

# BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John King, BPA President



Welcome to autumn, Barron Park neighbors! We're happy the summer months provided us with fun activities, vacations, and, luckily, great, temperate weather! I was even honored to be invited as a special guest at *The Summer Show*, David and Robbie Kings' wonderfully lighthearted, very local talk show, where I was able to share in person the goings-on in the 'hood – from social events to development issues. (See article and photos later in this Newsletter.) On Labor Day weekend, I had the pleasure of attending a block party on Military Way and chatting directly with neighbors I'd only seen briefly before at BPA events. One-on-one interaction is precious, as we now know well.

Late June brought us a BPA Ice Cream Social in Bol Park with music by Gary Breitbard and his all-star performers! We all clamored for more, and so a repeat of the Ice Cream Social in the park on September 17 was equally well attended. Look out for times and details about our Fall events. Don't miss the return of Movie Night in Bol Park on **Sunday, October 8!** Bring your family, friends (and pets) to enjoy *The Secret Life of Pets!* This year's Halloween Bray Parade on **Sunday, October 29,** begins at Bol Park; costumed children and adults will parade with our decorated donkeys along Laguna Avenue, then up to the donkey paddock. In November, everyone is warmly invited to our musically rich, colorful Diwali

Festival on **Saturday, November 4,** in the Barron Park Elementary School multipurpose room. Then to finish out the year, we're planning a December holiday caroling session (with warm cider?).

It's great to be back in person with the neighborhood.

Please use the membership information in this issue to renew or join the BPA at: [bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/](http://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/) You can always contact me at: [johnwadeking@gmail.com](mailto:johnwadeking@gmail.com)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark your calendars!

- **Sunday afternoon, October 1, Bike Palo Alto** returns! [bikepaloalto.org](http://bikepaloalto.org)
- **Sunday eve, October 8, Movie Night** in Bol Park featuring *The Secret Life of Pets*
- **Saturday, October 14, Peninsula-wide Electric Home Tour**, featuring four Barron Park homes. (See details on page 7.) [electrichometour.org](http://electrichometour.org)
- **Saturday, October 28, Barron Park Elementary Walk-a-thon**
- **Sunday afternoon, October 29, Halloween Bray Parade** for kids of all ages
- **Saturday afternoon, November 4, Diwali Celebration** at Barron Park Elementary. Open to all residents (more info on page 3)
- **Saturday, November 18, Native Garden Workday** (more on page 2)



At National Night Out (NNO), John King takes a break from staffing the BPA table to chat with Leon Rochester, while Students Demand Action volunteers Chloe Chan, Jolie Chan, and William Xue provide gun violence prevention information. See page 4 for more on NNO. Photo by Sky Runser.

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# Gardening in a Native Plant Garden

By Linda Elder, Native Habitat Committee

From time to time, passersby tell us that our Bol Park Native Plant Garden looks too wild, too dry, or untended. To some extent, that's the idea behind a habitat garden; critters live there! But as a public-facing garden, we also need to think about ways to make a wilder garden look more cultivated and even inspirational, even though we have reasons to boil down our practices. Our other big constraint is the limited person-hours available for working on this all-volunteer project. We strive to strike a balance between art/beauty and science/nature, but we also want to show that the garden is being cared for. So, we are starting to use the practices listed below, which can of course also be applied to our own home gardens.

- Keep pathways well marked, clear of plants, and edges neat looking.
- Plant showy flowering plants up front, which are short and colorful, like a page out of a gardening magazine.
- Keep mid-sized and tall native plants farther back where they can be left untouched.
- Be judicious about seasonal cutbacks. This is where it gets tricky, since spent plants increase habitat value for birds and insects.
- If we choose not to cut back dead annuals or dormant perennials that have seed pods, we post explanatory signs nearby, such as this one:



California Wild Rose (*Rosa californica*) with mature rose hips.

As ecologically focused gardeners, our intention is to encourage wildlife by being aware of the life cycles of the insects and birds that live in our garden so they may thrive. Our approach will vary, depending on garden location and season. We hope that as time goes on, we will find the right balance.

Come and be a part of this effort! We are planning a workday on Saturday, November 18, 2023.

This year we will have a lot of beautiful, edible native California rose hips, so bring along a bag to collect them to take home. Make sure to add your name and contact info to our list, so we can contact you about work-days. Write to:



Photos by Linda Elder.

**Barron Park Association  
Newsletter Winter Deadline:**

**Friday, December 1, 2023**

Please submit articles (Microsoft Word if possible) for the Winter 2023-24 issue of the BPA Newsletter, with photos/ images separate from text, by **Friday, December 1, 2023**, to Myrna Rochester at: [mbrbpa@sonic.net](mailto:mbrbpa@sonic.net)

Make sure your BPA membership is current at: [barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com](mailto:barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com) Please contact us in advance with your ideas ([mbrbpa@sonic.net](mailto:mbrbpa@sonic.net)).

Any announcements for neighborhood and school activities should be for events scheduled **after January 15, 2024**. The Winter issue will be available in mid-January 2024.

[bpnativegarden@gmail.com](mailto:bpnativegarden@gmail.com)

Donate to the Bol Park Habitat Garden through the "Bol Park Fund" at: [friendsofpaparks.org/donations](http://friendsofpaparks.org/donations) or by mail or phone at: Friends of the Palo Alto Parks (FOPAP), Bol Park Fund, 425 Grant Ave., Suite 27, Palo Alto, CA 94306; 650-327-7323.

**Barron Park Seniors!  
Family and Friends of BP Seniors!**

**Look out for announcements for our December Get-Together!**

Join together for scheduled events, lunches, and gatherings. Reach out socially and for mutual interests and assistance. Get details by joining the BP Senior Connections mailing list. Write to Pooja Punn at: [barronparkseniorconnections@gmail.com](mailto:barronparkseniorconnections@gmail.com)

**BPA Email Lists**

The Barron Park Association offers three Email Lists for **any** resident to post: bpa-news, bpa-misc, and bpa-issues. The lists are hosted on Google Groups.

To join a list, go to: [bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/](http://bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/)

The link provides information about each list and an easy way to subscribe.



# Barron Park Celebrates Diwali on November 4!

By Jaya Pandey

Dear Neighbors,

This year, we will once again celebrate Diwali as a Barron Park community event! Diwali – “The Festival of Lights” – originated in India and is now celebrated in different parts of the world. Symbolizing the victory of Good over Evil, Light over Darkness, and Knowledge over Ignorance, Diwali brightens homes with warm oil lamps, sweets, and the smell of incense. The traditional five-day holiday gathers friends and family as the weather begins to get cooler and the days shorter.

We’re planning a community get-together with food, music, and fun – a wonderful opportunity to bring together neighbors and friends. Please join us! If you can, bring a sweet or snack to share, and, if you wish, wear your traditional colorful clothes and your dancing shoes!

The entire community is warmly invited. The Barron Park Association looks forward to seeing everyone on **Saturday, November 4, 2023, 2:00-4:30 p.m.** in the Barron Park Elementary School Multipurpose Room!



Poster by Jaya Pandey.

## BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS FALL 2023

- President, John W. King
- Secretary, Jaya Pandey
- Treasurer, John W. King
- Doug Burns
- Todd Collins
- Richard Elder
- Maurice Green
- Christian Kalar
- John W. King
- Lisa Berkowitz Landers
- Gwen Luce
- Jaya Pandey
- Myrna Rochester
- Kellie Stafford
- Paul Yang

### Committee /Activity Chairs

- Business Liaison:* Paul Yang
- Communications:* Myrna Rochester
- Email Lists:* Richard Elder
- Environment:* Jaya Pandey
- Events:* Kellie Stafford
- Barron Park History:* Douglas L. Graham
- Membership:* Lisa Berkowitz Landers
- Neighborhood Safety & Emergency Preparedness:* Maurice Green
- Parks & Creeks:* Christian Kalar
- Native Habitat:* Richard Elder
- Shared Pathway:* Doug Burns
- Schools Liaison:* Todd Collins
- Senior Connections:* Pooja Punn
- Traffic & Streets:* Doug Burns
- Webmaster:* Maurice Green
- Welcoming:* Gwen Luce
- Zoning & Land Use:* Vacant
- P.A. Neighborhood (PAN) Liaison:* Doug Burns

**BPA Board Meetings** are held the 3rd Tuesday of most months at 7:15 p.m. Neighbors are welcome.

For schedule and location write to: [johnwadeking@gmail.com](mailto:johnwadeking@gmail.com)

[bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org)

# Barron Park Shines in Electric Home Tour

By Hilary Glann

**B**arron Park will be a big stop on this year's Electric Home Tour, representing four of the 14 Palo Alto electric homes featured. All of the more than 40 homes on the tour, which spans both San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, will be open on Saturday, October 14, 2023, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Visit [electrichometour.org](http://electrichometour.org) to learn more and sign up (required) for the free tour. Registration closes on October 12.

Homeowners will be present to answer questions about their clean, efficient, and safe electric appliances. At each home, student volunteers will also be on hand to share information about rebates, financing options, and how to create an electrification plan for your home. You can also explore other "green" features of these homes, including native plants, electric garden tools, solar panels, battery walls, and more.

Here's what our Barron Park families said about their switch from gas to electric at home.

### Peter and Melanie Cross

"We built our house about twelve years ago with environmental sustainability (both energy and habitat stewardship) as a primary objective. We designed it to be all-electric to take advantage of the renewable energy available from both City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) and our own solar PV system.

"In addition to addressing our carbon emissions objective, we have particularly enjoyed other benefits of electric appliances. The heat pump efficiently provides quiet, dust-free radiant heating as well as air conditioning from one unit, and the induction cooktop has been amazing. It not only keeps harmful combus-



Peter and Melanie Cross in their kitchen. Photo courtesy of Peter and Melanie Cross.

tion products out of our kitchen, but it's also as responsive as gas, and its planar glass surface is very easy to clean.

"The major pieces of electrical equipment installed are:

- Air source heat pump to provide both heating and air conditioning
- Heat pump water heater for domestic hot water
- Induction cooktop
- Electric oven
- Electric clothes dryer
- Lithium-ion batteries for grid backup power."

### Linda and Richard Elder



Linda and Rich Elder in the Bol Park Native Garden. Photo by Sky Runser.

"We began our electrification adventure by replacing our gas water heater with a heat pump water heater in 2018. That went so well that in 2020, we replaced our gas cooktop with an induction cooktop. We had always preferred gas over electric, but induction is a game changer. Our Samsung induction

cooktop is hotter and ridiculously easier to clean than our old gas cooktop. Pans heat up and cool quicker, so cooking is actually better than gas.

"We then replaced our gas furnace with a Samsung heat pump and added Enphase solar with battery backup in 2022. Just

this spring when our washing machine died, we used it as an excuse to get an LG heat pump [clothes] dryer. Every one of these changes has made our lives better. The air conditioning that comes with a heat pump is a nice upgrade. Our back-up battery, charged by solar, can be used to run the heat pump after the sun goes down. That allows us to power the house almost exclusively on solar in the summer. We haven't been through a winter with everything running yet, but at least in the summer, both our gas and electric bills have gone to almost nothing.

"The hardest part of electrification is that there are just a lot of decisions to make. This tour will be a great chance for you to learn from people who have been through it."

### Susan Stansbury and Cédric de La Beaujardière



Susan Stansbury and Cédric de La Beaujardière at home. Photo courtesy of Susan Stansbury.

"We have been on the journey of electrifying our home over the past twenty years. Currently we have a heat pump water heater as well as a ground source heat pump that provides heating, cooling, and air filtration. We also recently upgraded to a photovoltaic system that now produces more than enough electricity to cover our home's current needs. As part of the process, we insulated the walls, replaced the single-pane windows with dual-pane, and opted for energy efficient appliances and light bulbs. The final steps in this journey will be to replace our gas-powered stove and get an electric vehicle. As a result of our efforts, we have a very comfortable house year-round. We have a credit on our electric bill and a negligible gas bill."

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# National Night Out Comes to Bol Park

By The Editors

Neighbors from Barron Park and beyond gathered in Bol Park on the evening of Tuesday, August 1, 2023, to enjoy National Night Out (NNO), an annual event organized by the Palo Alto Police Department (PAPD).

NNO promotes police-community partnerships, and helps neighbors get to know each other so they can support each other in an emergency. In addition to tables staffed by the PAPD and Pets in Need (the Palo Alto

animal shelter), visitors connected with the Barron Park Association, Students Demand Action, and 350SV Palo Alto Climate Action. The BPA publicized and staffed the event.



Volunteers from 350SV Palo Alto Climate Action talk to Barron Park neighbors about transitioning from gas to electric in their homes. Patrick Muffler explains how an electric vehicle can power home appliances in an emergency. Photos by Sky Runser.



Children enjoy up-close views of the fire truck at the event.

Home Tour --Continued from previous page

Hannes Ruescher and Ruby Lin



Hannes Ruescher shows us his rooftop solar panel array. Photo courtesy of Hannes Ruescher.

"Same quality of living. Feels good to make some contribution to save the planet for my kids and grandchildren."

## Palo Alto Plans Electric Grid Modernization



As we switch our homes, buildings, and cars from fossil fuels to electricity, we will need more electric capacity, resiliency, and "smarts" in our grid. City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) has just completed a strategy plan to build the electric grid we need for a pollution-free future. Join a webinar organized by the League of Women Voters of Palo Alto on **Thursday, October 19, 2023, from 7-8:15 p.m.** to learn more. Use the following link to register: [bit.ly/palo-alto-grid](https://bit.ly/palo-alto-grid)

Event speakers are:

- CPAU Director **Dean Batchelor**
- Former Environmental Quality Commissioner for the City of Menlo Park and home electrification expert **Tom Kabat**
- Quitcarbon CEO and electrification planning expert **Cooper Marcus.**



# A Fond Farewell to Eric Struck's Garden Railway

By Douglas L. Graham



The Barron Park Garden railway welcomed the public every weekend in season. Photo by Lexie Munevar.

If you live in Barron Park, or spend time here on weekends, you were probably familiar with the Barron Park Garden Railway (BPGR) on Kendall Avenue. Starting each spring, quaint, hand-painted signs appeared late each week with an invitation to visit. And we did! So many of us enjoyed a tour of the BPGR at least once, often returning with our kids or our friends' kids. Barron Park native Eric Struck, the "Engineer," operated and still owns the miniature outdoor railway, generously sharing it with every interested visitor. Sadly, with the recent passing of Eric's mother, our wonderful neighbor Barbara Struck, at age 97, Eric will soon be moving. He dismantled and stored his garden railway in late August 2023.

### A G-Scale Railroad

The rustic, ranch-style home with many windows at 748 Kendall, purchased by Eric's parents in 1950, was newly built by Joseph Eichler. It had served as a model home, not just for Eichler's University Gardens Tract (Josina and Kendall Avenues, known as the Bol Tract before Eichler owned it), but also for the larger Eichler development in

Redwood City.

Eric's garden railway occupied the entire backyard at 748, looping into the front yard. It is a "G-Scale" (Garden Scale) model, much larger than the more familiar "O-Gauge" Lionel Trains. (Note that "HO-Gauge" railways, popular with many hobbyists, are about half the size of O-Gauge Lionel Trains.)

Eric's G-Scale locomotives are each about 18" long and stand about 4" high. They are precisely detailed and beautifully painted. He owns more than 50 engines (32 diesels and 20 steam engines). His rolling stock – at least 70 freight and 40 passenger cars – is extremely varied and probably includes types of railcars we couldn't name offhand.

### A Nostalgia-Inducing Whistle

The railway wound in and around the shrubbery in the backyard, crossing over itself in spots. There are sidings and rail switching yards, including one very large one with 50 or more cars. There is an Old Western village of realistic-looking G-Scale houses and commercial buildings almost big enough to be dollhouses, and of course, a railroad station, a water tower, and all the usual accoutrements of a working railroad. The railway is electric, although the "steam" engine puffs vapor from its smokestack. Sound effects are recorded from actual full-sized trains. The steam train puffing and straining to get up to speed, then whistling for a crossing, sounds perfectly authentic. You could close your eyes and imagine yourself back in the 1940s.

### Eric's Beginnings in Model Railroading

Railroading was in Eric's family background: His grandfather had worked as a yardmaster

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Train cars waiting on the sidings of the Western town. Note the bright blue Golden West Freight cars going over the trestle at the back. Photo by Myrna Rochester.



# The King Brothers' Talk Show Returns!

By The Editors



August 25: David King interviews Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou. Photos courtesy of the King Family.



"Mountain Dew" man interrupts the serious proceedings of *The Summer Show*. On the right, Robbie King; left (at desk) David King.

Twins Robbie and David King, who grew up on La Selva Drive, have been hosting a live, home-based talk show since 2015. Originally called *The Late Show with David King*, neighbors, friends, and passersby are delighted to show up – or just happen upon – the patter, jokes, special guests, and live music (voice, guitar, violin, keys, and tambourine) right there on the Kings' garage stage.

Now called *The Summer Show*, David King, Robbie King, and their associates ended their latest season on August 25, with special guest Palo Alto Mayor Lydia Kou. Host David King always keeps special guests on their toes. Mayor Kou recalled the sheep, goats, and chickens, that, unlike our fenced-in donkey herd, roamed free in Bol Park not that long ago. Other guests

this summer included John King, BPA President (no relation), and Don Schaefer, local rapper and artist (and occasionally the roving "Mountain Dew" man).

For the lucky audience members who stayed, a delicious, celebratory cake followed the August 25 show, marking their eighth anniversary.

### Railroad --Continued from previous page

for the Union Pacific Railroad in the Midwest during World War II. As a boy, Eric had an HO-Gauge railroad layout at home, but then saw G-Scale models in hobby shops and realized what he really wanted.

Eric, then a sophomore at Gunn, started laying tracks in his backyard in March 1982. In 1988 he opened the layout to the public. He joined his first garden railway club, the Bay Area Garden Railway Society (BAGRS), which set up one-day shows at our Bol Park May Fête several times in the 1990s. Today Eric remains active in the Diablo Pacific Short Line group.

The Kendall Avenue Garden Railway became a local attraction, drawing about 20 visitors on an average weekend. Eric loves his hobby and continues to work hard to maintain it. He has said, "It's kept me out of trouble" since high school days. "No drugs or bad



Eric was happy to answer any and all questions from casual visitors or serious hobbyists. Photo by Myrna Rochester.

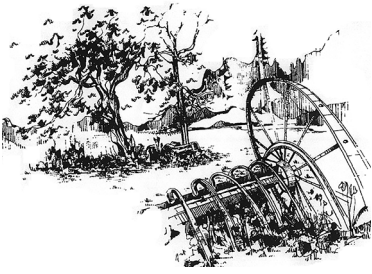
company." One of his motives is to memorialize the old Southern Pacific "Mayfield Cutoff"

spur and the railroad that, from 1907 to 1962, ran commuter steam trains through Barron Park along the right-of-way now occupied by the Bol Park shared pathway. Spikes salvaged from the SP railroad lined the paths of Eric's garden railway. He is a student of the history of that railroad and of many of the "scenic" (tourist) railroads of the West.

### Beyond Model Railroading

Eric has a day job and has also been a Barron Park donkey handler since 2008, at times using his truck to deliver hay. On those occasions, he has to drive across the pathway bridge into the donkey pasture and quickly unload the alfalfa in the shed before the donkeys can get to it! When asked what he likes best about Barron Park, Eric will tell you that it is the nice neighbors, the memories of growing up here, and the fact that "it is off the beaten path."

(Doug Graham's Spring 2012 Newsletter article has been updated by the Editors.)



# 2024 Barron Park Association Membership

[bpapaloalto.org](http://bpapaloalto.org)

**Thanks to all BPA members who joined for 2023!  
2024 Membership Renewals begin January 1, 2024. It's fine to renew early!**

**Your membership can be renewed online with a credit card or PayPal at:  
[bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/](http://bpapaloalto.org/join-the-barron-park-association/)**

**To pay by personal check, mail this membership form and your check to:  
BPA Treasurer, 724 Barron Ave., Palo Alto, CA 94306**

*Memberships renewed after October 1, 2023, are valid through 2024. To check your membership status please email: [barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com](mailto:barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com)*

Name(s):	Primary email address:
Address:	Secondary email address:
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Newsletter:</b> I want the online edition instead of a mailed copy for Spring, Summer, and Fall. <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Email lists:</b> I want to join the BPA email lists.	Phone:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Fellow</b> \$100              | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Member</b> \$30 | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Business</b> \$50                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Patron</b> \$50               | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Senior</b> \$15 |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution: \$_____ |   |   |
| Total Contribution:      \$_____                          |   | If sending a personal check, pay to: Barron Park Association. |

**Note: Membership and contributions are not tax deductible.**

## BPA Neighborhood Committees: Please check your volunteer interests.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Newsletter:</b> Contribute photos, articles, creative works; interview Barron Park neighbors/businesses for articles; proofread.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>May Fête:</b> Help with the annual Spring neighborhood event in Bol Park.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Social/Cultural Events:</b> Organize volunteers, coordinate neighborhood events, assist with planning.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Welcoming:</b> Greet new residents with information to introduce them to our caring community.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Parks and Creeks:</b> Work with City and neighborhood to review park and creek issues, maintenance, and improvement projects.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Seniors:</b> Join us for lunch and other activities, or serve as a volunteer to help other Barron Park Seniors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Neighborhood Safety and Emergency Preparedness:</b> Work with Emergency Preparedness Volunteers to prepare</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the neighborhood to handle major emergencies.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Traffic and Streets:</b> Work with the City and neighborhood to review traffic issues, present plans for traffic calming and other safety-related changes within Barron Park and on adjacent streets.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Environmental Issues:</b> Work on a specific neighborhood environmental issue or identify, create, and implement sustainable environmental solutions in and near our neighborhood.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Zoning and Land Use:</b> Be informed about urban design studies or multi-family, commercial, or mixed-use developments proposed in and near our neighborhood; attend meetings and provide input to project sponsors.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>School Liaison:</b> Coordinate BPA affairs and news with neighborhood school issues and activities.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

The BPA encourages all residents and businesses in Barron Park/Green Acres 2 to join our volunteer neighborhood association. May Fête and other events are happening! Look out for announcements. Your membership dues support them, as well as the BPA quarterly Newsletters and community programs that include the Bol Park Native Habitat Garden, Welcoming New Residents, Senior Activities, the Donkey Project, Buena Vista Homework Club and Summer Camp, the Karat School Project, and Emergency Preparedness efforts.



# Gas Leaf Blower Ban Strengthened

By David Coale

In June, the Palo Alto City Council reaffirmed the decades-old ban on gasoline-powered leaf blowers by raising fines and shortening the waiting period for issuing citations. They also agreed that property owners would be liable for the fines, not the landscapers. While there are provisions for a grace period in some situations, the Council made it clear they are cracking down on the noisy, gas-powered leaf blowers that deliver more than 10 times the pollution as a gas-

powered car, along with dust and allergens.

Leaf blowers also remove leaf mulch that should not be blown away. Mulch adds nutrients and reduces water use in gardens. While the code enforcement officers generally start by informing homeowners about the ban, they also issue fines: \$250, \$500, and \$1000 for first-, second-, and third-time violations.

To help inform the public about the ban, the City will be doing public outreach with Util-

ity bill inserts, door hangers, and a website: [cityofpaloalto.org/leafblowers](http://cityofpaloalto.org/leafblowers)

What you can do: Make sure your gardener is using an electric-powered leaf blower. If you see or hear someone using a gas leaf blower, you can make a report using the City's 311 app/website or call (650) 329-2605. You can also cut out or print the info below and give it to your neighbors so that they can be informed and avoid any possible fines.

## Don't Blow It! Unless it's Electric!



Source: Depositphotos.com

Did you know it's illegal to use a gasoline-powered leaf blower in Palo Alto? Property owners can be fined for use of a gas-powered leaf blower. So, use an electric-powered leaf blower, or grab a rake or broom for landscape and garden clean ups. Gas-powered leaf blowers not only pollute our air (10 times more than a gasoline-powered car running for the same time), but also make a lot more noise that disturbs our neighborhoods while removing good leaf mulch that can enrich the soil and reduce water use.

**If you see - or hear!** someone using a gas-powered leaf blower, there are a couple of ways to report it. You can submit a report using the City's Palo Alto 311 mobile app, with the day of the week and time of violation, or call the Palo Alto Police Department non-emergency line at (650) 329-2605, or visit: [cityofpaloalto.org/leafblowers](http://cityofpaloalto.org/leafblowers)  
Please do not call 911.

So, go electric, avoid a fine, and make sure the electric leaf blower you or your gardener is using has a noise level of 65 decibels (at 50 feet) or less. Generally, the model number will indicate the equipment's noise level.

The good news is that now there are vouchers for buying electric-powered gardening equipment. The California Air Resources Board has a program to fund the purchase of electric leaf blowers, lawn mowers, and more. See: [californiacore.org/how-to-participate-professional-landscape/](http://californiacore.org/how-to-participate-professional-landscape/)

# Part 4: The Bol Family Story, Continued

By Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian

## Summary of Parts 1-3

**Part One** of this story, published in the Spring 2023 issue, told who the Bols were and why they are important in the history of our neighborhood. Cornelis's early life in Holland, his college years at Princeton University and in Montana, his invention of the improved mercury vapor lamp, and the family's emigration from Holland to Barron Park were covered in brief. Part One was originally meant to cover half of the entire story.

**Part Two**, in Summer 2023, "Cornelis's Early Life in Holland," explained my May 2023 discovery of Cornelis's autobiography and how and why it required completely reorganizing this story. Part Two detailed Cornelis's birth in 1885, his life in rural Holland, his youthful apprenticeships and job training, his machine-worker trade school and instrument school education, culminating in his being awarded a certificate as a "practical engineer," his basic training in the Dutch Army, and, in 1906, a job offer from the U.S.

**Part Three**, also published in Summer 2023, was titled "Ten Years in America." It covered Cornelis's time in Boston; his stint as a laboratory assistant and student in the physics department at Princeton University; a trip to Holland and his informal engagement in 1911 to Corrie Berentsen, a Dutch school teacher; his return to Princeton; his time as a farmer in Montana; earning his B.S. degree in physics at the University of Montana; his admission to Stanford as a PhD student in physics; life in Palo Alto; and, in 1916, his decision to return to Holland to see his fiancée.

**Part Four**, in the present issue, "Career and Family Life in Holland," we cover Bol's years from 1916 through 1936.

## Part 4 - Career and Family Life in Holland (1916-1936)

### Bol's Trip to See His Fiancée

By the summer of 1916, Cornelis Bol, still in California, had been living more than 6,000 miles from his fiancée Corrie Berentsen for

two years. He was constantly lonely and eager to see her. Written correspondence between them was increasingly unsatisfactory to both. During the summer break, Cornelis took passage on a ship from New York to Holland, first stopping in southwest England. The ship was directed north around Scotland to avoid German submarines, but did not make it, running up on the Scottish rocks in the fog. Pulled off, it proceeded under tug through the English Channel to Holland. As he disembarked in Rotterdam, Cornelis could hear the shelling as the war continued in Belgium just 20 miles away.

As soon as he could, Cornelis went to the home of Corrie Berentsen's parents in Serooskerke on the island of Schouwen in Zeeland province. Their reunion was a high point in his life: "We had only to look at each other and we knew. Nothing had changed [in the two years since they parted]. If there had ever been any doubt, not a trace of it was left." They walked a lot and made music in her home, Cornelis on a violin and Corrie on an organ.

### Cornelis's Army Problem

But trouble soon arose – Cornelis was informed that the Dutch army had booked him as a deserter and that he must immediately report to his regiment (in Leiden). He did so, taking Corrie Berentsen with him and finding her a place to stay. Cornelis reported in and had a physical checkup by an army doctor, who found a hernia and told him, "You cannot serve in the army if you are not operated upon. But the operation is not compulsory." After Cornelis refused the operation, he was told that if he were willing to relinquish his right to a military salary, he could go anywhere in Holland if he reported his whereabouts. So he and Corrie went to Eindhoven where her sister lived. "Her sister, Adri, was married to Andre Bongaard, a chemist working at the Phillips chemical laboratory."

### Corrie's Job Problem

In addition to the army, the couple faced another problem. Cornelis wrote: "Just

before I arrived, Corrie had accepted a teaching job at an elementary school in Geldermalsen, a town about 25 miles from Eindhoven – and she would have to start in a few days. The headmaster was unpleasantly surprised when she introduced me as her fiancé, because when she had applied for the job she was not engaged at all and had no engagement in sight either. She now told the headmaster she would stay for a year and, as she looked at me, said, 'then we will get married' (not 'would': WILL), so that was that!"

### Cornelis Is Hired at Phillips

Meanwhile Cornelis had to look for a job. "I saw the bottom of my financial resources and had to start working. Andre [Bongaard] talked to Dr. Holst, the leader of the physics lab at Phillips. Dr. Holst told him that I could apply and come over and see him. So I did, and was appointed an assistant physicist at the N.V. Phillips Glow Lamp works at Eindhoven at a salary of 1,500 Guilders a year." This equaled about 833 US dollars in 1916 (or approximately \$23,300 in 2023).

With Corrie working 25 miles away, they only saw each other on weekends, usually alternating at her place or his. "How we looked forward to the days when we would have our own home. In the back of my mind was still a return to Stanford, but money was needed . . . so I put the idea off for a future possibility. I had no idea that 20 years would pass before I would return to the United States and sunny California."

### The First Assignment

At that time electric light bulbs were extremely short-lived, due to burnout of the tungsten filaments. Dr. Oosterhuis assigned Bol to investigate the condition of a gas immediately around a glowing tungsten wire, the so-called Langmuir layer. Cornelis set up a series of experiments with parallel wires, one of which was at a high temperature. The change in resistance of the cold wire would indicate the temperature gradient between them. The critical skill needed was to control the distance between the wires. Measuring



the resistance would provide information useful in improving the lamp filament design.

### **Solving a Lamp Manufacturing Problem**

Cornelis also put in a lot of volunteer evening hours in the lab when nobody else was there. While passing through the room where they pumped air out of the incandescent bulbs to create the needed vacuum, he noticed that the lamp stems would often crack, emitting a high-frequency pinging sound. They cracked where they were temporarily sealed off from the vacuum pumps. The following day a team of young women would regularly destroy the cracked ones and finish the others by sealing off the rest of the stem close to each lamp.

Cornelis thought that he could improve on this procedure. He set up an iron plate with a hole in it. The unpumped lamp would sit on the plate with its stem through the hole. It would be connected to a little rubber tube whose exterior could be put either under pressure or vacuum. When under vacuum, the lamp stem would be inserted, and then pressure was put on so that the rubber was tightly pressed against the stem, making a vacuum-tight connection to the pump.

“Mr. Gerard Phillips [the factory’s founder] came through the laboratory checking on the workers. He knew that I was investigating the Langmuir layer around a hot wire. When he saw the vacuum pump and seal-off equipment on the table, he asked, ‘What’s that here?’” Bol told him. Phillips then asked, “Who ordered you to do this?” Bol told him it was on his own initiative. He was then told he “was to do (only) what he was told to do.” Mr. Phillips said, “You have been in America, and they must think they are all inventors. You should stick to what you are ordered to do.” When Bol told him that he worked on the pump problem only in the evening hours, Phillips relented and allowed him to go ahead with the experiment.

Since he could now work on the pump set during the daytime, Bol proceeded to set up a complete exhaust set for 20 lamps simultaneously. When it was demonstrated, Mr. Phillips pressed Bol to put it into operation in the factory as fast as possible. Cornelis soon had a setup that enabled a single worker to pump vacuum in 600 lamps a day instead of 100. Employee learning time dropped from six weeks to one week.

If, at this point, my readers are wondering why I have included all these details about

an obscure technical development in early twentieth century light bulb manufacturing, it is because the sequence of rapid innovations by Bol on his own initiative made a positive impact on the Phillips company’s bottom line. Suddenly, Bol was seen as a significant asset to the company. It had a big effect on his career. The immediate payoff? Bol was awarded a 1,000-guilder reward by the company directors, equal to more than 550 U.S. dollars in 1916 (\$15,500 in 2023). A handsome bonus indeed for a brand-new employee!

### **Military Detention Interrupts**

But not everything was going well for Bol in the winter of 1916-17. The Dutch military decided to sentence him to 14 days of military detention in Utrecht. Before reporting there, he was allowed to visit the lab to pick up paperwork to do while he was in detention. During the detention, he drew up plans for the manufacturing change. Upon his release, spring had come, and everything looked brighter.

### **Marriage to Corrie, Finally!**

Cornelis Bol and Corrie Berentsen were married at Schouwen on June 29, 1917, in both the required civil ceremony and the optional church service. They had applied for a house – one of the many the Phillips Company was building – and it was ready for them at Phillipsdorp in Eindhoven. Bol wrote: “An extremely happy life was ours. My work was successful, and I no longer spent evenings at the laboratory.”

### **Living Near the War**

Bol wrote: “I have hardly written anything about the war which was going on when I [returned to] Holland in 1916. The reason is that since Holland stayed out of the conflict, we were only observers. Yes, we could hear the dull booms of the cannons, especially at the end when there was hard fighting near our border in Flanders, not more than 20 miles from Eindhoven. We knew people were dying but we did not see it. And since this had been going on for several years now, the terror of it all grew less. Food was rationed but there was enough, especially when some extra cash was available to buy something outside of the official distributions [i.e., the black market], and without the required government tickets [ration coupons]. In the evening, a farmer would ring the doorbell and offer eggs or a chicken . . . we knew that

the Burgomaster of our town . . . had a supply of ham and pork hidden at the home of . . . a farmer near us. Coal was rationed but I had bought a large supply of oak chips.”

### **The Baby Was Born Healthy, but the Mother Died . . .**

On December 13, 1918, the couple’s happiness was crowned by the birth of a healthy baby girl. But trouble arose immediately. The birth had been delayed and the labor was long and painful. Then Corrie had no milk, and she developed a fever and anxiety. The fever worsened, she began hallucinating, and the doctor came but could do nothing. Neither sulfa drugs nor modern antibiotics existed then. Corrie fell unconscious and died.

After the funeral, Cornelis’s sister Cathrien gave up her teaching job and came to look after the baby and keep house for Cornelis. The baby – Little Corrie – did poorly for some time, until they learned to let her decide how much sugar-milk to drink. Formulated baby food did not exist. A cynic might comment this is what happens in life: You go up, then you come back down. Bol’s life in 1916-18 would be a good illustration.

### **Buying Property**

Part of Cornelis’s dealing with grief was by planning to build a house. He wanted to live in the country and near some water. He bought land on a brook called the Tongelreep. But the seller insisted on half the payment “under the table.” Unbeknownst to Bol, the seller was cheating on the taxes due, and a few months later the Dutch government began an action against Bol. He had to pay a fine and request leniency from the Queen, which was granted. Other than paying too much for the land and getting into legal trouble, he was happy with the purchase.

### **A New Manufacturing Strategy**

In the factory, Bol was “experimenting with a different way of making lamps, by doing the various operations as a unit together and not, as was the practice, having all similar operations grouped together. On one floor the filament was placed on its support, on another floor it was sealed in the glass bulb, and then on the ground floor it was pumped to a vacuum.” According to Bol, this “was a fruitful avenue for breakage and collection of unwanted dust. I now placed all the

various machines and operators together so there was hardly any transport problem." The value of this change was soon proven: higher production per worker and less shrinkage or loss. Gerard Phillips saw the results and became enthusiastic. Bol returned to the lab to develop new ideas, while his system was installed by the regular workers throughout the factory in 1920 (this date is an estimate).

The story demonstrates Cornelis Bol's extraordinary ability to develop practical methods, using new scientific findings to immediately improve product design, increase manufacturing efficiency, and improve product quality. It was obvious to his bosses that he was an asset to the company.

### Radio Technology

His next innovation was in a new technological area. Radio was a rapid growth industry and radio "transmission" (broadcasting) tubes an exciting product for Phillips. At first they were only enlarged versions of the small ones used in radio receivers. The capacity was determined by the maximum wattage that could be radiated by the anode in the form of heat. They usually operated at a dull red heat. The molybdenum or nickel anodes, especially the latter, were easily damaged when too much energy was applied. In the U.S., General Electric (GE) and Westinghouse both developed high-wattage water-cooled broadcasting tubes by sealing glass to very thin-edged copper dividers. The higher the wattage, the greater the distance the signal reached, and therefore the larger the geographic area covered. At the Phillips Company X-Ray Tube department in Eindhoven, they developed a different method, using very thin chromium-iron rings to insulate various elements from each other, to protect the tungsten anode.

Bol decided to use chrome-iron for his water-cooled transmission tubes, and he quickly found that there was no need at all to have the metal so very thin. "And so, we obtained a much better product than the thin copper seal. There was practically no limit to the size of transmitting tubes we could develop." Now that Phillips could make the bigger tubes, the Marconi Company of England acquired some for a shortwave station in Wales that was meant to communicate with the U.S.

### Home Life and Loneliness

Let us return to Bol's home life. After his wife Corrie died, his sister Cathrien moved in with

him as housekeeper and substitute mother for "Little Corrie." She did this for a year and then left to get married and live in northeast Holland. Over the next five years, Cornelis hired several women in succession to fill that role. Corrie seems to have been a very adaptable child and she had good relationships with each of these women. Meanwhile, Cornelis was deeply lonely and knew he wanted to marry again. He toyed with the idea of asking one of his housekeepers to marry him, but realized that she could never replace Corrie Berentsen.

### Real Estate Investment

By 1920 Cornelis was ready to buy a bigger and better house, but still lacked the up-front cash. He was interested in a three-acre property on the Tongelreep, a large, old house called Rustoord (a place to rest). He wrote: "On half of the land around the house were very old and beautiful trees – beech, chestnut, pine and what not." Bol's winning auction bid was 32,000 Dutch guilders. He asked if Phillips would back a mortgage for him. Gerard Phillips approved it, with a 2,000 guilder per year payback program. Local people told him later that he had paid too much for the property and that a "strawman" had bid at the auction, running the price way up.

However, Cornelis later found a good way to recoup his money. For another 5,000 guilders he bought another piece of land that rounded out the overall property, which enabled lots to be subdivided along the road. He "sold about 1/3 of the property for 60,000 guilders, so it proved a very good deal after all, from a business standpoint." Bol went on to tell that he spent another "10,000 guilders to modernize the house, build a stable so that we could keep a cow, [and we had] chickens, ducks, rabbits, a monkey, a dog, some peacocks . . . so Corrie had a very pleasant place to grow up in."

Bol did not say what he did with the rest of the money, but it seems likely that he paid off the Phillips loan with a little over half of it. Was it the remaining profit, suitably invested, that enabled the Bol Family to move to America 16 years later? This successful real estate deal was a harbinger of Cornelis's later canny investments in Barron Park properties at Depression-era prices.

### A Long Vacation

In the fall of 1923, Bol was advised by his

doctor to take a long vacation for his health. He had been at Phillips for six years, working hard all along. He took Corrie to her grandparents and went on a solitary hiking vacation to Switzerland, Italy, and the Bavarian Alps, where he tried skiing but found it too exhausting. He was in Germany when the hyperinflation of the Weimar Republic reached its peak on November 1, 1923. He wrote that in Munich he bought an apple for one billion marks.

### Recharged

Bol returned to the lab with his "batteries recharged." He continued to develop improved radio transmitting valves (tubes) for larger power output. He hit upon a vastly improved method for the exhaust and degassing of small triodes (radio amplifying tubes). Phillips immediately adopted the method and scaled it up for factory production. He tried to make a workable mercury vapor lamp in 1924, but did not succeed: The light was not bright enough to be worth the effort.

### Finding the "Love of His Life"

However, he was successful in another endeavor. After returning from vacation in November 1923, Cornelis met the "love of his life," Josina Johanna den Haan. In Eindhoven, Cornelis was involved in a religious group, a unit of the VCJB, the most liberal branch of the Dutch Reformed Church. Josina, a scientific assistant in the Eindhoven Phillips Chemistry Laboratory, was in the same church group. She worked for Cornelis's colleague and friend, Andre Bongaard, one floor above Cornelis's lab. As the reader knows, Andre was married to Corrie Berentsen's sister Adri. Another classic example of serendipity: As in other big turning points in Bol's life, his problem was solved by close friends or relatives.

### Marriage to Josina den Haan

The attraction between Cornelis and Josina was immediate, mutual, and intense. It took little time for them to decide to be married. By the spring, Cornelis was ready, but Josina was cautiously reluctant. In this instance, Cornelis's impulsive nature had to bend. They agreed on a wedding date: September 19, 1924.

The wedding consisted only of the civil marriage formalities at the town hall, attended by all their siblings, and by Little Corrie, six years old, who liked Josina very much. Cornelis and Josina had a brief honeymoon (Cornelis had used up most of his accrued



vacation). They spent it at Valkenburgh in Limburg province. (Valkenburgh, site of the ruins of a twelfth-century castle, is said to be the “hilltop marvel of the Netherlands, perhaps one of its most popular destinations for local tourism.”)

### The First of Six Sons

Josina was pregnant within one month of the wedding. Their son Kees (the first of six) was born June 16, 1925. He was followed by Klass on March 22, 1927, Pieter Johannes on May 2, 1928, Joor on November 22, 1930, and Morris on June 24, 1936, all born in Eindhoven. Their youngest son, Gerald, was born at the Palo Alto Hospital on April 2, 1940.

### Turning to Radio Receivers

At the lab, Bol had been working on transmitter triodes and he “thought it was time that we did something about radio receivers. At home I made us a crystal set and we listened to a local station in the Hague.” He began to understand that, if it were well amplified, listening to music from a radio receiver could be a very pleasing pastime and would be a large potential consumer market for Phillips.

The Phillips “commercial people” began to clamor for receivers. “When I showed them a model, they ordered 10,000 of them, [even though] it was a receiver where the power supply, the loudspeaker, and the tuner were all separate units. The power supply (was) a six-volt battery, a unit which raised the voltage to about 150 volts, and a rectifier to keep the battery charged. I made a cabinet [for everything] with the tuner placed on the top.” Others still thought it was undesirable to build the two together, but Bol thought the receiver should be a simple “music box.” Phillips chose to offer an all-in-one cabinet, “breadbox”-sized.

### Many Ideas Explored

From 1927 to 1929, Bol worked on a succession of different projects and product development ideas for Phillips, some of them ahead of their time, like the concept of consumers recording music from radio broadcasts in their own homes (which did not become commercialized until almost 40 years later).

His lab also worked on more mundane things like shortwave receivers for communication with the Dutch East Indies and vacuum condensers for the manufacture of improved sodium vapor lamps for street lighting (which

had been pioneered in Germany). The big disadvantage of sodium vapor light is one that people still complain about: Its yellow light makes people look sickly.

### Finally, Work Started on a Mercury Vapor Lamp

And now we come to the “super high-pressure mercury vapor lamp.” Mercury vapor light is blue and looks cold compared to sodium; it is more flattering to people nearby. The problems with mercury lamps were mostly in manufacturing. The mercury must be extremely hot, and heating it causes problems by increasing the pressure difference between the inside of the tube and the outside. Regular glass cannot withstand this; the stress makes it crack. Bol’s experimental tubes exploded, once nearly putting his eyes out.

Bol tried cooling the tube with a flow of cool air in one hand and heating it with a torch in the other, thereby regulating the vapor pressure. He got a large tube to give off 105,000 candle power, but it was not a practical lamp. However, it resulted in an interesting development. He took a regular 250-watt incandescent lamp and, by passing an air current along its wall, got it to emit light equivalent to a 1000-watt lamp. What could be obtained from a mercury vapor lamp if water cooling were used?

It was known that glass made of quartz could withstand the pressure difference, so he began experiments with it. He used a quartz capillary tube of 6mm diameter outside and 2mm inside with about 10mm between the electrodes. To make it, they had to learn how to seal electrodes into quartz. This took many months of trial-and-error testing. They eventually found that they could take single tungsten wire of 1mm diameter, cover it with a “hard glass,” and it could be sealed into the quartz. They found success in a sequence of layers with increasing hardness to bridge the hardness gap between ordinary glass and quartz. The resulting lamp produced spectacular brightness, but the manufacturing process was complex and expensive.

### “Dutchman Beats Sun”

Bol wrote: “There was of course a great deal of interest for the high-pressure high-intensity lamp.” An English newspaper headlined their story “Dutchman Beats Sun.” He gave a demonstration of a 100,000-candlepower

lamp – a 6mm diameter quartz tube about 30 centimeters long (about 12 inches) – water-cooled, of course. The Phillips Company decided not to try to commercialize the lamp, and development stopped in 1931 or ‘32. And there the technology sat, until Bol, on his own, picked it up again upon returning to Stanford in 1936.

### Bol Buys a Car

Meanwhile, Cornelis’s distance to work doubled when he moved to Phillips’s new laboratory in Eindhoven. He bought a motorcycle and learned to ride it. He also took young Corrie to school, riding behind him, and Josina too, when they visited her parents. But Cornelis had a bad fall when the motorcycle chain broke and decided to learn how to drive a car. After a near accident in 1932 driving the company car on an icy road, he decided to buy his own car – a new Ford Model A sedan.

Summer vacations were nearly always at the seaside; the family had five favorite towns. Cornelis wrote: “For children, I do not think there is a better place to find than the coast. Sand and water, two ingredients any child is happy with. Except when it rained, our tent could always be found on the beach – no matter how it stormed, when the sand would blow all over the place, we would still be present.”

### A Vacation in Fascist Countries

Josina and Cornelis made train trips together too. Leaving the kids in the care of a housekeeper, he and Jos took a trip up the Rhine to Heidelberg and Switzerland. On another occasion, in 1933, they went to Italy. It was a snowy winter in Europe, so they started as far south as possible, in Sicily. Amateur artists, both Cornelis and Jos sketched a lot of scenes. As spring came in, they left Palermo for Naples. They visited Pompei and Herculaneum, where Cornelis found the ancient Roman frescoes “not fit for my lady’s eyes and downright obscene.” They then visited Rome for the ancient ruins and beautiful churches.

However, they also saw “large groups of boys in black shirts doing military exercises.” Having (already) seen in Germany how the National Socialists were growing in power under Hitler, and how the Heil Hitler salute was in evidence wherever one went, the future of Europe did not look hopeful. “There were plenty of evil acts going on hidden from

the visitor.”

Hitler had taken power in Germany in January 1933. Bol’s comment in his autobiography about “the future of Europe” is one of the first hints that he was starting to think about getting out of Europe while it was still possible to do so. “After Rome, we went to Florence where we stayed a couple of weeks, [it] being a much pleasanter [sic] place than Rome. It was a place [where] one would like to live. But it was time to go home,” and they did.

### Cutting Back at Work

When they got home, Cornelis went to the laboratory and told the director “they could cut my salary in half but that I wanted more time for myself to paint.” They agreed and from then on, he only went to the lab in the mornings, except when an experiment was going on that needed his presence. He found he “could hand out far more work in the morning than could be worked out in a week.” If he worked whole days he made overtime, so his salary increased gradually to the previous level, and he could, when the work on hand allowed, stay away several weeks and take trips.

### Longings, Losses, and Worries

Bol wrote, “Especially when the weather in Holland was poor, I would think of California. When the sky would be gray and dull for days on end, I would think of that sunny California . . . and a longing to return would come over me.”

Both Cornelis and Josina lost close relatives in the early 1930s. Josina lost her brother and mother. For Cornelis, the worst loss was his daughter Corrie: She developed Hodgkin’s lymphoma, for which there was no treatment, and she died in December 1935. Fortunately, Josina and their other children were all healthy. By 1935, Bol was ready to emigrate. Cornelis wrote, “The outlook in Europe grew steadily worse. Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy got the notion they could conquer all the world around them, and a second world war was drawing closer all the time.”

“Josina and I decided to make a trip to the U.S. I knew the free open spaces of that country and I thought the boys would have better opportunities than in Holland. I liked the U.S.A., but would Josina like it?” His good friends, the Bruijnesses, had gone to the U.S. to work for Phillips Roentgen which made X-ray tubes in Mt. Vernon, N.Y. (Westchester County). A housekeeper came to take care of

the Bol boys during their trip.

### The House-Hunting Trip to California

Cornelis and Josina left to visit California in January 1936, and the North Atlantic winter crossing was as rough as one might expect. Josina was seasick and “not exactly joyful.” The Bruijnesses were on the dock to meet the Bols who stayed with them in Mamaroneck (an upscale Westchester suburb on Long Island Sound). From there, Josina and Cornelis went to Princeton to see Professor Croll and his wife and Andy deZwart and family from Holland.

Then they took a train west, through Chicago (where it was “terrifically cold”), stopping at the Grand Canyon. They “both marveled at the great wonder wrought by the Colorado River. The sight of that alone was worth coming to America for . . . From there we went to Yosemite Valley, which was also new to me. All was covered by a thick cover of snow. We seemed to be the only visitors so had the entire valley to ourselves. . . . From Yosemite we took a train to Merced and San Jose, where Professor Ross met us and took us to his home and family. We also met several men of the [1916] Stanford Physics Department, Professors Sanford, Rodgers, and Brown. It was 20 years since I had seen them and yet how little changed they seemed.”

### The Roble Ridge House

They went with Professor Ross to Roble Ridge Road where Mrs. Carruth lived, but Ross could not find her house. By mistake, they came to the Roble Ridge house they later purchased and lived in. Josina said, “This would be a nice place to live.” When they located Mrs. Carruth, Josina told her the same thing. At once Mrs. Carruth said, “The place belongs to my nephew and is for sale.” The next day, the nephew came, and the Bols took an option on the house and three acres of land for \$7,500. The deal included \$1,000 for necessary repairs and \$900 for redecoration, for a total of \$9,400. Mrs. Carruth would arrange the work. The family could not come before September because Josina was expecting in June.

### Return to Holland

Bol wrote: “While we were in the U.S. newspaper headlines looked scary enough as if war were just around the corner. Luckily for us the war did not break out (i.e., come to

Holland) before spring 1940, and so we had plenty [of] time yet for our emigration to the U.S. The Bruijnesses saw us off on a boat of the H.A.L. (Holland America Line) and ten days later we stood on Holland soil again. Strange it was that there was not anywhere near the war scare we had noticed in the U.S. But we were determined to emigrate. When I went to the laboratory I told Dr. Holst that we were going to leave the country, which he could hardly believe. The boys were greatly excited of course – going to America!”

### The Fifth Boy Arrives

“It was June 24th when the baby arrived, again a boy! I think Jos did not count too much on a girl anymore. We called him Morris after Professor Croll of Princeton.” The birth was near the expected date, and both the baby and mother were fine.

### Leaving Rustoord and the Phillips Company

Cornelis wrote: “A lot of things had to be dealt with before we would be ready to leave. We decided to turn our Rustoord into a youth hostel. That [remodeling was planned, but the work] could wait however until we were gone.” The Bols did not sell any real estate, but “all [the] stocks, mostly Phillips preferred certificates, were sold, and the money transferred to the U.S.” The exchange rate was very favorable.

A Phillips physician determined that Cornelis was entitled to an “invalid” pension (medical retirement). Bol made a deal with the company that gave Phillips the rights to royalties on any patents he might develop in the U.S. To me, all of this sounds like a very friendly parting. In the meantime, Professor Ross had written to Bol that he would be appointed as a Research Associate at Stanford, in the Physics Department. The position would be unpaid, but Stanford would provide him with laboratory space to investigate ideas.

Cornelis and Josina decided to take only part of their furniture, leaving the remainder at Rustoord. Cornelis had seven large boxes made, to be shipped directly to San Francisco. He, noted that, “The freight from San Francisco to Palo Alto cost almost as much as from Holland to San Francisco.” They sold the Ford to Phillips to be a company car.

### Emigration

The Bols left Rustoord in September 1936, feeling sad about leaving the house surrounded by their beautiful and beloved old trees.



They emigrated with their five boys: Kees was eleven years old, Klass nine, Peiter eight, Joor five, and Morris a three-month-old baby. All were in good health. They sailed from Rotterdam, with stops at Le Havre in France, Southampton in England, somewhere (Dublin?) in Ireland, and finally a straight shot across the rough Atlantic seas to New York. Jos had “trouble again” with seasickness and so did Joor, but little Morris was unbothered by it all. During the voyage, Cornelis spent a lot of time teaching his oldest, Kees, English to give him a leg up in his new country.

Once again, their Phillips Company friends, the Bruijnesses, met the boat in New York City and took the Bols to their home in Mamaroneck. They visited there for a short time and then went to Princeton for a couple of days to see the Croll and the deZwart families. Then they were off to Philadelphia and the west. No stops this time; the Rosses again met them in San Jose.

#### Getting Settled on Roble Ridge

The next few days were spent buying furniture for the house at 925 Roble Ridge. The boys liked the place from the start. They bought a good second-hand Oldsmobile for \$1,000. The boys entered school at the on-campus elementary school. They made a hit with the other kids. As Cornelis wrote,

they were “so fresh from Holland, the land of Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates.” On Roble Ridge, there were a couple of kids, Sally Sherman and Mary Palmer, the same age as Klass and Pieter. Cornelis carpooled with the Shermans, Cornelis taking all the kids to school and Mrs. Sherman picking them up in the afternoon. Mr. Sherman had saddle horses and rode frequently, so the boys started “talking horses.”

#### Getting Started at Stanford

Cornelis bought necessary lab equipment and looked for an assistant. Another nice surprise was a visitor from General Electric who offered Cornelis a consulting job at \$5,000 per year (which would have been a handsome salary for a full-time PhD scientist). GE would also cover “all the material” he would need. Twice a year, Cornelis would need to visit GE facilities in Cleveland, Hoboken (New Jersey), and Maine. He would be free to experiment on anything he wanted and could decide himself how much time to spend on it. “With the \$3,000 per year from Phillips, [this] gave me \$8,000 to work with.” He decided, in late 1936, to “continue to work on the water-cooled high-pressure mercury lamp.”

#### The Autobiography Ended with the 1936 Events

And with that, in 1963, Cornelis Bol aban-

doned writing his autobiography. As Barron Park historian in 2023, I sincerely regret that he never finished it! The family’s 29 years on Roble Ridge, his farming efforts and those of Josina and the boys, acquisition of the donkey herd, taking over the water company, expanding and modernizing it, and his and Josina’s dream of creating a public park – all remain unrecorded.

But let’s celebrate the work Cornelis Bol did to create an autobiography with such a rich account of the first half of his life. We are also deeply indebted to Kees Bol and his typist Faith, who provided the 117-page typescript of Cornelis Bol’s first 51 years.

#### Conclusion

This concludes Part 4 of the ongoing Bol family story. Part 5, planned for our Winter 2023-24 issue, will finish the five-part story with the Bol family’s experiences on Roble Ridge from 1936 through 1999, when, after Josina Bol’s death in 1997, the property passed to current owner James Witt.

To Reach the Historian: If you have questions, comments, or corrections to the story, please contact me at [dgrahampaca@gmail.com](mailto:dgrahampaca@gmail.com), landline: (650) 493-0689, or snail mail to: 984 Ilima Way, Palo Alto CA 94306. I am not reachable by texting.

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- **Bol Park Native Habitat:** To volunteer, contact Rich Elder at: [rich.e.elder@gmail.com](mailto:rich.e.elder@gmail.com) Donate to the Bol Park Garden through the “Bol Park Fund” at: [friendsofpaparks.org/donations2](http://friendsofpaparks.org/donations2)  
By mail or phone: Friends of the Palo Alto Parks (FOPAP), Bol Park Fund, 425 Grant Ave., Suite 27, Palo Alto, CA 94306; 650-327-7323

# News From the Pasture: All About April

By Jenny Kiratli, Barron Park Donkey Project



April contemplates her dinner. Photos by Jenny Kiratli.

For the past 25 years, there have been two donkeys in the Bol Park pasture, but this tradition was shattered on March 12, 2023, when we acquired a third for our herd! Her name is April, and this is her story. April turned 14 on April 2, soon after joining us from Salinas. Her previous owner had a rural property with chickens, ducks, several chihuahuas, and a stable housing two miniature horses and April, a white miniature donkey. The owner had to relocate and needed to rehome her menagerie – which she was able to do – all except the little white donkey. She heard about the Barron Park Donkey Project and called us. Two of us visited and were immediately impressed with April's sweetness and how much she needed a home.

Our decision was not an easy one. April had a serious, chronic hoof disorder called White Line Disease. In consultation with our vets, we decided that our dedicated handlers would be able to give her more comprehensive care than she had been getting, and that our Barron Park community would welcome her with (proverbial) open arms. Later, we learned she had other medical issues, including insulin resistance and Cushing's Disease. April now gets several medications daily and is on a diet to reduce the risk of progressing to full-blown diabetes. Because of the

White Line Disease, we take her to the UC Davis Veterinary Medical Center for specialty equine podiatry care every five weeks – one reason we hope our Barron Park community will welcome her with a (proverbial) open pocketbook!

At first, April was quite withdrawn and appeared "shut down." This may have been a holdover from her Salinas home: She was the last animal remaining and got a single daily visit for feeding. According to her owner, she was lonely and wasn't eating. Suddenly transported to a large pasture with so much to explore, she'd been confronted by two inquisitive and mostly welcoming companions, a number of new handlers, and an excited larger community. It was a lot to take in! April appeared to study everything going on around her. She tolerated contact by handlers, but didn't exactly seek it out. She often kept her distance from the gate and remained cautious with handlers, not really fearful, but guarded, and she kept to herself for the most part. As time went on, she began to learn our routines and recognize her handlers. She began to open up.

Within a week, however, she had to go to UC Davis for hoof treatment. Her case is fairly severe and the treatment rather aggressive.

Her damaged hoof wall tissue was cut away and the hoof set in a protective rubber cuff secured with an acrylic glue to protect the foot and provide stability while the natural hoof wall heals and grows out. She also requires regular treatment with an antibiotic spray, and we have to keep her hoof as clean and dry as possible, which is not easy during the rainy season. April has been to UC Davis four times so far. Her prognosis is very positive! The Davis vets are super pleased with her progress, but it is slow, requiring ongoing specialty vet and farrier visits and long travel days for her and her handlers. Each visit takes at least a full eight-hour day and sometimes longer.

Here at home, April is settling in well. In early spring, we witnessed her first "heat"! It caused quite an uproar, as Buddy, despite being gelded, showed great amorous interest. Because of the delicate state of her hoof and the forceful nature of equine mating (male chasing, biting, and mounting; female kicking), the handlers spent an entire week keeping Buddy away from April, either by haltering and walking with him or by confining him to the back shelter. We did take preventive measures: April is now on hormone treatment to control her estrus cycle (basically, birth control). For his part, Perry seems indifferent to her, not unwelcoming, but neutral. She has adapted to the habits of the two older donkeys, often following them around in search of the best foraging spots, but can also be found on her own.

Feeding April is yet another challenge. She'd been accustomed to hay, but refused to eat the hay sent with her, perhaps due to the unfamiliar environment. We then offered grass pellets – Perry and Buddy's regular diet. She ate them at first, but soon changed her mind and went back to hay, nosing around the pellets and leaving them in the dish. These days, she prefers pellets to hay and eventually eats most of what she's given, after a lot of dithering. It's still a puzzle to figure out her preferences while offering the best food for her nutrition and weight control. We must be doing something right: April has lost at least 30 pounds since joining us – great both for her hoof and to address her insulin





April, Perry, and Buddy enjoy some quiet time in the pasture.

resistance. She has about 15-20 more pounds to go for her size. That's why we are particularly concerned about unauthorized feeding by visitors!

By the way, the rule goes for all the donkeys! Never offer them anything (including carrots and apples – both very high in sugar!) as it can be dangerous for their health! We feed all three a vet-prescribed diet that suits their nutritional needs.

April also has skin allergies. She started rubbing her haunch on anything she could, especially on one tree with a bend and rough bark at just the right height. She rubbed off most of the hair on her backside, causing skin lesions. After blood tests and skin scrapings, no specific cause could be identified. Our vet prescribed Zyrtec (yes, Zyrtec from Walgreens!); it has controlled the itching and allowed her hair to grow back. She has new white hair patches, but still has a ways to go to regain her full coat. So, despite her mottled appearance, especially from the rear, April is now in pretty good health, all things considered.

The most important adjustment for April has been socialization. She was a lonely and reserved little donkey but has blossomed into a bit of a social butterfly. For months, she stayed away from the gate, eyeing visitors with suspicion. Why were Perry and Buddy so comfortable with all these strangers? During Sunday walks, she shied away from visitors, standing at a distance while the others were petted and brushed by the children. With time, April has become more comfortable and trusting. She now often greets visitors;

she seems fascinated by dogs (leashed!) and may go nose to nose if the dog is brave enough; and she has become accustomed to the attention of adults and children on Sundays when we stroll through Bol Park.

To provide ongoing care for all three donkeys, our biggest challenge is, of course, financial. Equine care is expensive, especially with April's additional needs, including vet visits and travel, medications, food, farrier visits, and vaccines. A typical year's expenses total about \$20,000, but with April's ongoing medical costs, we know that this will be substantially

### ART IN MY YARD



We know Barron Park has many examples of outdoor or "yard" art, either made by you or other artists. We'd love to see photos of them in upcoming news-

letters. Please send reproducible photos to Myrna Rochester at: [mbrbpa@sonic.net](mailto:mbrbpa@sonic.net) Tell us something about the art, but you don't need to include a street address.

higher (\$5,000-\$8,000 additional), and we are starting a major fund-raising effort to raise the needed monies. So, please consider *The Donkey Project* during your regular giving. Donations can be made through *The Donkey Project* website ([barronparkdonkeys.org](http://barronparkdonkeys.org)) or sent directly to the Palo Alto Humane Society ([paloaltohumane.org](http://paloaltohumane.org)) – but there you *must* specify that it is for *The Donkey Project*.

Please visit the donkeys anytime. The best times are Sundays from 10–11 a.m. at Bol Park or Sundays at 5 p.m. at the pasture gate for feeding (we provide the hay and pellets) and stories. Remember: No food of any kind (even grass) from outside! Questions? Please contact: [barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com](mailto:barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com)



Nanci Thomander, Despina Alice Christakos, Irv Yalom, Mary Jane Leon, Ben Yalom, Pooja Punn, Shanti Punn, and Rakhi Singh enjoy a Senior Connections lunch on July 22, 2023. Photo courtesy of Pooja Punn.



# Business Spotlight: Carol Garsten's Nature Gallery

By The Editors



Carol Garsten of Nature Gallery invites us to join her at California Avenue 3rdThursdays! Photo courtesy of Carol Garsten.

**B**arron Park neighbor Carol Garsten has been a retail business owner and community connector for over 35 years. Her business, Nature Gallery, sold minerals, fossils, and jewelry in San Luis Obispo from 1987 to 1994, in Palo Alto's Town and Country Village from 1994 to 2011, and finally, in downtown Los Altos from 2011 to 2022. You can now find Nature Gallery online only at [nature-gallery.com](http://nature-gallery.com)

"After my most successful year in business in 2022, I decided to end my career as a retail owner/operator," says Garsten. "I loved my Gallery and all of my wonderful clients, but after 35 years in retail, I knew that it was time for a change. Time to launch Carol 3.0!"

Carol started her professional life as a filmmaker after attending USC film school. When her mother, Norma Tager, came down with stage 4 ovarian cancer, Carol's life took a turn. The duo worked together in Hollywood in between surgeries and treatments. Finally, after a round of heavy-duty experimental treatment, Carol's mother was cancer free. She left stressful Hollywood for San Luis Obispo, starting Nature Gallery in 1987. Months later, during the 1988 Hollywood writers' strike, Carol also left Los Angeles to

work at the SLO gallery. The two became business partners nine months later. In 1996, Norma died of breast cancer at age 63. Carol continued running the retail business for 26 more years.

"I have always been an artist and a community connector," says Garsten. She is the co-chair of the popular Downtown Los Altos First Friday activities and is now producer of 3rdThursday California Avenue in Palo Alto, which brings monthly music groups to Cal Ave. Carol has been chair of the board of directors of Peninsula Health Care Connection in Palo Alto and is a past member of Palo Alto University and Los Altos Rotary Clubs. "My goal with the monthly music festival, 3rdThursday Cal Ave, is to inspire joy in the community through free live music and to generate economic vibrancy in the California Avenue business district."

Carol feels strongly about being a mentor. To work toward ending homelessness, she started a mentoring program with the Downtown Streets Team. She has mentored over a dozen high school students in their first job. Carol is a fine-art photographer, jewelry designer, and community activator. She has loved living in her 1934 Barron Park home on La Para Avenue for 20 years with her cat, Petra.

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While you're there, check out our Archive of past newsletters. It's an easy way to review past activities and catch up on issues you may have missed.

## BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION

### FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER

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# El Camino Business Update, August 2023

By Bob Moss

There continue to be changes in occupancy on El Camino Real between Adobe Creek and Page Mill Road as well as an increase in vacancies, but vacancy rates on the Barron Park side are still relatively low. Covid lockdowns and stay-at-home orders are over. However, shopping habits have altered with pressure on retail stores from internet providers.

**On the Barron Park side:**

The former Jewish Study Network offices at **3626** and **3628** remain vacant. Home Remodel at **3666A** has been replaced by Century 21. Small Group Training at **3666D** has been replaced by The Strength Collective. The former Palo Alto Tailoring at **3700**, corner of Barron, remains vacant.

Pizza Chicago has returned to Barron Park, having replaced the former Sandwich Bug at **3864**.

The Thain lot at **4160** has been vacant for more than 45 years. Townhouse projects have been approved for the site, but there has been no construction. (The lot is currently being used to store public construction materials.) The Su Hong building at **4254** was demolished and remains an empty lot.

**On the Ventura side:**

The long-closed (more than 45 years) Abacus European Car building at **2905** is being rented as a car repair shop. There have been no applications for redevelopment. Omniscience (business software) at **2951** and **2951A** is now BMNT (business consulting). The **2951B** premises are vacant, as is the remainder of the building (470 Olive).

A proposal to redevelop former Mike's Bikes at **3001** with 19,800 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and 30 apartments, plus 20 apartments in a building behind the retail, was approved years ago, but is still not under construction.

Redevelopment of the former Foot Locker site at **3225** at Portage is currently on hiatus due to environmental concerns. It is a mixed-use project with a 4-story building that will have 6,513 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and 8 housing units, plus a 2-story rear building with 2,061 sq. ft. of ground floor retail and 1,826

sq. ft. of 2nd floor offices. Travel Lodge at **3255** is now Kasa Palo Alto.

The storefronts between Margarita and Matadero (**3503** to **3533**) are vacant. At **3567**, longtime Kraft Furniture was replaced by TaeKwon Tigers. A project of Alta Housing, Wilton Court, the redevelopment of **3703-3709** to a 4-story, 59-unit apartment project with street-level community services, was opened to residents in December 2022.

The former Compadres site at **3877** is now Woodcrest Palo Alto, a nearly completed, mixed-use community of 17 condos and townhouses, with approximately 4,500 sq. ft. of retail space. At **4115** (once Pizza Chicago), construction is being completed on 3-story mixed-use building with 7 apartments, ground floor retail, and offices. The Combes lot at **3585** has been vacant for more than 45 years, and former Curves site at **4117** has been vacant for at least 9 years.

ECR Vacancy rates	Aug '18	Feb '19	Nov '19	Feb '21	Aug '22	Aug '23
Ventura (East) Side	5.2%	5.2%	5.5%	10.8%	14.4%	14.4%
Barron Park (West) Side	2.2%	2.8%	3.0%	4.0%	4.4%	3.8%
El Camino Way	3.5%	4.8%	4.6%	2.4%	2.4%	0.0%
Total Vacancy	5.0%	3.2%	3.8%	6.7%	7.3%	7.2%

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For more information, contact our BPA Business Liaison, Paul Yang at: [pabloyang@yahoo.com](mailto:pabloyang@yahoo.com)

## CLEVER REMODELING



**Long abandoned Bol Park Bike Pathway phone booth finds a new purpose, and Barron Park gains another Little Free Library! Photo by Greta Olbrich.**

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