AI enters the classroom
From drones to art, Castilleja students learn about artificial intelligence | Page 5

Survey: Residents sour on retiring in Palo Alto
Page 5

Stanford hosts eclectic New Orleans street music
Page 16

Weed wars: Take 'em out now or live with 'em later
Page 21

Pinewood, Menlo girls meet for WBAL hoops lead
Page 26
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Survey: Anxieties rising about retiring in Palo Alto

Housing shortages, traffic congestion top residents’ concerns
by Gennady Sheyner

A s Palo Alto’s population of seniors continues to grow, so are residents’ anxieties about retiring in their hometown, according to a new survey released this week by the office of City Auditor Harriet Richardson.

The 2018 National Citizen Survey, which is administered by the National Research Center and the auditor’s office, found that the percentage of residents who gave Palo Alto high ratings as a “place to retire” plummeted by 11 percentage points between 2017 and 2018, from 51 percent to 40 percent. The decline is particularly significant given the city’s historic rates. Between 2008 and 2012, about two-thirds of the respondents ranked the city “excellent” or “good” as a place to retire, with 68 percent giving Palo Alto one of the two highest scores in 2012.

The survey results are based on 889 responses that the National Citizen Survey received, a 21 percent response rate. The margin of error is 2 percentage points for responses aggregated citywide.

The survey, which the City Council is set to discuss at its Feb. 2 retreat, also indicated that a growing number of residents disapprove of the city’s general direction. Only 42 percent of the residents gave the city a rating of “excellent” or “good” when asked about the “overall direction that the city is taking.”

While this is only a slight drop from the 45 percent who gave the city high grades in 2017, it is a significant drop from 2013, when 54 percent did so (in 2012, the percentage was 59 percent).

Despite these anxieties, most residents still see themselves sticking around Palo Alto for the next five years. In the survey, 78 percent said they are “very” or “somewhat likely” to stay in the city, up from 76 percent in 2017. Even that, however,

(continued on page 9)

HOLIDAY FUND
Charitable drive sets new record

Dozens of nonprofits will receive grants to aid those in need
by Palo Alto Weekly staff

T hrough the generous contributions of 375 donors, the Palo Alto Weekly Holiday Fund collected a record-breaking $403,889 this winter — every dollar of which will be distributed in the coming months to local nonprofits serving those in need.

The goal of the campaign, which launched in November and officially closes at month’s end, was to raise $350,000.

“Thanks to high participation from community members, the ongoing support of local charitable foundations and a strong cadre of sponsors of our annual Moonlight Run event in the fall, we were able to exceed not only our goal but last year’s total as well,” said Bill Johnson, publisher of the Weekly. “I couldn’t be prouder of our community. And I know the impact our grant recipients will make on those they serve this year will in some cases be absolutely life-changing.”

Last year, 60 nonprofit organizations in the Palo Alto and East Palo Alto area received grants ranging from $2,500 to $15,000 for programs that ranged from after-school tutoring and literacy intervention to health care and much-needed food.

Among the major donors to this year’s charitable campaign, one

(continued on page 9)
CALL FOR NOMINATIONS
for the 40th Annual Tall Tree Awards

Nominations are due Friday, February 8, 2019
in the following categories:
Outstanding Business
Outstanding Nonprofit
Outstanding Citizen
Outstanding Professional or Business Person

The Nomination Form is available at www.paloaltotchamber.com

Why you can’t find the City Council agenda.

Looking for the Palo Alto City Council agenda for Monday night’s meeting?

To save $20,000 a year your city government has discontinued publishing its meeting agendas and other public notices in the Palo Alto Weekly.

For more information: https://bit.ly/2WlI7P

SURFICIAL LOCAL JOURNALISM

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“It’s really cool realizing that computers shouldn’t always necessarily replace humans.”

— Lia Spencer, student at Castilleja School, on learning about artificial intelligence. See story on page 5.

Around Town

ENTERING THE ‘SHARK TANK’

... Palo Alto resident Whitney Lundeen, founder of Sonnet James, which creates play dresses for moms, took a chance by leaving Silicon Valley where investors abound for “Shark Tank,” an ABC reality show for rising entrepreneurs. The mother of two boys, Satchel and Eero, will make her pitch to five celebrity business moguls who will decide if they want to back her company on an episode airing this Sunday, Jan. 20. Lundeen, 32, prepared for her presentation by taking to pictures of the panelists taped on her mirror and reviewing lists with 100 to 200 potential questions from the “sharks.” Her fears peaked the moment she stepped through the doors on the show’s set. “Literally, I was thinking was ‘Don’t pee in your pants,’” she said. As soon as Lundeen dove into her pitch, she found the tycoons to be kind and supportive. Her practice paid off: “I was prepared, I was good and confident,” she said. As soon as she gave her pitch, she said her hands were shaking, all I was thinking was ‘Don’t pee in your pants,’” she said. As soon as she gave her pitch, she said her hands were shaking.

A WELCOME SIGHT ...

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Fueled by early success, Palo Alto TMA eyes expansion

Nonprofit looks to launch California Avenue program next month
gennady sheyner

Having steered more than 230 downtown Palo Alto workers away from cars and toward other forms of transit, the Palo Alto Transportation Management Association (TMA) is now considering expanding its car-pool-fighting efforts to California Avenue.

Outreach kicked off on Wednesday afternoon, when TMA leaders stopped by the monthly meeting of the California Avenue Business Association to pitch the program to area merchants and describe the evolution of the TMA since its formation in 2015.

The organization, which the city launched in a bid to reduce the number of commuters driving solo, reached several key milestones in 2018: It achieved status as a 501(c)3 nonprofit, raised more than $240,000 in private funding for organizational development and hired in June a new executive director, Steve Rane.

Its most notable accomplishment, however, has been the significant boost in the number of transit permits issued to downtown employees, particularly those in the service industry. The percentage of downtown workers who use alternative transit went up from 18 percent in 2015 to 27 percent in 2018, according to the city, while the percentage of employees who drive alone has slipped from 57 percent to 49 percent.

The Palo Alto TMA’s flagship program — transit subsidies — saw a surge in demand in the latter half of 2018, according to Rob George, chair of the TMA board of directors. It’s expected to reach out to several key mileposts by the time of the TMA board of directors, second from left, listen on Jan. 16.

Consultant Justice Burt, second from right, explains the Palo Alto Transportation Management Association (TMA) to merchants of the California Avenue Business Association, as city Senior Management Analyst Khuskayur Alvar, far right, and Rob George, chair of the TMA board of directors, second from left, listen on Jan. 16.

Reforming order filed against supe's husband

Marianna Gaona-Mendoza, a trustee on the Ravenswood City School District Board of Education, has filed a restraining order against the superintendent’s husband, Duane Goff, alleging he verbally harassed her on multiple occasions at a district food bank.

The restraining order — which San Mateo County Superior Court granted temporarily — illustrates escalating tensions between Gaona-Mendoza and Superintendent Gloria Hernandez-Goff, of whom the trustee has been openly critical of since she was elected in 2016.

Gaona-Mendoza filed the request for a civil harassment restraining order on Dec. 27 after an incident at the semimonthly food bank at Costano Elementary School in East Palo Alto. Duane Goff is a volunteer coordinator for the program, which the district runs in partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank.

On Saturday, Dec. 15, Gaona-Mendoza said she arrived at Costano to attend a holiday toy drive distribution for students and had to walk past the food bank, where Goff was present.

The two had had at least two altercations at the food bank in the past, said Gaona-Mendoza said she tried to avoid Goff but that he approached her, said she was disrupting the program and asked her to leave. A video recorded by Julian Garcia, a former Ravenswood school board candidate who told police he was with Gaona-Mendoza, shows Goff following Gaona-Mendoza. Goff tells police that she’s “trespassing.”

Gaona-Mendoza said that on two previous occasions when she first went to visit and then volunteer at the food bank last spring, Goff asked her to leave and called the police.

In a statement to police, Goff said that he called police on those occasions because he was “harassing” parents at the food bank.

— Elena Kadvany

School board backs teacher housing proposal

A proposal to build affordable housing for local teachers and staff in Palo Alto took another step forward on Tuesday with the Palo Alto Unified school board directing staff to identify a funding source to contribute to the proposed project.

The board took no formal action but all expressed support for the project, which has been spearheaded by Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian since early last year. He is hoping to build from 60 to 120 housing units on vacant or under-utilized land in the downtown area, said Simitian, who was on hand to discuss the project.

Simitian is banking on five regional school districts to pay $600,000 for their share of the units. The Foothill-De Anza Community College District, Mountain View Whisman School District and Los Altos School District have taken action to find funding and the Mountain View Los Altos District is in process of doing so, Simitian said.

In order to fully fund the project — now estimated at $48 million — Simitian has set up a regional fund for school districts to put $600,000 for their share of the units. The Foothill-De Anza Community College District, Mountain View Whisman School District and Los Altos School District have taken action to find funding and the Mountain View Los Altos District is in process of doing so, Simitian said.

The Palo Alto City Council has also set aside $3 million in developer fees for the project and the Board of Supervisors, $6 million from a $50 million state grant approved in 2018, for a total of $59 million.

— Elena Kadvany

(continued on page 12)

TRANSPORTATION

Palo Alto unified settles Title IX case

The school board approved unanimously on Tuesday night a $190,000 settlement agreement with the family of a former Palo Alto High School student who said she was sexually assaulted on campus in 2015.

Palo Alto Unified Board of Education President Jennifer DiBrienza announced the terms of the settlement agreement after it was approved in closed session.

They also agreed that district staff would meet with the young woman, who is now out of school, to protect her privacy, to discuss the handling of her case and “steps taken to improve similar processes going forward;” DiBrienza said. This meeting took place in December, she said. Title IX Compliance Officer Megan Farrell and Trustee Todd Collins attended the meeting, according to the settlement agreement.

The family previously alleged that Palo and district administrators failed to properly handle the young woman’s report that a male student sexually assaulted her on the school quad in November 2015, when she was a junior. They started the process of pursuing legal action against the district more than a year ago.

Coxen O’Connor, a national law firm the district brought in to investigate the case, filed a 2016 report of student sexual assault at Palo, found that district responded promptly but failed to take the legally required steps to investigate and assess the impact of the incident on the young woman.

— Elena Kadvany

Restraining order filed against supe's husband

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(continued on page 12)
Palo Alto reached a rare milestone Monday night when the City Council approved the city’s first development for low-income residents and adults with disabilities. It will least 21 apartments for adults with developmental disabilities. It will include at least 21 apartments for adults with disabilities. The council’s resounding approval allows the developer to pursue its first Palo Alto project since 2013, when voters overturned the zoning for its approved development on Maybell Avenue in a referendum.

By approving the project, the council moved to address one of its biggest priorities for the past two years: a housing shortage that members believe has reached a crisis level.

It’s a goal the city has been slow to pursue. Last year, the council set as its goal the production of 300 housing units annually. It only approved one multifamily project: a 57-apartment complex for the local workforce at 2755 El Camino Real, which has as a feature the expectation that many tenants will not own cars.

That so-called “car light” development focused on the those residents whose incomes are too high to qualify them for below market rate housing but too low to allow them to afford market rates. By contrast, at the Palo Alto Housing development, 58 apartments will be devoted to residents making between 30 and 60 percent of the area median income, or between $28,000 and $55,000 for a one-person household. (The manager’s apartment, however, is not designated as below market rate).

Sheryl Klein, chair of the Palo Alto Housing board of directors, said the organization is “passionate about keeping the community diverse.” The nonprofit currently has 650 units throughout the city that house about 2,000 residents, she said. It also has about 3,000 people on its waiting list.

“You know that stable housing allows people to thrive,” Klein said. “This project will allow 59 households to thrive in the community. It’s a great way to start the new year.”

The council planted the seeds for the project known as Wilton Court last year when it created a new “affordable housing overlay” zone that relaxes zoning restrictions for affordable housing projects in commercial corridors. The Palo Alto Housing development is the first project to apply under the new zone.

But while the overlay district helped make the project feasible, it was the nonprofit’s leadership that made it popular and politically possible. Despite initial misgivings about the development’s height, density and potential traffic, residents of the Ventura neighborhood on Monday rallied behind the project. Many credited the development team for listening and constructively responding to their concerns.

Becky Sanders, moderator of the Ventura Neighborhood Association, was among them. She said neighbors were concerned at first about the complex becoming a “big industrial shoebox” that overshadows neighboring properties. The architect responded by reducing the massing of the top two stories in the back of the property.

Sanders thanked Palo Alto Housing’s recently hired CEO Randy Tsuda, Klein and Palo Alto’s planning staff for getting to a compromise.

“It’s going to be real homes with lovely amenities — an outstanding home for residents,” Sanders said.

Nicole Ventre, whose building property is just behind the project site, had some reservations about the proposed four-story project, which she called a “very dense building for such a busy corner.” Ventre said that once the building goes up, it will be an ideal environment for small business. (continued on page 12)

Join us for an educational workshop, taught by award-winning senior designer, Genie Nowicki.

Remodeling can be filled with snags and unpleasant surprises if you’re not prepared from the start. There are ways to make your experience during the remodeling process just as exciting as the final result. Learn the questions to ask, the potential warning signs, and the different ways to approach a remodel to make it a success.

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Whole House + Additions: Going Up, Out, or Both
Feb 2, 2019 10:30am-12:30pm

Seating is limited. Register today! Harrell-Remodeling.com/Workshops or call (650) 230 2900
Residents’ community engagement
More are giving their opinion, fewer watching online

The 2018 National Citizen Survey results for Palo Alto are based on 889 responses (21 percent of the surveys distributed). Source: City of Palo Alto

Residents on quality of life
Those rating statement ‘good’ or ‘excellent’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Availability of affordable, quality health care</th>
<th>Palo Alto as a place to retire</th>
<th>Ease of travel by public transportation in Palo Alto</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
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<td>63%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>52%</td>
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* First year the question was asked

The percentage of the respondents listed traffic and 21 percent cited housing. No other issue received more than 10 percent of responses.

Despite years of the City Council discussion over the need to solve the city’s housing-affordability crisis, Palo Alto’s traditionally dismal ratings on “affordable housing” questions only got worse last year. Only 13 percent of the survey takers gave the city high ratings for “variety of housing options” last year, down from 18 percent in 2017. And a mere 5 percent gave the city high grades when asked about “availability of affordable quality housing.”

The survey suggests that both renters and homeowners see Palo Alto as a “place to retire.” With 79 percent of homeowners giving the city the top scores compared to just 61 percent of renters. And when it comes to Palo Alto as a “place to retire,” 45 percent of homeowners gave the city high marks while only 29 percent of renters did so.

The residents’ responses to the survey’s open-ended questions only underscored local worries about traffic and affordable housing. On traffic, numerous residents said they would like to see better synchronization of traffic lights, improved road paving and better planning on “road diets” and other traffic-management projects (several called for the city to return to the recently reconfigured section of Ross Road to its former state). Dozens of residents requested that the council build more affordable housing, with a few calling for rent control. One response urged the city to “figure out affordable-housing options so families can stay here and people don’t need to live in RVs/motorhomes or spend almost all income on housing.”

Another resident said that the one action that the council can take to make him or her happier is “to fix the housing situation.”

Online This Week
These and other new stories were posted on Palo Alto Online throughout the week. For longer versions, go to www.PaloAltoOnline.com/news.

City declines to interfere in hotel evictions
With their eviction deadline nearly two weeks away, residents of the President Hotel Apartments made a last-ditch plea on Monday night to the City Council to help them obtain an extension, a request that city officials indicated they are unlikely to entertain. (Posted Jan. 16, 10:38 a.m.)

Police: Man robbed of phone near Caltrain
Palo Alto police are looking for three youths who reportedly robbed a man of his cellphone near the Caltrain station on University Avenue Monday evening. (Posted Jan. 15, 12:28 p.m.)

Food pantries prepare for more clients
Bay Area families that depend on federal programs for their basic food needs could find themselves without a lifeline by the end of February, according to local food pantries concerned about a sudden influx of new clients. (Posted Jan. 16, 4:36 p.m.)

Geo Blackshire tapped as interim fire chief
Geo Blackshire, a 21-year veteran of the Palo Alto Fire Department, fills the interim role for about traffic and affordable housing while the city considers a permanent replacement for Eric Nickel, who departed this month for Santa Barbara. (Posted Jan. 15, 2:30 p.m.)

City plans to build garage, remove trees
As Palo Alto looks to launch construction of a parking garage near California Avenue, city crews are preparing to remove 35 trees to accommodate the structure as well as the new police headquarters. (Posted Jan. 15, 9:55 a.m.)

Plano teacher arrested for sex crimes
A 34-year-old piano teacher who gives lessons out of his Barron Park home has been arrested for allegedly sexually abusing a girl for 17 months in his home, police said in a press release Monday. Police are searching for any possible additional victims. (Posted Jan. 14, 12:59 p.m.)

Khoury’s Market soft opens
After more than a year without a neighborhood grocery store, College Terrace residents now have Khoury’s Market, which soft opened Friday in Palo Alto. (Posted Jan. 11, 9:54 a.m.)

www.PaloAltoOnline.com • Palo Alto Weekly • January 18, 2019 • Page 9
Artificial intelligence

(continued from page 5)

For the first time, an AI class

Before he came to Castilleja, Barriger worked for two decades in the high-tech industry.

Two years ago, he said, “it became really obvious to me that AI was going to take off because of the computing power and the availability of data that were really the big impediments to it for the last 30, 40 years.”

He proposed an elective on artificial intelligence at the same time administrators were considering it as a future Global Week theme. Six juniors and seniors took his seminar-style class last fall, learning first how the underlying technology works, then its applications and its potential benefits and risks. They studied key artificial-intelligence concepts, like machine learning, neural networks and deep learning, and examined the role that AI plays in the very technologies they consume — the filtering of data that are really the ability of data that were going to take off because of the computing power and the availability of data that were really the big impediments to it for the last 30, 40 years.”

For the capstone research projects, each student selected a topic of interest and developed her own 5- to 10-year technology forecast for how AI might affect that application, considering social, political, economic and ethical implications.

Senior Divya Tadimeti decided to investigate how drones will affect food delivery, a nascent but growing industry, she said. Another student researched how artificial intelligence is being used in bail assessments, to predict whether someone will show up in court, and another teenager examined potential uses for military defense satellites.

For her forecast, Tadimeti predicted that drone-delivered food will take off after two or three years but only after issues like privacy and governmental regulations are addressed. Tadimeti said all high schoolers should be educated about AI in some way: “No matter what you’re interested in, AI is going to affect you in the future.”

Barriger agreed, particularly given that this generation of “digital natives” — ever-attached to smartphones and their apps — have little understanding of the technology that powers them, he said.

“My discovery at the beginning of the semester was that they’re also digitally naive,” he said. “I don’t think we can overstate the importance of understanding the technology.”

Barriger plans to offer the elective again next year, but he hopes artificial intelligence will become part of the fabric of other academic subjects rather than a standalone course, which is still uncommon in K-12 schools. Barriger’s class is only one of handful offered across the country, according to David Touretzky, a Carnegie Mellon University professor who chairs an education initiative for the Palo Alto-based Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI). Touretzky’s initiative aims to lay the groundwork for national guidelines for K-12 AI instruction.

“We hope to see many more schools including AI into their curriculum in the future,” Touretzky said. “But the teachers doing it today are truly the pioneers.”

Barriger, for his part, is considering how artificial intelligence could apply to his statistics classes and is working with the head of the school’s computer-science and engineering department to integrate machine learning into Castilleja’s new computer-science requirement.

At Global Week, the future is now

Last week, Castilleja’s campus transformed into an artificial-intelligence conference, with speakers from Google, Facebook, Stanford University, the American Civil Liberties Union and The New York Times sharing their expertise with middle and high school students.

On Tuesday morning, the school’s gym was packed with students and faculty, including Head of School Nanci Kauffman, working through an exercise led by Carissa Carter, director of teaching and learning at the Stanford d.school. She brought artificial intelligence to life through a design-thinking challenge: Groups of four were tasked with designing a visit to Silicon Valley for someone new to the area.

The teams selected specific personality traits and place of residence for their consumer, considering all the data points, from that person’s favorite Starbucks drink and the music he or she likes to local weather and transportation patterns. They learned six common machine-learning algorithms and then had to choose the one best-suited to scale their plan to 10,000 people. (One group of students chose regression, a set of statistical processes for estimating the relationships among variables, to predict the weather for the day their consumer would be visiting.)

At the end, the students considered the worst and best case scenarios by writing alternatively “fantastic” and “terrible” news headlines. Other activities throughout the week included visiting interactive art pieces that use machine learning, hearing from Castilleja alumni who now study or work in the field and learning about the ethical implications for governments, companies and the public. Barriger also led a week-long workshop with seniors on image recognition.

(continued on next page)
A Castilleja School student holds cards describing basic concepts of machine learning and artificial intelligence during a Global Week workshop on Jan. 7.

(continued from previous page)

Student Lia Spencer was fascinated by the non-technological applications she learned during Global Week, such as the use of artificial intelligence to predict risk for cardiovascular disease or disease in crops. “It’s really cool realizing that computers shouldn’t always necessarily replace humans, but they can be used to supplement humans in ways that are really useful,” she said.

Administrators had considered artificial intelligence as a Global Week theme for years but didn’t feel prepared to offer it until this year, with Barriger’s new course and the upcoming computer-science requirement, said Stacey Kertsman, Castilleja’s dean of equity education and social impact and director of the Center for Awareness, Compassion and Engagement.

“When you have a technology or any kind of tool that is now so ubiquitous on our planet, we need to figure out how does that tool connect to the mission of the school and our goals for how we’re developing women leaders,” she said. “It felt like a really important time to say, ‘Girls, these are the skills you need to learn, and these are the thoughts that align with our mission to use those tools more effectively.’”

Staff intentionally created a program that would appeal as much to students passionate about technology as those it might alienate. They brought in three artists to create the interactive art exhibit on campus, which included a facial analysis tool that predicts your age, gender and emotions in real time when you sit in front of it, and a “Lost in Google Translation” piece that translates any English phrase into Thai and then back to English to reveal “shortcomings in both humans’ and machine’s capabilities,” the exhibit description reads.

Speakers also addressed diversity in the artificial-intelligence industry, bias in data and privacy and free-speech issues.

“When we do something like a Global Week dedicated to AI, it’s not to get kids to become computer scientists,” Kertsman said. “It’s to help them understand, this is an incredible force that is shaping the way we humans exist and co-exist with our environment, with each other, and we need to understand it so we can make wise choices.”

About the cover: Castilleja School sixth-graders Tenta, right, interact with “Lost in Google Translation,” an art installation that translates speech into different languages. It was created by Purin Pratchiphant and Kevin Ho as part of the exhibit “The Art in Artificial Intelligence,” which was featured during the school’s AI-focused Global Week.

“Girls, these are the skills you need to learn, and these are the thoughts that align with our mission to use those tools more effectively.”

Staff Writer Elena Kadavany can be emailed at ekadvany@pawweekly.com.

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JOEL SARTORE
March 12
VAN JONES
April 23

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Summary of the Home

- 2 bedrooms and 1.5 baths
- Approximately 1,090 square feet
- Freshly painted inside and out in a designer color palette
- Covered front porch leads to a foyer with ceiling light and hardwood floors that extend throughout most of the home
- Spacious living room with extensive built-in cabinetry, numerous windows, a wood-burning fireplace surrounded by painted stacked stone, and recessed lighting
- Open formal dining area has tile floor that extends into the kitchen; sliding glass doors open to a vine-covered arbor over the driveway
- Large kitchen with abundant cabinetry, tiled countertops, and full-height backsplashes; a greenhouse window above the sink and window-paned door to the rear yard are also featured
- Appliances include a KitchenAid 5-burner gas cooktop, dishwasher, two KitchenAid ovens, and LG stainless steel refrigerator
- Hallway to private wing with two bedrooms, each with organized closet and one with en suite half-bath and ceiling fan
- Detached newly remodeled 1-car garage with laundry area including sink
- Nest thermostat
- Lot size of approximately 5,000 square feet
- Just minutes to shopping and dining, including University Avenue just 1.5 miles away
- Just 2 miles to Facebook main campus

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2007 Poplar Ave, East Palo Alto

This charming westside home, with welcoming front porch, is updated with designer selected paint colors inside and out making it ready to move in and enjoy today. Hardwood and tile floors enhance the setting along with numerous other updates, including light fixtures and even a Nest thermostat. The 2-bedroom, 1.5-bath floor plan has an open design that includes a spacious living room with fireplace and built-in cabinetry, a separate dining area, and large tiled kitchen complete with gas cooktop. Adding to the appeal are numerous windows and glass doors that provide great sources of natural light plus a detached, newly-remodeled 1-car garage with laundry area. A long driveway is partially covered by an arbor, and the front and rear yards present excellent possibilities for the imaginative landscaper. With shopping and dining options close at hand, including downtown University Avenue just 1.5 miles away, as well as nearby tech companies like Facebook, this home presents an excellent opportunity for mid-Peninsula living.

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Housing project (continued from page 8)

up, she and her tenants would get no direct sunlight during a good portion of the year.

“I highly implore you to drop the building by one story, to three stories,” she said.

But almost every other speaker focused on the project’s benefits. This included several residents whose families members have disabilities. Leora Ross talked about her sister, who had a traumatic injury as a baby that left her with a disability.

“She loves a place to live on her own with the support she needs,” Ross said. “When we talk about 59 units, we’re really talking about 59 people like my sister whose lives would be completely changed with this.”

Noah Fiedel, a Wilton Avenue resident who represented his neighborhood in discussions with Palo Alto Housing, told the council that he didn’t initially expect to be backing the project. On Monday, however, he said he was “excited” to support it and called the nonprofit’s leaders “incredibly collaborative” and “very flexible” in making sure the project works for neighbors.

Former Mayor Pat Burt, who was on the council during the 2013 controversy over the Maybell development, also praised the approach of Palo Alto Housing in pursuing the project and winning over the neighbors.

“The Ventura neighborhood and their leadership have shown that they are sincere — that they truly value diversity in the community and want to support it and are willing to accept certain trade-offs to achieve that,” Burt said. “The willingness to listen to them and respond to them has just been a breath of fresh air and rea-

lly bodes well for these projects going forward.”

Given the broad community support, the council wasted little time in moving the project forward. Vice Mayor Adrian Fine, a housing advocate whose November 2017 memo prompted a broad revision of the city’s zoning code to encourage more housing, made the motion to approve the Palo Alto Housing proposal.

To ensure the project does not create parking and traffic problems, council members agreed to add a few conditions to their approval. Councilman Tom DuBois added a clause directing staff to evaluate insti-
tutions in the Ventura Parking program in the neighbor-

hood, and Councilwoman Lydia Kou insisted that staff conduct a “comprehensive traffic study” for Ventura — an idea for which many in the neighborhood had clamored.

Those civvies aside, Mayor Eric Filseth called the project “a model for how these things are going to be done.”

“We’ve done is go to benefit everyone in Palo Alto, in Ventura and all the other neighbor-

hoods,” Filseth said.

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@pawEEKLY.com.

Sharon Lynn Defty
July 26, 1939 – December 18, 2018

Sharon Lynn Defty was born in Phoenix, AZ July 26, 1939 to Henry Watson and Ann Ryland Defty. She moved with her two siblings, Peter and Michael, to Los Gatos in 1940 and then Atherton in 1947 and attended Las Lomitas Elementary School. The original thinking instilled in those early years led to a lifetime of Sharon following her passions.

As a child and teen Sharon was an active member of the 4H and loved her animals that she raised at the family farm. Sharon attended Menlo Atherton High School and Brillonmont in Switzerland. She briefly attended the University of Arizona before moving to Paris where she worked as a CIA secretary prior to the Vietnam War. She returned to the states with the intention of attending training for the CIA, but instead took a job with Pan American Airlines where she put to use her French as an international ticketing agent.

On a blind date in San Francisco she met Edward Barry whom she eventually wed. The couple returned to Massachusetts where Ed grew up and eventually settled in Manchester-by-the-Sea. They raised two children, Petica and Gregory, as Sharon continued to expand her resume. Sharon was instrumental in the start of the still thriving Magic Years Cooperative Nursery School. She developed a lifelong passion for remodeling homes while continuing to work as a travel agent and became a certified massage therapist. Sharon also hand made a line of girls bathing suits sold in a boutique on Newbury Street in Boston. She also rediscovered her love for horses and bred prize winning Arabians. Sharon and Ed divorced, but shared a lifelong connection through their children.

When her children were older, Sharon completed her undergraduate degree, and matriculated at Harvard School for Continuation Education, graduating Magna Cum Laude. She taught ESL at MIT’s women league, where she encouraged young women to excel in English as a gateway to their own freedom and power. Sharon’s home was open to international visitors and she hosted lots of happy gatherings. In 2005 Sharon followed her heart back to California and married Alan Babcock. The couple traveled, played music and Sharon sang for the Stanford Choir and became an instructor for toddlers’ music classes. She worked at Restoration Hardware and then Eileen Fisher and remodeled a small cottage in Carmel-by-the-Sea. After divorcing, Sharon enjoyed the remainder of her life with Ulrich Aldag, her many close and richly varied friends, her son, brother, nephews and her daughter’s family in Lake Tahoe.

Sharon will be remembered as someone who took the time to listen and learn everyone’s story. She had a deep and genuine curiosity for the world around her and the people she met. Life was an adventure and lived each day to the fullest.

Sharon passed away December 18th after a six-year battle with Lewis Bodies Dementia which she bravely faced and fought. She is survived by her children, her brother Michael Defty of Novato, four nephews and her son-in-law, Michael, and grandsons Ryland and Westan Lubin. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to Peninsula Open Space Trust.

CityView

A round-up of Palo Alto government action this week

City Council (Jan. 14)

Housing: The council approved a 59-unit affordable housing development at 3700 El Camino Real. Yes: Cormack, Dubois, Filseth, Fine, Kou, Tanaka Absent: Kniss Redwood Circle: The council upheld the planning director’s approval of a two-story home at 3743 Redwood Circle and specified that the home should have glazed windows to protect neighbors’ privacy. Yes: Cormack, Dubois, Filseth, Fine, Kou, Tanaka Absent: Kniss Palo Alto TMA: The council received an annual report on the Palo Alto Transportation Management Association. Action: None

Board of Education (Jan. 15)

Teacher housing: The board directed the superintendent to identify funding sources for a proposal to build affordable housing for regional teachers and staff. Action: None

Magical Bridge: The board approved a revised resolution to apply for $200,000 in matching funds from Santa Clara County to build a Magical Bridge playground at El Carmelo Elementary School. Yes: Baten Caswell, Collins, Dharap, DiBrienza Absent: Dauber Bond committee: The board approved a resolution consolidating oversight of the 2008 and 2018 bond measures into the existing citizens oversight committee. Yes: Baten Caswell, Collins, Dharap, DiBrienza Absent: Dauber Conflict of Interest: The board approved an amended conflict of interest code Yes: Baten Caswell, Collins, Dharap, DiBrienza Absent: Dauber

Architectural Review Board (Jan. 17)

4256 El Camino Real: The board discussed the 100-room hotel proposed for 4256 El Camino Real and voted to continue its discussion to a future date. Yes: Unanimous

380 Cambridge Ave.: The board recommended approving the demolition of three buildings and a new three-story, 35,000-square-foot commercial building at 380 Cambridge Ave. Yes: Unanimous

Palo Alto TMA (continued from page 7)

employees’ involvement in the TMA.

Council members also broadly supported the TMA’s new focus on California Avenue, where the city is preparing to break ground on a new 636-space garage to ad-

dress the area’s chronic parking shortages. Vice Mayor Adrian Fine lauded the TMA’s “good progress” and said he is willing to continue supporting it. When Fine asked whether the California Avenue programs will largely mirror those downtown, George said they would initially, though the TMA would change pro-

grams based on demand.

George said that in his initial discussions with area merchants, he has already sensed great enthusiasm.

“ar is excitement we didn’t see in the early months at all in downtown, when we had some-

one walking through the door and talking about it,” George said.

That said, the TMA is also mindful of its own limitations. Both Raney and Burt are part-
time employees, and the board of directors is composed of volun-
teers, including employees from Palantir, Google, IDEO and the city of Palo Alto. (George, as the representative of small busi-

nesses, is a former Phiz manager who now works for the restaurant Lemonade).

There are also more systemic challenges: those who cannot take transit because of their schedules and those who simply like to drive.

“Whether you’re a poor kid working as a server or a guy who works at a tech company, you love your car,” George said on Monday. “It may be the one bit of quiet you get each day. That’s something that will take us generations to solve, probably.”

Staff Writer Gennady Sheyner can be emailed at gsheyner@pawEEKLY.com.
POLICE CALLS
Palo Alto
Jan. 9–Jan. 15

Violence related
Battery ..... 1
Child abuse ..... 2
Dependent adult abuse ..... 2
Elder abuse ..... 1

Theft related
Commercial burglaries ..... 1
Fraud ..... 4
Grand theft ..... 2
Identity theft ..... 1
Petty theft ..... 11

Vehicle related
Bicycle theft ..... 4
Driving with suspended license ..... 4
Driving without license ..... 3
Lost/stolen plates ..... 1
Parking/driving violation ..... 5
Vehicle accident/mvr, injury ..... 2
Vehicle accident/no injury ..... 2

Alcohol or drug related
Driving under the influence ..... 1
Possession of drugs ..... 1
Possession of paraphernalia ..... 1
Under influence of drugs ..... 1

Miscellaneous
CPS referral ..... 1
Lost/stolen property ..... 1
Found property ..... 3
Info case ..... 3
Juvenile ..... 2

Mental evaluation ..... 3
Missing person ..... 1
Other/misc. ..... 1
Parole arrest ..... 1
Suspicous circumstances ..... 1
Threats/ ..... 2
Vandalism ..... 1
Warrant arrest ..... 5
Warrant/other agency ..... 1

VIOLENT CRIMES
Palo Alto
Old Trace Road, 11/14, 11:48 a.m.; child abuse/physical.
La Caña Court, 12/10, 8 a.m.; child abuse/physical.

El Camino Real, 1/3, 12:25 p.m.; elder abuse/physical.
Campana Drive, 1/6, 7:30 p.m.; child abuse/sexual.
El Camino Real, 1/3, 12:25 p.m.; dependent adult abuse/physical.
180 University Ave., 1/13, 5 p.m.; battery/simple.

We’re Hiring
Full-Time News Reporter

The Almanac, an award-winning community newspaper and online news source that covers the towns of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside, is looking for an enterprising full-time news reporter with a passion for local journalism.

The ideal candidate will have experience covering local government and community news, and the skills to dig up and write engaging news and feature stories for print and online. Our reporters produce monthly cover stories that highlight issues and people in our community.

We’re seeking someone who is motivated, eager to learn, able to quickly turn out finished copy, and who lives in or near the Almanac coverage area. Social media skills are a plus.

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The Almanac

JANUARY 21, 2019
10AM – 1PM

Mitchell Park Community Center
3700 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto

Join Youth Community Service and the City of Palo Alto in a national day to celebrate the legacy and dream of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. for an inclusive community of justice and equality for every child from every background.

★ Live music and performances ★
★ On-site service projects ★
★ Learn about the past from local youth ★
★ Engagement with the community ★
★ Activities for all ages! ★

youthcommunityservice.org/MLK
Thank You Ken!

The employees of DeLeon Realty would like to thank Ken DeLeon for our productive and fantastic end-of-year team trip to Mexico! Thank you for your dedication to improving our quality of life here - from covered health and life insurance, matching 401K plans, paid vacation time, annual 7-day cruises, and more. We are so thankful for your outstanding generosity and commitment to our development!

Sincerely,
DeLeon Team
417 Seneca Street, Palo Alto

Stunning ultra-modern design along with thoughtful details, touches of global influence, and plenty of tech make this 6 bedroom, 4.5 bath home of 5,726 sq. ft. (per seller) on a lot of 10,549 sq. ft. (per county) a pleasure to experience and a comfortable retreat. Newly completed in prestigious Crescent Park and abundant in unique yet fun and functional features that delight at every turn, this property offers design by renowned architect Robert Swain, exceptional amenities, smart and flexible spaces including a detached guesthouse, incredible entertainment potential, whole house automation, while being near the best that Palo Alto Offers. Located in a peaceful setting, residents are a stroll away from vibrant University Avenue and moments to Stanford Shopping Center, and commuting along US 101 while children attend top-ten ranked schools including Addison Elementary (#10 Elementary School in California), Greene Middle (#3 Middle School in California), and Palo Alto High (#4 High School in California) (buyer to verify eligibility).

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B orn into the Mardi Gras In- dian culture in uptown New Orleans, Cha Wa’s lead singer, J’Wan Boudreaux, has lived and breathed street music, pag- enancy and parades ever since his mother dressed him in his first hand-beaded and feathered parade suit when he was just 2. Even now when he’s on break from tour- ing, the 22-year-old can be found playing jazz with brass musicians in a second-line parade on any given Sunday or decked out head-to-toe in full Mardi Gras Indian re- galia singing traditional Indian chants as a “spyboy” responsible for leading his grand- father’s Golden Eagles tribe through neigh- borhood streets on Mardi Gras day.

“I’m a Mardi Gras Indian before I’m anything, so when (Cha Wa) is traveling or hotel room. It’s a skill he learned from his grandfather. “To this day, I’m still learning tricks of the trade,” he said. Having a suit that’s better than anyone else’s on parade days is “the whole point of the Mardi Gras Indians,” he said. It’s a competition, he added.

While the band’s name, “Cha Wa,” is an Indian call used during parades to let other tribes know “we’re comin’ for ya,” the term also could easily describe the band’s rapid advance into neighborhoods beyond New Orleans with its second album “Spyboy.” Released last April, the album has been nominated for a Grammy Award for Best Re- gional Roots Music Album, catapulting the band on a whirlwind tour across the country.

Boudreaux said not everyone is familiar with the Indian chants or style of music, but that doesn’t matter. Most people have a simi- lar reaction when they hear it: “I don’t un- derstand what you’re saying, but I love it!” On Friday, Jan. 25, the band is bringing its eclectic street sound to Stanford’s Bing Studio as part of the 2018-19 Stanford Live concert season celebrating New Orleans mu- sician on the city’s tricentennial.

Boudreaux, who’s still a bit stunned since learning about the band’s Grammy nomi- nation last month, said the band wanted to keep advancing into neighborhoods beyond New Orleans with its second album “Spyboy.”

Mardi Gras Indian J’Wan Boudreaux — dressed in his hand-sewn feathered parade suit when he was just 2. (He’s already getting ready to include his daughter in her first Mardi Gras parade this March, which falls just one day before she reaches 6 months old.)

Boudreaux said he wasn’t always a front- man, or even a good singer. He said while in high school, he would occasionally sing background and ad lib with musicians that toured with his grandfather. When one of the lead singers quit, they told him: “You got to step up or step back.”

“Everything has to elevate at one point in time,” he said. “We’re still stickin’ to the roots, but we’re going somewhere else ... and we’re not the first ones to do it.”

Mardi Gras Indians, including his grand- father, Big Chief Monk Boudreaux — a de- scendant of Native Americans and African slaves, who leads the Golden Eagles tribe — initially helped push the music’s boundaries earlier with the Wild Magnolias, giving many of the traditional songs new life.

For Cha Wa, whose members come from both the brass and Indian worlds and who played together in the streets before join- ing the band, creating their own sound just seemed to come together.

“All the souls got involved in the music. ... Everybody just started putting their instru- ments together and adding their own touch,” Boudreaux said.

The result is a new generation of classic music and street traditions play in his life. Cha Wa brings these New Orleans street traditions together in its music by blending second line brass and funk with the soul- ful chants of the Mardi Gras Indians.

As frontman of Cha Wa, Boudreaux said he hopes to carry on the music and tradi- tions of his culture to a new generation. (He’s already getting ready to include his daughter in her first Mardi Gras parade this March, which falls just one day before she reaches 6 months old.)

Boudreaux said he wasn’t always a front- man, or even a good singer. He said while in high school, he would occasionally sing background and ad lib with musicians that toured with his grandfather. When one of the lead singers quit, they told him: “You got to step up or step back,” he said.

“It came in me, and I just started rolling from there.”

Music and the Mardi Gras Indian culture, “is pretty much everything I know,” Boud-reaux said. “This is what I want to do, and I still have a lot more life to go.”

Associate Editor Linda Taaffe can be emailed at ltaaffe@pawweekly.com.

Cha Wa brings its eclectic blend of New Orleans street music to Stanford
by Linda Taaffe

Mardi Gras Indian J’Wan Boudreaux — dressed in his hand-sewn suit — and his Grammy-nominated band Cha Wa will be bringing their eclectic blend of New Orleans street music to Stanford’s Bing Studio on Friday, Jan. 25. Photo by Kim Welch.

Cha Wa members include founder and drummer Joe Gelini, Clifton “Spug” Smith, Spyboy Thaddeus “Peanut” Ramsey, Ari Teitel, Eric Gordon Jr., Joseph “Jose” Matzie Jr., Hanuka Kikuchi and J’Wan Boudreaux.
Taylor Eigsti holds a local ‘Reunion’

Pianist to perform with mentors, Peninsula Symphony

by Yoshi Kato

T he new year is a time for reflecting back and looking forward, and both were a theme for Menlo Park-raised Taylor Eigsti as he returned to the Peninsula to finish moving things out of his childhood home. Meeting at the Philz Coffee in downtown Palo Alto on the first Thursday of 2019, the pianist/composer/prodigy emeritus of Menlo Park isn’t lost on Eigsti. He’s already enjoyed a two-decade musical career. These Peninsula Symphony “Reunion” concerts will be the first retrospective shows he’s had, acknowledging and reconnecting with three elders. “I’ve had gigs with guys I haven’t played with in a long time, but it’s never been anything official like this,” Eigsti said, in between sips of his Philz Greater Broadway St., Redwood City, where he joined our efforts to produce outstanding journalism and results community information and entertainment to the Midpeninsula. We’re looking for talented, highly-motivated and dynamic people.

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Embarcadero Media is an independent multimedia news organization with over 35 years of providing award-winning local news, community information and entertainment to the Midpeninsula. We are always looking for talented and creative people interested in joining our efforts to produce outstanding journalism and results for our advertisers through print and online.

We currently have the following positions open for talented and outgoing individuals:

- Advertising Sales/Production Admin. Assist the sales and design teams in the production of online and print advertising. Tech savvy, excellent communication and keen attention to detail a must.
- Graphic Designer. Creation/production of print and online ads, including editorial layout, in a fast-paced environment. Publishing experience and video editing a plus.
- Digital Sales Account Representative. Prospect and sell local businesses in our markets who have need to brand and promote their businesses or events using our full-suite of digital solutions. Responsibilities include excellent sales and closing skills on the phone, preparing proposals, maintaining a weekly sales pipeline and ability to hit deadlines and work well under pressure. Sales experience is a plus, but we will consider well-qualified candidates with a passion to succeed.
- News Reporter. Full-time news reporter with a passion for local journalism needed to cover the towns of Menlo Park, Atherton, Portola Valley and Woodside. The ideal candidate will have experience covering education, local government and community news, as well as writing engaging feature stories. Social media skills are a plus.

What: “Reunion” (David Benoit, Taylor Eigsti, Chris and Dan Brubeck with the Peninsula Symphony)
Where: Fox Theatre, 2215 Broadway St., Redwood City
When: Friday, Jan. 25, 8 p.m.
Cost: $10-$75.
Info: Info: Go to peninsulasymphony.org or call 650-941-5291.

READ MORE ONLINE
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For an interview with the new artistic director of Dragon Productions Theatre Company and more arts and entertainment coverage, go to PaloAltoOnline.com/arts.
As Virginia Woolf wrote, “One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well.” It has been my good fortune to write restaurant reviews and related articles for the Palo Alto Weekly and Mountain View Voice for the past 18 years. I’ve probably eaten over a thousand meals in the line of gastronomical duty. Now, my wife and I are at a point in our lives when it is time to move closer to family — our son, daughter-in-law and young grandsons — in Boston. We don’t want to miss out. Time has become a precious commodity.

I have worked with several editors over the years but none finer than the Mountain View Voice’s Andrea Gemmet and the Weekly’s Peninsula Foodist, Elena Kadvany. To them I extend my deepest gratitude. I also want to thank the Weekly’s former Arts and Entertainment editor, Rebecca Wallace, who gave me the freedom to do what I wanted and to publisher Bill Johnson, who stood unwaveringly behind my submissions.

The Midpeninsula might be on the cusp of a golden age of fine dining. Sleepy for too long, the recent infusion of chef-driven restaurants in the area is encouraging. Over the years, readers have written me asking for specific recommendations for birthdays, receptions, office gatherings, reunions and other assemblages. Alas, too often the suggestions I offered were limited to one or two restaurants. That is not the case any longer.

In my years of reviewing, my restaurant visits were never announced until after I had concluded the dining part of the assignment. I operated anonymously and never met a chef or an owner face-to-face. After concluding my visits, I telephoned for background information and secured permission for a staff photographer to take photos. As a courtesy, I let owners and managers know what criticisms I was going to mention in the review to give them a chance to comment. I never accepted a free meal.

I am a freelance writer, meaning, I am not a salaried employee of Embarcadero Media. I have another life, my day job, as they say. For some years, I have been a director and chairman of the board of Hog Island Oyster Company (five restaurants and two oyster farms), a position I will also relinquish in a few months. I have logged over four decades in the Bay Area wine and food industry and have been directly involved with restaurateurs, caterers, wineries, farmers and food producers.

Over the course of my career it was a rare privilege to share tables with Luciano Pavarotti, Julia Child, Charles Chevalier (legendary winemaker of Chateau Lafite Rothschild), White House chef Rene Verdon, famed Basque chef Juan Mari Arzak, legendary California winemakers Joe Swan, Dick Graff, Josh Jensen, and other luminaries. It wasn’t because of my importance, rather, my involvement with people and places who were important at the time.

Yet, my fondest dining memories were the simple dinners with friends and family, at restaurants, or at home where I might grill salmon on a cedar plank over mesquite and serve it with my version of Caesar salad with crispy romaine and garlicky croutons, or slow-roasted achiote pork wrapped in banana leaves and served over Spanish white beans and rice. Desserts, usually homemade ice cream (fig, peach, cinnamon, or strawberry), or possibly a plum tart, poached fruit or some spur of the moment creation.

Yes, Virginia, I have dined well. It’s been a pleasure. Thank you, and bon appetit.

Freelance writer Dale Bentson can be emailed at dbbentson@gmail.com.

After 18 years and more than 1,000 meals, Dale Bentson is ending his tenure as the Palo Alto Weekly’s restaurant reviewer. Photo by Magali Gauthier.
Few artists have held a greater fascination for dramatists than Vincent Van Gogh. He’s been played on film by Kirk Douglas, John Hurt, Tim Roth and Martin Scorsese, and he’s palled around with the Doctor on “Doctor Who.” At this late date, there would seem to be little new to dramatize about a man so often scrutinized on screen. But Julian Schnabel’s “At Eternity’s Gate” finds a filmmaker (and, not incidentally, a painter) in kinship with his subject. Add a deeply resonant performance by Willem Dafoe, and everything old feels new again.

Named after a late-period Van Gogh painting, “At Eternity’s Gate” takes what might be called a post-impressionist tack in telling the story of the greatest post-impressionist painter. Where 2017’s “Loving Vincent” did so visually, Schnabel’s film finds its analogues both visual and dramatic. The casting of Dafoe challenges the literal-minded, given that the actor is in his early 60s and Van Gogh died in his late 30s, while the very fine screenplay by Schnabel, Louise Kugelberg and Jean-Claude Carrière plants the roots for Schnabel’s dreamy drift through Van Gogh’s latter days by suffusing artistic ecstasies, self-dissecting conversations and confusions, and existential torments.

On a surface level, “At Eternity’s Gate” beguiles by shooting at Van Gogh’s old haunting grounds, conveying the sun-dappled beauty of the French countryside in a manner that introduces the reality of the landscape to the vision of the artist (by goosing beautiful cinematography with just-so color-correction, photographic frames magically evoke Van Gogh’s canvases). As impressive as these reveries can be, they arrive to meditatively check the film’s most memorable moments come from its series of penetrating philosophical conversations. Taking Vincent’s loving bond with brother Theo (Rupert Friend) as a given, “At Eternity’s Gate” delves deeper in its duets between the artist and his typically baffled friends and acquaintances. Van Gogh develops a co-dependent friendship with one of the few men who might understand him, fellow painter Paul Gauguin (Oscar Isaac). When he consoles the unappreciated Van Gogh, Gauguin speaks for Schnabel: “You’re surrounded by stupid, wicked, ignorant people.”

Even as Van Gogh’s struggles with mental illness play out, his imagined tête-à-têtes with doctors and priests here allow Schnabel to grant his ill health while still challenging the skewed perceptions that constantly limit the artist. When his detractors paint him with the broad brush of madness, the painter only slips deeper into madness, seeing his clear-headed artistic genius (and his entirely reasonable frustrations) dismissed as crazy. Though Van Gogh’s brushstrokes of geniuses were thick, the line between genius and madman has ever been thin.

Rated PG-13 for some thematic content. One hour, 51 minutes. — Peter Canavese

**Brushstroke of genius**

**‘At Eternity’s Gate’ unlocks the mind of Van Gogh**

Willem Dafoe stars as Vincent Van Gough in “At Eternity’s Gate.”

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**MOVIES NOW SHOWING**

**Movieline**


A Star Is Born (R) ++ +1/2  Century 20: Fri.-Sun.

ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.

At Eternity’s Gate (PG-13) Aquarius Theatre: Fri.-Sun.


ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.

ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.


Guild Theatre: Fri.-Sun.


ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.

Mary Queen of Scots (R) Aquarius Theatre: Fri.-Sun.


ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.


Ralph Breaks the Internet (PG) +++  Century 16: Fri.-Sun.

ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.


ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.


ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.

Unf(x)ed (R) ++ +1/2  Century 16: Fri.-Sun.
ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.

Vice (R) +++  Century 20: Fri.-Sun.
ShowPlace Icon: Fri.-Sun.

Willem Dafoe stars as Vincent Van Gough in “At Eternity’s Gate.”

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Answers to this week’s puzzles, which can be found on page 27.

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Answers to this week’s puzzles, which can be found on page 27.

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**At Eternity’s Gate**

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Title Pages

Stranded in the future

Bay Area time traveler searches for family in ‘Here and Now’

by Michael Berry

East Palo Alto author Mike Chen just released his first novel, ‘Here and Now and Then,’ which follows a time-traveling secret agent from the year 2142 who must return to the Bay Area of the 1990s to find his family.

It’s always time travel have been around at least since the heyday of H.G. Wells. The trick, however, is to find a fresh concept that hasn’t been overworked. You can visit Jesus Christ or save John F. Kennedy only so many times.

With his debut novel, ‘Here and Now and Then,’ East Palo Alto writer Mike Chen finds a new wrinkle in time. Instead of frollicking with dinosaurs or witnessing the heat death of the universe, his characters focus on more mundane, though no less compelling, near-future conflicts, those between parents and children, friends and lovers.

‘Here and Now and Then’ focuses on the adventures of Kin Stewart, a secret agent for the Time Corruption Bureau (TCB), based in 2142. It’s his duty to preserve the integrity of recorded history and hunt down anyone who would attempt to alter the past for their own personal benefit. When a mission goes awry, he finds himself stranded in the Bay Area of the 1990s.

With little choice but to adapt to his predicament, Kin builds a comfortable life for himself in the past, getting married and raising a daughter, Miranda. But then the TCB finds him and returns him to his proper time period, where he has a devoted fiancée who knows nothing about the 18 years he subjectively spent with someone else.

Chen, a San Jose native who grew up in the Almaden Valley neighborhood, earned a mechanical engineering degree from University of California, Davis — but it was a close call. In addition to the requirements for his major, he enrolled in creative writing and comparative literature classes.

One of his Davis instructors — Wendy Sheanin, now with Simon & Schuster publishing company — advised him to change majors. She told Chen: “If you’re not going to do that, keep writing. Take classes, find a critique group,” he said.

Chen followed her advice. He kept writing after college but concentrated on sport journalism, covering the National Hockey League as a freelancer and starting his own hockey blog.

He would eventually write for markets such as Fox Sports, SB Nation, Yahoo Sports and NHL.com.

Chen said his career highlights include interviewing Wayne “The Great One” Gretzky, the leading scorer in NHL history, and discussing guitars and guitarists with NHL guitarist Nicki Stewart.

In addition to working as a full-time engineer, technical writer and project manager, Chen started his own tech/marketing writing business. He said he feels the copywriting makes him a better fiction writer.

“It’s kind of like how an athlete has to work out and practice before they compete in their event. The tech and copywriting is like training. They work out those muscles for craft. When it’s time to write fiction, I find that I’m a much more efficient writer.”

After deciding to step away from writing about hockey, Chen maintained his geek cred by contributing to various high-profile science fiction sites. He also reignited his interest in writing fiction.

‘Here and Now and Then’ is the fifth full-length novel Chen attempted. After his daughter was born, he huddled with bright ideas by watching classic episodes of “Doctor Who.” One particular episode, “School Reunion,” inspired him with his use of time travel. He also was fond of “The Inner Light,” an episode of “Star Trek: The Next Generation” in which Capt. Picard spent decades in the past.

“Both of those really deal with the impact of missing time on relationships and friendships,” he said.

In developing his own style, Chen also took inspiration from mainstream writers, including Nick Hornby, author of “About a Boy” and “High Fidelity.”

“I really loved his (literary) voice and how he could express the moment in an interpersonal drama without it becoming too cheesy or melodramatic,” Chen said. “I wanted to take that feeling and apply it to science fiction.”

‘Here and Now and Then’ definitely straddles genres, mixing comedy, drama and good old “sense of wonder.” Best by memory problems and warned that another trip to the past could be fatal, Kin embarks on a rogue mission in defiance of TCB guidelines.

He is horrified to learn that after he disappeared from her life without explanation, Miranda also endured the cancer death of her mother. The two traumas pushed her onto a path that eventually led to a prison sentence.

Determined to undo his mistakes, Kin starts a conversation across time with his daughter, but the more he meddles, the more he endangers her. When TCB agents are dispatched to kill Miranda to protect the integrity of time itself, Kin knows he must prepare himself to sacrifice everything to save her.

Despite the availability of time travel, Chen’s vision of 2142 isn’t radically removed from the present time, but it does differ in some significant ways.

“It’s making some minor assumptions about the overall temperature being a little warmer and that the future rainforests being affected by climate change,” Chen said. “You can probably tell that I’m a pretty progressive person. I’ve tried to make it clear that in the future gay people can be married and have children and it’s no big deal. I want to write the future I want to see for my daughter when she grows up.”

Chen said that he builds his characters “in layers.” They may be kick-ass, but they have flaws. For example, the main character Kin is an overworked dad. You can see this in real life, he thought.

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Chen currently has a two-book deal with his publisher and he has already turned his second manuscript, “The Pause,” to his publisher. Scheduled to be published in January 2020 and tentatively titled “The Pause,” it is set in the aftermath of a global pandemic. It should give Chen the chance to lend his personal touch to another tried-and-true sci-fi trope — the end-of-the-world novel.

Freelance writer Michael Berry can be emailed at mikeberry@mindspring.com.

What: Mike Chen will talk about his new book with author Maggie Shen King.
When: 7 p.m., Wednesday, Jan. 20.
Cost: Free.
Info: For more information, go to Booksinc.net.
The good news is that in winter, your yard tends to look greener from far away, even if up close that low-growing green carpet is really a patch of weed sprouts.

The bad news, according to Master Gardener Rebecca Schoenenberger, is if you don’t deal with those weeds now, you will see the 3-foot feisty deep-rooted version in your lawn in spring.

Schoenenberger, who also owns landscape design company California Nativescapes, teaches a workshop on weeds and weeding through the UC Extension’s master gardener program.

That green mist in your yard, she said, is actually sending you some warnings: Controlling us is an on-going gardening activity (pencil us in on your calendar); a single weed produces 223,200 to 250,000 seeds per plant each season; we have un favorable (some will remain dormant until the next season). In other words, not all seeds will germinate when conditions are favorable, some potential dormancy may remain until next season.

Schoenenberger teaches her students to slowly ratchet up their battle plans as the need progresses. Stop the seed cycle by pulling or removing weeds as soon as possible. Plant beneficial plants densely to suppress weeds. Use mulch on blank spots to prevent weed growth.

Every garden is different and so are gardeners. Some swear by one thing and others another.

“I find weed cloth can be more effective in rock or cactus gardens, where you don’t necessarily care about building up healthy soil,” she said. Generally, she warns against using the black or gray fabric because the sun still shines through it.

With a lawn, she said, “It kind of depends on what’s coming up.” Annual grasses in a lawn will just die off. Most lawns usually come in on a blend of fescue and rye (90-10), she said. “What often happens, most people let everything die off, and the landscapers mow it down.”

One approach to killing weeds is to kill weeds as soon as they come up. Uniform weeds can be controlled by a single application of a post-emergent one may be called "weed whacker." If you need to pull weeds, she uses a ‘hori hori,’ also known as a small knife, to do the job.

Schoenenberger points out that sometimes one person’s weed is another’s native plant. She cites an old book called “Weeds of the West,” which is actually full of today’s gardeners would call beneficial native plants.

If you consider fungi, such as mushrooms, to be weeds, Schoenenberger said to pick them as soon as you see them and as fresh as possible before they have a chance to drop spores, especially if you have pets. But if you don’t mind leaving them, mushrooms do serve as your garden’s “decomposer,” eating old tree stumps and roots.

The critical thing, she said, is catching weeds as they start to grow. As the days start warming, it’s important to take out particularly aggressive weeds like foxtails (also called foxtail barley) early to stop the weed-to-seed cycle.

While Schoenenberger, the master gardener program, and UC’s Integrated Pest Management program all advocate for gradual levels of removal, she said in some cases, a pre-emergent spray (which prevents weeds from growing) or a post-emergent one may be called for. She cautions gardeners to read chemical labels very carefully, cover skin and wear respiratory protection. All of the chemicals sold in nurseries, she points out, are “legally safe.”

If you can clear out the seeds, or even go ahead and “whack” tall weeds down with a “weed whacker,” that should be done first. After that, the easiest thing is to add a good layer of mulch. Mulch can be anything from bags from a nursery to tree chippings. Some local garbage companies also make chips from old wood pallets and other wood products and offer them as mulch.

Elizabeth Lorenz is the Home and Real Estate Editor at the Palo Alto Weekly.

**EXAMPLES OF WEEDS YOU SHOULD REMOVE:**

1. Purslane — Portulaca oleracea (summer annual broadleaf)
2. Burclover — Medicago polymorpha (annual broadleaf)
3. Cheeseweed (Mallow) — Malva parviflora (winter annual broadleaf)
4. Fillaree — Erodium spp. (winter annual & sometimes biennial)
5. Crabgrass — Digitaria spp. (annual grass)
6. Bluegrass — Poa annua (winter annual grass)
7. Dandelion — Taraxacum officinale (simple perennial)
8. Bermuda Grass — Cynodon dactylon (creeping perennial)
9. Bermuda Buttercup — Oxalis pes-caprae (bulb perennial)
10. Wood Sorrel — Oxalis corniculata (creeping perennial)
11. Nutsedge — Cyperus spp. (bulb perennial)
12. Burning Nettle — Urtica urens (annual broadleaf)
13. Stinging Nettle — Urtica dioica (annual broadleaf)
14. Scarlet Pimpernel — Anagallis arvensis (winter or summer annual)
15. Puncturevine — Tribulus terrestris (summer annual)
16. Field Bindweed — Convolvulus arvensis (perennial broadleaf)
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4 Bedrooms
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Sat/Sun Midtown Realty, Inc. 924-5728

4 Bedrooms
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Sat 2-4/Sun 1-4 Coldwell Banker 465-6210

MOUNTAIN VIEW
4 Bedrooms
571 Piazza Dr $1,750,000
Sat/Sun 2-4 Coldwell Banker 855-9700

PALO ALTO
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Sat/Sun Midtown Realty, Inc. 815-5410

3 Bedrooms
1891 Channing Av $2,950,000
Sat/Sun Coldwell Banker 465-6210

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Sat 2-3/Sun 2-4 Golden Gate Sotheby's International Realty 281-8028

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New Years Resolutions
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COURT ORDER ...Sophomore Collin Jordan recorded 14 kills on .667 hitting and the Menlo College men’s volleyball team earned its first victory of the season, beating visiting UC Merced, 25-15, 25-21, 25-21, in a nonconference match Wednesday. Edin Ilharimovic added eight kills for the Oaks (1-1), who host Westcliff University in a pair of nonconference matches on Jan. 25 and 26, at 7 p.m. both days. Menlo College’s Destiny Bowie was named the Golden State Athletic Conference Women’s Basketball Player of the Week, winning the honor for the third time in five weeks, a first for a Menlo athlete. In addition, Bowie was named NAIA National Player of the Week.

NATIONAL RANKINGS Menlo-Atherton senior Launee McDonnell has joined fellow senior teammate Folasade Akinola as a nationally-ranked wrestler on USA Wrestling and Folkstyle’s second National Girls High School rankings, with input from the National Wrestling Hall of Fame. Akinola was moved to No. 7 from No. 18 in the 180 division while McDonnell debuts at No. 17 in the 138 division. McDonnell reached the third round of the Napa Valley Classic in her most recent competition. Akinola, who placed second at last year’s state meet, made her season debut at the Classic, winning one of three matches. Menlo-Atherton will compete at the Lady Baler Bash on January 25 and 26, at 7 p.m. both days.

MENLO SOCCER

The 126-pound wrestler pinned his opponent in the first period of a Peninsula Athletic League match and won the individual title in his weight class. Akinola, who went on to play at UC San Diego and is one of the great people you’ll meet, was named NAIA National Player of the Week. Akinola moved to No. 7 from No. 18 in the 180 division while McDonnell debuts at No. 17 in the 138 division. McDonnell reached the third round of the Napa Valley Classic in her most recent competition. Akinola, who placed second at last year’s state meet, made her season debut at the Classic, winning one of three matches. Menlo-Atherton will compete at the Lady Baler Bash on Saturday, Jan. 26 in Hollister.

Palo Alto basketball

The kids followed the success of a Peninsula Athletic League match and won the individual title in his weight class. Akinola, who went on to play at UC San Diego and is one of the great people you’ll meet, was named NAIA National Player of the Week. Akinola moved to No. 7 from No. 18 in the 180 division while McDonnell debuts at No. 17 in the 138 division. McDonnell reached the third round of the Napa Valley Classic in her most recent competition. Akinola, who placed second at last year’s state meet, made her season debut at the Classic, winning one of three matches. Menlo-Atherton will compete at the Lady Baler Bash on Saturday, Jan. 26 in Hollister.

First place on the line for Menlo, Pinewood

by Glenn Reeves

In recent years Eastside Prep has been Pinewood’s primary competition in West Bay Athletic League girls basketball. This season, after a 40-34 win over Eastside on Jan. 5, Menlo School has placed itself alongside Pinewood at the top of the WBAL Foothill Division standings. And on Friday the Knights (15-1, 4-0) travel to Pinewood (14-1, 4-0) for a 6 p.m. game with undisputed possession of first place on the line.

“We’re very excited about Friday night’s game,” Menlo coach John Payne said. “Pinewood is a tough place to play. They’re notorious for the way they come out of the gym and jump all over people right off the bat.” The Panthers are also looking forward to the game.

“We’re excited for the game,” Pinewood coach Doc Scheppler said. “The girls love playing Fri night games at home. We’re playing for first place. We’ll be extremely motivated, not only to play Menlo.”

The additional motivation comes in the form of Pinewood assistant coach Miranda Seto, a former Pinewood player and 2011 graduate, being inducted into the Pinewood Hall of Fame in a ceremony at halftime.

“Miranda was a great player at Pinewood who went on to play at UC San Diego and is one of the great people you’ll meet,” Scheppler said.

Pinewood, a longtime small-schools power, has catapulted itself in recent years into the upper reaches of California girls basketball. In 2016 the Panthers advanced to the Northern California Open Division championship game after a stunning upset at nationally No. 1-ranked St. Mary’s of Stockton. Last year the Panthers outlasted undefeated Mitty, again the top-ranked team in the nation, for an epic triple-overtime victory in the NorCal Open Division championship game.

“The kids followed the success of Pinewood had in that remarkable season last year,” Payne said. “I have followed what they’ve done for the league the last six to eight years.”

The teams know each other well. Two of Menlo’s players -- Avery Lee and Coco Layton -- have played for the Fever, Scheppler’s AAU team.

The last time Menlo beat Pinewood was in a sweep in the 2011-2012 season. That was the last time anybody beat Pinewood in any league game.

ATHLETES OF THE WEEK

Catie Cassani

MENLO SOCCER

The senior scored two goals in a nonleague win over University High and followed that with two goals, including the game winner, in a come-from-behind victory over the defending WBAL champion Notre Dame Belmont.

Joshua Meyers

MENLO-ATHERTON WRESTLING

The 126-pound wrestler pinned his opponent in the first period of a Peninsula Athletic League match against Aragon and then won the individual title in his weight class at the Jim Root Memorial tournament over the weekend.

Honorable mention

Katie Feareon

Castilleja basketball

Hannah Jump*

Pinewood basketball

Ila Lane*

Palo Alto basketball

Avery Lee*

Menlo basketball

Maggie Malecik

Menlo-Atherton soccer

Annikha Shah

Palo Alto basketball

Watch video interviews of the Athletes of the Week, go to PASportsOnline.com

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Matchup highlights WBAL as ‘league of champions’

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

M-A is perfect in PAL play

T he Menlo-Atherton boys basketball team is so hot, coach Mike Mohr got his own bobblehead and it’s a close resemblance.

The Bears, who beat Mills, 71-38, on Wednesday, take an unbeaten Peninsula Athletic League South Division record and a nine-game winning streak into Friday’s 7:45 p.m. game against host Woodside, which marks the end of the first half of PAL play.

Menlo-Atherton, which held a three-point edge at halftime, turned the game into a rout by firing on all cylinders to open the second half. And it wasn’t any one individual who carried the load as six different Bears contributed on a 19-0 run to open the third quarter.

James Beckwith made four 3-pointers and scored 16 points to lead the Bears (13-3, 5-0), who also held Mills scoreless for more than six minutes during the rally.

Nick Tripaldi and Will Beasley hit back-to-back 3-pointers to get the run started. Heath Hooper hit a pair of free throws, Justin Anderson scored and Skylar Thomas hit a bucket before Mills called its first timeout.

M-A never slowed down, with Thomas scoring his seventh 3-pointer before Mills finally ended the run with under two minutes to play in the third.

Menlo-Atherton out-scored the Vikings, 48-18 in the second half after holding a slim 23-20 edge at halftime.

Mills held the lead for the first 12 minutes of the game. That’s when Beckwith knocked down consecutive 3-pointers to give M-A the lead for good.

Thomas added 13 points for the Bears and Beasley had 10.

In another PAL game, Burlingame topped Woodside, 67-42. The Wildcats (5-12, 0-5) have lost five straight.

In West Bay Athletic League
Boys basketball
(continued from page 26)

action, Eastside Prep handed several teams a ‘get-out-of-jail’ card in the form of a 53-52 home victory over previously unbeaten The King’s Academy.

The Panthers (6-6, 3-1) are among those who benefited, of course, as did Menlo School and Sacred Heart Prep each of which woke up Wednesday morning with a share of first place with a pair of games remaining in the first round of league play.

Eastside Prep had to adjust its schedule to accommodate its first-year boys coach Donovan Blythe. Yep, he’s still coaching the girls team. He loves coaching. And coaching boys is nothing new. Blythe has extensive coaching experience at many levels.

The challenge was to make sure he gave both teams the necessary attention. If the TKA victory is any indication, he’s been successful.

It helps to have the same coaching staff he has with the girls team. Also to have a player like Isaiah Saams-Hoy, who has produced 40 points in a game at least once this season.

Friday may be a bit of a stretch. His girls’ team plays at Sacred Heart Prep at 5 p.m. and the boys team plays at Pinewood at 7:30 p.m.

Meanwhile, Menlo went on the road to beat Harker, 64-40, Priory stayed home to beat Pinewood, 50-30 and Sacred Heart Prep had a fun trip to Crystal Springs Up-lands, winning 82-54.

Sacred Heart Prep (7-7, 4-1) has the benefit of going to the foul line for 35 free throws against the Gryphons. Those 23 makes went a long way into produc- ing the 28-point victory.

Charlie Selna took advantage, making 5 of 9 on his way to 13 points, one of four Gators to reach double figures in scoring. Jai Desh-pande led the team with 15 points. Brendan Carney added 12 and Aidan Braeza had 10.

Sacred Heart Prep stays at home Friday night, welcoming Priory (6-9, 1-4) for a 6:30 p.m. start. Priory beat Pinewood (9-6, 1-4) on the strength of a trio of double-figure scorers. Dave Ajakanu-Makan scored 15 points, Zach Zifran added 15 and Matthew Covington had 12.

Cole Kastner scored 24 points to lead Menlo (10-4, 4-1) past the Eagles. The junior added seven rebounds, five steals and three assists. Sophomore Chris Cook scored all eight of his points in the fourth quarter.

Girls basketball
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Boys basketball
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Pine wood is led by Hannah

Avery Lee averages 16.5 points a game.

We’ve got to handle the ball and make some shots.”

Pinewood is led by Hannah

Jump (16.3 points, 6.8 rebounds), who is headed to Stanford, and Yake-bound Klara Astrom (12.9 points, 8.0 rebounds). The Pan- thers have won four WBAL games by an average margin of more than 47 points per game. But Scheppeler has not been pleased with his team’s shooting.

“We’re not playing at full capa-

ble,” Scheppeler said. “We shot 9 of 42 from 3 against Notre Dame-Belmont, 3 of 21 against Priory. I don’t know if it’s the way teams are playing us, giving us the drive to take away the 3, or what. We have yet to get a Pinewood rhythm going.”

Going 14-1 and winning in league by 47 points per outing without a “Pinewood rhythm go-

ing?” A scary thought for Men-

lo and other future Pinewood opponents.

Menlo-Atherton created a Mike Moleri bobble head.

Boys basketball
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Girls basketball
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...and with their driving ability, going 14-1 and winning in league by 47 points per outing without a “Pinewood rhythm going?” A scary thought for Menlo and other future Pinewood opponents.
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