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THE Rockridge News

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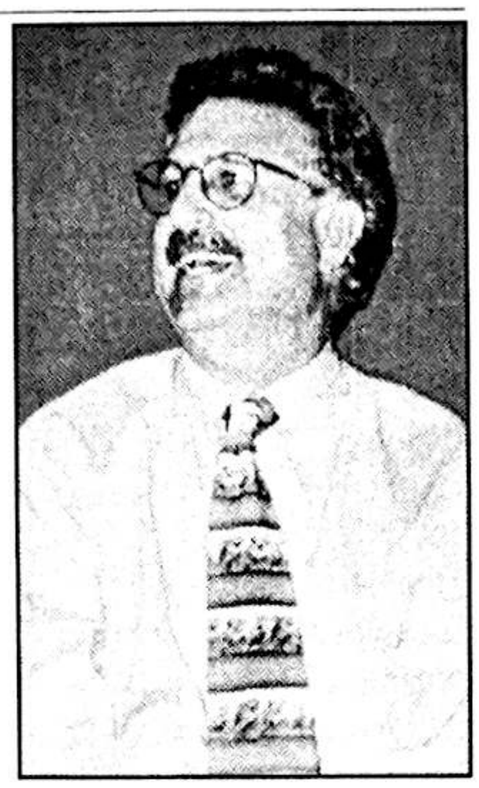
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New Oakland School Boss Describes Work Ahead

Just a few months into his job, Oakland School Superintendent Dennis Chaconas already has a plan and is confident he can fix our schools

by Cy Gulassa



Sporting a surfer tie and a friendly smile, Oakland Schools Superintendent Dennis Chaconas shows solid leadership qualities.

Photo: Cy Gulassa

After listening to new Oakland School Superintendent Dennis Chaconas speak at Carter Middle School recently, it's easy to conclude that the Oakland School Board — too often reviled for its ineptness — showed wisdom in selecting him to succeed Interim Superintendent George Musgrove.

Chaconas is a nice guy — charming, folksy, accessible — with a "pinch me" attitude about his elevation to the head of the 53,000-student district. But don't let his surfer necktie and rumpled blazer fool you. He has all the qualities that go into solid leadership — experience, vision and the toughness to achieve. His stints as principal of Carter Middle School (when he was only 27), and principal of Oakland Tech gave him in-depth knowledge of how the Oakland system operates, he told the 100 parents, teachers and residents who came to check him out. As Superintendent of the Alameda School District, he proved he has the vision and strength to turn around a $4-million deficit and radically improve student success.

Chaconas believes OUSD suffers from several systemic problems

See "Chaconas," page 9

Rockridge BIG Loser in Caldecott Tunnel Debate

by Ronnie Spitzer

With another bore for the Caldecott Tunnel looking more and more like a *fait accompli*, Alameda County participants are asking what the purpose of the Highway 24 Corridor study was. Even before a recommendation could be issued by the corridor study's Policy Advisory Committee, Governor Davis on April 6 proposed $20 million from the state budget surplus to start the construction of another tunnel. This action not only blindsided the committee, it signaled that the Governor doesn't much value community input.



At the April 21 PAC meeting, the MTC's consultant estimated a two-lane bore would cost $185 million and a three-lane bore $351 million.

Although MTC says no funding has been secured, it is clear that Interregional Transportation Funds are being sought, and that Contra Costa officials believe the cost is reasonable.

What is most distressing about the project is that none of the $4 million set aside for environmental mitigations will apply to Rockridge. The MTC suggested that since no additional highway capacity such

See "Rockridge Traffic," page 10

RCPC General Meeting Agenda

Thursday, May 18, 7:30 p.m.
Rockridge Branch Library
5366 College Avenue (at Manila)

May RCPC Meeting: School for Zoning?

Revised CCAC student housing proposal to be discussed in the context of zoning rules, proposed changes

by Chad Thompson, RCPC Zoning and Design Review Committee Chair

The area along Broadway between 51st Street and Broadway Terrace is a car-oriented landscape busy with traffic and not particularly inviting or pedestrian friendly. The contrast with the smaller scale, pedestrian oriented feel of the surrounding neighborhood is a reason this location was chosen as a "test area" by the city's zoning update team. The zoning update is a multi-year project to completely revise

See "Meeting: Zoning," page 3

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book corner



Photo: Chris Ahlstrand

by Gay Ducey Children's Librarian

On Picking What to Read

The old Houston Public Library is the first one I remember. We took the bus down Bissonet Street and stepped out into a shady block of pecans and magnolias, with the grand old building in the middle. No air conditioning in those days, so it was very warm in the library most of the time and ceiling fans moved the air around. I was perfectly happy there. My parents left me in the children's room and came back awhile later to collect me and to shorten the ambitious stack of books I wanted to borrow. We read all the way home.

When summer began I staked out a place in the fig tree or on the sofa and read there for much of the summer, between racing and romping. My mother never inquired into my reading choices, nor did my father. I poked around that big library, sometimes wandering into the adult section for a book or two to add to my stack. I was an eclectic reader, although most of my choices were located on the first three shelves, which was as high as I could reach. I could claim that my parents were too respectful of my privacy to adjudicate my literary selections, but it would not be true. They simply didn't think much about it and were generally pleased that I read such a lot. No one ever took me in hand and asked a librarian to recommend a good book, so I went about it randomly, sometimes finding marvelous surprises, sometimes not. There's something to be said for that approach, but I wish that I had had some advice from time to time for I missed a lot. I had my own children before I read Winnie the Pooh.

Oakland Public Library carves out a judicious middle ground in this debate. We design the summer Reading Program for discreet encouragement, while not averse to inducements in the form of small treats and trinkets. This year kids will count, not titles, but time. This is a pretty compulsive deal, but it seems to work, particularly for leveling the playing field. My daughter would have tangoed right through the eight books we previously required, while my son would have drooped with the effort. So the kids will sign up (after June 15th) and start reading. Tick-tock,tick-tock. Every hour or so there's a prize.

The other big news is that there is also a teenager reading program. This is our second year. Kids sign up, read, and write a review. We post these, and we will learn a lot from our wise readers, if last summer is any indication. We give away cool stuff, too. But this summer the teen's program for 12- to 18-year-olds is "Celebrating the Arts in Oakland," and a teen can write a review of any of several cultural events. The review might be a watercolor, or whatever (we're flexible). At the end we will have a party for our teen participants.

How about it? We do hope you'll join us.

Rockridge librarians are looking for volunteers in middle or high school to help run the summer reading program. Volunteers are welcome to come for just a few hours, or for a regular shift. Call Gay Ducey or Thanh Ho for more information at 597-5017, or drop by the branch.

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SEE COMMUNITY CALENDAR, PAGE 12 FOR LIBRARY PROGRAM DETAILS.

The Rockridge News

The Rockridge News, founded in 1986 by Don Kinkead, is published monthly in Oakland and is sponsored by the Rockridge Community Planning Council, a non-profit public benefit organization founded to: preserve and enhance the unique character of the Rockridge neighborhood; promote the health, safety and quality of life of its residents; furnish a forum for community involvement, and provide leadership and representation of neighborhood interests.

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Oakland's Zoning Update Project

Oakland's zoning regulations are now undergoing massive revisions that include consolidating the existing 60 zones into 19.

by Clare Langley-Hawthorne

The City of Oakland is currently revising its planning and zoning regulations to make them consistent with the General Plan, adopted in March 1998, which outlines a vision for Oakland development over the next 20 years. The existing codes are being updated and changed to provide a more user-friendly framework for the review and approval of projects, and to strike a balance between the interests of residents, owners, and the character of neighborhoods. The new regulations will also govern non-conforming uses and clarify live/work rules.

The update process consists of two phases. The first, to be completed by year's end, focuses on regulations transferring new land use classifications in the General Plan to specific zones. The second phase will produce a draft zoning map incorporating the changes. The City Council will review and consider the map later this year.

The Zoning Update Committee which oversees the project has already held a series of public meetings. The first sought input on the overall framework for the proposed new planning code, which will employ a land-based system that will consolidate the current 60 zones into 19.

Subsequent meetings examined the decision making, review and appeal process under the new code. After the Oakland Hills fire, residential design review became a major concern. Neighbors complained of inadequate notice of proposed changes to properties even when proposals substantially affected their property. The committee emphasized that the new code needs to achieve a balance between discretionary review and development rights

The committee also discussed a new classification system for non-conforming uses, i.e., once-legal land uses no longer allowed because of zoning regulation changes. These range from benign impact (a small, multi-unit building) to high impact (an industry in a residential area). The proposed new regulations will focus on the neighborhood impact of nonconforming uses rather than their industrial classification.

The committee proposed licensing for problem uses (those with a high impact on neighbors) including palm readers, fast food, liquor stores, needle exchange facilities and restaurants (odor and garbage), and varied standards based on degree of impact. Granting high-impact licenses would depend, in part, on the testimony of neighbors.

Future public meetings will discuss live/work regulations, commercial/industrial zones, downtown development and residential zoning. For meeting dates and detailed information, visit www.oaklandnet.com and click on the Zoning Update hot link.

Meeting: Zoning

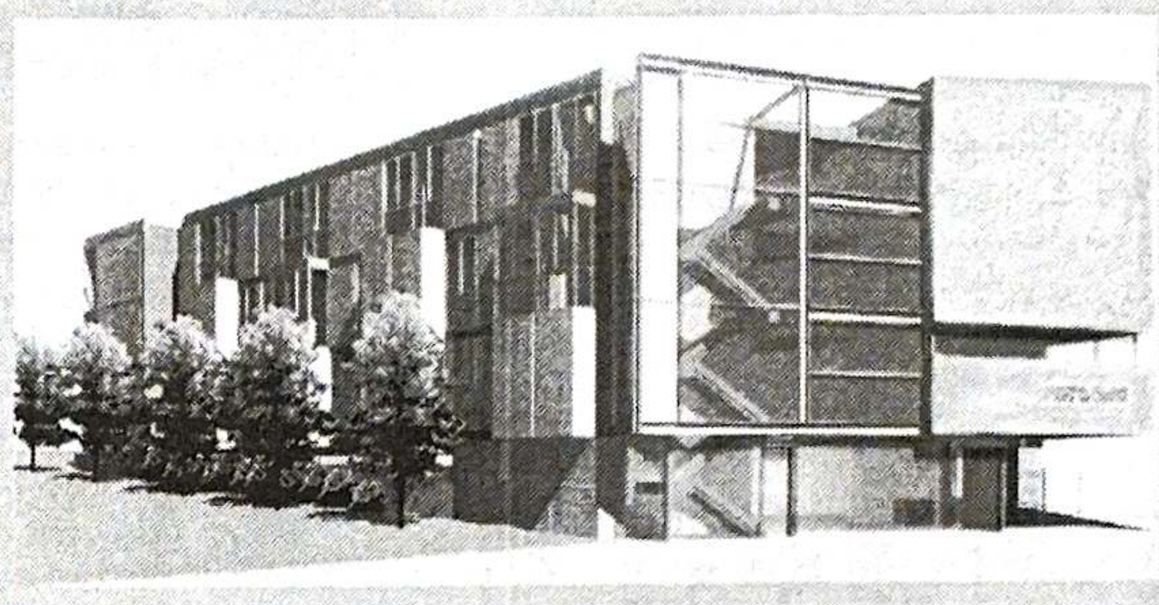
from page 1

and update the planning code. Decisions made now will have a direct impact on the quality of life in our neighborhood over the coming years.

Zoning can sometimes seem like the province of experts, bureaucrats, policy wonks, and lawyers until a real project brings the provisions into sharp focus. Suddenly all that impenetrable language becomes vitally specific when issues of views, bulk, and parking are raised by a proposed major project.

At the May RCPC general meeting, the latest revisions to the proposed student housing project at the corner of Broadway and Broadway Terrace will be presented by Architect Mark Horton. This project will be considered under the current zoning code. Deborah Diamond of the city planning department will present an update on the general zoning project, focusing on any changes which might affect a project like the CCAC proposal.

Come to this important meeting to learn about and discuss these vital issues affecting our neighborhood. For further information contact RCPC at 814-6060 or E-mail chadthom@concentric.net



Broadway view of the proposed front elevation of the CCAC dorm/parking structure. See Agenda, page 1.

— from a print-out supplied by architect Mark Horton.

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Rain or Shine, Earthday Volunteers Turn Out

Earth Day volunteers cut bushes, trim trees and catch their breath while cleaning up 51st Street.

Photo left and below: Susan Montauk

by Susan Montauk

Rain-gear clad volunteers braved inclement weather on Saturday, April 22, to participate in this 3rd successive TemeRock Garden Club Earthday project on 51st Street.

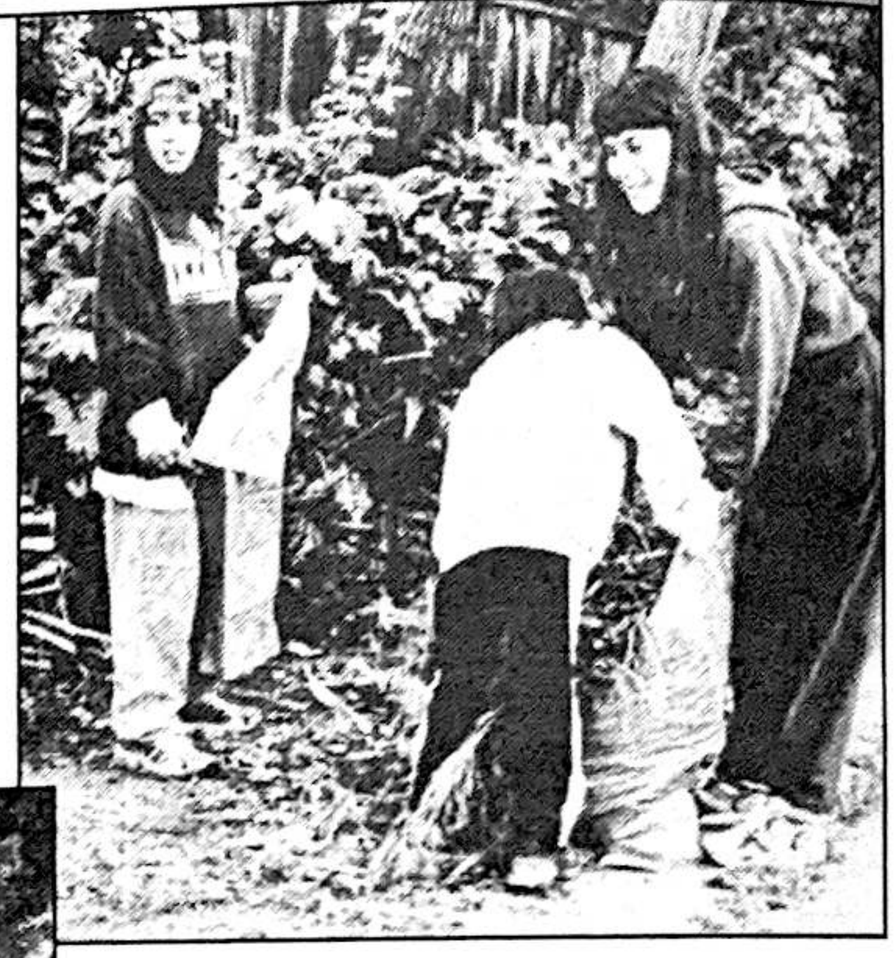
Toting personal garden tools and making selections from the giant loppers, shovels and brooms provided by the Oakland Parks Department, they chose spots from Telegraph to Lawton Avenues to chop away at vines, pull tenacious weeds and clean up refuse in order to restore the area to its springtime beauty. A morning snack fortified them in their labors and a noontime lunch, Earth Day T-shirts, and the satisfaction of a job well-done were their reward.

Food and drink were donated by Albertson's, Grocery Outlet, Market Hall Caterers and Red Tractor Cafe.

Interested in joining the TemeRock Garden Club? Call 547-3855.







Earth Day volunteers came from all over the neighborhood to donate their time and skills.

Above, Mary Johnson of 39th Avenue with a full bag.

Top right: taking a lunch break under the sign announcing the clean-up project.

At right, the Zumbro family of Clifton Avenue trims and bags together.

Below, Patrick Cullinane of Miles Avenue with the fruits of his labor.

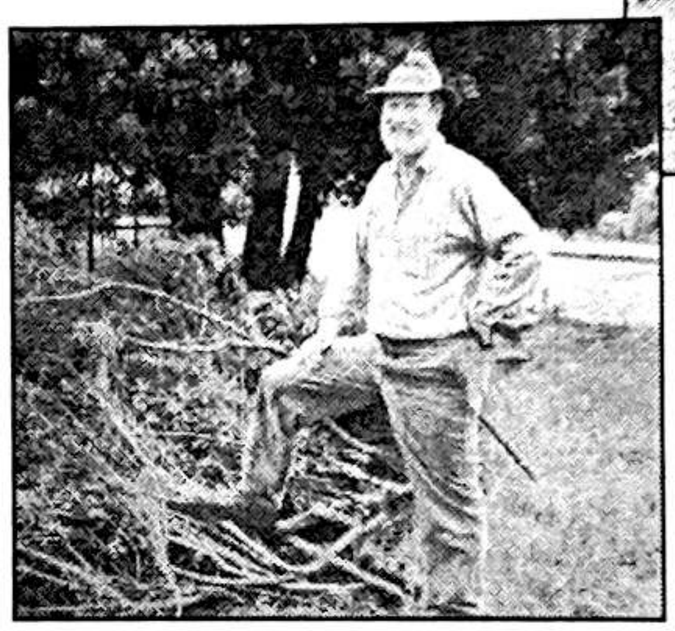


Photo left: Susan Montauk
Above: Lydia Gans

changes ON COLLEGE

by Theresa Nelson

Spasso Coffeehouse

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The new owner of Spasso, Reza Salehi, will launch a new menu in May and add to the cafe's offerings. Former owner Hamid Rasafar is taking some time off. *The Rockridge News* readers will recall that, after Hamid was wounded in a robbery at the store, he made an amazing recovery. Many Rockridge neighbors volunteered and worked in the cafe to keep the doors open during his hospitalization and recovery.

The Conga Room

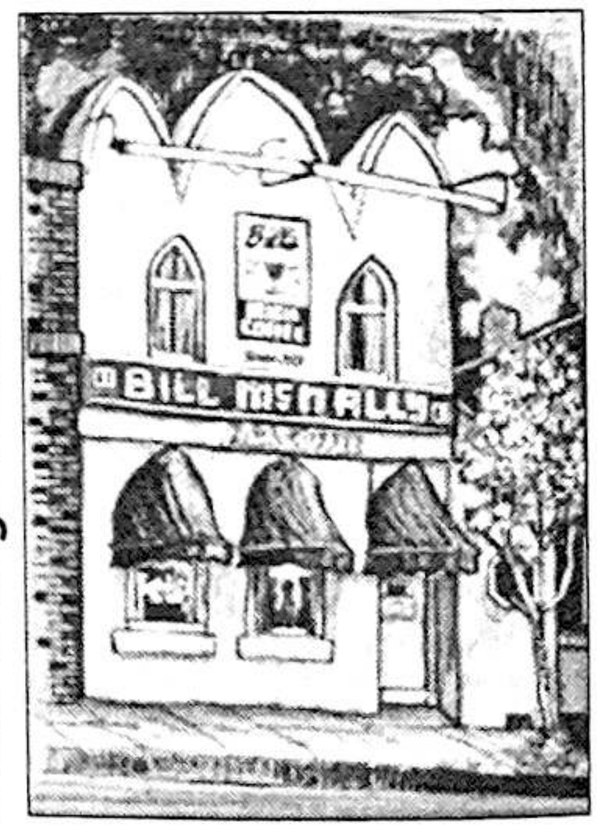
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The Conga Room has opened, above Pizza Rustica, 5422 College Avenue. The Polynesian-themed bar features exotic drinks and creative appetizers, along with plastic pineapples, wooden tiki gods, and fishnets on the walls.

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Your Neighborhood Pub

Rockridge Resident Joins Oakland Public Ethics Commission

by Theresa Nelson,
RCPC Board Member

Last November, Willie J. Smith, a 30-year Rockridge resident, was appointed to the Oakland Public Ethics Commission (PEC). A Vietnam veteran, Willie retired as a logistics manager from Alameda Naval Air Station after 30 years, and began expanding his volunteer involvement in the community. Intrigued by the call for concerned citizens to join the Public Ethics Commission, he applied and was appointed by a majority vote of the Commission. Recently we talked about the Public Ethics Commission, what it does, and how Willie sees his role as a Commissioner.

TN: *Tell us about your background and personal history.*

WS: I'm from Ohio originally, and joined the Navy in 1962, spending much of my time at Leemore Naval Base near Fresno. In 1966 I came to Oakland to see some friends, liked the area, and started at Alameda Naval Air Station as a mechanic, working up to logistics manager. I also completed my B.S. at Cal State Hayward in Management Science. I met my wife, Cheri Shoemaker, when I was in the Navy and she was a college student. She was master of ceremonies for a youth program in the Hanford area, and in my spare time I was the lead singer in a rhythm & blues band. We've been together ever since.

TN: *You raised your family in Oakland as well?*

WS: Yes, we've lived in Rockridge for 30 years and have three children: Aubrey is entering medical school, Nicole is a media attorney with Disney Studios, and Peter is a special Agent with the California Department of Justice. Cheri is an American Sign Language instructor at Vista College in Berkeley.



The mission of PEC, the Public Ethics Commission, is to promote the highest confidence in the government of the City of Oakland.

Ethics Commission Appointee
Willie J. Smith

TN: *What got you involved in community work?*

WS: I've always felt that Oakland has been beat up — unfairly — in the press, and that Oakland is far better than the negative media image. When I retired, my daughter got me involved in Habitat for Humanity and a community health fair, and something just clicked for me.

TN: *So why volunteer for the Public Ethics Commission?*

WS: The mission of PEC, the Public Ethics Commission, appeals to me: to promote the highest confidence in the government of the City of Oakland. It means that everything that is the public's business should be public, except what is legally required to be closed by the charter. PEC does several things I think are important: 1) helps citizens get easier access to public information, 2) educates city officials, candidates, boards and commissions, and staff about ethics, 3) investigates complaints about ethics violations, 4) recommends changes in law to promote ethics in government, and 5) sets a standard, by example, for ethical conduct. Originally PEC set the salaries for the City Council [before I was appointed], now we only recommend increases based on the Consumer Price Index; other increases must go before the voters.

TN: *What are the major issues confronting PEC?*

WS: Enforcing the Sunshine [open government] Ordinance and the Campaign Reform Act [campaign finance and contributions], and working to draft the new lobbyist registration ordinance. Most of the complaints we hear are about Sunshine Act violations and campaign finance issues. Citizens have the right to file a complaint against any official — the City Council, the Mayor, members of boards and commissions, the City Manager, City Attorney, City Auditor, and any employee of the City for ethics violations. [The Oakland School Board is not covered by PEC].

TN: *What happens when someone files a complaint?*

WS: The complaint goes to the Commission's Executive Director, who must decide within 30 days if there is probable cause, in which case it is forwarded to PEC for investigation. We review the complaint and seek an opinion from the City Attorney or outside legal counsel. If there is no violation, we drop the complaint. However, if there is a violation, PEC can levee a fine or, if criminal action is involved, go to the grand jury.

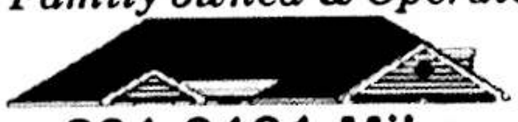
TN: *This sounds like a very serious position. Are you enjoying PEC, too?*

WS: I really enjoy it — there's a lot to read and I've vowed to learn the language of the City Charter and the law. Most of the commissioners are attorneys, but since I'm not, I try to get issues discussed in plain English. What I like best is that I'm chairing the new PEC Education Committee, whose purpose is to inform the public, City staff and contractors about PEC and the rights of the public. I hope to do a number of presentations to community groups to make sure people know their rights and get them more involved in City government.

TN: *Your closing thoughts?*

WS: I hope Oakland citizens will see themselves as vital participants in government. Get involved, file an ethics complaint if it's appropriate. Don't let City officials do all the thinking for you. Do take responsibility for making this a wonderful City.

In the interest of full disclosure and public ethics, the writer (who is also a volunteer Member of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission) enjoyed a lovely chicken Caesar salad at La Creme de la Creme on College Avenue courtesy of Commissioner Smith, who had the lamb chops.

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A Conversation...



With Isabel Allende

by Alice Wilson-Fried

After reading Isabel Allende's latest novel, Daughter of Fortune, I was so impressed that I called her to talk about the book and her career. Daughter of Fortune details the life of a young woman who, during the era of the gold rush, leaves her village in Chile and sails to San Francisco to reunite with the father of the child she is carrying. Following are excerpts of our conversation.

AW-F: *I understand that your writing career began in journalism. Yet you have such a profound writing voice in your novels, I was wondering what life incident made it clear to you that you should become a novelist?*

IA: I had no epiphany. No female models to emulate. I did, afterall, live in exile in Venezuela for a while after the military coup in Chile and had to do whatever I could to make a living. However on January 8, 1981, I received a phone call that my grandfather was dying in Chile. I wrote him a letter that later became my first book, House of Spirits.

AW-F: *The memoir you wrote,* Paula, *also stems from a personal incident — your ill daughter. But what prompted* Daughter of Fortune, *which involves a fictional heroine living in California over a century ago? Apparently, there's little autobiographical connection.*

IA: In 1991, I finished the book *Infinite Plan*, which was set in California. I fell in love with the place. While doing the research, I learned that California was only 150 years old, that a century and a half ago there were very few non-natives there. What brought people to this part of the world was the discovery of gold. In moments like that, human vices and virtues are enlarged, which is great for literature. So many wonderful things happened that I decided that's what I wanted to write about.

AW-F: *Do the characters in the novel, especially those that heal and philosophize, represent more than just characters. Do they represent themes?*

IA: My characters are real, not representative of some idea or ideology. I'm often surprised by the interpretation critics give my work.

AW-F: What about all the flashbacks and use of the omniscient viewpoint — are these part of a conscious design or...?

IA: A story sets its own tone and rhythm. Rather than impose design, it must evolve. For example, the novel was supposed to be an adventurous love story, but it wasn't until I wrote the last sentence, "I am free," that I realized the story was about freedom.

AW-F: *I have to admit that the Oprah Winfrey sticker drew me to your book, it was one of her recommendations.*

IA: Ah, see what she's done for reading!

AW-F: *I understand you're at a writer's retreat. Are you working on a new novel?*

IA: Yes.

AW-F: *Another period piece, or will you explore humanity as it is today?*

IA: Another historical novel. One thing I discovered when researching *Daughter of Fortune* is that people 150 years ago were no different — no less complicated or contradictory — than they are today.

AW-F: *The title?*

IA: I'm afraid that is all I'm going to say about my new book.

AW-F: *Inevitably there's a reader/writer out there who'd like your advice on how to break into the seemingly elusive world of publishing fiction.*

IA: Get a good agent. It's impossible to get fiction published otherwise.

Rockridge writer Alice Wilson-Fried has written two novels and is working on her third.

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Rockridge News Layout Guy Recognized for Work With Neighborhood Newsletters



At a recent League of Women Voters award luncheon, Don Kinkead, layout and design director for *The Rockridge News*, was honored for his work in co-founding the Oakland Neighborhood Newsletter Task Force. Pictured from left are Bonnie Hamlin, League President, Kinkead, Daphne Markham, NLTF co-founder, and Vice-Mayor Henry Chang.

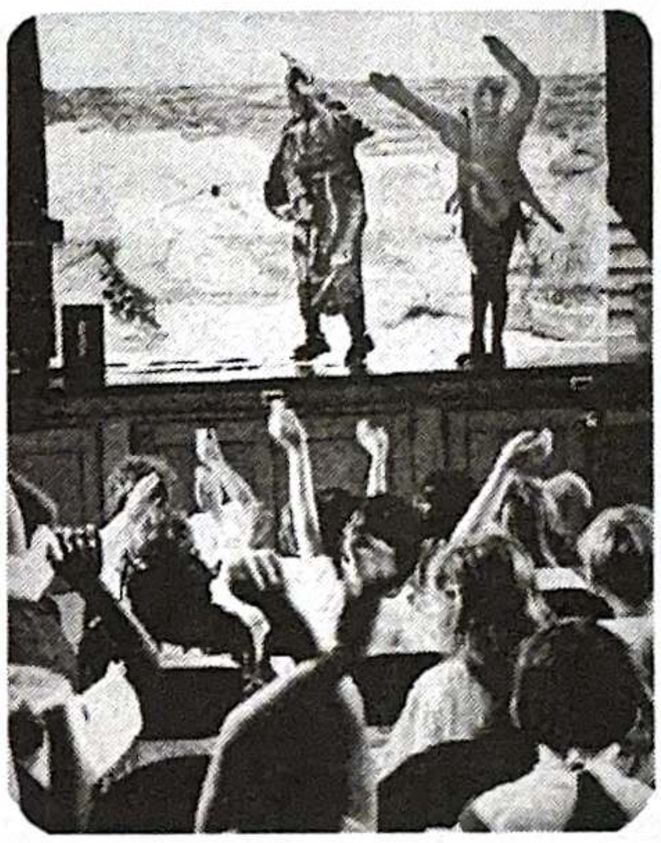
Photo: Cy Gulassa

Chabot Elementary Heads Out to Sea

by Vicki Hammarstedt

Classrooms at Rockridge's Anthony Chabot Elementary School were transformed into laboratories for the discovery and exploration of the ocean during a week of school-wide activities focused on marine science. Guided by Berkeley's Lawrence Hall of Science's Marine Activities, Resources & Education (MARE) program, Chabot's K-5 students, teachers, parents, and community members culminated a year-long educational program with a 5-day intensive study of the ocean.

During the week of April 3-7, classroom walls and floors disappeared under 3-D tide pools, kelp forests, and fantastic sea animals created by the students. The whole school community, including Dreyer's Grand Ice Cream volunteers, participated in a series of exciting activities — from printing Ocean Week T-shirts using the centuries-old Japanese practice of Gyotaku, or fish rubbing, to experiencing sea creatures up close in a mobile "touch pool."



Herme the Hermit Crab delights the students while searching for his lost home.

Chabot is one of hundreds of schools throughout the U.S., Mexico, and Finland to participate in MARE (pronounced "mah-ray," which is Latin for sea), an award-winning ocean studies program created by the Lawrence Hall of Science. Parents on Chabot's School Site Council wrote grants to fund the two-year, $28,000 program, which includes intensive teacher training, special programs for students, and an interdisciplinary curriculum that encourages collaboration and hands-on learning.

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Celebrating Cinco de Mayo

Although it's a common misconception, Cinco de Mayo is not the Mexican equivalent of 4th of July. Cinco de Mayo actually commemorates the defeat of the French army by the Mexicans at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Although recognized as a national holiday in Mexico, it is more of a regional holiday celebrated primarily in the city and state of Puebla.

Cinco de Mayo has become a popular holiday in regions of the United States where there is a large Mexican or Chicano community. Just like St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo is becoming part of the holiday calendar of more and more North Americans. Commercial interests have been very successful in promoting the holiday with advertising and marketing focused on Mexican food, restaurants, and especially beer.

As with other complex cuisines, Mexican cooking is highly regionalized, with vast differences in flavors, textures, cooking techniques, and the use of local herbs and spices. Most supermarkets now carry a selection of everyday ingredients for Mexican cooking. A variety of fresh and dried chiles, tomatillos, Mexican spices, and masa (cornmeal for making tomales and tortillas) are available at Safeway, Albertson's, Market Hall, and Yasai Market.

We are most fortunate in our Rockridge community to have Cactus Taqueria. Cactus Taqueria is one of the finest and most authentic taquerias in the Bay Area. The standard menu of burritos, tacos, homemade tamales, and chile rellenos is the best you will find anywhere, but it is the daily specials that make Cactus Taqueria truly unique. With great salsas, a large selection of Mexican beers and Aquas Frescas (fruit drinks), Cactus Taqueria is a wonderful place to celebrate Cinco de Mayo.

A recent arrival to the College Avenue food scene is Las Palmas. Las Palmas and longtime Rockridge favorite, College Avenue Burrito, offer standard Mexican fare at reasonable prices.

To celebrate Cinco de Mayo, let's prepare a traditional Tinga de Pollo from the state of Puebla. It is in Puebla that the world's first great fusion cuisine was created — criollo — a blending of Mexican and Spanish food.

Let's go shopping! First we need to get some chicken breasts. I urge you to buy your poultry at one of our local butchers. Poultry from supermarket chains has been frozen and just does not have the flavor of a fresh-killed, never-frozen chicken. Enzo's and Ver Brugge carry fine poultry. But if you want something special, consider buying an Empire kosher chicken from Rockridge's newest butcher, Oakland Kosher Food. The chickens are highly flavorful because they are brined as part of the koshering process.

Other specialty items you will need are Mexican chorizo sausage and canned chipotle chiles en adobo, both of which are available at our local supermarkets. I noticed canned chipotle at Albertson's on the shelf near the "10 or less line."

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo by preparing this tasty Tinga de Pollo. Serve with an avocado-tomato salad and, of course, the obligatory Mexican beer. *Un feliz Cinco de Mayo.*

Rockridge resident Barry Kaufman is a student at the California Culinary Academy.

Tinga de Polla

Seasoned Shredded Chicken

Adapted from Diana Kennedy's My Mexico

- 6 ounces chorizo or other mild sausage
- ¼ cup finely chopped white onion
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 2 cups finely shredded green cabbage
- 4 small plum tomatoes, finely chopped
- 1-2 canned chipotle chiles en adobo and 1-2 teaspoons of the sauce from the can (chipotle chiles are quite spicy, so use according to taste)
- 2 cups poached and shredded chicken (see note)
- ⅓ cup chicken broth – use from the poached chicken
- salt to taste
- corn tortillas

Take the chorizo out of the casing and crumble into a large skillet. Cook over low heat so that the fat renders out, but do not let the meat brown. Strain off all but 2 tablespoons of the fat. Add the onion, garlic, and cabbage and sauté over low heat, occasionally stirring the mixture until the vegetables are soft. Add the tomatoes and chipotle chiles with the adobo sauce. Continue cooking over medium heat until most of juice has been absorbed and the mixture is fairly dry. Stir in the shredded chicken and broth and cook for another 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt. Serve on warm tortillas.

Note: Poached and shredded chicken breasts: Place two chicken breasts in 3 cups of chicken broth (canned low-salt is fine). Bring water to a boil, lower to a simmer and cook until meat is tender — about 20 minutes. Set aside to cool in the broth. Remove the skin and bone and shred the meat. Use the Chicken broth for the tinga.



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Chaconas

from front page

that need immediate attention. For one, no district-wide system of communication exists. School board directives at the top go unheeded and feed-back from the bottom never arrives, so segments work in isolation and tend to do their own thing. Other systemic problems he identified include no structure or expectation for accountability, no ownership of problems, no system-wide focus on student achievement, and no understanding that all parts of the system must work together to produce success.

For too long, Oakland has addressed severe problems by shuffling organizational charts, inventing programs, and issuing more mandates, according to the 52-year-old former coach, who as a high school student in Oakland was told by a counselor to drop out of advanced classes because he was not college material. "Oakland managers deal with problems as isolated entities rather than in context," he said. It's foolhardy, for example, to try to solve a teacher shortage with a stand-alone program when it's really a district-wide problem. "As long as new teachers can't get broken windows fixed, don't have heat, get paychecks late, can't find guidelines for lesson planning, can't find out how to get support for students with serious problems and don't get treated professionally," no retention program will hold them.

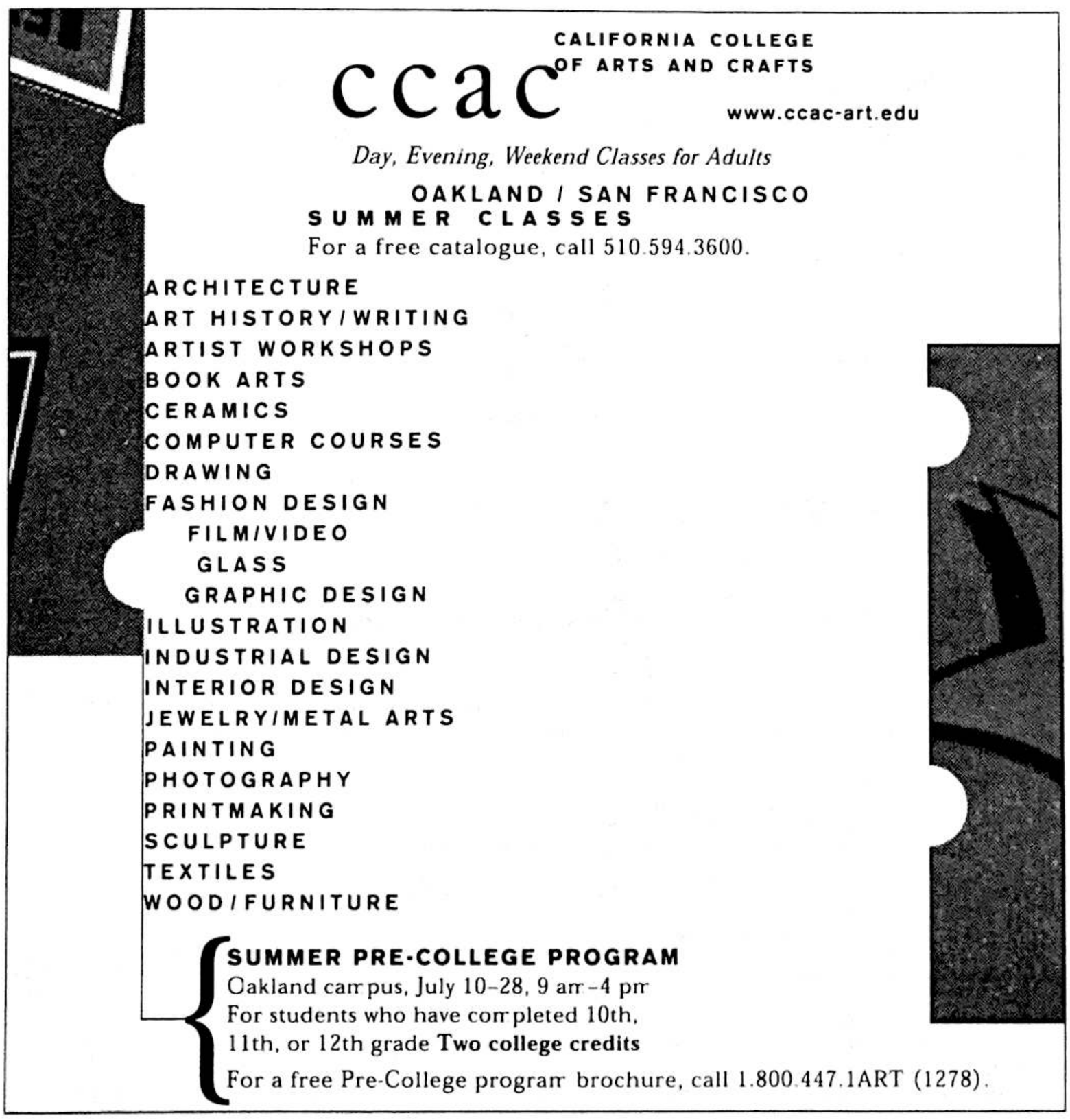
His strategy for turning Oakland around includes cutting out layers in the bureaucracy, returning teachers who are on special assignment back to the classroom, and implementing a district-wide system of accountability with a strong evaluation component. On March 15, letters were sent to over 60 percent of school site administrators, notifying them that they may be assigned to other duties or terminated. At Chaconas's request, senior administrators have already drafted a plan for responding to the highly critical state audit, with timelines and detailed descriptions of objectives in all areas from communications to facilities management.

> ***ignorance of a problem's cause will seldom yield its cure*** — *Dennis Chaconas*

Chaconas made it clear that he is committed to fiscal integrity even if it means an unpleasant struggle with the union. When pressed by a teacher in the audience for an early settlement to contract negotiations, he responded that much of the money earmarked for the pay raise so far was smoke and mirrors, consisting of suspect estimates and one-time-only money. He would make a prudent settlement only after he had a reliable assessment of funds. Further, he wants the budget document redesigned so anybody can read it.

In another exchange, Chaconas illustrated what he means by "taking ownership of problems." When the principal of Carter Middle School complained that he needed replacements for staff that had left, Chaconas asked if he had done an "exit analysis" to find out why they didn't want to stay. The principal hadn't. Chaconas, warming to his critique, explained that ignorance of a problem's cause will seldom yield its cure. "Since other schools with the same demographics as Carter Middle School aren't having a similar staff exodus, the real problem may be right here, not downtown," he said.

Few question Chaconas's determination, intelligence or his ability to get things done. But many are waiting to see if he can refloat OUSD as easily as he did the Alameda School District and send it steaming toward academic success.





Rockridge Traffic

from front page

as lane widening is being added along the Rockridge section, no mitigations are required. The money will go for, among other things, a soundwall for the Parkwoods condo complex (just west of the new bore site), wetlands restoration in Orinda, and the preparation of the EIR.

The RCPC Traffic and Safety Committee does not agree with the MTC assessment. If the bore is operated as planned, the additional Tunnel lanes will increase the total reverse commute highway traffic through our section of Hwy. 24. The mitigations the committee believes essential are:

1. Soundwalls throughout the Rockridge section of Hwy. 24 (At the request of Councilmember Brunner, the MTC will estimate the cost of a soundwall for Rockridge.)

2. Redesign of Claremont and Broadway off-ramps to eliminate vehicular conflicts.

3. Removal of the shortcut for Hwy. 24 traffic through Rockridge by closing Broadway after Lake Temescal.

4. Improvement of pedestrian crossings on Broadway and Claremont. Also, improve pedestrian safety at the eastbound Broadway exit, as this is used by school-age children.

5. Traffic calming devices in lower Rockridge to slow the traffic that short cuts through.

What do you think? Do you oppose or support another bore? Are the proposed Rockridge mitigations adequate? Please give RCPC's Traffic and Safety Committee (653-0935) and Councilmember Jane Brunner (238-7001) your input!

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If you'd prefer to apply through the mail, send a copy of your ID and documentation to 4131 Lakeside Drive, Suite B, Richmond, CA 94806. Please feel free to contact our Customer Service Department at 510-261-6800 if you have any questions. Some restrictions may apply.

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East Bay Open Studios!

The Annual East Bay Open Studios Tour is coming to town! The Pro Arts Gallery at 461 Ninth Street, just off Broadway in Old Oakland, will be displaying sample artwork and disseminating information about 400 participating artists from May 3 to June 11, with the actual Open Studio events taking place on the weekends of June 3 and June 11.

An Open Studios Primer

If you have never done an Open Studios tour before, the sheer size of the event can be overwhelming. Where to start, how to get to see everything, what to spend time viewing, how to get the most out of it all. If you are not the lone-wolf type, go with a group of like-minded friends. This will save on gas and parking problems. Visit the Pro Arts Gallery a few days prior to the event and research the participating artists and studios. You will find examples of artists' work, artists' statements and resumes, and other material you might need for a successful tour.

Be adventurous and include places such as Alameda or the Fruitvale on your list of destinations. Part of the fun is viewing art from different areas of the East Bay. To meet the artists of your choice beforehand, plan to attend the Artists' Reception on Thursday, May 25, 7-9 p.m. If you don't have time for all this, at least go to the Pro Arts website at www.proartsgallery.org. And check out the exhibit of Rockridge participants we hope to have at the Rockridge Library!

On the day of the tour, dress comfortably and start out early, itinerary in hand. There will be so much to see that you will not have time for it all, guaranteed. Food and drink are generally offered, so stopping for lunch is nice but certainly optional. Allow at least twenty minutes for each studio you visit. Bring a notebook, a checkbook, and a Christmas gift list! Many works of art are quite affordable — about the cost of a dinner for two — and portable, so be prepared to buy. Definitely buy when it's love at first sight because that piece may be gone when you come back. See something that is out of your price range? Talk to the artist about arranging an installment purchase. Artists are pretty accommodating people; many will gladly spend time with you and offer advice on how to handle and display art properly. They will also ship to you, and work with you over time, exchange pieces, give credit toward another work — you name it. If you like a particular artist, be sure to sign the address book for future events. Once you get in the habit of following an artist's career, collecting pieces of her or his work can be a wonderful adventure.

Rockridge Artists

At least fifteen studios will be open to the public in the Rockridge area and you will be able to pick up maps to these studios at the Rockridge library. Participating artists are:

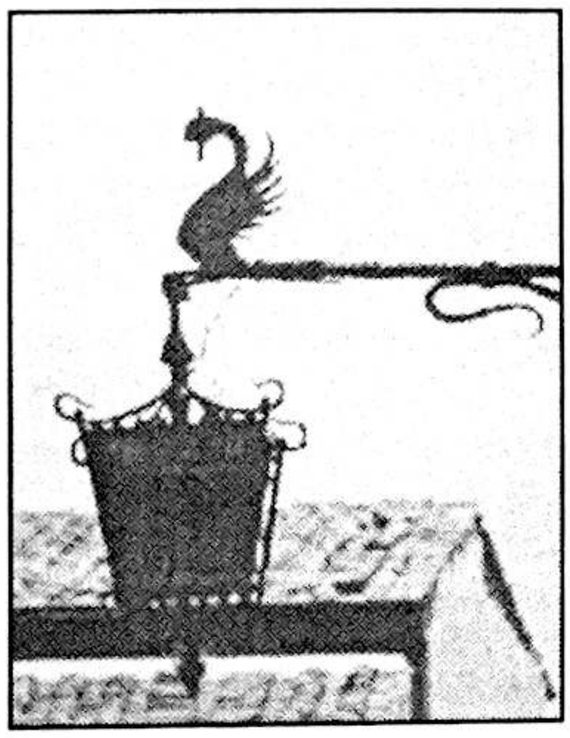
Carol Aust, Karen Carbone & Amy Rosenthal, Lise Dahms & Kirsten Stolle, Margaret Dorfman, Gerta Farber, Anne Gomes, Howard Hopkirk, John Jacobsen, Linda Lemon, Karen LeGault, Liz Maxwell, Maura Singer, and Joanne Yeaton.

The Rockridge Muse

by Ortrun Niesar

Preparing for the Open Studio Tour

The Claremont Gallery



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for adult students during intensive programs; 3-14 day programs, twice yearly (winter, summer), some weekends. Kitchen privileges appreciated. Accomodations within walking distance only (Claremont/College). Please call Carrie, The Breema Center. 428-0937.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Submit Items To RCPC COMMUNITY CALENDAR, 5856 College Avenue, #130, OAKLAND 94618 or call 814-6060.

BANANAS. 5232 Claremont Avenue, 658-7101.
Wednesday, May 10, 7-9 p.m. Kindergarten readiness workshop
Tuesday, May 16, 7-9 p.m. Potty training workshop
Wednesday, May 17, 7-9:30 p.m. Tax workshop for parents and nannies
Tuesday, May 23, 7-8:30 p.m. First childcare experience workshop
Tuesdays, May 2, 9, 16, 30, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Caretakers are invited to a free intermediate ESL class. Pre- register by calling Bananas

College Avenue Adult Activities Center

College Avenue Presbyterian Church, 5955 College Ave. All activities Wednesdays, 11-noon. Lunch follows, $1.75. Slide and video shows (SS) in Lighthouse Room.
May 10: *Rockridge News* Writer Ortrun Niesar
May 17: (Video) "Alaska"
May 24: (Video) "Life of Judy Garland"
May 31: (SS) "Far East", Cathy Connelly
June 7: (SS) "Norway", Charlie Fitch

College Preparatory School

Annual House Tour and Raffle, Sunday, May 21, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. This year's theme is, "What's Art Got to Do with It?" The tour, a fundraiser for the school's scholarship fund, will feature 8 homes, each one an expression of the art lover — whether collector or artist — who inhabits it. Raffle prizes range from a stay in a Greek seaside villa to Oriental rugs from Claremont Rugs. Tickets are $35. Call 652-6829 for information.

NCPC Meetings

Methodist Church, Manila/College Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council meets 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m., Methodist Church, Manila/College. Public invited.

North Oakland Community Charter School

Informational meeting, May 23, 7:30 p.m. at the College Avenue Presbyterian Church, 5951 College Ave., Oakland. Come to hear more about the school opening in September 2000 and/or to submit an application for your child entering kindergarten or first grade. Questions? Call Denis Udall at 923-0495 or Allison Pugh at 290-4541.

Oakland Tours

Discover Oakland's changing skyline, landmarks, churches and high rises on one of the free guided walking tours. The tours are offered Wednesdays and Saturdays, May through October. On the first Tuesday of the month there is a tour of historic City Hall and the newly renovated Frank H. Ogawa Plaza. Call 238-3234 to add your name to our mailing list and to receive a 2000 Schedule. Log on to www.oaklandnet.com and click on the community link for map, dates and starting places.

Pussycat Theater History Event

"Beyond the Pussycat: Nine Lives of a Neighborhood Landmark" will take place at the site of the former Pussycat Theater (Telegraph/51st Street), Saturday, May 20. Temescal Creek, which flows under the site, will also be a theme of this public event. Refreshments, prizes, and sunny spring weather should make this a festive occasion.

Rockridge Branch Library

5366 College Avenue, 597-5017 Storytimes:
Toddlers: 10:30 a.m. Saturdays, May 6,13,20,27
Preschool: 10:30 and 11:00 a.m. Tuesdays, May 2,16
Pajama: 7:00 p.m. Wednesdays, May 10, 24
Lawyers in the Library: Free advice 6-8 pm, 1st Thursday each month. Signup starts at 5:00 p.m.
Book discussion group: Thursday, May 25, 7-9 p.m. Call 597-5017 for more information.
Writing From the Soul: Free workshop with Susanne West. Emphasis on writing for creative expression & personal growth. Saturday, May 20, 1-4 p.m. To register call 597-5017 by Thursday, May 18.
Remodeling and Additions: What You Need to Know: Free workshop with architect Deborah Lane and Certified Remodeler Paul Winans. Thursday, June 1, 6:30-9:00 p.m. To register, call 597-5017 by Tuesday, May 30.

Science Without Scientism

Free talk and discussion with Charles Lutner, sponsored by the Secular Humanist of the East Bay (SHEB), May 7, 7 p.m., Rockridge Branch Library, 5366 College Avenue. e-mail: eastbayhumanists.org

Toastmasters

Early risers: Conquer your fear of public speaking and develop leadership skills in a supportive, relaxed and friendly environment. Join Toastmasters. 7:00 a.m. every Thursday. Please call 251-3066 or email: spk2@flash.net

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Repaving Will Close Northbound College Avenue Traffic Through Elmwood During the Summer

by Ronnie Spitzer & Reh-Lin Chen

The City of Berkeley will repave College Avenue between Alcatraz and Dwight Way in late May, a project expected to take up to 2 months. During this period, southbound traffic will remain open.

Northbound traffic, however, will be detoured to three alternative routes:

1. College-Alcatraz-Telegraph-Dwight Way-College
2. College-Claremont-Ashby-Telegraph-Dwight Way-College
3. College-Claremont-Bellrose-Warring-Piedmont-Haste-College.

Hillegass between Claremont and Alcatraz will be used as a temporary detour during the repavement of the College/Alcatraz intersection.

AC Transit Route 51, which serves much of Rockridge, will be re-routed to avoid the construction area. At this time, the exact route is undecided, although it will most likely travel along alternative route #2.

For any concerns or questions, call either the City of Oakland Traffic Engineering Department, 238-3466, or Glenn Carloss, City of Berkeley Project Engineer, 665-3446, or come to RCPC's May 18 general meeting, 7:30 p.m., in the Rockridge Library. Representatives from the City of Berkeley Public Works Department will be on hand to give a brief presentation and solicit your views on the proposed repaving project.

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Letter to The Editor

Bike Lanes on Telegraph Are a Bad Idea

Editor:

As a cyclist, I was grateful to see a city map of 1985-94 bicycle collisions in your April 8 issue. I hope just a glance at this grim scatter-plot will remind everyone to drive, ride, and share the road carefully.

However, I was disturbed that the RN uncritically captioned this graphic: "Telegraph Car-Bike Crash Record Underscores Need for Safe Bike Lanes on Busy Thoroughfare." The map's chilling concentration of "dots" along Telegraph may simply reflect that street's role as a regional thoroughfare multiplied by the dangers of biking on such an artery. Introducing bike lanes would invite more cyclists into the mix, giving them the false sense that Telegraph had suddenly become safe for biking.

It is not clear that bike lanes (or anything else) would make biking safe on Telegraph: Motorists on Telegraph are aggressive, and might not stay out of the lanes. Even worse are impatient motorists on side streets, who ignore stop signs and red lights in their rush to turn onto Telegraph; cyclists would be right in their path. Finally, Oakland's bike-lane proposal, and as the experience of adjacent cities like Berkeley shows, interrupts these lanes at major intersections and freeway ramps, creating a confusing and hazardous predicament for cyclists.

Fortunately, a superb alternative bicycle route is available on a parallel streets — Webster, Shafter, and Colby — with lower car volumes and speeds. Oakland should consider forgetting bike lanes on Telegraph, and spend its money to improve this network: Better signage would help direct cyclists; better lighting would make them more visible and feel more secure.

Sincerely,
Tom Brown,
Ellsworth Street,
Berkeley



The Claremont Theatre (c. 1930), granddaddy to the inglorious Pussycat Theatre.

Temescal & Rockridge Celebrate History of Pussycat Theater Site

May event includes slide show, music, prizes, and outdoor showing of a movie classic

by Jeff Norman

The artists, neighbors and merchants who produced the book and video about the Temescal neighborhood, and who organized the history exhibit in storefront windows on Telegraph a couple of years ago, are bringing another series of events to the neighborhood. "Beyond the Pussycat: Nine Lives of a Neighborhood Landmark" will feature in May an exhibit and two public events exploring the vicinity of the former Pussycat Theater site — now an empty lot — at 51st and Telegraph.

The exhibit, to be mounted for the month of May on the fence surrounding the lot, will trace the site's history of ownership and use from its earliest days to the present. At Carter Middle School on Friday, May 19, 7:00 p.m., local historians Jennifer Dowling and Ray Raineri will present a slide show of the historic Temescal neighborhood (which included what is today lower Rockridge).

The following day, Saturday, May 20, at 5:00 pm, the community is invited to the vacant Pussycat lot (soon to be cleaned up) for an afternoon and evening of music, performance, picnicking, children's activities and "community conversations" about the site's future. For the grand finale, and to commemorate the theater's 85-year history in the community, an outdoor screening of a Buster Keaton classic will be shown under the stars.

Drinks and refreshments will be provided by local merchants, prizes will be awarded, and all events are free. For more information or to volunteer, call Jeff Norman at 653-7190.

ROCKRIDGE CRIME REPORT

Reach Rockridge community policing Officer J. Watson by paging her 1:00-11:00 p.m., Tuesday through Friday, at 330-4539; at the tone, enter your return phone number. Officer Watson urges residents not to hesitate to report suspicious activity to the police using the non-emergency number, 777-3333. Dial 911 to report suspected crimes in progress.

Armed Robbery

The Oakland Police report that an individual was robbed at gunpoint at 3:25 a.m., Thursday, March 9, in the vicinity of Clarke Street and Claremont Ave. The suspect was described as a black male, age 16-18, 6', 180 pounds, riding a mountain bike.

The police also report an armed robbery on the 6200 block of Claremont on Saturday, March 12, at 9:30 p.m. The suspect was described as a Black male, age 32-34, approximately 6', 190 pounds, with gapped teeth.

Officer Watson reports that a business on the 5800 block of College Avenue was held up on Friday, March 17, between 4 and 5:00 p.m. The suspect was described as a black male, in his early 30's, 5'8"-5'11", medium complected, with a mustache. The description of the gunman matches that of a suspect who held up another store on March 14.

Residential Burglaries

On Saturday, March 25, a residence on the 6400 block of Regent Street was burglarized sometime between 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. The perpetrator gained access by walking down the driveway and breaking a window located off of a back porch. A laptop computer, cash hidden in a drawer and jewelry were taken. It appears the thief was scared off, as a second laptop was left at the top of the stairs.

Another burglary occurred on March 25 on the 5900 block of Chabot Court.

Theft

A resident of the 6000 block of Monroe Ave. reports that a big fern in a large, jade-colored pot was stolen from their porch during the evening of Saturday, April 8.

Suspicious Individual

A resident on the 5100 block of Miles reports that on Saturday, March 18, a man came to the door at 1:00 a.m. and attempted to get the resident to open the door and give him money. The individual argued with the resident, who refused to open the door, and did not appear to be deterred by the noise of the resident's large barking dog. The suspect was described as a black male, in his late teens or early 20s, 5'11", clean-shaven, with short hair, wearing a baggy, olive-colored jacket. The police were notified.

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The Neighborhood Merchant

BY THERESA NELSON

Bosko's Gallery and Framing
6038 College Avenue 655-3966



Photo: Chris Ahlstrand

In Memoriam: Peter Bosko

Peter Bosko, a longtime College Avenue business owner and Rockridge resident for many years, passed away in early April at age 85. The store he opened in 1945, Bosko's Gallery, was a natural outgrowth of his studies at CCAC, from which he graduated (along with his wife Margaret) in 1939. An artist, he framed and displayed his own works in the gallery along with those of CCAC graduates and other local artists.



The late Peter Bosko tries one on for size in his College Avenue frame shop.
Photo: Albert Levy

Mr. Bosko grew up on Moss Avenue (near Piedmont Avenue), lived in a house on Forest St. in Rockridge, and later moved to the Oakland Hills. He served in the Army's amphibious landings group in WWII, which sustained 80% casualties in landings in the South Pacific. He returned to his family and business after the war.

In the early years of the business, the gallery sent out beautifully designed announcements for gallery openings. One card from the '50s announced pastels from the artist Jade Fon, whose works are now highly prized.

An avid collector, Peter owned the works of many California artists whose reputations grew with the years. The well-known California Impressionist Louis Seagriest, who lived on Cavour, was a close friend. Peter Bosko framed all of Siegriest's works, some of which are in the permanent collection of the Oakland Museum.

Another of Mr. Bosko's friends was Rip Matteson, whose paintings are still sold in the shop. Mr. Bosko's own artwork ranged from complex abstracts to ceramics and patterned works featuring stylized horses, some of which are also on display in the shop.

The rear of the store is an old-fashioned work area, with spray cans, dried glue, strips of matting and antique frames dating back more than 50 years. The shop has hundreds of frames, and frames everything from original artwork to posters.

For years, the front windows of the shop have displayed the famous "Introduction to Error Analysis" poster with a train crashing through a station wall. Later it was joined by one of Peter's son's popular creations, a photo of a girl experiencing a bizarre hair treatment entitled "Adolescent Behavior Modification Using Common Household Appliances." While I was at the shop, a 20-something couple stopped in to buy one for a friend who would soon complete a Ph.D. in Psychology.

Mr. Bosko's children, John and Lynn, will continue to run their father's business. Interestingly, Lynn's father-in-law once had an antique store called "El Capitan" in the 1920s-30s, at the same location.

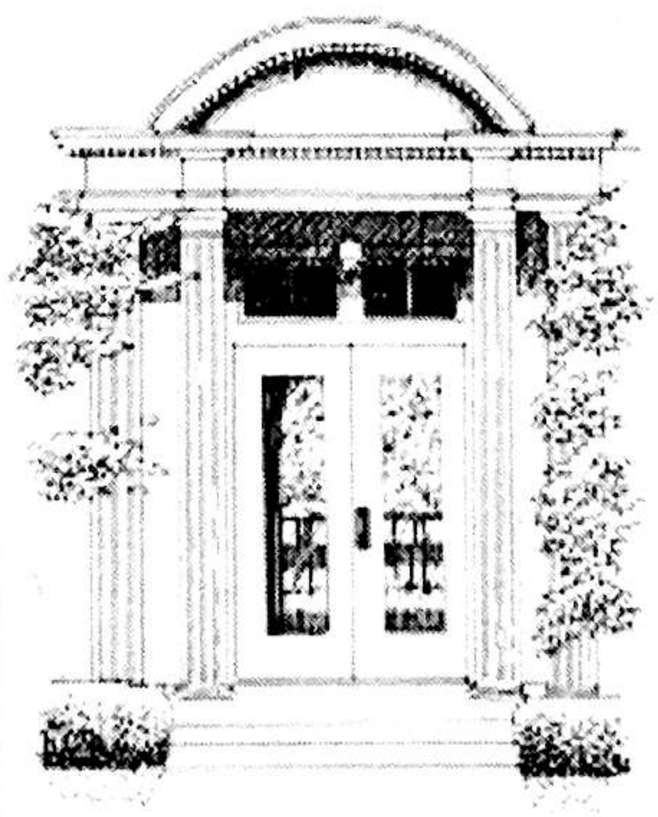
An open house and remembrance of Peter Bosko will be held at the shop on Sunday, May 21, from 2:30-5:00 p.m. Family photos and some of his artwork will be on display. Customers, neighbors, and anyone who knew Mr. Bosko are encouraged to stop by and share some memories.

Correction: The photo in the April 2000 issue accompanying the story on Rockridge Kids was taken by Lia Berkowitz, an employee of the store.

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