice Frost has been a pillar of neighborhood service for many years. In addition to the other activities already mentioned above, Alice supported the Barron Park Holiday Party and Donkey Parade for the eleven years it was held. Each year Alice organized the Barron Park Seniors to bake cookies (and baked many dozen cookies herself), for the gathering at the end of the caroling parade at Barron Park Elementary School. She also helped organize the setup and cleanup of the holiday event every year.

SENIOR LUNCHES

By Julie Spengler

Barron Park Senior Lunches take place every other month (even numbered months) on the second Tuesday at 1:00; that is February, April, June, August, October and December.

June and August are catered picnic lunches at Bol Park, December has always been at Cibo's where we get a large private room and enjoy musical entertainment, either by neighborhood accordian players (Gary Breitbard and Jena Rauti) or a choral group. February, April and October are at a neighborhood restaurant with plenty of convenient parking.

Anyone interested in joining us please contact Julie Spengler at 493-9151 or email at juliespengler@sbcglobal.net to give me your phone number and /or email address so we can contact you.

...AND WE'RE BACK

Saturday, February 28, 2015

JuanaRun?

IT'S SERIOUS FUN

..AND STILL BENEFITTING our neighborhood schools: Terman, Gunn, Juana Briones, and Barron Park. Thanks to West Valley Track Club, Gunn Sports Boosters, and the PTAs at Briones, Barron, and Terman, this neighborhood tradition that Karen Saxena started will continue. It's still a certified 8k race starting at 8:30 am. Included is a 5k race for those runners who want a shorter route. Varied-length races for kids. A 1-mile race for everybody! A Challenger race for those with special needs. Pancake breakfast, automated timing. T-shirts if you register before race day. Bag check for 8k runners. Registration fee varies depending on which race you choose. Online registration, printable registration forms and more info to come soon on www.juanarun.org or email to juanarun2015@gmail.com. Join the long-standing neighborhood tradition: Get your shoes on and run it, walk it, cheer for it, volunteer for it. This race is once again sponsored by the Barron Park Association, Kiwanis, Agile PT, Amol Saxena DPM, Fish Market, James Witt Construction, Sport & Spine Institute, On Your Mark, Sports Basement, and Peter Giovannotto of Dreyfus Realty. See you on Race Day!

Help Support the Barron Park Donkeys!



Photo by Bernard Andre

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

able Earth), 3921 East Bayshore Road, Palo Alto, CA 94303-4303. The check *must* be made out to "ACTERRA-Palo Alto Donkey Fund." All of the above must be included. For further information about making a contribution on behalf of the donkeys, or if you would like information about how to become one of the volunteer donkey handlers, please call Steven Parkes (650) 918-6768 or email at smparkes@smparkes.net, or go to BarronParkDonkeys.org.

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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and the Greenacres 2 tract. See Photo A, map of the area as it now is (in 2014), and showing the two tracts that were ultimately built on the pit property.

Why Was the Pit “Necessary”?

The story of the proposal and the resultant protest is partially told in four newspaper clippings from the archive of the Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA), dated between October 21 and 25, 1932. However, the conclusion of the story (the final decision to dig the pit) is not covered by any of the four, and must remain a mystery (pending the success of further research).

In order that you can get the flavor of the newspaper stories, and see all the evidence they contain, I have made true copies, which appear below. It was not feasible to scan the copies I have because they are prints of poor scans that have picked up too much background coloration.

A Protest Was Organized

The first clipping, dated October 21 (Friday), and probably from the *San Jose Mercury*, is headlined “**City to Protest Excavating at Maybelle Tract.**” Herein follows a true copy:

“Strong protest against the plan of the state highway commission to remove large quantities of earth from two “borrow pits” in the Maybelle tract on Arastradero road, near Alta Mesa Memorial Park, for the purpose of obtaining fill material to be used in the construction of the Bayshore Highway from Oregon avenue south to Lawrence station, was made today in letters addressed to Governor Rolph, the highway commission, and the state department of public works.

Decision to address these protests was reached by the local planning commission last night after hearing a delegation of 25 property owners of the Maybelle tract, who are vigorously in opposition to this project, which, they assert, will damage their property.

The state highway commission has an option on **two sites of more than four acres each**, adjacent to the lands of residents of that tract. The proposal is to excavate the land to a depth of from eight to 20 feet, thereby creating large pits or craters.

The county planning commission is already on record in opposition to this proposed excavation.

In its letters of protest the local planning commission pointed out that this area is close to Palo Alto and in a few years may

become a part of the city, and on this basis it is vitally interested in the future of the section, from the standpoint of future planning and development.”

(Note: Bolding emphasis was added by Doug Graham to each of the four newspaper stories reprinted herein.)

Note also: Newspaper practice of the day was to NOT capitalize words such as “street,” “highway,” “road,” when used as part of the street names.)

Delegation to Meet With Governor Rolph

On Saturday October 22, the same newspaper, under the headline “**Group to Protest Removal of Dirt,**” reported:

“A delegation, representing the local planning commission, the planning commission of Santa Clara county, and residents of the Maybelle tract, Arastradero road, will call on Governor Rolph next Monday morning in Sacramento for the purpose of presenting their protest against the state highway commission removing earth for building materials from **two four-acre tracts in the Maybelle subdivision**. The materials would be used for fill on the stretch of the Bayshore highway between Oregon avenue and Lawrence Station near Santa Clara.

The protestants (sic) assert that the removal of the earth would create large craters which would be detrimental to nearby property and to the future development of the section.

Among those to call on the governor are: L. H. Anderson and A. G. James, of the local planning commission, Arnold Rumwell, deputy city attorney, O. F. Campbell and Hugh Pomeroy of the county planning commission, and G. H. Gibbons, W. H. Sloan, and L. J. Traynor of the Maybelle tract.”

Good News?

The *Palo Alto Times* reported on Tuesday, October 25, under the headline, “**State Will Probably Not Use ‘Borrow Pits’ On Arastradero**”:

“Little likelihood is seen that the two four-acre sites on Arastradero road near Alta Mesa Cemetery, now under option by the state, will be used as “borrow pits,” from which to obtain dirt for fill on the stretch of the Bayshore Highway from Oregon avenue to Lawrence station, near Santa Clara.

This opinion was expressed as the result

of a conference yesterday in Sacramento with Governor Rolph, attended by representatives of the local city planning commission, the county planning commission, and residents of the Maybelle tract where the prospective borrow pits are situated.

Governor Rolph expressed himself against doing anything which would damage property, and Earl L. Kelly, newly named director of the state department of public works, said it might be possible to secure the needed materials from a borrow pit on Alviso road near Sunnyvale. **Mr. Kelly promised to take no action in prosecuting the plan to take up the options on the Arastradero road property without first notifying the local group and giving time for the filing of an injunction**, if that procedure were desired.

Bids on the Bayshore highway extension job, which includes dirt excavation for fill of the new road, **will be received by the state tomorrow**.

The road bed of the highway stretch will be laid during the next few months, after which it is expected the highway will be paved.”

Alternative Proposal Threatens Palo Alto

A clipping using font appearing to be the same as that used by the Palo Alto Times, and undated but with internal evidence suggesting a date of about Friday, October 28, includes the headlines “**Road Contractors Have Option For Securing Dirt Supply, PIT TO BE DEEP,**” and “**20-Foot Cavity Foreseen In Embarcadero Annex.**” A true copy follows:

“Word reaching Palo Alto today indicates that an **option is held by Basich Bros. contractors, on the Kumagai pear orchard, just north of the Bayshore highway on Embarcadero road—at the city’s “back door”—the intention being to use that tract as a “borrow pit” for the excavation of earth to provide fill on the stretch of the new highway from Oregon avenue to Whisman road, near the Sunnyvale dirigible base.**

The Kumagai pear orchard lies within the Embarcadero Annex, which the voters of Palo Alto rejected in the annexation election held September 20 last.

Palo Alto, accordingly, has no control over the development of that adjacent territory.”

"90,000 Yards Needed"

"Basich Bros. was the low bidder for the construction of the Bayshore highway from Oregon avenue south. It is expected the contract will be awarded by the state in the near future, and that work will begin shortly thereafter on building the roadbed of the new highway. About 90,000 yards of fill will be required.

Tests conducted on the Kumagai land showed that satisfactory materials for fill were available to a depth of about 20 feet.

The same contractor has already used nearby soil, on the Faber holding abutting the city's airport site, for use in connection with the construction of the Bayshore highway between Redwood City and Palo Alto. And (sic) since that time Palo Alto has been attempting to fill in the hole at one corner of the airport property, which had already been leased as a borrow pit when the city acquired it from Peter Faber.

In the original annexation election the city Bayshore lands, as well as Embarcadero Annex, were included in the area which the people of that sector and the city council voted to admit to Palo Alto. The council action was nullified when the annexation procedure was attacked by a local group on the ground that it was faulty. Later it was decided by the

council to "confess judgement" and to open the way for beginning the action anew."

"Other Pits Abandoned"

"Several days ago protests were lodged with Governor Rolph and state officials against the use of two sites near Alta Mesa Cemetery as borrow pits. Their protests were effective in preventing the excavation of the properties in the Maybelle tract. **The proposal to use the Kumagai pear orchard follows the unsuccessful attempt to obtain earth from the Alta Mesa sites.**"

Lack of Further Documentation

Unfortunately, we do not have any documented follow-up on any of this, but it is clear that the story continued—after all, the gigantic pit was dug on Maybell and a lot of earth (90,000 yards?) was removed. See Box #2 for my speculation on what may have happened after it first looked like the Maybelle residents had won a victory.

The Pit, Nine Years Later

Roll forward to 1941 for our next glimpse of the pit. In that year, a pilot (or pilots) made a series of flights over Palo Alto and took photographs with the camera held or fixed in a vertical position. Each shot covered only a relatively small area (less than a square mile). Then prints were made and a "composite" photograph was created by

a very crude cut-and-paste method. The result, cropped to show only the pit and vicinity, can be seen in Photo B, The Borrow Pit in 1941. Note how the cutting-and-pasting has introduced a ½ inch offset of the pit boundaries where two photos do not match up properly (about 50 yards, "on the ground"). My apologies for the poor reproduction—the print I got from the national aerial photo archive was poor, the original photography was worse, and my scanning and enlargement techniques clumsy and primitive.

What the Photo Shows

In spite of the image problems, careful study of this photo can reveal

Box 2: Speculation on Why the Maybelle Site Was Selected

■ In the Sacramento meeting, Governor Rolph was careful to cover his bets by apparently supporting the Maybelle citizens' request, but promising nothing.

■ Rolph then allowed his director of public works, Kelly, to promise only to notify the local group (if the state decided to go ahead at Maybelle) in enough time that they could file an injunction.

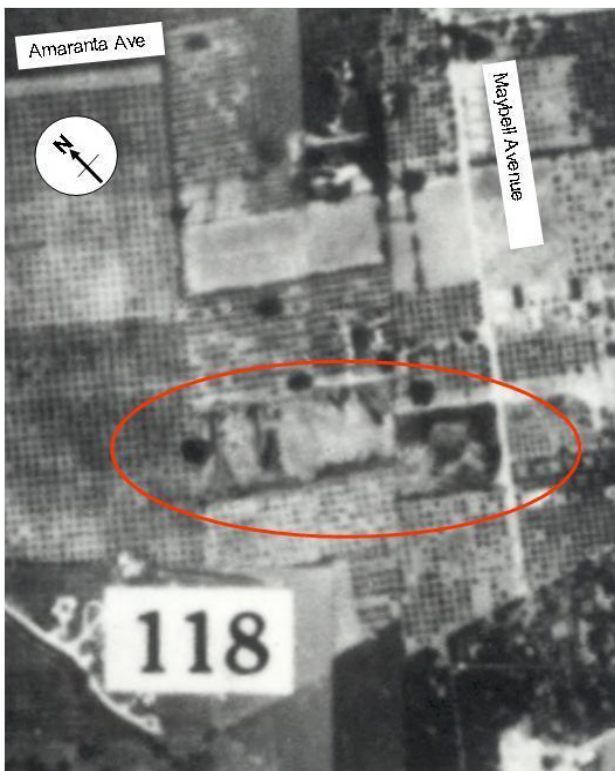
■ The newspaper then reported, several days later, that Basich Bros., the likely awardee for the next segment of the Bayshore highway, had an option for an excavation site very close to the Palo Alto boundary line in the area that had almost been annexed only six weeks before. It was clear that the city planned to begin the annexation "anew".

■ It is possible that the state told Basich to get that option, then to let the newspaper know about it. This would constitute a political threat against the City of Palo Alto that would be difficult to trace and probably impossible to prove.

■ It can be speculated that the City went back on its implied promise of support for the Maybelle residents in return for the state deciding against the Embarcadero alternative.

■ It may be that there was some negotiation (possibly mediated by a third party—the county?) during which the deal was struck based on a reduction of the two proposed Arastradero sites to one—Maybelle.

■ Please remember that this is only my speculation—a possible answer to this 82-year-old political mystery. Nobody who was alive at that time can now come forward to give us the answers—although there is more newspaper research that can be done.



1941 Composite Aerial Photograph (very poor quality original) Annotations copyrighted by Douglas L. Graham, 2014

Photo B: The Borrow Pit in 1941

some details; (1) The original orchard house (the square-ish fuzzy grey blob) at the southeast end of the pit was still there in 1941. (2) The shadow along the long southwest side shows that much of the pit had been dug deep during the preceding nine years. (3) There was still a live oak

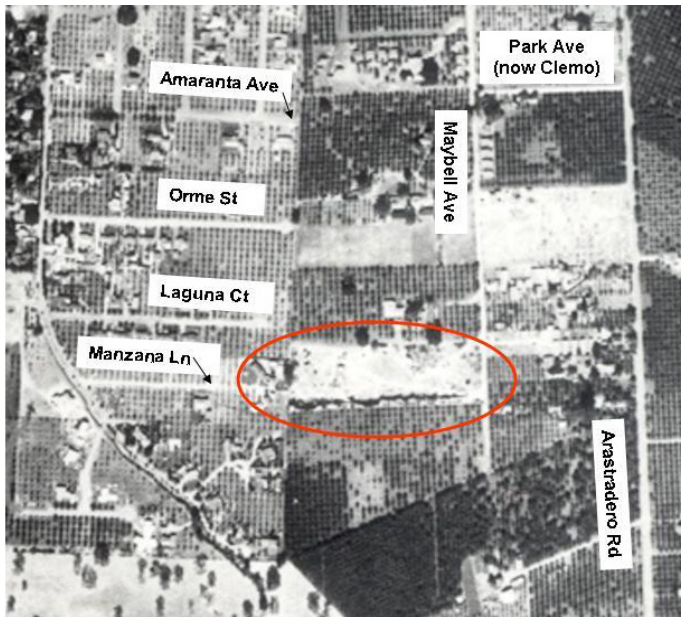


Photo C: The Borrow Pit in 1948

tree (the round fuzzy black blob) at the northwest end. (4) Much of the northwest end appears to be overgrown with vegetation (probably weeds and small brush) but there is an area in the center where exposed soil shines brightly, indicating fairly recent excavation activity. (5) Few houses show up in the pit environs—this was largely because there were very few subdivisions made and homes built during the Great Depression from 1930 through 1938.

The Pit in 1948

The 1948 aerial photo is unquestionably the most valuable one for the purpose of exploring the history of the pit. It was excellent photography and I obtained a good print from the national archive.

See Photo C, The Borrow Pit in 1948. Seven more years and World War Two have occurred and much has changed. You can see the encroachment of subdivisions and individual homes into the pit environs from all directions except the direct south. The photo was shot on September 26, 1948—early autumn (note the full foliage on the orchard trees), and probably about mid afternoon.

This is the shot that revealed the exact location of the pit to me. I was musing over the photo when preparing an article for the Fall, 1997 issue of this newsletter when the proverbial light bulb lit in my mind and I perceived what I had looked at many times but had never “seen.” There, just when I wasn’t thinking about that topic at all, was the pit—as obvious as it could be.

Photo Analysis

What I saw was the dark, jagged line running along the southwest side of the pit—the shadow of the rim. The jagged effect comes from the “bites” the excavating machinery took. It was probably a large power shovel, perhaps steam-powered like most in those days. If I knew the actual time of day it would be possible to calculate the angle of the sun and then, from the width of the dark shadow, obtain the depth of the pit. Note how it had been dug deepest at the northwest end and how the depth diminishes at the south-

east end where the pit bottom ramps up to street level to allow dump truck access directly to the excavating machinery.

I apologize for the relative lack of contrast in the bright portions of this print—otherwise, you could see a pattern of tracks radiating inward from two spots on the shoulder of Maybell Avenue (one at the “east” corner and the other at the “south” corner), indicating probably a truck entrance and exit. This would facilitate a one-way oval truck traffic pattern (the most efficient). This also demonstrates that the pit was probably being actively excavated again during the late 1940s (perhaps for the doubling of the Bayshore Highway to create the Bayshore Freeway?).

Trespassing Rights?

Whether it was still an active excavation site in 1948 or not, the pit was certainly an attraction for neighborhood boys. In 2009 I exchanged copies of aerial photographs and other information with John Christman, who lived in Washington State. John’s father, F. L. “Chris” Christman, his wife Claire M. Christman and their 3-year-old son John moved to Barron Park in 1947. According to John, his father “bought all the property from Amaranta Avenue to Rincon Circle, and Los Robles Avenue to the pit.” They built the first house on Manzanita Lane, at 4060, living at first in the garage until the house was ready for occupancy. John wrote “Our back yard butted up to the north side of the pit and I played in that pit for several years till the

‘bad boys’ took it over and my dad built a fence after the Santa Clara County Sheriff and my dad had a run-in about “public domain” and trespassing rights in 1952.” The Christmans left Barron Park to move to Scotland in 1961.

The Borrow Pit in 1955

Now we will fast-forward another seven years. See Photo D, The Borrow Pit in 1955. This was near the end of the pit’s existence. Even if you know how fast our neighborhoods grew in the late forties and early fifties, it is still astonishing to see the changes in the pit’s environs. The pit was now almost entirely surrounded, up close, with houses. Northeast of the pit was Loma Vista Elementary School (now Juana Briones), completely built out. The school had been built in 1951 during the Korean War steel shortage, and almost didn’t get built because of it.

Photo Analysis

Immediately southwest of the school and the small orchard that it wrapped partway around, is the pit. It looked quite different from 1948, and I think it was in the process of being filled in during 1955. I do not have any record of exactly when it was completely filled, but we know it had to be after this photo and before the McLaughlin Glen tract map was filed at the county on October 28, 1958. What you can see in the photo is a clear pattern of earthmoving machinery or truck tracks, entering from Maybell Avenue about midway on the southeast end of the pit, running partway in and then fanning out. This looks to me like a good pattern for a “filling” operation.

More Guesswork (Educated, but Still Guesswork)

I also don’t know who was responsible for filling the pit, but a likely guess would be the developer Doug Couch, who built both McLaughlin Glen in 1958 and McLaughlin Glen #2 in 1959. The sequence is interesting, since it suggests that the northwest, the deepest end, was built on first.

The Law of Unintended Consequences

Patricia Sorenson contacted me in 2011 to talk about some unintended consequences of the pit that she knew of. She moved to 624 Georgia Avenue (in McLaughlin Glen) in 1963 and was told by her neighbors about some of the settling problems because the houses were built on deep fill. One of the worst consequences was the rupture of a major water main that the city had installed across the northwest end of

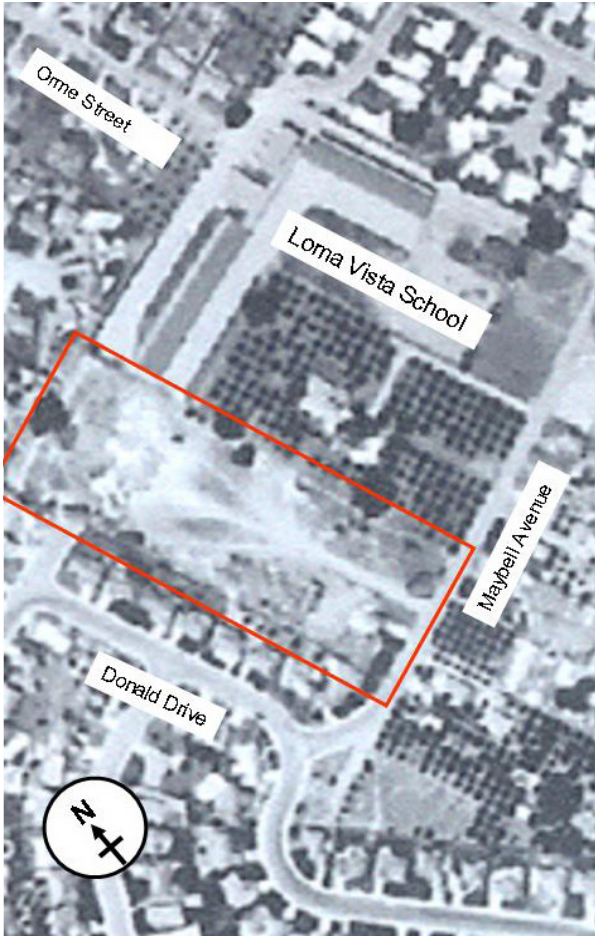


Photo copied from one obtained by John Erickson from an internet source, about 1997. Annotated map by Douglas L. Graham copyright 2011

Photo D: Aerial Photo The Borrow Pit in 1955

the filled pit. It ran through the backyards of the properties on the northwest side of Georgia Street. When it blew in 1962 it damaged the house she moved into the following year, and two others on her block.

Patricia noted that the houses southwest of hers seemed to be the ones most affected by the settling (probably not coincidentally, this is the area of widest shadow in the 1948 photo, indicating that the hole was very deep there). According to Patricia, "the house (hers) is settling—moving all the time." Her gardener worked in a lot of gypsum to "break up the soil," but that didn't help.

The Birth of Community Activism in Our Neighborhood

The community reaction of the Maybelle orchardists was the first documented instance, in the greater Barron Park area, of organized community reaction to a perceived threat to property values and quality of life from the actions of a governmental agency. Although in the short run it was unsuccessful, it did plant the seeds for the later formation of the Maybelle

Improvement Association, which morphed into the Barron Park Maybelle Improvement Association, and then, in 1953, into the Barron Park Association (BPA).

At the time of Palo Alto's "Foothills #2 Annexation" in 1959 that took Greenacres Two and nearby mini-neighborhoods into the city, the neighborhood was split in two—a rift that has never been completely healed. From 1959 until 1975, the west end of the Maybell tract (as well as the area served by the upper [west] end of Los Robles Avenue) was represented by the Loma Vista Association, or LVA. Then, when the rest of Barron Park finally wised up and joined the city in 1975, the LVA, under Chairman Sam Sparck, quickly moved to merge with the BPA, so at least part of the split was repaired.

I hope you have enjoyed this rather detailed story

of the infamous "Borrow Pit." I suppose you could fairly say that another one of the unintended consequences of this atrocious invasion was stimulation of community activism that ever since has been the hallmark of our neighborhood.

If you have questions, comments or information about this topic please contact me at dgrahampaca at gmail dot com, 650-493-0689, or by snail mail to 984 Ilima Way, Palo Alto CA 94306.

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EMAIL LISTS

The BPA has four email lists: bpa-news, bpa-issues, bpa-misc and bpa-jobpostings. They are hosted at Google Groups. To join, go to the BPA Website: BPAPaloalto.org and click on the tab "BPA Email Lists." This provides an easy means to subscribe, and information about the lists.

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Email Lists: Richard Elder

Membership: Lisa Berkowitz Landers

Neighborhood Safety & Preparedness:

vacant

Newsletter: Nancy Hamilton

Seniors Lunch: vacant

Traffic & Streets: vacant

Welcoming: Gwen Luce

■

BPA meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m.

E-mail President@BPAPaloalto.org for location

www.BPAPaloalto.org

Looking for a few good phenologists—You can be one!

By Chip Crossman



Claudia discusses the Bol Park Project with Pete and Ann Knopf.

First off let's get one thing straight. Phenology is not the study of skull shape. That's phrenology.

Phenology is the observation and study of the seasonal events in the life of plants such as leaf budding, flowering, fruiting and the seasonal loss of leaves, flowers, and fruits. A national database of these observations has been established by the National Phenology Network, and a thousand volunteers are sending in their 100 thousand observations yearly. The long-term goal is to document the time shifting of these seasonal events due to changes in climate or from annual variations in the severity of seasonal weather. The Nature's Notebook website has several reports derived from

the data collected there. See https://www.usanpn.org/nn/connect/highlighted_pubs.

In January of 2012 a couple of Barron Park neighbors, Anne Knopf and Chip Crossman, joined a new California Phenology Project (<https://www.usanpn.org/cpp/>) team under the leadership of Claudia Newbold of Menlo Park. The project is in Bol Park along the Matadero Creek corridor. The three of us go out once or twice a month to record what's going on with 7 native species: live oak, valley oak, bay laurel, buckeye, coyote brush, and snowberry. Claudia uploads the observation information to the national database.

The Bol Park team is looking for a few more Barron Park neighbors who would like to participate in this project. The time commitment is approximately 1–2 hours each month. We have been meeting on one or two Mondays per month from 9–10 am. We walk about a mile on our tour. None of us is a professional botanist, but we have learned a lot by observing.

For example, did you know that coyote brush bushes are either male or female? Did you know that caterpillars love to eat elderberry leaves? Did you know that galls on the Valley Oaks contain the larvae of wasps? We didn't either until we started really observing the plants of Bol Park.

If you think you'd like to join us, we are asking for a full year's commitment. That way you will see the entire seasonal cycle

for each of the 7 species that we observe. If you want more information or would like to join us on one of our inspections first, you can email Chip Crossman at crossmanf@earthlink.net or call him at 650-493-9182.



A colorful caterpillar on our elderberry plant.



Claudia notes the early leaf drop of a California Buckeye because of last winter's drought.

Update on the City's Effort to Amortize CPI's Hazardous Materials Operation: Progress, but Obstacles Remain

By Art Liberman

Progress

The efforts over many years by the neighbors who live in the shadow of CPI's hazardous materials, bolstered by support from many Barron Park residents, are paying off! At the Council meeting on October 6th, a City action to shutter CPI's Plating Shop took a big step forward. After listening to the Staff presentation and the City's independent consultant pres-

ent the results of his study of the risks to residents, followed by a rebuttal from CPI and comments from residents, the Council voted on a motion by Gail Price, seconded by Vice Mayor Liz Kniss, to have the Staff begin work on a zoning ordinance that would make CPI's operation non-conforming, which would then allow the Amortization action to move forward.

The remarkable turnout at the Council

meeting of residents, who stayed late into the evening, indicated to the Council the strong feelings we have about this issue and the great sense of community in our neighborhood! Romie Georgia and Samir Tuma delivered stirring remarks to the Council. Lydia Kou called on the City, forcefully, to take steps that were long overdue. Bob Moss also spoke very

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

directly, with his usual bare-knuckle, brutal clarity about the risks and the hazards. I contributed a riff on Dr. Seuss' "Horton Hears a Who" that I entitled "City Council Listens to Chimalusville," that began:

The Staff had thought CPI smelled like a bouquet of roses.

They believed this from the tops of their heads to the tips of their toes—es 'cause the Fire Department had inspected CPI's tanks and their hoses.

But now we know the real risk that CPI poses.

When a disaster strikes, and contamination spikes

The poisonous gases will go right up our noses.

The Council seemed to understand our predicament; no matter what safety improvements have been implemented by CPI (we appreciate their efforts, which benefit themselves and their employees as well), nor what else they might do, it's just a fact that so much extremely hazardous material on CPI's site so close to residents' homes is inconsistent with good zoning practices and unacceptable in Palo Alto. The Council realizes that not all circumstances can be foreseen nor can all accidents be prevented when one understands the nature and amount of the Extremely Hazardous Substances (a category defined by the EPA) on CPI's site—more than 2000 lbs. plus hundreds of gallons of cyanide compounds and concentrated acids, and CPI's usage, which includes pumping acids and other dangerous liquids from their basement storage tanks to the 2nd floor plating shop and back down, frequent hazardous material deliveries in the narrow driveway behind their building, and then isolating, packing and storing hazardous waste. Council member Greg Scharff stated it very clearly when he said that it's not right for residents to wonder each time they smell something: "Is it a major problem? Not knowing and just worrying. It's just not right."

The larger Palo Alto community and the press are now keenly aware of the hazardous materials issues at CPI. The headlines and article on the fire on November 20th at CPI, confined to a cabinet in a testing area, mentioned the hazardous materials at CPI and the Council action to start the Amortization process.

Obstacles Still Remain

The motion by Council Member Price, in line with the recommendation from Staff, was to have the Staff draft a zoning ordinance that would apply only to plating shops near residential zones. It would "explicitly identify plating shops, prohibit plating shop uses within a specific distance of residential uses and residential zoning districts, and incorporate an amortization schedule based on updated information on the value of affected investments."

After the motion was proposed, Council Member Burt engaged Staff and the consultant in some extended discussions. Burt objected to the idea of a zoning ordinance that would single out plating shops as a non-conforming use and was also opposed to one that did not specify a threshold of hazardous materials. He tacked on a number of conditions in an amendment, which was incorporated into Council Member Price's motion. His amendment would direct Staff to also do the following when drafting an ordinance: 1) identify uses from similar operations with similar hazards; 2) identify additional incompatible adjacent uses (schools, retail, restaurant); and 3) identify an appropriate volume of hazardous materials thresholds and possibly establish tiers in the Ordinance for facilities covered.

Pat Burt was the founder and CEO for more than 20 years of Acteron, a plating company in Redwood City, which he sold in 2010. Given his background and his knowledge of plating technology, it is understandable that he would take an active role in the Council discussion. Similarly, he is familiar with other instances when the plating industry has come under close scrutiny, and when there were calls for more regulation. While he was running his plating business, he was active in the plating industry community, serving as the President of the Metal Finishing Association of Northern California (CPI is a member of this association) from 1985 to 1987 and receiving an 'Award of Merit' from the National Association of Metal Finishers in 1991.

This was not the first time that Council Member Burt forcefully stepped into the Council discussions on Amortization. In April of 2012, when Amortization was put forward by the Staff, Burt said more studies were needed to determine if the hazardous materials at CPI actually created a risk

to nearby residents. This was the study, projected to take 6 months but which took 2½ years to complete, whose results were reported to Council on October 6th. The answer: yes, there were risks in two of the scenarios studied—from spillage accidents during delivery of nitric acid and from a spreading cloud of hydrogen cyanide following a catastrophic earthquake.

The amendment from Council Member Burt does not put a roadblock in the way of Amortization, but it does put some obstacles in its path. Once Staff resolves those issues, the zoning ordinance they come up with would need to pass through the Planning Commission and then return to the Council. This puts off the time when a zoning ordinance that includes Amortization will be on the books, so we're not yet finished with our work. This has been a long struggle; see the table for a summary timeline of key events of the past 10 years. While Council Member Scharff's amendment to the Oct 6th motion asked Staff to report back before the end of 2014, it's likely that Staff will only be able to state that their work is not yet complete. Readers of this note should stay tuned for further developments in early 2015.

Summary Timeline

Year	Key Event
2014	Staff to draft Amortization ordinance
2012	"6 month" Independent Risk Study authorized
2011	Amortization Study completed
2008	Second Hazmat Release — hydrochloric acid spill
2006	First Hazmat Release — nitric acid vapors
2004	CPI rebuilds Plating Shop

CALLING ALL ARTISTS, POETS AND PHOTOGRAPHERS!

Please submit your work for possible future publication. Also provide a short bio. about yourself, including how long you have lived in Barron Park.

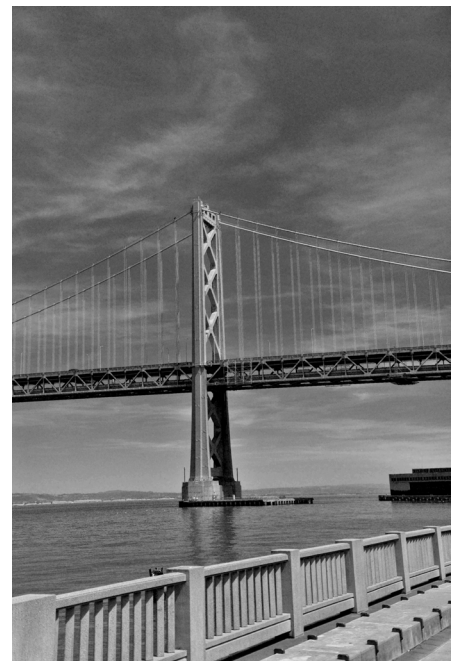
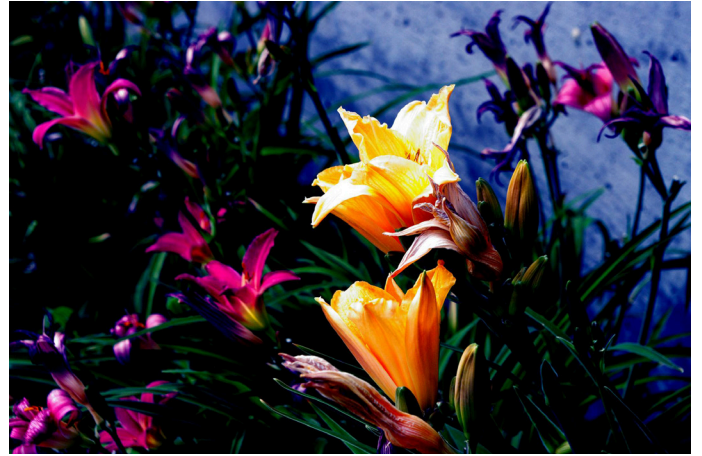
Send to: Nancy Hamilton njh.bpa@gmail.com

ART IN THE PARK—ERICH BOEHM

I am a recent college graduate with a major in photography and plan to go professional. I'm heavily involved with many kinds of digital art.

I started studying graphic design around 2008 and studied it for a few years in community college and then a few more when I transferred to Cal State East Bay in 2012. When I picked up my first camera I discovered my love for photography. Shortly after, I switched my major to photography and the rest is history. I am currently pursuing a career in photo retouching and plan to do all sorts of photo work for freelance (weddings for example). I am passionate about many kinds of art but at the moment I've been dabbling in landscape photography. I would say that a lot of my work (graphic design for instance) has a modern theme.

Erich can be emailed at eboehm@horizon.csueastbay.edu



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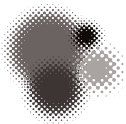
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