

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

John King, BPA President



Dear Barron Park Neighbors,
Our California winter, when the year slows its pace (or perhaps picks it up!), is a good time to reflect on the months since late summer and the many ways our community members have gathered, celebrated, and supported one another. From August through the fall, Barron Park once again demonstrated that community here is something we actively create together.

Fall Community Highlights

The second half of the year was filled with meaningful moments:

- **Fall Ice Cream Social – September 14, 2025.** A relaxed and welcoming afternoon at Bol Park that drew neighbors of all ages and provided a perfect opportunity to reconnect after summer travel and to welcome new residents.
- **Diwali Celebration – October 12, 2025.** A vibrant celebration that reflected the cultural richness of our community and brought neighbors together in a spirit of warmth, light, and inclusion.
- **Outdoor Movie Night – October 19, 2025.** Families and friends gathered at Bol Park for an evening under the stars to watch *Shrek 2* in honor of our famous donkey, Perry! This has become one of our most popular fall traditions.
- **Halloween Bray Parade – October 26, 2025.** Costumes, kids, neighbors, and of

course the Barron Park donkeys, led the way from Bol Park down Laguna Way, and back up to the Donkey Pasture. The donkeys were of course also in costume! This event once again showcased the playful, one-of-a-kind character that defines Barron Park.

- **Holiday Caroling and Crafts Fair – December 7, 2025.** Our second annual Holiday Caroling and Crafts Fair in Bol Park was another very successful event! We had 13 neighborhood crafters displaying their artistry, and our Barron Park musicians Gary Breitbard and Jena Rauti led the caroling. Hot chocolate, cider, coffee, and baked goods were available. Donkeys April and Buddy, dressed up for the holidays, paid us a delightful visit!

These events are more than dates on a calendar – this is how friendships are built, traditions are passed along, and our neighborhood stays connected.

Enjoy the event photos starting on page 10!

Thank You to Our Board and Volunteers

Board Appreciation

I want to thank the Barron Park Association Board for the steady leadership, thoughtful decision-making, and many hours of behind-the-scenes work that keep our neighborhood organization running smoothly.

Volunteer Appreciation

Equally important are the many volunteers who plan events, write and produce the quarterly newsletter, set up tables, scoop ice cream, manage logistics, and quietly step

in whenever help is needed. Your time and generosity are what make these gatherings possible.

Looking Ahead

As we move into spring, the BPA is preparing for our **Annual Meeting in March 2026**, where we'll share updates on neighborhood issues, City matters, and opportunities for involvement. Details will be announced soon, and we hope you'll plan to attend.

Winter is also a great time to renew your **BPA membership**, see your membership options, or check your membership if you renewed last year! bpapaloalto.org/#join

Please consider volunteering in the year ahead. Memberships, donations, and volunteers support everything from neighborhood events and communications to advocacy efforts that help protect the character and livability of Barron Park.

Also please consider a **separate donation to the BPA** to support all our Barron Park activities! bpapaloalto.org/donate

A Season for Community

Barron Park has always been defined by its independence, neighbor-to-neighbor connections, and willingness to look out for one another. As the days grow longer, I encourage all of us to keep that spirit alive – by slowing down on our streets, checking in on neighbors, and continuing the small gestures that make this a place we're proud to call home.

Continued on bottom of page 2

2

[Ivy Woes](#)

3

[Invasive Plants](#)

4

[Bike Plan](#)

5

[BPA Updates](#)

6

[Fallout Shelter](#)

10

[Fall Photos](#)

12

[Magic & Fun](#)

13

[Donkey Handlers](#)

15

[Diwali Photos](#)

Is Ivy Killing Your Tree? Check to See!

By Chris Witzel



Without intervention, non-native Algerian ivy can kill young trees and provide shelter for rats to hide and build their nests. Photos by Chris Witzel.

Throughout Barron Park you find Algerian ivy thriving in gardens and by the creeks. Ivy is beautiful, so what's the problem?

Leaves are nature's solar panels that convert sunlight and air (via photosynthesis and respiration) into nutrients the plant needs to grow and survive. All plants must have sunlight and if crowded together will fight to the death to ensure their own leaves capture the sunlight. Ivy grows quickly, but trees don't — it's not a fair contest. Ivy also kills young trees by wrapping vines tightly around the trunk, called "binding." (By the way, ivy attracts rats — its dense growth offers shelter for rats to hide and build their nests.)

How to Check

Trees growing in a patch of ivy are at greatest risk (first photo), but even a single ivy plant can be a threat (second photo). Just look for green vines growing upwards on bark. Without help, the tree will eventually die and become just a scaffold for the ivy (final photo).

What to Do

To halt ivy growth, cut all the vines near the base of the tree (carefully, don't stab the tree), then make second cuts in the ivy vines

at least a foot (30 mm) above the lower cuts. Remove just the vines between the cuts, then wait for the ivy above the cut to die. Once dry, it's easier to pull off and less likely to tear bark off the tree. This will halt ivy for a year or two. The only permanent solution is to dig out the ivy manually, by the roots. Please do not use weed killers that pollute the environment.

For more information, see thetreecareguide.com/climbing-vines-tree-killers/. If you would like some informal advice from Barron Park gardeners, write to bpnativegarden@gmail.com

Saving old trees, especially native oaks and redwoods, not only preserves the beauty of our neighborhood, it is also good for property values.

President's Message Continued from page 1

On behalf of the BPA Board, thank you for being part of this community and for all the ways — seen and unseen — you help make Barron Park special.

Wishing you a peaceful winter and a warm start to the New Year.

Warmly,
John W. King

President, Barron Park Association
johnwadeking@gmail.com
Phone: 650-483-2710

Barron Park Association Spring Newsletter Deadline! Monday, March 2, 2026

Please submit articles (in Word if possible) for the Spring 2026 issue of the BPA Newsletter, with photos/images separate from text, by **Monday, March 2, 2026** (i.e., during the first week of March ☺) to Myrna Rochester at: mrbpa@sonic.net

Find out if your BPA membership is current at bpapaloalto.org or write to barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com Also, you may wish to send a query in advance with your ideas — for an article, story, report, update, interview, profile, announcement, review, anecdote, or artist's page — to mrbpa@sonic.net

Announcements for activities should be for events scheduled **after April 15, 2026**. The Spring issue will be available in April 2026 by U.S. mail and online.

A Habitat Gardening Checklist: Remove Invasive Plants

By Linda Elder, Barron Park Native Habitat Committee

You can increase the habitat value of your garden by removing invasive species and also minimize the consequences of invasive plants in natural ecosystems.

What is an invasive plant?

An invasive plant is a plant that is non-native to the local ecosystem, introduced through human activity, which spreads rapidly, outcompeting native plants. An invasive plant can overtake crops or wild lands, harm wildlife, clog waterways, and increase fire hazard.

Your garden is on the frontline when it comes to battling invasive plants. Almost two-thirds of invasive plants were introduced as garden ornamentals that jumped the garden fence. An example is pampas grass that you see all along the coast near Half Moon Bay. Introduced in 1872 by nurseryman John Sexton of Goleta, California, pampas grass has spread all over the state. An individual pampas grass stand can produce millions of seeds annually that travel many miles. Pampas grass has displaced native plants, lowered biodiversity, and has extremely sharp leaf blades that can cause physical harm to animals and humans.

Actions you can take:

- Get to know the most common invasive plant species in our area.
- Remove landscape plants that are known to be invasive. Examples include glossy privet (*Ligustrum lucidum*), blackwood acacia (*Acacia melanoxylon*), ivy (*Hedera spp.*) (includes Algerian and English ivy), periwinkle (*Vinca major*) and Mexican feathergrass (*Nassella tenuissima*).
- Find the best method for removing the invasive plant in your garden. For example, see the article "Is Ivy Killing Your Tree?" in this newsletter, page 2.
- Dispose of invasive plant matter in a way



Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*), brought to California as a decorative plant by horticulturist Joseph Sexton in Goleta, California, in the nineteenth century, is a major invasive species along the California coast and Bay area open space and gardens. Image credit for NOAA: Captain Albert E. Theberge. noaa.gov/digital-collections/collections/photo-library/3958/item?page=375

that prevents further spreading – especially avoid spreading seeds.

- Plant a native species in spots where you have removed invasive plants.

An excellent resource is PlantRight (plantright.org) which has an invasive plant list by area of California. PlantRight also works with California’s nursery industry to keep invasive plants off our landscapes.

Another great resource is California Invasive Plant Council (Ca-IPC). Click here for a list of plants invasive to California regions.

cal-ipc.org/solutions/prevention/landscaping/dpp

ARE YOU AN ARTIST OR WRITER?

Do you enjoy the creative work featured in the BPA Newsletter? Would you like to see your art, photography, crafts, music, published (or unpublished) writing, etc., in a future issue? Please send your idea with a draft Artist’s Statement and reproducible samples or a description of your work to Myrna Rochester at: mbrbpa@sonic.net

BPA EMAIL LISTS

The Barron Park Association offers three Email Lists for any resident to post: (1) *bpa-news* for news, information, and announcements; (2) *bpa-misc* for neighbor requests, queries, recommendations, freebies, etc.; and (3) *bpa-issues* to express opinions or initiate discussion on topics of interest. They are hosted on Google Groups. To join a list, go to: bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/. The link provides information about each list and an easy way to subscribe to one or more of them.

Palo Alto Bicycle Plan Update

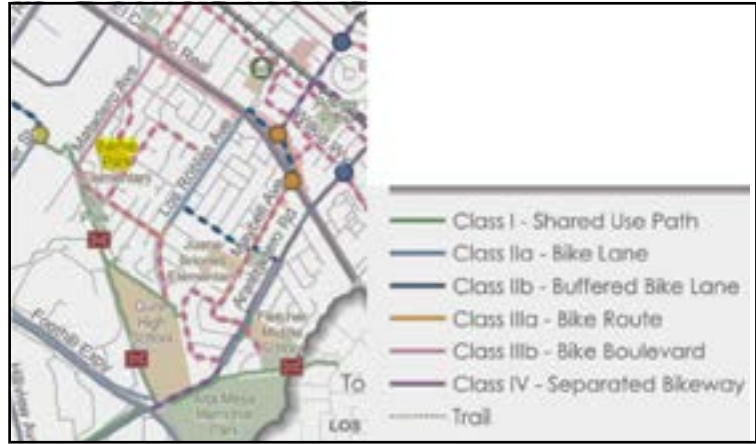
By Art Liberman, Member of PABAC (Palo Alto Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee)

The update to the Palo Alto Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan is close to being finalized. I want to inform Barron Park residents who are not already aware of the changes this Plan would have in our neighborhood. A draft of the new Plan is available on the City’s website for review: paloalto.gov/Departments/Transportation/Bicycling-Walking/bikepedplan The P.A. Transportation Staff developed this Plan (2026 BPTP) with the assistance of Kittelson Associates Consultants.

On December 1, 2025, the City Council held its second review of the Plan. After incorporating changes from this review, the Plan will be presented to the Council in early 2026 for approval. This Plan is an update to the 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan (2012 BPTP).

The Council held its first review, a study session on the proposed Plan, on June 2, 2025. At that meeting, the Council directed the Staff to focus on neighborhood streets. The Plan now emphasizes the importance of low-stress, high-comfort, tree-lined routes to encourage broader participation in cycling. By improving the perceived safety of cycling, the Plan’s projects can lead to increased usage of bicycles as a mode of transportation, contributing to healthier lifestyles and reduced traffic congestion.

Transportation staff and consultants have prioritized and ranked over 104 projects throughout the City of Palo Alto and narrowed the list to 16 Near-Term Bicycle Projects: [near-term-bike](#) The list, along with cost estimates for each project, is available on the website. The Near-Term Projects will be the priorities for the next 10 years. One of these Near-Term Projects is in Barron Park: a “Buffered Bike Lane” along Amaranta-Clemo from Los Robles Avenue to Arastradero Road. Here is the description of this Barron Park project: “Stripe a buffered bike lane on Amaranta Avenue and Clemo Avenue from Los Robles Avenue to Arastradero Road. Consider design details for a more rural neighborhood context. Coordinate with Arastradero Road Separated Bikeway to create a safe intersection crossing.” A buffered bike lane is a striped buffer area that



Proposed bike network changes for 2026 from City of Palo Alto Report. paloalto.gov/Departments/Transportation/Bicycling-Walking/bikepedplan

provides extra horizontal separation between the cyclist and the adjacent motor vehicle lane or parking lane. The additional space helps protect cyclists from moving traffic and the risk of car doors opening unexpectedly from parked vehicles. This separation contributes to a more comfortable riding experience, encouraging more people to cycle.

The Plan proposes a low-stress bicycle network that will be built utilizing Bike Boulevards as the foundation. Bike Boulevards are low-speed, low-traffic streets that give priority to bicycles while allowing local car access. Just before the 2012 Bicycle Pedestrian Plan was adopted, Matadero Avenue became a Bike Boulevard. The yellow stripe down the middle was removed, and some speed bumps were added to slow the traffic. While Matadero is narrow and has car traffic, being one of the few collector streets in Barron Park, it became a Bike Boulevard because it is on the route between the end of the Bol Park Pathway and Park Boulevard, which is heavily used by cyclists.

Matadero Avenue is also on the Walk and Roll Map for Barron Park Elementary School, designated by the Safe Routes to School organization. Every weekday morning, you can see young cyclists from Ventura riding along Matadero on their way to Barron Park Elementary School. However, the pavement on Matadero has deteriorated and is not very good in places. The pavement suffered

after the sewer lines on Matadero were dug up and replaced. I asked the Staff to require that any road that is now or may become a Bike Boulevard in the future to have very good pavement. This would make bicycle riding comfortable and pleasant. Also, the 2026 BPTP will require that stop signs on Bike Boulevards be turned towards the cross streets so cyclists do not have to stop, since it requires a significant expenditure of energy for cyclists to resume riding after a stop. The 2026 BPTP proposes that Josina, Laguna, Maybell, and the segment of Barron Avenue between La Donna and Laguna Avenues, as well as segments of Los Robles Avenue, Donald Drive, and La Donna and Georgia Avenues. See the map above (dotted lines are proposed changes).

At the June Study Session, Council Member Pat Burt raised the idea of a “Chimalus Spur” to the Bol Park Pathway. This would be a new Bike Path along the Greenbelt (Stanford land with a Water District easement) that would take cyclists from El Camino Real to the Bol Park Pathway. (We expect that Council member Burt will raise this path suggestion at every Council meeting when the 2026 BPTP is discussed.) The Chimalus Spur is listed in the plan, but with a low priority.

Write to: Transportation@paloalto.gov with any questions, comments, or concerns.

Barron Park Association Updates!

By Lisa Berkowitz Landers, BPA Membership Chair

The Barron Park Association is setting up several new (and one revived!) initiatives for BPA members to connect with one another in practical ways! Please check out the programs below, and write to the email addresses provided.

BPA Recommended Services:

To help BPA members find household and other referrals, the BPA recently organized a Recommended Services List. The list is now available to BPA members through the **BPA website Businesses Tab: Recommended Services:** bpapaloalto.org/bpa-referral-list/

The service listings have been recommended by residents of Barron Park. The posts are not endorsed or verified by the BPA.

If you have a referral to share, please email information to: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

Babysitter List:

The babysitter list is in need of sitters!

If you know a babysitter, please ask the adult sitter or a parent of the teen sitter to email their information to: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

Lunar New Year, Potluck, or Other Barron Park Event?

Are you interested in organizing a Barron Park community event? If interested, please email johnwadeking@gmail.com, any Board member, or barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

Barron Park Neighbor to Neighbor:

A new BPA Member-only initiative to foster neighbors helping each other in a few focus areas, such as providing homemade meals if someone is ill or recovering and alone,

picking up prescription medications or groceries, and even tutoring for middle- or high-school students. This is one initiative to support community connections and assistance among members of the Barron Park Association.

For further information send email to:

bpa-n2n@googlegroups.com

New Board and Committee Members Needed!

The BPA Board encourages both newer and longtime residents to get involved in the BPA! The existing Board positions and Committees eagerly welcome new members, ideas, and activities.

If you have ideas or questions, please email any Board member, barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com or johnwadeking@gmail.com

BPA EMAILS AND WEB LINKS

WINTER 2025-26

- **BPA Website:** bpapaloalto.org/
- **BPA Newsletter Archive:** bpapaloalto.org/bpa-newsletter/
- **BPA Membership (Join/Renew):** bpapaloalto.org/#join
- **Membership Questions:** Lisa Berkowitz Landers at: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com
- **BPA Email Lists:** Join at: bpapaloalto.org/bpa-email-lists/ or Write to: listmanager@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA President:** John W. King at: johnwadeking@gmail.com
- **BPA Treasurer:** John W. King at: johnwadeking@gmail.com
- **BPA Newsletter Editor:** Myrna Rochester at: mbrbpa@sonic.net
- **BPA Business Liaison:** Paul Yang at: pabloyang@yahoo.com
- **Support for Buena Vista Neighbors:** Karen Ratzlaff at: karen.ratzlaff@hotmail.com; Buena Vista Partners (non-profit) at: buenavistapartners.org
- **Welcoming Committee:** Star Teachout at teachout@sonic.net
- **Emergency Services Volunteer Program:** Maurice Green at: mauryg3@comcast.net
- **Barron Park Historian:** Douglas L. Graham at: dgrahampaca@gmail.com
- **BP Neighbor-to-Neighbor:** bpa-n2n@googlegroups.com
- **BPA Webmaster:** Maurice Green at: bpawebman@bpapaloalto.org
- **BPA Activity Interest and Survey:** Star Teachout at: bit.ly/BP-Survey25 or Contact teachout@sonic.net
- **Barron Park Neighborhood Referrals:** Lisa Berkowitz Landers at: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com
- **Barron Park Donkeys:** To volunteer, donate, or purchase merchandise, go to: barronparkdonkeys.org or Contact Jenny Kiratli at: barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com
- **Bol Park Native Habitat Garden:** To volunteer, contact Rich Elder at: rich.e.elder@gmail.com Donate to the Native Habitat Garden through the "Bol Park Fund" at: friendsofpaparks.org/donations/p/bol-park-native-plant-garden 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.

A Fallout Shelter in Barron Park?

By Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian

From the Cold War Days

At the 2025 Barron Park May Fête, Greg Heestand told me a fascinating fragment of local history, right out of the Cold War days of the 1950s. Greg said that a house on Georgia Avenue in the Green Acres 2 neighborhood has a genuine Cold War nuclear fallout shelter in a side yard, still intact, and at least theoretically functional. He showed me photographs of the shelter. The story stimulated me to do some research on fallout shelters in Palo Alto and to write this article. The photos are included here.

What Was the Cold War?

The Cold War began after World War Two, when the coalition of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), Great Britain, and the United States, along with other Allied nations who fought against the Nazi regime in Germany, fell apart after winning the war in Europe in the spring of 1945.

The USSR was completely dominated by Russia and was not interested in freeing the Eastern European countries that had been conquered by Germany or bullied into being German allies. Instead, it intended to control all of Eastern Europe militarily and convert those countries into Russian satellites. In late 1945, Russia had a huge army, still only partly demobilized. The U.S. was pulling out of Europe, as it did following World War One. Britain was broke, exhausted, and basically demoralized. The future looked bad for Eastern Europe.

The Iron Curtain

Trying to revitalize the Western allies, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in one of his most famous speeches, on March 5, 1946, said, "From Stettin on the Baltic to Trieste on the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the Continent." The speech had a terrific political impact, especially in the United States, Britain, and Canada. This could be considered to be the beginning of the Cold War, which was named by an American statesman, Bernard Baruch, in 1947. During the Cold War, both the U.S. and the USSR built enormous nuclear-armed forces and held each other

hostage by the threat of all-out nuclear war.

NATO and the Warsaw Pact

The Cold War also stimulated the founding of NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in 1948 and its Russian-led counterpart, the Warsaw Pact of Eastern European Nations in 1955. (The Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed.)

MAD

After a decade or so of this stalemate, the two nations each developed the concept of "Mutually Assured Destruction," or MAD, which contended that each could destroy the other in a general exchange of rocket-delivered warheads. Since this was "assured," it made eminent sense not to start it, and this led to treaties reducing the number of nuclear weapons and allowing for limited inspection by each nation of the other's capabilities. The stalemate continues to our day, in spite of major political changes in both countries.

The Political Confrontation

The hostile confrontation between the U.S. and the USSR lasted for more than 40 years, and some of the more important (and less peaceful) episodes included the Greek Civil War (1944-49), the Berlin Airlift in 1948, the 1949 Communist Party victory in the Chinese Civil War, the Korean War (1950-53), the 1956 Hungarian Uprising and Invasion, the Berlin Wall in 1961, the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the Vietnam War (1966-75), the Czechoslovakian reforms (Prague Spring) and subsequent invasion in 1968, the Polish Solidarity movement of 1980-81, and the final dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1989. During at least three of these Cold War episodes there were serious fears in the United States that nuclear war would break out between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Starting in about 1949, U.S. children were taught what to do during a nuclear attack and participated in frequent, unscheduled "drop drills" in school.

Why Were Fallout Shelters Built?

Fallout shelters were constructed in most cities, including ours. Steve Staiger, for many

years the Palo Alto City Historian, authored a brief article on this topic in the May 2015 issue of *The Tall Tree* (newsletter of the Palo Alto Historical Association). Staiger wrote, "Palo Alto's new City Hall, designed in the mid-1960s, provided protection from nuclear fallout. Schools emerged as popular sites for public community fallout shelters. With enough concrete and earth around them, a family could survive underground for several weeks before it would be safe to come outside."

Google's Gemini AI Assistant tells us that there were 18 basement shelters on the Stanford campus (presumably most are still there). And "... at the height of the Cold War, Stanford designated as many as 56 fallout shelters on campus." In Palo Alto, the former Medical-Dental Building on Hamilton Avenue and the Art Center at 1313 Newell Road were also public shelters. Concerned residents built private shelters in their own backyards. The City of Palo Alto issued permits for fallout shelters, indicating that private construction was common.

Are They Needed Today?

In his 2015 article, Steve Staiger also pointed out that fallout shelters were no longer in demand. "With more powerful nuclear weapons and our location in Silicon Valley, a prime target of any attack, the need for a backyard shelter may be moot, and many sit abandoned in backyards. However, owners of some shelters have new uses for their Cold War relics – transforming a shelter into a wine cellar is a common re-use in today's Silicon Valley."

Gemini says that in 2025, "No public buildings in Palo Alto are currently designated as fallout shelters. Modern threat mitigation focuses on general emergency preparedness, including disaster planning, evacuation routes, and individual preparedness."

The Green Acres 2 Tract

Green Acres 2, with 126 houses on five streets, is the second largest tract in the Barron Park area – only Encina Grande, with 162 houses, is larger. Green Acres 2 is County Tract #948 and was filed with the County Clerk in April 1952. The homes are

located on Georgia Avenue (33), and on Donald (33), Hubbardt (20), Willmar (36) Drives, and Arastradero Road (4). They were built individually on demand mostly from 1952 through 1955. The final six empty lots were filled in from 1956 through 1973.

The house with the fallout shelter is located on Georgia Avenue west of Juana Briones Elementary School, not far from the kindergarten play yard. The shelter was built in 1955, during Dwight D. Eisenhower’s first term as U.S. President, and two years after the cease-fire agreement ending the Korean War in 1953.

The Current Owner

George (who prefers not to share his family name) was born in China, raised and educated in Taiwan, attending Taiwan National University. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1973 and became a U.S. citizen in 1979. He studied in a computer science program at Georgia Tech and earned a master’s degree in physics at the University of Wisconsin. From 1979 to 2000 he worked for IBM, first in Poughkeepsie, NY, and then for 19 years at the Santa Teresa facility in San Jose. George retired in 2000, lived in Los Altos Hills for 19

years, and moved to Green Acres 2 in the spring of 2024.

The previous owner of the Green Acres 2 house had recently renovated and updated both the house and yard of the 70-year-old property, which still has its distinctive period architecture. The seller assured George that he should not worry about “settling problems” with the house because the fallout shelter was not underneath it. George’s daughter Grace then went down in the shelter and took a video, which showed how small it was and proved that it went under the fence toward the front yard, and not under the house.

The Fallout Shelter

The shelter is visually unobtrusive. Based on its above-ground appearance, its purpose would not be obvious to a casual observer. It consists of an above-ground entrance, the below-ground shelter area, and a pipe to an above-ground vent about 50 feet from the shelter. The entrance and shelter are located in a narrow side yard between the house and the neighboring property to the east (closer to Juana Briones School). The vent is in the front yard near the street.

The Entrance

People would enter the shelter by raising the shallow, dome-shaped steel lid and letting themselves down into a vertical, corrugated-steel pipe, 30 inches in diameter, then climbing down about seven feet (86 inches) on

a hefty wooden ladder that is firmly fastened to the pipe. (See Illustration A, entrance, and Illustration B, the ladder, below.)

The Underground Chamber

At the bottom of the ladder, the occupants would be standing in a horizontally laid, corrugated-steel pipe of the same design as the entrance, but much larger in diameter (about five feet). A full-grown adult would need to hunch over. A wood flooring had been installed to provide a smooth, flat surface to stand, sit, or lie down on. To the north of the ladder (left as you face the ladder) there is a rough wooden wall separating the chamber from the soil.

To the south there is another wooden wall partially dividing the shelter area into two compartments (possibly for privacy?). (See Illustration C, taken from a video of the underground shelter chamber, looking south from the entrance ladder.) On this partition, of which only a lower quarter shows in the photo, there is a poster that reads, “God Bless Our Shelter.” (See Illustration D, the poster.)

Out of sight in Illustration C, beyond the partition that divides the chamber and at the south end of the of the large pipe, there is a wall separating the chamber from the soil, like the one at the north end.

This is certainly a spartan arrangement to shelter an unknown number of persons, apparently for a minimum of two weeks! Not only would there be no luxury – there would be little comfort.



A – Shelter entrance in the side yard between the lot line on the left and the house (out of sight to the right). The underground shelter is about seven feet below the surface of this photo, about 12 feet into the front yard. Photos A, B, and C were taken in July 2025 by Tony Graham.



B – The ladder. This shot is straight down into the rusty pipe, about seven feet to the bottom. The wooden ladder is firmly fixed to the pipe and shows no rot or damage.



C - This shot shows the underground living area in a corrugated steel pipe about five or six feet in diameter, with a flat wooden floor to facilitate walking and a bench to sit on. The view is to the south (toward the street). The half-partition, presumably for privacy, blocks the view of the south part of the shelter, which holds a short, narrow sleeping bench.



D - This poster is fastened to the half-partition. Photographs D and E were taken in 2024 by George's daughter Grace, who went down into the shelter.

The Vent

There is an open vent (a pipe, roughly three to four inches in diameter), which goes through the wooden wall and runs underground for about 50 feet south, then connects with a four-inch vertical steel pipe that extends about 18 inches above ground in the front yard near the street, clearly to

prevent the occupants of the shelter from suffocating. It was capped against rain and included a filter to prevent radioactive particles from entering the shelter. (See Illustration E, the vent in the front yard.)

Would the Shelter Have Been Effective?

I am not any kind of expert on nuclear weapons or on how to protect yourself in case of an attack. However, I lived in Los Angeles and graduated from high school in 1955, the same year this shelter was built in Barron Park. I have personal memories of the Korean War, drop drills, and the intense fear

that Russian bombers might reach California and drop nuclear bombs on us. I can appreciate why the new homeowners in 1955 wanted safety for their family. But would this shelter design have provided it?

I believe the answer would be a qualified "yes." The side yard shelter was crude and would have been uncomfortable, but likely would have been effective. My internet research revealed information about nuclear weapons and the dangers of radioactive fallout, most of which, in 1955, would have been highly secret, existing only in strictly classified documents. Today, we find public information on blast damage, thermal damage, and the radiation hazards from fallout after the blast, the heat, and the initial burst of radiation are over.

The worst hazard is gamma ray damage to human tissue, as the rays go right through the human body, ionizing cell contents and damaging DNA. Similar damage from alpha particles would also happen if they are ingested or inhaled. Beta particles are much less dangerous, as they are blocked even by clothing and skin.

What Is "Fallout"?

Fallout is radioactive dust consisting of nuclear fragments and contaminated soil or debris carried aloft by the blast. The most significant hazard, gamma rays, results in acute radiation syndrome (ARS), also known as radiation sickness or radiation poisoning. ARS is the result of exposure to high levels of ionizing



E - The vent sticks up about 18 inches above ground level and has a rain cap to keep rainwater from entering the shelter. It is in the front yard near the driveway and street.

radiation in a short period of time. Symptoms can start within an hour of exposure, as was experienced by many survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts in July 1945. The symptoms can last for several months, followed either by an agonizing death from ARS itself, or a very slow recovery accompanied by radiation damage to the immune system that makes the victim susceptible to a wide variety of disease infections, often fatal. Years or decades later, an almost inevitable attack of cancer completes the deadly toll.

Shelter Is Critical

The most important thing to do after a blast - assuming you survived it, that you were not within the thermal zone, and did not have radiation burns - is to take shelter from the fallout. This is especially true if you were downwind from the blast area and from the mushroom cloud full of radioactive particles. Any shelter at all is better than remaining in the open. In a house it is important to stay away from the exterior walls and ceiling, as the radiation coming from the dust deposit on them will be intense at first. If you can get underground, several feet of soil will give you a lot of protection. Several inches of a lead barrier or several feet of solid concrete would give almost complete protection, but these would not usually be available in home fallout shelters.

Time Is Critical

Radiation levels decline rapidly over time. The "7:10 Rule" describes this: For every

seven-fold increase in time after detonation, there is a ten-fold decrease in the exposure rate. Again, the most significant danger is from gamma rays emitted by the fallout. The advice is to minimize your exposure for the first 24 to 48 hours. The amount of gamma-ray exposure will drop rapidly. Therefore, a home fallout shelter with two feet of soil above you is definitely the place to be for up to two days after the blast. After that, your house will continue to provide good protection from alpha and beta particles over the longer period of up to two weeks.

Why Didn't Everyone Build Fallout Shelters?

There probably were different reasons for each household, but several come to mind:

1. The information we outlined above was not generally available in the press or in news broadcasts in the early 1950s – much of it was still protected for national security reasons.
2. The hazards of fallout were generally known, but not in detail. Many novels then told of atomic weapons destroying cities or fallout destroying humanity along with all higher life forms. The most famous was Nevil Shute's *On the Beach*, published in 1957, with its follow-up Hollywood movie released in 1959. These, and similar books and films published in the late 1940s and early '50s, scared people enough to make the very topic feel toxic.
3. Many people, my father among them, concluded that the beginning of a nuclear war would be the end of the world as we knew it. My dad – who was a scientist and no fanatic – often repeated, "If they start dropping nuclear bombs, I want to be right at ground zero under the first one."

Purpose of this Discussion

I do not believe we will end in the grisly way the characters in *On the Beach* did. However, I empathize with my dad's view and do not want to live in a post-nuclear-war world. I think many people nowadays have not given much serious thought to it and what it would mean for civilization. I also wonder how much they know about the Cold War – and, do they realize it could be said that we are still in it?

Above all, we should not laugh or sneer at people who built backyard fallout shelters

in the mid-twentieth century. Although we may not agree on their usefulness today, we should respect their need to protect themselves and their families as best they could.

I hope this article did not depress you. I meant it to be interesting and educational, not to compel you to turn over the soil in your backyard!

Contact the Historian

You are always welcome to contact me with corrections, comments, and questions.

Douglas L. Graham, Barron Park Historian
984 Ilima Way, Palo Alto CA 94306
650-493-0689 (landline, no texts please) or dgrahampaca@gmail.com

BARRON PARK ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER WINTER 2025-26

Barron Park Association
724 Barron Avenue
Palo Alto, California 94306

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Doug Burns



BPA Board Meetings are held the 2nd Tuesday of most months at 7:00 p.m. All neighbors are welcome.

For schedule and location write to:

johnwadeking@gmail.com



bpapaloalto.org

Fall Photos of Our Community



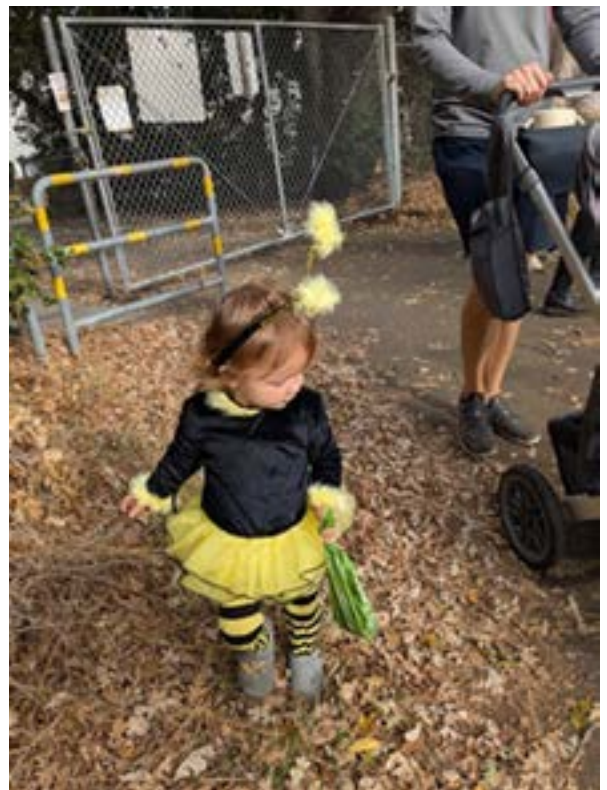
Neighbors enjoyed *Shrek 2* in Bol Park on October 19, 2025. Photos by John King.



A friendly police officer kept the October 26th Bray Parade on course. All Bray Parade photos by Myrna Rochester.



Blue dragons on scooters accompanied April in the Bray Parade.



A bumblebee joined the parade.



The short arms of this T-Rex were perfectly proportioned to push a stroller in the Bray Parade.



Madison Thomas and Becky Thomas displayed original knitwear and kids' clothing at the Second Annual Barron Park Craft and Caroling Fair on Sunday, December 7, 2025. Photo by John Kling.



Local potter Scott Hess showed up with his fun, one-of-a-kind mugs. Photo by Myrna Rochester.



Barron Park native Aviva Rochester with her silver jewelry inspired by natural forms. Photo by Myrna Rochester.



Gary Breitbard and Jena Rauti (seated) led the holiday singing. Photo by John King.

More photos on page 15

An Invitation! Hearts & Hocus Pocus, February 12, 2026

By Carole Hyde, President, Project HumaneKind



Illustration by Marilyn Hyde.

You are invited to join Project HumaneKind (projecthumanekind.org/) for *Hearts & Hocus Pocus*, an evening of magic and fun, on **Thursday, February 12, 2026, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.** at the **Sheraton Palo Alto**, 625 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. *Hearts & Hocus Pocus* will celebrate the fabled relationship between animals and people with a featured speaker and magic show. The generous hosting by the Sheraton will include a fabulous offering of vegan and vegetarian delights created by Mark, the Sheraton Chef, and wines donated by Thomas Fogarty Winery. The event will be a perfect blend of whimsy and warmth for a Valentine-season celebration.

Hearts & Hocus Pocus will feature remarks by **Dr. Patrick Hunt**, renowned archaeologist, author, and National Geographic Explorer. Dr. Hunt has spent decades teaching at Stanford University and led the Stanford Alpine Archaeology Project, known for groundbreaking research on Hannibal's route across the Alps. His work includes studies on "Ötzi the Iceman," numerous archaeological expeditions, and more than 20 published books. His expertise has been featured across PBS, NOVA, and National Geographic. Dr. Hunt will present "Fabled

Friends," an inspiring talk exploring human connection, myth, and the compassionate stories that bind us together. He will speak on the loyalty to humankind of donkeys of history.



Dr. Patrick Hunt, archeologist and author. Photo courtesy of Patrick Hunt.



Patrick Livingstone, Magician Unique. Photo courtesy of Patrick Livingstone.

Patrick Livingstone, Magician Unique, will perform his unforgettable magic. Patrick's sleight-of-hand and theatrical storytelling

have earned him acclaim across stages nationwide, including the Magic Castle in Los Angeles and an appearance on *Penn & Teller: Fool Us*. Surprise guests and a few choice auction items will add to the celebration.

With the help of Vice Mayor Greer Stone, Project HumaneKind will also present its annual Community Awards, honoring local organizations and individuals who make extraordinary contributions to animal welfare and community compassion, including:

- Pets In Need
- Feline Friends Network
- Mayra Sabrina Sanchez
- John Hale
- Jonathan Kessler and Mickaboo Bird Rescue
- Kaelyn Tan

Project HumaneKind is a locally based nonprofit organization that provides humane education to schools, organizations, and community groups. Among its programs are an animal shelter reading program, a story-writing competition for middle schools in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, and Pet Painters, which introduces young people to animal shelters and encourages empathy through artistic renditions of the animals waiting for a home.

Registrations for the event are required. Reserve your tickets here: bit.ly/heartshocuspocus

The event is free of charge, and donations are welcome – either at registration or at the event. If you have questions, please email us at: info@projecthumanekind.org or Carole@projecthumanekind.org

Project HumaneKind, a local nonprofit, is a longtime supporter of our Barron Park Donkey Project.

Celebrating Our Donkey Handlers!

By Jenny Kiratli, Barron Park Donkey Project

2025 began on a very sad note at the pasture with the loss of our much-loved, gentle icon, Perry, ending his nearly 28-year career of charming and entertaining all visitors to the pasture and many adoring fans worldwide. As our now dynamic duo, Buddy and April, adjusted to life without the grand old man, donkey care has been continuously and lovingly provided by three dozen donkey handlers.

Our dedicated volunteers contribute over 1,800 hours of work annually: feeding, walking, cajoling, brushing, and collecting manure. They are essential to the health and well-being of our beloved donkeys. These unsung heroes of Barron Park deserve acknowledgment of the work they do all year long. Approximately half live in the Barron Park neighborhood with the rest joining from other sectors of Palo Alto and north Los Altos; they are the heart and soul of the donkey community. Handlers range in age from 15 years old to 80+ and represent a wide swath of our local population – engineers, medical professionals, lawyers, clinical researchers, pastors, professors, venture capitalists and entrepreneurs, photographers, wildlife rehabilitators, landlords, librarians, stylists, singers, administrators, fund-raisers, truck drivers, graduate students, high-school students, and retirees, as well as other “day jobs” that I may have missed.

Despite broadly ranging backgrounds, all donkey handlers share the compassion and commitment to provide outstanding care to our charges. They provide care under any weather conditions and ensure that the donkeys receive three meals and a walk daily. Most handlers have little or no equine background when they join but all share a love for animals and a devotion to animal care. We provide training on feeding and walking protocols, and everyone contributes suggestions and personal twists to ensure the donkeys’ needs are met. Miniature donkeys are much like big dogs, intelligent, good-natured, and affectionate – once they get to know you. Each handler develops an individual relationship with each donkey, resulting in deep and unique connections. Most handlers have a set weekly schedule, and there are



Volunteer handlers at the Annual Donkey Handler Meeting in June 2025. (Note that this is approximately one-half of the full handler group.) Photo by Paige Parsons.

several subs, guaranteeing that donkey shifts are always covered, with alternate handlers readily filling in as needed.

Our handler community includes one member of the original group who provided care to Mickey back in the mid-1990s, dozens who have joined over time, and a handful of brand-new volunteers just trained last November and December. Although “Donkey Handler” may not be a standard entry on a résumé, it should be, as it requires expertise and dedication and represents an essential service. Donkeys have a 65+ year history in Barron Park, starting with the Bol family. Volunteer donkey handlers have been an indispensable part of this legacy for over 35 years. Beyond caring for the donkeys, handlers will answer questions, educate and tell stories at the gate, and are always willing to share the love of donkeys with visitors. If you know any handlers, be sure to thank them, and if you don’t know any, you should stop by the pasture and get to know these donkey champions. Without this cadre of volunteer donkey handlers, there would be no Barron Park Donkey Project.

A final note, there would also be no Barron

Park Donkey Project without the generous support of the community. We truly value all those who contribute so we can keep our donkeys healthy and safe. Please consider donating toward their care with an annual gift, or join as a monthly donor. We are also happy to facilitate matching donations from corporate sponsors. Donate through our website: barronparkdonkeys.org/donate or mail a check to Palo Alto Humane, PO Box 60715, Palo Alto, CA 94306 (be sure to specify DONKEYS on the memo line). Please contact barronparkdonkeys@gmail.com with any questions.

Come and see the donkeys in their pasture home along the Bol Park bike pathway anytime, but be sure to never feed them (not even carrots, apples, or grass), as we work diligently to maintain their diets based on veterinarian guidance. Join us for the Meet and Greet every Sunday morning between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. in almost all weather (except during a downpour), as well as feeding at the gate on Sunday afternoons at 4:00 p.m. PST (changing to 5:00 p.m. when the time changes to Pacific Daylight Savings Time in March).



The BPA needs your support! Join or renew for 2026!

Check your membership status on our new website: bpapaloalto.org

Join or renew your membership online: bpapaloalto.org/#join

To mail a check, complete this form and check payable to **Barron Park Association** to:

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The Barron Park Association is your volunteer neighborhood group serving the interests of our very special community. All residents of Barron Park and Green Acres are encouraged to join. If you have questions about the BPA or cannot confirm your membership through the website, please email: barronpark.paloalto@gmail.com

Your BPA membership supports many Barron Park community events and interests including: May Fête, Movie Night in Bol Park, Ice Cream Socials, Babysitter and Household Service Listings, Neighbor Support Networks, Emergency Preparedness, Quarterly Newsletters, and Email lists.

Calling Local Business Owners!

Do you have a business in Barron Park? Are you a business owner living in Barron Park? A **BPA Basic Business Membership (\$50/year)** gives you one complementary ad in a quarterly BPA Newsletter. You may also place a "Spotlight" article about your business during your first year as a member. Plus, you'll be listed on the home page of the BPA Website.

At another level, **Business Sponsors (\$350/year)** may place an ad in **each** of our quarterly Newsletters. For more information, contact our BPA Business Liaison, Paul Yang at: pabloyang@yahoo.com

Continued from page 10



Neighbors gather at the annual Diwali Celebration on Sunday, October 12, at Barron Park Elementary School. Photos by Myrna Rochester.



Everyone enjoyed a large buffet of tasty Indian dishes!

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