



The Portola Valley Post

Fall 2008

Community Ribbon Cutting Opens the New Town Center

On September 13th, 2008, residents of all ages gathered to celebrate the opening of the new Portola Valley Town Center. A big green ribbon was tied around the building facilities, set off by white and green balloons. Speeches were made by the Mayor, Congresswoman Anna Eshoo (who delivered an American flag that had flown over the White House), and Architect Larry Strain. Scissors were then handed out to all the folks who attended. On the count of three, all the attending community members joined in to cut the green ribbon to officially 'open' the new center. It was an appropriate way to cut the ribbon on a project that was designed by and for the residents of the Town of Portola Valley.

Many who toured through the buildings were very pleased with the beautiful interior of the library. The 'tree trunks' that can be found in both the library and the community hall were seen as a unique touch, as was the locally harvested eucalyptus flooring in the community hall. There were signs around the site that gave information on the numerous materials that had been re-used from the old Town Center buildings. The beautifully designed donor bench attracted many viewers who searched through the inscribed names to see who gave support to the project.



Town officials have lots of help cutting the ribbon.



Sally Ann Reiss (l) and Beth Rabuczowski, as well as Jocelyn Swisher (not shown) were key players in fundraising for the new Town Center.

Virginia Bacon photos

Portola Valley Community Fund committee members handed out packets of wildflower seed to commemorate the special day. Printed on the packet were these thoughts: *"With this historic ribbon cutting for the new Town Center, we recognize all the volunteers and donors who have helped design and fund this project. Thank you to everyone who has helped build a unique facility where community can come together for generations to come."*

Sally Ann Reiss

A Dream Come True



Brandi de Garmeaux. The Town's new Sustainability and Resource Efficiency Coordinator

Hello Portola Valley! My name is Brandi de Garmeaux, and I am the new Sustainability and Resource Efficiency Coordinator for the Town. I am thrilled to join a community that is so committed to its sustainability efforts. Working every day in the new "green" Town Center is a dream come true!

I am a Bay Area native and for the last five years I have called San Francisco home. Portola Valley reminds me of the rural street where I grew up in the Tri-Valley and provides a wonderful respite from city life. For as long as I can remember I have been interested in environmental issues, and growing up with a

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Point of View

What makes Portola Valley a unique community? Why do you live here? Do you have memories of an event that happened in Portola Valley? Maybe life in Portola Valley brought you an interesting experience or inspired you or someone you know to do something different. It's a broad topic. You can write it, or tell us and we'll write it for you.

Page 6 contains our first Point of View column, written by Sheldon Breiner. We encourage you to contribute to broadening our understanding and appreciation of the amazing place we call home. Contact julia8925@sbcglobal.net.

Corte Madera Wins National Award!

The Portola Valley School District (PVSD) is pleased to announce that Corte Madera Middle School (CMS) has been named a 2008 NCLB Blue Ribbon School. Corte Madera is one of 27 California public schools to receive the Blue Ribbon.

Current CMS Principal Carol Piraino, recently retired CMS Principal Joel Willen, Fourth Grade Teacher Marcy Barton, and Science/Art Teacher Treena Joi attended a special ceremony in Washington, D.C. in mid-October to receive the Blue Ribbon Award from Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings. The CMS contingent joined representatives from 319 other schools from across America who also were designated as Blue Ribbon Schools.

The Corte Madera staff completed a lengthy application to compete for the Blue Ribbon. These words from their application do a great job of capturing what makes CMS such a great place for the children and youth of Portola Valley:

By emphasizing academic excellence, providing support, and encouraging active student and community

involvement, CMS is actively working to produce 21st century citizens who will have the strong academic, critical thinking, and problem solving skills needed to be innovators for the future.

We are all certainly proud of Corte Madera's accomplishments! PVSD wants to extend a hearty "Thank you!" to the community for its consistent support of our local public schools. Great schools result from

*Corte Madera Middle School is a 2008
NCLB Blue Ribbon School*

powerful partnerships, and Corte Madera benefits from one of the best! Congratulations to Corte Madera on receiving the 2008 Blue Ribbon Award and a special note of thanks to the supportive community who helped make it all possible.

Anne Campbell

PV's New Website Continues to Evolve

The website redesign project continues, with the Town entering into an agreement with Vision Internet Providers, Inc. for website redesign services this past July. VIP is an award-winning website development firm with extensive experience creating websites for all levels of government.

The design team (composed of the Vice Mayor, Town Administrator, Planning Technician Carol Borck, and Administrative Services Officer Stacie Nerdahl) recently finalized the site map for the new site, and was excited to receive preliminary drafts of the new home page from VIP--and they are fantastic! On a side note, the team is most grateful to Sheldon Breiner, Susan Thomas, and Nancy Lund for their beautiful digital images of local scenery for inclusion on the new site.

With the helpful feedback from various community questionnaires earlier in 2008, the design team established several goals for the redesign. A refreshed appearance, improved navigation, and broadened content were included along with a "content management system" to make site maintenance easier and more efficient.

In addition, the new website will offer:

- Committees and commissions their own pages, and committee members will be able to maintain these pages, including adding new content if they wish.
- Improved pages for Town classes, with the goal of allowing participants to enroll online.
- Additional ordinances and regulations in the building & planning area of the website
- The Town's General Plan and Municipal Code
- Sustainability ("green") features with the assistance of the Town's new Sustainability and Resource Efficiency Coordinator, Brandi de Garmeaux.

Stacie Nerdahl



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Masthead Photo: Karen Vahtra

From page 1

A Dream Come True

father in facilities management, I developed an interest in buildings. Last December, I graduated from the Urban & Regional Planning Master's program at San Jose State University. My research at San Jose State focused on municipal environmental issues and the role of urban planning in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Specifically, I studied methods for reducing emissions in the built environment, such as green building and energy efficient retrofits. In addition to my urban planning experience, my background includes environmental education, marketing, project management and event coordination in the non-profit, public and private sectors. In my spare time, I enjoy trying new restaurants, kayaking in my foldable kayak and walking my dog, Katy.

As the "SURE" Coordinator for the Town, my primary role is to develop, implement, and promote resource efficiency and environmental programs through community outreach and education. At Town Hall, we are working to link residents with products and practices so they have the tools they need to develop a sustainable lifestyle. We are also looking at ways to address greenhouse gas emissions. In October of 2007, the Town Council adopted a resolution to support the goals of Assembly Bill 32, the California Global Warming Solutions Act. The goal is to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 and to 80% of 1990 levels by 2050.

My other main role in the Town is to promote and monitor our progress toward this commitment. In Portola Valley, the building stock provides the best

opportunity for reducing emissions. This can be done through retrofitting existing buildings to make them more energy efficient and building new buildings to a higher standard. Not only will improved energy efficiency reduce our emissions, it will protect residents from energy price fluctuations, reduce energy costs and improve indoor comfort. We are developing a spectrum of options to address retrofits from inexpensive do-it-yourself projects, such as changing light bulbs, to professional energy audits and retrofits such as replacing windows. We want to enable residents to make improvements at their own level of interest and financial ability.

Hear Dr. James Hansen, top climate scientist at NASA
December 16th
Town Center Community Hall

My primary project right now is to develop ways to get information out to the community and engage residents, schools and businesses in the Town's sustainability efforts. Very soon we will launch a new Town website with a section devoted to Sustainability, which I want to make a resource for the community and an

extension of our outreach efforts. We are creating a Town Center tour and updating our handout on the green features. We have also launched a Green Speaker Series: Pioneers of Sustainability. Our next event takes place on December 16th at the Town Center Community Hall. The guest speaker is Dr. James Hansen, the director of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York. If you would like to know more about our Town sustainability efforts, need assistance or have suggestions, please contact me at bdegarmeaux@portolavalley.net or 650.851.1700 x 222.

Old News in Portola Valley

The Community Heritage Center is taking shape near the entry of the new library. Stop in to take a peek next time you are returning books. As final structural work is completed, the front room is always open, but displays, including the seismograph, are not yet in place. Local authors' books and the collection of regional histories and general California history books are on the shelves.

One amazing new acquisition is a chert lance point found twenty-five years ago during the excavation of a driveway at 20 Naranja. An Ohlone expert has called it a beautiful example and dated it from 2000 BC to 800 BC. Also new is a collection of relics from Ohlone times found near the meadow on Portola Road.

Are you or your house included in the historic files?

Tentative plans are to have a member of the Historic Resources Committee available there from 3:30 to 5:00 PM on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, beginning in November. They will be able to show you photographs, maps and documents. You can check to see if you are included in the "Personalities" files or if there is any information about your home.

Nancy Lund

New Planning Commissioner

A woman of many talents and interests, Alexandra Von Feldt has been appointed to the Planning Commission. Alex and her husband Randy have been central Portola Valley residents for seven years, and she enjoys keeping up with the fun and activities of her two sons and her crazy Golden Retriever, Max. Jack, age 7 and Oliver, age 5 attend Ormondale School.

Having served as a member of the Conservation Committee for four years and the ASCC for a year and a half, she's familiar with Town issues and certainly exemplifies the volunteer spirit of the Town. Alex is also currently the co-chair of the Friends of Sausal Creek and you'll find her planting the creek with other volunteers on Saturdays through December 13 (see page 8).

Alex's career has been focused on software development, but she isn't currently working in the field. In addition to demands of being a mother and a Portola Valley volunteer, Alex teaches a weekly class in character development at East Palo Alto Charter School. She is a member of the Portola Valley Garden Club and is particularly interested in California native plants.

Portola Valley is fortunate to have Alex's generous contributions to the community.

Attention ART Doers, Lovers, Just Curious.....

For those who know and those who don't, there is a Cultural Arts Committee lurking in our country village of Portola Valley. It began many years ago with a function to serve whatever was deemed art --- I personally feel we are all artists, of sorts --- and as long as we meet, chat and contribute with pen, paint, ideas, science, music, flexibility, and humor, we might just keep alive a culture where coloring in the lines is not always important and keep alive a view of life with many colors.

All you folks who simply have an interest in some of this stuff, let's get together and ponder a new foundation for the Cultural Arts Committee. If nothing else, it's always very interesting ---- my experience has been you guys know how to laugh. Call me, Susan Thomas, 464-0645 or 851-0844. email is poodlest@sbcglobal.net.

Parks and Recreate

As the dust settles at the new Town Center and the community begins to conceive of all the possibilities that could be realized there, the Parks and Recreation Committee has questions. What would you like to do at your new Community Hall? Which courses would interest you? What are your ideas and views?

We've had some of our own : a Master Class Series where local volunteers lecture or demonstrate a particular skill such as: digital photography, baking, website design, invention patents, gardening, wine-making, crafts. Classes taught in yoga, meditation, dance, Spanish language, quilting, drama, flower

What would you like to do at your new Community Hall?

Which courses would interest you?

What are your ideas and views?

arranging, dog training. Social clubs (regular drop-in weekly meetings) for needlecrafts, hiking, card games or painting. Community education: emergency preparedness, first aid and CPR, the human/natural environment interface (what should you do if you meet a mountain lion?) Our list could continue ad infinitum but are these classes/events you'd like to see and attend?

To survey your thoughts and suggestions, we've set up an email address to which we would like you to write. It is: pvclasses@gmail.com No internet access? Write to the Parks and Recreation Committee at 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley. We look forward to hearing from you.

Aside from the Community classes project, the Parks and Recreation Committee continues to work on the new field use priority and fee structure, the renovation of Ford Field, the renovation plan for Triangle Park, the tennis and sport courts and the possibility of a badminton league.

Parks and Recreation Committee



Blues and BBQ for Open Space An All-Round Success

Whether it was the record turn out, the nearly \$70,000 raised for PV Open Space, the great weather, an exemplary honoree - Gary Nielsen, or the many happy faces and good times had by all, the Community Events committee should feel proud that they put on another fantastic Blues and BBQ that was an all-round success.

Held at the newly opened Portola Valley Town Center, the Blues and BBQ drew record numbers. Decorations were in red, white and blue and it was a festive event for all ages. The children had jumpy houses, pony rides, a climbing wall and reptile critters to hold. Adults perused the silent auction for a quality selection of goodies and mingled around the 'watering holes' to visit with neighbors and friends. The barbeque was prepared and served by Portola Valley's own Bianchini's Market with wine supplied by Thomas Fogarty Winery helping to keep the event special and local.

During the early evening, Gary Nielsen was honored for his long-time outstanding support of Open Space. Gary is known to many for his helpful support of our community including many volunteer years as a councilmember and mayor of our Town, committee member of the Portola Valley Community Fund, long time member of the Open Space committee and a docent for Jasper Ridge.

Live music was performed by *California Cowboys*. It was a fun night for dancing and celebrating Open Space. Volunteers are now being accepted to help start planning next year's event and other community events. Interested persons can contact Michael Bray at 851-8177.

Sally Ann Reiss



What is Petroleum and How is it Found?

Petroleum (rock oil) is used to fuel our economy and to make many products we use everyday. Yet, how many Americans know what it is, how it is formed, why it is found where it is and how it is turned into the products we use?

Paul Heiple, a petroleum exploration geologist, will present a simplified three-step view on how oil deposits are found and some of the techniques involved in drilling for oil. Paul will shed some light on the current world oil situation, such as why the Middle East has so much, why all oil is not the same, and what effect these differences have in the cost of extracting and refining oil.

The program is sponsored by the Town's Nature and Science Committee and will be held at the Town Center in December. Watch for the date and more details on the Town's website.

Yvonne Tryce

Point of View

Zott's, The Internet and Me

By Sheldon Breiner

Arguably, the most significant historic site in our Town is the Alpine Inn, known to most of us as Rossotti's or Zott's. It owes this significance not just to its 150 years as a tavern, but also because of a single event memorialized on a small plaque above the tables inside the venerable roadhouse.

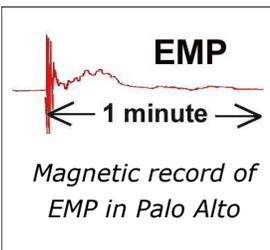
Please bear with me as I rewind the tape about a half-century.

It was 1962, in the early days of the Cold War. Scientists on both sides of the Iron Curtain were intensely worried about an as-yet unproven effect, called the Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP). The effect was a byproduct of the newly developed hydrogen bomb, and the EMP could be characterized as an electronic version of a sonic boom caused by the gamma rays from such a bomb detonated at high altitude. While it does not harm life, this EMP could potentially disrupt normal electronic communications over a very large area. If true, this could render a government and its military utterly helpless if attacked by an adversary bent on its destruction (either *against* us or *by* us).

The research arm of the Department of Defense, then called Advanced Research Projects Agency, or ARPA, initiated a secret effort, called *Project Starfish*, to attempt to prove or disprove the EMP by detonating a 1.4 megaton hydrogen bomb, atop a rocket sent aloft 250 miles above Johnston

Island, 1,000 miles SW of Hawaii. To measure this EMP, ARPA used a magnetometer (akin to a sensitive electronic compass) in rockets launched along with the bomb. To hide the real purpose of this test, the government issued disinformation that they were going to create a man-made *Aurora Borealis*.

At the time, I was working on my M.S. in Geophysics at Stanford and temporarily employed by a nearby company to test an idea that I later patented for the company. It involved an application of the same type of magnetometer, made by the same company as used for the EMP test. Much of my time was spent testing the device in a large field at Stanford University, near what is now Peter Coultts Drive, away from disturbing cars along Page Mill Road.



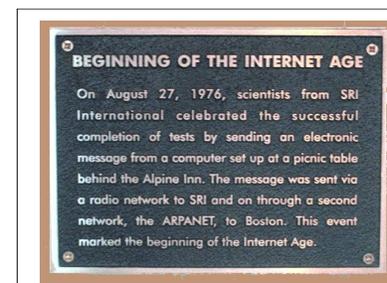
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Learning about this 'secret' test from engineers working on it in the office adjacent to mine, I thought I should be able myself to monitor the effect, even though I was 6,000 miles away from the detonation. I tended my instruments every night for weeks in the field test site waiting to see the anticipated EMP signals from the blast. Finally, at 1 AM on July 9, 1962, the bomb was detonated. The lights went out in Hawaii. Communications were severely affected for hours over an area 1,000 miles in diameter. Extraordinarily large and fascinating on my recorded magnetometer records, I submitted my (non-strategic) interpretation of these observations as my very first published technical paper.

The EMP was indeed a proven phenomenon. ARPA consequently decided to initiate a nationwide, dense network of stations to ensure dependable communications in the face of such a challenge -- an array called ARPANET. Though not in the original plan, computers were introduced six years later on the network that then became known as -- yes, you guessed it -- THE INTERNET.

The very first transmission on the Internet across multiple networks was made by scientists operating from one of the picnic tables at Rossotti's. In the context of today's world, a seminal logon to an innovative network 50 years ago may well trump a lager imbibed a century earlier.

Epilogue: In July, a nearby Soviet trawler bristling with antennae closely monitored the American EMP test; in August, the Soviets launched their own 1 megaton bomb, 100 miles up to confirm the EMP. These events were, according to my theory, the trigger for placement, in September, by the Soviets of nuclear missiles in Cuba, to provide assurance of a retaliatory strike against the U.S. and the consequential, near cataclysm we now call the Cuban missile crisis.



This small plaque is mounted above the tables at The Alpine Inn

Tempora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis

Times change and we are changed with them

Although the physical distance traversed by Portola Valley Library is not vast, the time, effort and resources supplied by many members of our community has been, still is and hopefully will continue to be, phenomenal.

Visiting the new library today, it is hard to believe that just over forty years ago Portola Valley's 'library' consisted of a bookmobile visit every Tuesday. The Friends of Portola Valley Library (FoPVL) was formed in 1965 to promote and augment library services in the Town. A first book sale raised \$790 establishing a Trust and in 1967, the Portola Valley Library Branch became a rented reality with ivy growing over the walls (hopefully into the horticultural section!) in the Village Square, next to a barber shop.

Land given by Emma and Carroll Roush in 1968 and donations by Bob and Pat Brown brought the dream of a permanent home closer but Proposition 13, changes in the Town Center plans and funding difficulties meant a hiatus of 13 years. It was 1980 before the Portola Valley Library most of us remember was created from two former school classrooms.

Fast forward 28 years during which the Library survived an earthquake and a couple of financial crises. During this time the FoPVL purchased the first library computers (endearingly called 'Pete' and 'Repete'), furniture, landscaping, installed the school bell and contributed towards expanded library hours. Additionally the FoPVL supported reading programs, children's programs, annual poetry competitions and the expanded book and media collections many enjoy. It's a heritage we're extremely proud of and that is most recently evident in the new furniture, fixtures and equipment embellishing our new residence (\$200,000 and counting).

We would not have achieved any of this without our community's support via membership, used book donations, gifts and the efforts of our wonderful volunteers. To help us continue our work (including once again the possibility of more library hours) please email: friends@fopvl.org, write to us at 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley or call (650) 854 1893.

*Jane Wilson, President,
Friends of the Portola Valley Library*

The Sequoias

The Sequoias opened the new Lodge - the long building overlooking the Windy Hill parking lot, on September 14. It is the Ritz of assisted living, with large single rooms looking towards the hills, a beautiful dining room with a patio on the first floor, and on the second floor a comfortable living room with a big television set and a small library adjacent with book-lined shelves and two computers. Both floors have large, open kitchens. There is a spa room, a beauty parlor, a new Clinic with examining rooms, and a room reserved for family consultations. Residents of the present Lodge have moved into the new building and are delighted with their surroundings. The old Lodge is now refurbished and offers care for those who are coping with Alzheimer's and other problems of mental health. It too, has single bedrooms and a "wander garden" which is secure.

A first time Health Fair on September 20, was a great success. There was something for everyone: pain management, body work, the value of health screenings, a discussion on theft and fraud, hints on "downsizing," and spiritual growth through work in our gardens. There were booths including Keplers, Pathways Hospice, Vista center for the visually impaired, the Parkinson's Institute, and Sammons Preston Company offered examples of their adaptive equipment. We hope to repeat this event in 2009 and that residents of Portola Valley will join us next year.

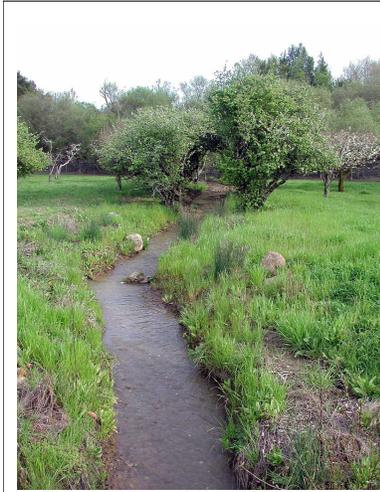
The Sequoias has also had a Life Trail installed - Ten wellness stations placed along the existing Sequoias-Portola Valley town trail adjacent to Portola Road. They are great fun as well as excellent stations to test your strengths - physically, not mentally!

Trish Hooper

Sausal Creek Project

Wondering what that ditch is in front of the new Town Center buildings? Well, it is the future home of the newly daylighted Sausal Creek. Sausal Creek runs free from the Sequoias to Searsville Lake except for the portion that goes in a concrete culvert under the Town Center site. Town residents have spent the past year raising the money to restore part of the creek and bring it back to the surface so that adults, kids, birds and invertebrates can all enjoy the native habitat.

In addition to raising all the funds through private donations, the Friends of Sausal Creek have organized community planting days to install the plants along the creek. Not only are we saving some money,



Sausal Creek as it flows through Jelich Ranch inspired the design for the daylighting project.

but volunteers will be able to learn about riparian systems while planting sedges, native grasses, leopard lilies and more. Learn what grows in our local watershed and what may work for your garden too.

Come plant your plant! We will be out at the site every Saturday through Dec. 13 starting at 10AM. All ages are welcome. Tools and gloves are being provided by our partner, local environmental group Acterra. We could also use your financial contributions to cover the expenses of the project. Please contact Alex Von Feldt at alex_vonfeldt@yahoo.com with questions or for more information. Feel free to pre-register at www.acterra.org/watershed/ or just show up.

Immediate Notification of Local Emergency Alerts

San Mateo County's Community Alert System, SMC ALERT, is an alert notification system used to immediately contact you during urgent or emergency situations with useful information and updates by sending text messages to your email accounts, cell phones, pagers, Smartphones and handheld devices. Visit www.co.sanmateo.ca.us and select Emergencies. Click on SMC Alert and follow the prompts. Recent notifications have included road closures, a fire and mountain lion sightings.



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