

The Portola Valley Post

Winter 2003

Exciting Service Improvements

The Cable TV committee is responsible for shepherding Portola Valley's cable TV and Internet services. We recently surveyed the town residents about the current cable service. This article includes the results from that survey along with the exciting upgrade Comcast is rolling out this year for both cable TV and cable modem Internet service.

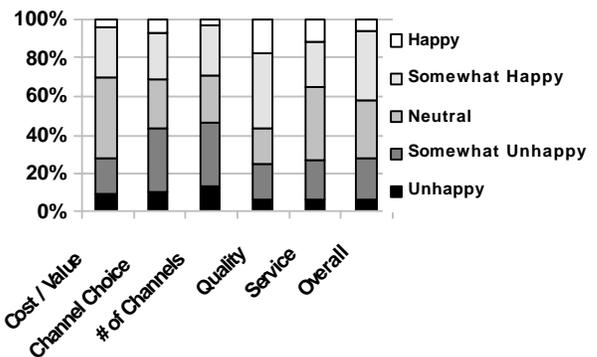
Survey Results

Nearly ten percent of Portola Valley residents returned our survey and included many helpful comments. Seventy percent of the survey respondents are cable TV subscribers. Most of the remaining thirty percent use satellite dishes with around half of those using some HDTV gear. The survey explored satisfaction with value, channel selection, number of channels, picture quality and support as shown in Figure 1.

Overall, 75% of the replies were neutral to positive about overall cable service. The greatest satisfaction was in picture quality while greatest dissent arose over channel choice and number of channels.

A second part of the survey covered the new town website. Many of these suggestions were implemented as rapidly as possible. Please link to www.portolavalley.net to see the new improvements.

Figure 1: Value, Channels and Service



The shading indicates satisfaction: the lighter the shading, the happier the customer.

Video and Broadband Improvements

Last year, Comcast acquired the ATT cable franchise. As part of the negotiations, Comcast agreed to overhaul the old cable

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Jenna Scandalious rides a pony with help from Terry Tenzing.

Blues and Barbecue

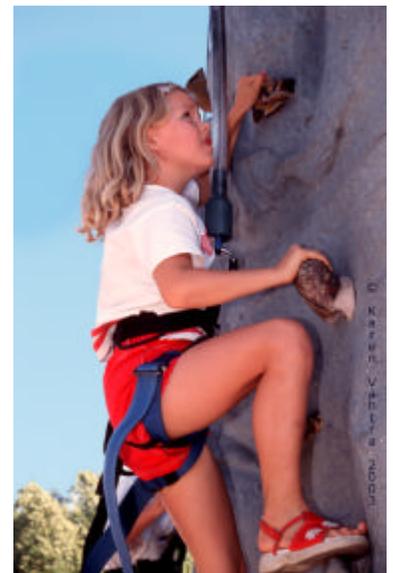
Hundreds of folks from Portola Valley and neighboring communities flocked to the Town Center lawn to enjoy the sixth annual Blues & Barbecue on September 14.

The open space celebration and fundraiser, featuring a silent auction and raffle, generated about \$36,000 for the Portola Valley Open Space Acquisition Fund, said event chair Marianne Plunder.

Also at the event, the Town honored two Portola Valley residents, Eleanor Boushey and Jon Silver, for their cumulative four decades of leadership in the conservation of the environment. Both are former town mayors.

The late summer afternoon offered plenty of fun for everyone. As adults tended to head for the

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Kristina Matyssik scales the 24-foot climbing wall

More Open Space

Three successful sales events of Herb Dengler's wildflowers prints netted \$16,000 for the Portola Valley Open Space Fund. Our thanks go to Tor Lund who produced the digital "Giclee" process prints and to Bill and Jean Lane whose generous contribution underwrote production costs.

This past summer committee members participated in seminars on conservation easements. We plan to produce educational materials highlighting the tax advantages of the easements -- especially for those residents who own multiple parcels or larger properties.

Gary Nielsen
Open Space Committee



Trails Upgraded

Several Town trails - the latest being Old Spanish Trail, a major trail on Coal Mine Ridge— have been upgraded at the recommendation of the Trails and Paths Committee.

This year our committee's priority has been the improvement of trails around our schools in order to encourage school children to walk or ride bikes.

The Alpine Trail from Indian Crossing to Portola Road is the town's first multi-use trail, a six-foot wide trail with an all-weather surface usable by bikes, pedestrians and equestrians; school children are encouraged to use the trail rather than the street.

The Shawnee Pass Trail near Ormondale School will also be upgraded to permit bicycle use. Planned for the future is reconstruction of most of the Portola Road Trail as a multi-use trail, in order to extend the network of trails usable by school children as they travel to major destinations in town.

Lynne Davis
Trails and Paths Committee

Sequoia's Proposed Health Care Facility

An exciting new Health Services Complex is in the planning stages at the Sequoias. The Northern California Presbyterian Homes and Services along with the Sequoias Residents' Council are proposing improvements to our existing Health Center, the development of a new Assisting Living Facility, and the conversion of the existing Assisted Living Facility to a Memory Impairment Center.

The new Health Services Complex will offer accommodations and comprehensive healthcare services. The vision is to offer personalized care in a convenient and pleasant setting for both Sequoia and town

residents. The complex will address healthcare needs including rehabilitation and nursing care after an operation or an accident, custodial nursing care, or a specialized program for those with memory impairment.

These are exciting and ambitious plans involving residents as well as neighbors. We are hoping that the project will receive a green light from the town to begin in 2004!

Trish Hooper



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All Kinds of Traffic

The traffic committee guides the town to create a safe place for cars, bikes, horses, and pedestrians.

A major initiative is to ease traffic at both schools and fields by encouraging both bicycle and foot traffic. The trail between Corte Madera and Portola Road has been improved; similar improvements are underway around Ormdale.

Many residents ask about the funds gained from speeding tickets. Portola Valley is not making money on the tickets but using the mechanism to encourage safer driving.

One day in the spring and fall, we host a town litter clean up. Individual volunteers participate along with groups such as the cub scouts. Come on out, lend a hand, and meet your neighbors at the next event. All residents are also welcome to join the discussion at our monthly committee meetings at the old schoolhouse on the first Thursday of each month.

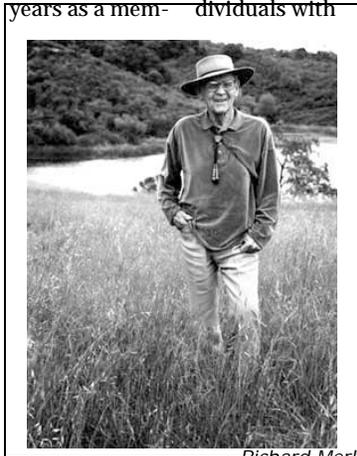
Chris Buja
Traffic Committee

Dengler Memorial Dedicated

On October 25 a carved stone was placed under a newly planted oak tree at Triangle Park to honor Herbert J. Dengler, who served the Town of Portola Valley for over 37 years as a member of the Conservation Committee. Herb worked diligently and consistently to maintain the rural quality of Portola Valley and its environs through the protection of outstanding native specimens, the promotion of appropriate native plantings, the identification and removal of aggressive exotics, and the maintenance and protection of natural habitat.

He materially participated in the layout and sound building of our trails and paths which have opened to us all the wonders and beauties of our magnificent local ecosystem.

Without fail, he spoke at Public Hearings on behalf of the "Inarticulate Invertebrates", for the fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals and for our native plant life, to protect their standards of living, and their lifestyles from the relentless pressures of over-development, waste, toxicity and short-sighted human self interests.



Richard Merck

He steadfastly demonstrated his generosity to public and private organizations, to governmental agencies and to in-magnanimous contributions of his time, his unforgettable drawings and water colors, and his willingness to back his beliefs with financial support.

We can surely remember Herb each time we walk Toyon Trail, each time we look at a Sequoia Sempervirnes or Quercus Lobata, a Dirka or Trillium; each time we see the Stellar Jay he called "Topper" or the Vulture he called "Freddie" or the Banana Slug he called "Stanley." On behalf of all our native species, we will remember Herb for his energetic and diligent dedication to the preservation of our biologically diverse, native ecosystem.

Mayor's Message

"Democracy is a device that ensures we shall be governed no better than we deserve."

— George Bernard Shaw

I recently read this line, and it has stimulated some thought. We've just seen a year of public controversy in our small town on multiple issues. Every day brought a new mailing or leaflet; letters flooded the newspaper each week. Are we getting what we deserve from our government?

We have a great town, and we have struggled over the years to make it even better. All outward signs are that we are making progress, whether it be in acquiring open space, or building trails, or sensitively managing growth, or providing for our schools and future generations.

So what government do we "deserve"? Our government is made up of volunteers, ordinary citizens, none with any aspirations for higher office; altruistically focused on contributing to their town.

Outside of our small professional staff, no one is paid to serve on our town government, whether it be on our council or committees. Unfortunately, our volunteer town government is made up of only 100 people out of a population of 4500. Positions remain open and we frequently have to extend application deadlines.

So one way we can improve our Town government is by getting as broad and representative a selection of town residents as possible involved in "being" our town government. If you aren't helping out, you shouldn't complain. Even in this contested election, only half the eligible voters bothered to vote. To paraphrase John F. Kennedy, "...ask not what your town has done for you --- ask what you are doing for your town."

Then we'll get what we deserve.

Town Broom Pull

Can't French, Spanish or Scotch (the most prevalent in French) brooms were introduced into the area during the 19th century, and were admired for their bright yellow spring blossoms and ease of cultivation. But broom's prodigious fecundity has made it a nuisance, for it quickly crowds out the native vegetation. French Broom now forms dense hedges along parts of Los Trancos, and is moving in on most of our town roads.

The Conservation Committee will be holding the Broom Pull on March 13, when the ground is damp and the broom plants can

be easily pulled. We hope you'll join us.

Marilyn Walter
Conservation Committee

Join us on March
13 for the Town
Broom Pull

Blues & Barbecue 2003

From page 1

shade, scores of kids chose to climb the 24-foot-high climbing wall set up on the basketball courts. The younger set visited the petting zoo and waited patiently for pony rides. The heat inspired gleeful water play at the drinking fountains and placed an unusually high demand on the Waterin' Holes.

All the while, the band Mary Carves the Chicken played rhythm and blues and country-western tunes. And, back by popular demand, Kathy Schmidt led line dancing. After enjoying the barbecue buffet or their own picnic dinners on the lawn, lots of folks lingered well past sunset in the warmth of the evening.

Blues & Barbecue was started in 1997 to celebrate the reopening of the Historic Schoolhouse and to collect donations to help pay for its renovations. The event was such a success that the Town decided to continue holding it for the benefit of the Portola Valley Open Space Acquisition Fund.

Since 1970, the town has acquired 26-1/4 acres, including Town Center grounds, Ford Field, Rossotti's Field and the roadside property of Spring Down Equestrian Center, all fronting Alpine and Portola Roads. The town plans to acquire an additional three-acre parcel from Spring Down by 2005.

The whole community is involved in Blues & Barbecue. Private donors and more than two dozen local businesses provide financial support or donate services and



Madame Madera gives Angie Howard a glimpse of the future.

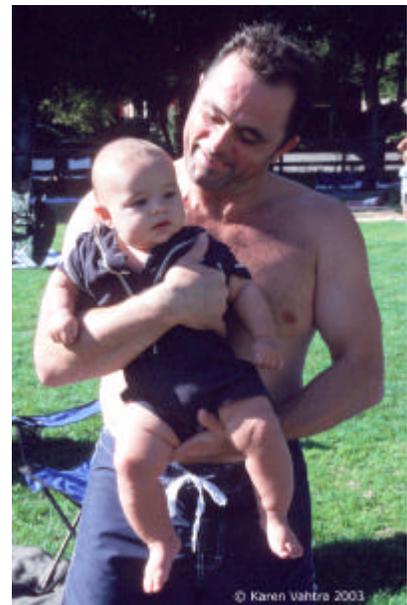
merchandise for the silent auction, raffle, and staging. More than 75 volunteers, including children and teens, help organize and stage the celebration, said event vice-chair Beth Bowman.

She noted that this community-wide participation, and an appreciation for open space, have made Blues & Barbecue a much-loved tradition in our town.

*Linda Strober
Community Events Committee*



Manning the Waterin' Hole are volunteers Gary Raines and Tom Robertson



Gary Williams and Fynn enjoy the summer weather

Town History Uncovered

A decorative box recently discovered during the destruction of an old building in Redwood City holds some fascinating documents, letters and receipts from the 1840's that belonged to the town's early settlers.

The Historic Resources Committee is sorting, categorizing, copying and translating the papers, many of which are in Spanish. The documents are being preserved in archival materials and their origin and connection to the town's his-

tory is being investigated.

The contents are varied, but include tax receipts from the old Searsville school, which was closed in 1894, paid by the early settlers so their children might be educated. There are rough drafts of wills and other legal papers.

The Historic Resources Committee preserves documents and artifacts of Portola Valley for anyone interested in investigating the history of our town.

As the committee acquires more materials, we are constantly on the search for larger quarters. We are presently in a small area in the Town Hall, and fascinating pieces of our past keep showing up.

*Lynn Lowengart
Historical Resources Committee*

Meet Ann Campbell

In overachieving Silicon Valley, many children are exhausted from school, after school activities and extensive homework.

Ann Campbell, the new superintendent of the Portola Valley School District, feels that homework is an excellent extension of what is done in the classroom but cautions "I also think we can go way overboard with homework." Kids need time to just be kids and also time to read books for pleasure.

Anne has been in education since 1973 working as a teacher, counselor, and principal in the Bay Area. Leaving the responsibility of 2,500 children at the

Kids need time to just be kids and also time to read books for pleasure

Belmont-Redwood Shores School District, she relishes the opportunity to be more involved with both the kids and teachers in a smaller school district. She is impressed with both the level of academic achievement of the kids and the professionalism of the teachers.

Portola Valley by all measures has excellent schools. One of the biggest edu-



New superintendent Ann Campbell works with Tessa Tapscott, Maddy Shove and Michael Putnam.

cational challenges it to "keep pushing the envelope" to ensure long-term excellence. School standards are helpful to make sure all kids throughout California get a basic education. For a high-ranking school district, the standards unfortunately create a time consuming level of micro management at the state and federal level.

Anne's overarching goal is to stabilize the district's financing. The school district gets a healthy \$11,500 per child, and the Portola Valley Schools Foundation makes a big difference, contributing approximately eight percent of the budget. Six percent of the school budget comes from a local parcel tax of \$195 that is due to expire in a year.

Since Proposition 13, school financing is a complex equation leaving many schools short funded. Anne strongly feels "California has to do something" to improve school funding.

Anne feels "community commitment to schools is vital." Volunteer opportunities are always available, such as working in the computer lab, helping in library, or tutoring an individual student. She invites anyone who wants to meet her, get to know the school district better, or inquire about volunteering to call her for a personal tour at 851-1777 x 3010.

Karen Vahtra

Exciting Service Improvements

From page 1

system and roll out an upgrade in Autumn 2003 improving video service and bringing cable modem internet service.. Cable TV choices will be improving with additional

channels and an HDTV offering. Comcast is also converting to a new fiber optic system replacing the satellite farm atop Los Trancos Road, which was susceptible to storm-induced failure.

Portola Valley is also seeing great im-

provements in Internet service. Comcast will be bringing cable modem service to the entire town by the end of the year. Over this past year, SBC has also been hard at work connecting large sections of town to their DSL network.

Cable or Internet Outages

If you experience a service outage, please call Comcast or SBC first. This phone call is necessary to get any potential refund for lack of service. If the service is not restored in 24 hours,

please call the cable committee at 851-1700 (extension 10) or email us at townhall@portolavalley.net. The committee has helped residents carve through many difficulties.

We warmly welcome anyone interested to join the committee as member or as attendee to speak out on your concerns. The committee meets the second Thursday morning of every month.

*Chris Buja
Cable TV Committee*

Anticipating Earthquake Problems

Portola Valley Ranch has an innovative solution to maintain the integrity of the much-needed water supply in the event of a major earthquake. The water for the Ranch is stored in a million gallon tank and flows to the Ranch via a pipeline that crosses an active branch of the San Andreas.

As a resident at the Ranch interested and trained in the field of earthquake research as a geophysicist and geologist and also the chairman of the Portola Valley Geologic Safety Committee, Sheldon Breiner was asked to assist in identifying the specific location of historic 1906 photos of Alpine Road after the 1906 earthquake. The request came from U.S. Geological Survey geologists who were preparing a memoir on the centennial of the 1906

The San Andreas fault is about 400' west of where most planners and geologists have been placing it for the past 30 years

earthquake on the San Andreas fault. Breiner obtained file photos from the 1906 Lawson Report of the major earthquake on the San Andreas fault, among which was one photo, shown below, taken on Alpine Road immediately adjacent to Portola Valley Ranch.

There are generally two traces of the San Andreas fault in Portola Valley: the main one called the Trancos trace and the other trace in the area of the Town Center termed the Woodside trace. The recent understanding of the location of the San Andreas fault in the area of the Ranch has been the Trancos trace, and it is that one that still is identified as "THE" location of the San Andreas fault, that is the one that is important in the time scale of geologic history. In the area of the Ranch, this Trancos trace crosses Alpine Road at the sharp bend in Alpine Road near the duck ponds, crosses through the tennis courts and passes

through or next to the original Bovet Ranch house.

This study of the two traces included confirming the location of the rift on Alpine Road as shown in the 1906 file photos, aerial photos, previous mapping and studies done in trenches, including one dug in 1991 in what is now Blue Oaks. The research led him to conclude that the western trace, what he is calling the Woodside trace, is actually the active trace of the San Andreas in this area.

The significance of the findings is that there are now at least two points, less than a mile apart, to tie down the location of the active trace of the San Andreas fault in this region: the shear on Alpine Road and the trench in Blue Oaks. The San Andreas fault, then, if it were defined by the active trace, is actually about 400 feet west of where most planners and geologists have been placing it for the past 30 years.

It is generally agreed by most geologists who have studied the San Andreas fault that where the fault has exhibited shear displacement in past historic earthquakes is where the displacement will continue to occur for the next many hundreds or thousand of years. So, there is a need to anticipate the damage that could be done by another major quake and take a fresh look at structures, including homes, now that we know where the next displacement will take place.

The site where the buried pipeline that supplies water to the Ranch and the trace of the fault intersect has now been identified. A major earthquake on this section of the fault will definitely occur at some time in the future, and the pipeline will break where it crosses the fault. Such a major earthquake in this area would tax every utility - water, electrical power, gas, etc., - and all would demand immediate attention. It is likely, therefore, that it might be days or weeks for crews and heavy equipment to be available to repair such a break.

The company that supplies water to the Ranch has agreed to do something about the problem, now that we know what and where to expect trouble with the pipeline. The suggested solution

is to put above-ground valves at points on both sides of the expected shear to control water flow on the pipeline and to stash a coiled industrial hose that can be used to bypass the damaged section and connect these valves immediately after an earthquake. The value to having a working water system for fire and normal use without interruption is obvious. This is a simple solution to a complex challenge.

Geologic Safety Committee



The 1906 photo, shown here for comparison with a modern photo at the same location, illustrates the 6-foot displacement of Alpine Road and sheds some light on what to expect in the next such earthquake on the fault.

Town Center Talk

I was one of 37 who signed up to be on the Town Center Citizens Advisory Committee (TCCAC). I had never served on a Town committee before, but many of the others had many years of Town service. Each of us was provided a thick blue binder of background material. Over the long hot summer of 2003, we pooled our collective thoughts and hammered out the issues.

We learned the history of the project and that the current town center buildings were in a problem area of the San Andreas rift zone, i.e. they were in an area where the ground would not only shake, but rupture and shear. We talked with experts, learned the difference between building standards, such as essential services and life saving.

The essential services standard, for example, is required for emergency operations. It is the one suggested for our Town Hall. We compared the cost of retrofitting the existing buildings and found it would probably be less expensive to start new. We examined financing options and compared them.

Our work wasn't just limited to reviewing prior work. We did independent research, identified new choices and clarified issues. We did this by establishing subcommittees to understand uses, site options, financing, and consensus building.

In the span of four short months, we produced a series of

reports, did PowerPoint presentations to illustrate issues, conducted a straw poll of our collective views, devised a comprehensive questionnaire and summarized the results. If you'd like to see the work the TCCAC did, stop by the Town Hall and see Barbara Powell.

We did independent research, identified new choices and clarified issues.

Committee members are: Virginia Bacon, Karl Bizjak, Danna Breen, Sheldon Breiner, Bob Brown, Christopher Buja, Sue Chaput, Kristi Corley, Sue Crane, Mark Dahm, Stephen and Dorian Dunne, Pierre Fischer, Rebecca Flynn, Greg Franklin, Jane Gallagher, Arthur and Carol Graham, Louise Hamm, Sue Jagers, Bill Lane, Mary McCann, Chip McIntosh, Gary Nielsen, Ray Pestrong, Amber Ramies, Alvin Rathbun, Sally Ann Reiss, John Richards, Beth Shaw, Rowland Tabor, Steven Toben, Yvonne Tryce, Ellen Vernazza, Nancy Vian, Carter Warr, Linda Weil and Ed Wells.

This was no simple feat, but showed me that a large group could work together to digest complex issues. As a new volunteer, I found it rewarding to work with a talented, energetic, committed group interested in solving community problems.

*Virginia Bacon
Town Center Citizens Advisory Committee*

www.portolavalley.net

A new, dynamic and interactive form of communication has replaced the quarterly newsletter from Town Center. Portola Valley's new website is always available to provide useful, updated information and invite community interaction - even when Town Center is closed.

The site was launched by resident volunteers and consulting professionals in January of 2003. The design, which will continue to evolve as the content and the Town's needs change, was created by a volunteer committee working with ICORP, a Santa Cruz consulting firm. Guidelines for the direction of the site and allowable content were defined by volunteer residents. New copy typically comes from the Council or Town Administrator.

Working behind the scenes of the site are Stacie Nehrdaahl and Michele Stern. Stacie, a part-time Town staff member, is responsible for several updates weekly to the site, in addition to her finance responsibilities for the Town. Stacie enjoys the challenge and welcomes residents' feedback about the site's design or content.

Michele is the volunteer resident liaison for the site, and she continues to improve the site with on-going adjustments and revisions, as well as coordinating upcoming

content and providing a broader focus. Recent improvements include a new Google-powered search tool, allowing users to easily find what they are looking for and an update that allows the Trail Map to load faster.

Many residents are familiar with the site and use it to keep up-to-date on current issues, as well as to gain insight into the background and points of view regarding an issue, such as the Portola Valley Town Center and recent Special Municipal Election. In addition to presenting lots of useful information, the site provides important contact information and links to other helpful sites.

During a four week period in September/October, the site averaged 1,800 hits per day. It's anticipated that usage will continue to increase as residents become aware of the site and the benefits of instant information via the Internet.

Julia Herlinger

Teens Recruiting

The Teen Committee was formed to bring teen perspective to town decision-making and to improve services and activities that meet teen needs.

Our focus is:

- To provide input on various proposals under consideration by town government that may be of interest to youth, such as recreation, library hours, bike trails and businesses that provide services that are popular with teens.
- To act as a link between town government, schools, teens and the community to be sure teen issues and needs are addressed. A current project is to create a website with referral information on subjects of interest to teens.
- To encourage teen service to the community, such as participation in town clean-up day, the town picnic, Blues & Barbecue and tutoring elementary students at our local library.

The committee wants to increase our membership of both students and adults. Because of the nature of our membership (teen members graduate and move on), we are the one town committee that always needs to recruit! We have a special need for adults who are willing to volunteer to supervise some of the popular activities we have sponsored in the past, including dances and summer recrea-

tion nights. We cannot sponsor activities without more adult participation. If you would be able to help with these activities, even if you cannot commit ongoing time to the committee, you can contact me by email at czaffa@earthlink.net.

*Peter Zaffaroni
Teen Committee*



Brook Ellison and Charles Zaffaroni enticed Teen Committee recruits at Blues & Barbecue with Krispy Kreme Donuts.



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