



## **GPNA 32nd ANNUAL PICNIC, THURSDAY, SEPT. 16** **SPECIAL ADDED ATTRACTION-SWING FEVER!**

All Gerstle Park residents are invited to attend this fun event, which will take place on Thursday, Sept. 16th, in Gerstle Park's Upper Redwood Grove, beginning at 5 PM. Free hotdogs, chili and soft drinks will be served from 6 to 7 PM. Music by our own local band, Swing Fever, will be a special treat this year, as they liven up the event by playing favorite swinging oldies. Some great prizes will be raffled off this year, including a night at the Gerstle Park Inn, a \$25 gift certificate for Marin Joe's, and a dozen muffins from Muffin Mania. Please, everyone bring a potluck dish to share, as follows:

**Last name beginning with A to M:** bring a salad or side dish

**Last name beginning with N to Z:** bring a dessert

Please provide an appropriate utensil for serving your potluck dish, and pay attention to your initials above, so that we don't wind up with a lack of one kind of dish.

This is one of the few chances we have in our busy lives to come together for a good time and good conversation with other folks from the neighborhood, at a time when most people can make it. So don't stay home and make dinner- join us, and let's all celebrate the close of summer with good food and good neighbors!

## **SECOND UNIT BILL DEFEATED (FOR NOW!)**

Assembly Bill 2702, which was passed by the state Assembly but later voted down in a state Senate committee, would have allowed the state of California to ELIMINATE the ability of local governments to determine the appropriateness of second units in ANY neighborhood. That's right, you read it correctly- this bill would have allowed bureaucrats in Sacramento to shoehorn a second unit into ANY property in ANY neighborhood- new or old! But it MIGHT have passed if all the committee members had been present, and it may be re-introduced in the future!

### **HERE IS WHAT AB 2702 (SECOND UNIT BILL) IS ALL ABOUT:**

- Eliminates requirement for second unit off-street parking.
- Essentially abolishes single-family zoning (existing and future).
- Allows second units in ANY neighborhood, ANYWHERE.
- Eliminates owner occupancy requirement.
- Eliminates local planning control.
- Eliminates any local design review or other planning scrutiny.
- Encourages rapid decline of older, more fragile historic neighborhoods like ours.
- Eliminates lot size and encourages overcrowding.
- Destroys the integrity of historic houses.
- Destroys backyard space in order to accommodate more units.
- Overrides ANY covenants that previously prevented second units.

Many thanks to Assemblyman Joe Nation for standing up for us and voting against this bill, and thanks also to Gerstle Park resident Steve Patterson and the Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods for mobilizing opposition to it. Their efforts were joined by all of Marin County's Mayors and City Councils, including San Rafael's. Thanks to all who fought this undemocratic usurpation of local power to control our own neighborhoods!

## **SAN RAFAEL GENERAL PLAN 2020 AND ITS IMPACT ON GERSTLE PARK**

The soon-to-be adopted San Rafael General Plan 2020 has elements that are of vital importance to Gerstle Park in particular, and the upcoming City Council meetings on the issues will be the LAST

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE: [www.gerstlepark.com](http://www.gerstlepark.com)**

The GPNA website will keep you informed and up-to-date about all the important news of our neighborhood, as well as upcoming events. Click on our website address, and stay current with what's happening- remember, what affects our neighborhood affects you!

CHANCE for public input. We urge all of you to get involved, because this Plan will shape the future of our neighborhood. The Plan will guide changes in City policies and ordinances that will be the backbone of planning, development approvals, and quality-of-life issues for all of us. We have already seen a demonstration of the impact citizen involvement can have on the City, when a proposal for more than 40 residential units at the Short School site was scrapped and replaced by a proposal for 9 units, because many Gerstle Park residents showed up at a City Council meeting and voiced their objections to such a high-density plan. However, we are continuing to monitor the Short School situation, because the draft plan could be changed at any time.

GPNA is continuing to monitor the whole draft of the General Plan, and we submitted our input to the Planning Commission after numerous meetings and extensive review. The Commission is in the process of reviewing public comment and making changes to the draft. Soon they will approve the Plan and send it to the City Council for adoption. It is anticipated that the City Council will hold more public hearings starting in September. The primary changes for San Rafael will be providing for additional housing as mandated by ABAG (Association of Bay Area Governments). Because of previous attempts on the part of developers to 'densify' our neighborhood, GPNA is very concerned about the locations earmarked for this additional housing, and the impact such growth would have on traffic, parking, utilities, air quality, noise, taller buildings, crowded conditions, and the historic integrity of older homes. One of the most controversial issues, of course, is traffic, which will undoubtedly become much worse.

Given the current budget crisis, the Plan will have serious funding shortages, and the City Council will determine how, when, and in what order the money that can be allocated will be spent. Gerstle Park residents, owners and renters alike, need to get the Council's ear in order to get funding approved for programs that relate to neighborhood priorities. Concerned residents are needed, to weigh in and be represented in the final process of the General Plan 2020 adoption. You can view the plan at [www.cityofsanrafael.org](http://www.cityofsanrafael.org). Just click on General Plan 2020, listed under Community Development. The City will reprint a revised Draft General Plan, but until this is available, the approved changes by the Planning Commission can be viewed in a series of documents found in the Virtual Library at <http://www.cityofsanrafael.org/generalplan/library.htm>, or via email at [clandecker@saber.net](mailto:clandecker@saber.net).

## **NEIGHBORHOOD VOICES: THE PANAMA'S DAN MILLER**

The Panama Hotel has been a Gerstle Park landmark for more years than most residents can remember, and its retro charm is as familiar to most of us as our own street corner. But Dan Miller, the Panama's owner and manager, is a quiet, unassuming person who stays in the background, although he oversees every aspect of the hotel's operation. When Dan bought the hotel in 1984 it already sported some tropical décor and had been given the name Panama, thanks to the previous owners, Richard and Mimi, who had owned the hotel for about ten years. They had added a café (now the indoor part of the restaurant) and a garden patio that joins the original hotel with the property next door, which they had bought in order to expand the number of rooms.

Dan spent his childhood in San Rafael and attended Sonoma State, where he studied business and accounting (he does all the bookkeeping for the Panama), but he learned the restaurant business during a ten-year stay in his mother's native England, notably in the small East Yorkshire town of Todmorden. After working in a vegetarian co-op, which eventually closed, he took over the lease and opened a small restaurant called "The Dumbwaiter". He did all the cooking, and there really was an old-fashioned dumbwaiter, because the kitchen was a floor below the small dining area, and the food was sent up on the dumbwaiter by means of a rope pulley. "The place was small, and it was a mess when I took it over", he recalls, "and after buying the lease, I didn't have much money to fix it up and decorate it. So after I cleaned it up, I bought some umbrellas and hung them, open and upside-down, from the high ceiling. That was my decoration", he laughs, "And when I went back to visit a couple of years ago, they were still there!"

Homesick for San Rafael, he returned in 1984, looking for a place to open his dream business, a small bed-and-breakfast hotel. At that time his mother was a real estate agent, and it was she who found the Panama, luckily up for sale just then. Dan liked it immedi-

ately. “It had all kinds of possibilities, and a lot of charm. I could see that there was a lot of work to be done, but I knew that I could build on what was already there and make it into a bed-and-breakfast with an old-fashioned, tropical feel”.

So once again Dan embarked on restoration. The rooms needed to be redone, and Dan’s mother, a talented seamstress and decorator, made all new bedspreads and curtains. She also added the special touches that now give each room its own theme, many of them reminiscent of faraway places like Venice and Africa. There’s even a smaller room, cozy and paneled, called “The Captain’s Cabin”, that looks very much like its name. Dan says his mother can make any room look beautiful. “She’s a real Martha Stewart type” he says, and then adds quickly, “but she’s not going to jail anytime soon!” Dan’s father was handy with plumbing and carpentry, and so he also helped a great deal with the restoration.

Dan took special care in remodeling the restaurant. He wanted a space that would be intimate and welcoming, with family mementos and photos and homelike decorations, but at the same time casually elegant and not overstuffed. “I have Rick’s Café syndrome”, he laughs, referring to the character played by Humphrey Bogart in “Casablanca”. “You know that fantasy- you have all these regulars enjoying themselves in your café night after night, eating and chatting and listening to the music, and there’s never any problem with the kitchen or the plumbing, and you’re in a white dinner jacket, and everyone knows there’s no place like yours. And I like to have crisp white linen at every table, and just the right lighting, and all that. It’s much harder work than it looks, but I really enjoy it. However”, he chuckles, “I do without the white dinner jacket”. Old collectibles are on display on high shelves, among his extensive collection of old teapots (he has collected over 100, but most of them are in his house, an old Victorian within walking distance of the hotel). To enhance the old-fashioned atmosphere, a local band, Swing Fever, has been playing oldies on Tuesday evenings for the past 12 years, and Wanda Stafford, a vocalist who also specializes in classic oldies, sings on Thursdays, accompanied by Si Perkoff on the piano.

Right now Dan is in the process of renovating some of the hotel’s rooms, but this is being done one room at a time, so as not to disrupt the hotel’s operation. “Some of the cute old bathroom fixtures may have to

be sacrificed, but there’s nothing like good new plumbing”, he says.

Between running the day-to-day business side of the hotel and restaurant, and arranging weddings and other events at the Panama, Dan had to give up his cooking chores quite some time ago, and his love of travel has to be squeezed into a 2-week vacation once a year. But he wouldn’t have it any other way, and he obviously relishes the sense of the past preserved, which is in evidence everywhere on the premises. When you’re there, see if you can spot the old photo on one wall showing Bogart in front of Rick’s Café Americaine. And if you look inside the ladies’ room, above the small palm trees painted high on the walls, you’ll see, suspended from the ceiling, an upside-down umbrella.

## **GPNA BLUE RIBBON AWARD FOR NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT**

In this issue we single out Josh and Cathy Klein, who took a small old cottage at 103 C St. down to its slab and built from the ground up, creating a 2-story modern Mission-style craftsman house with 3 bedrooms and 3 baths. Josh is a contractor who has built over 200 restaurants, mostly in the Bay Area. His work includes Delfina in S.F., Yankee Pier in Larkspur, Cafe Z in BonAir, and some of the Left Bank chain (but not the one in Larkspur). Josh designed the house to have a comfortable mix of spaciousness and privacy, and he helped with the hands-on building process. The inside of the house continues the modernized Mission-style theme of the outside, with beamed mahogany ceilings and handsome woodwork.

Josh and Cathy are expert and passionate cooks, and their large, airy kitchen is equipped with a chef-style stove, a pizza oven and a special wood countertop for rolling out dough. A bank of skylights across the back part of the kitchen ceiling creates a sunroom leading out to a sizable back yard, where they are in the process of creating an herb garden among 2 oak trees and a baby plum tree. Leading upstairs to 2 bedrooms and the large master bedroom suite is an unusual and attractive bronze-and-steel handrail, which becomes a guardrail across the upper landing. This was made by Mike Bondi,

Josh and Cathy's next-door neighbor, who is a blacksmith. The front yard landscaping is still to be done, but Josh says they will get to that soon. "Gerstle Park seemed like the ideal place to build our dream house", Josh says. "It's so beautiful, and the people are neighborly. We're not building to sell. This is just where we want to be."

Congratulations to Josh and Cathy for building a lovely improvement to our neighborhood! We want to let our neighbors know that we enjoy and appreciate the work they do to make their dwellings, and our neighborhood, a better place. So remember, if you see a home or garden improvement that catches and pleases your eye, you can nominate it for a Blue Ribbon award by emailing Tymber Cavasian at [tymber@distinctivebuilders.com](mailto:tymber@distinctivebuilders.com) or by phone at 455-0575.

## **PARKING AND TRAFFIC ETIQUETTE**

Have you ever come home to find your driveway blocked by someone else's car? Do some neighbors park for days, or even weeks, in front of your house? Do you feel as if some people are using your block as a permanent parking lot? Do some inconsiderate people consistently take up 2 spaces for their vehicle? Parking in one place on a residential street is limited by law to 72 hours, but sometimes huge work trucks, which take more than one space, are left all weekend, along with their construction debris or smelly yard waste.

As mentioned in the article on the San Rafael 2020 General Plan, our parking shortage is expected to get worse, not better, and since parking space is at a premium, we all need to be mindful of others and avoid the above scenarios when parking our vehicles. When you see these or other parking "crimes" being committed, speak up politely and ask if the situation can be changed, i.e., "Please pull up a bit, so that another car can park behind you", or, "Could you please move your big truck, since it's been here for a week", etc. Ask your guests to park considerately when they visit you. You can leave a polite note of reminder on an offending car's windshield. If you see commercial vehicles from construction companies, landscapers, etc. using your street as a parking place, call them and ask them not to use a residential neighborhood for this purpose. Call the police non-emergency number, 485-3000, for cars parked in one place on the street

for more than 72 hours, and for cars parked in red zones or blocking fire hydrants. The police put a warning notice on the car, and this usually gets the owner to move it. Report vehicles that look abandoned or lived in. The police will tow vehicles with expired registration.

There has been a suggestion for permit parking in the neighborhood. This would allow only cars registered with a neighborhood address to park on our streets for longer than 3 hours, and would be effective on weekdays only. This would certainly put a stop to non-residents parking here for days on end. Anyone who has thoughts on this matter, please email Lynn Bradescu at [lalynn3@comcast.net](mailto:lalynn3@comcast.net).

**Curbing your wheels:** We have many hills in Gerstle Park which require proper curbing of wheels when parking in order to avoid accidents, and some drivers are not aware of the proper method of parking on a hill. Here are the instructions, from page 31 of the DMV's 2004 California Driver's Handbook: "When you park headed downhill, turn your front wheels into the curb or toward the side of the road. Set the parking brake. When you park headed uphill, turn your front wheels away from the curb and let your vehicle roll back a few inches until the rear of one front wheel gently touches the curb. Then set the parking brake. For either uphill or downhill parking, if there is no curb, turn the wheels toward the side of the road so the car will roll away from the center of the road if the brakes fail. When you park on a sloping driveway, turn the wheels so that the car will not roll into the street if the brakes fail. ALWAYS set the parking brake (on a hill)." Be aware that failing to follow these instructions is an infraction, and you can get a ticket for it.

**SPEEDING:** This is ALWAYS dangerous in our neighborhood, and there is no excuse for it. There are many children, seniors, animals and bicyclists here. **SLOW DOWN.** Be aware of your speed. The SRPD has a "sting" program called PICASSO, which uses a decoy pedestrian to trap motorists who don't yield to pedestrians. The program is very successful. Failing to yield to a pedestrian is a moving violation, and can affect your driving record and your insurance. Even more serious, you could injure or kill someone!

In conclusion: slow down, and think twice about where and how you park. It will keep our neighborhood being the great place where we live, work and play.

## **THE GERSTLES AND THE SLOSSES: THE EASY LIFE IN OLD SAN RAFAEL**

In previous issues we have described the luxurious way of life led in the late 19th and early 20th century by our neighborhood's wealthy residents of those times, the Gerstle and Sloss families. Lewis Gerstle and Louis Sloss were German Jewish immigrants who had made a fortune in the fur trade and other businesses in San Francisco, and their wives, Hannah and Sarah, were sisters. To take advantage of San Rafael's good weather, the families built large adjoining summer homes in what is now our own Gerstle Park, and their children and grandchildren ran and played in the ample open space of the adjoining estates.

Our detailed knowledge of summer life for these families comes from the out-of-print book "Our City: The Jews of San Francisco" by Irina Narell, Howell-North Books, San Diego, 1981. Here is Ms. Narell's description of the daily trips to and from San Francisco:

"The men commuted daily by a morning train and a side-wheeler ferry from Sausalito, and the older children went to school in the City, commuting with their fathers. Members of both families were driven to the train station by their coachmen in carryalls drawn by two horses. The ferry trip was a daily adventure because of the incomparable views of San Francisco, and the youngsters had the run of the pilot house.

At home, family life was kept separate from the men's business lives, and many of the younger generation didn't know what their fathers did for a living; nor did they learn the story of their fathers' arrival in California as tough, courageous and ambitious pioneers."

Ms. Narell gives a vivid description of summer meals: "Food was always served with a generous hand. In addition to three bountiful main meals, sandwiches and milk were laid out on the porch in mid-morning, tea and cake were served in the afternoon, and at night a buffet supper awaited those who might feel pangs of hunger before bedtime. Very often, twenty or more people were served at table, and the staff also cooked for several servants."

Ms. Narell's description of Sunday luncheon evokes an almost Hollywood version of well-to-do leisure, as "tennis players showered and dressed in clean flannels and holiday attire before the meal". Three geese with all the trimmings, various accompanying dishes, bottles of Rauenthaler to wash it all down with- it's disconcerting that the description of all this food is accompanied by photos showing fairly slim people at table. Perhaps all that tennis kept them from gaining weight!

*Thanks to Cynthia Landecker, our own Gerstle Park historian, for the above article.*

### **Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association (GPNA) Membership Application**

Please complete the information below and return with your check to:  
GPNA, P.O. Box 150644, San Rafael, CA 94915-0644

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to receive this newsletter at your home?     Yes             No

Would you like to be included on our mailing list?     Yes             No

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

New Member     Renewal

Amount Enclosed\*: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \*Annual donation: **\$10.00** per household ( **\$5.00** seniors) - 1 voting member

Payment Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Term of membership is from January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>

How did you hear about GPNA?     Friend     Newsletter     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Welcome to GPNA!**

## **WELCOME TO OUR NEW BOARD MEMBER!**

Kevin Stockmann has filled a vacancy on the GPNA Board of Directors and will be serving on the Board for the remainder of 2004. Kevin has been a Gerstle Park resident since 1997. He is a biologist, and works as a clinical research consultant for TrialTech LLC in Kentfield, a company that monitors clinical trials of vaccines and drugs. Kevin's interests include birdwatching, cycling and boating. He hopes to contribute to the long-term improvement and beautification of Mahon Creek, which courses through our neighborhood between B St. and E St. He is also a volunteer naturalist for the Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN) in West Marin, as well as a member of the Marin County Bicycle Coalition. Kevin is interested in San Rafael's general improvement, but he is especially interested in helping to maintain safe pedestrian and bicycle routes.

## **UPDATE ON THE GERSTLE PARK DRAGON**

As we informed you in the last newsletter, the dragon in Gerstle Park, which has been the park's mascot as well as a beloved toy of neighborhood children for over 40 years, was damaged by unknown vandals in late April. We are now in the process of finding volunteers to repair it, so that it can once again be enjoyed. The dragon has been an important part of the park and should remain so. We hope to get some progress on this soon, especially since warm summer weather will soon be coming to a close.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

<b>September 2:</b>	Monthly Meeting - 7pm
<b>September 16:</b>	Annual Picnic - 5pm
<b>October 7:</b>	Monthly Meeting - 7pm
<b>October 31:</b>	Hallowe'en Decoration Judging
<b>November 4:</b>	Monthly Meeting - 7pm
<b>December 2:</b>	Monthly Meeting - 7pm
<b>December 9:</b>	Christmas Caroling - 6pm
<b>December 20-25:</b>	Holiday Decoration Judging

## **COMMUNITY MEETINGS**

Cultural Affairs Commission - 1st Wed.  
 Design Review Board - 1st & 3rd Tues.  
 City Council - 1st & 3rd Mon.  
 Planning Commission - 2nd & 4th Tues.  
 Federation of S.R. Neighborhoods - 3rd Tues.

## **DEFIBRILLATOR FUND UPDATE**

Well, folks, you did it! Thanks to all who contributed so that we could buy this much-needed piece of life-saving equipment for use by the Beat One officers of the San Rafael PD. There was even a small surplus of contributions, which they can use for necessary equipment for the defibrillator. We are planning to make a formal presentation of the final check amount to the Beat One team. With the City's current budget crisis, this never would have happened without your help. Thanks for showing the City and the officers of Beat One that we really do care!

## **SPEAKING OF THE BUDGET CUTS AND OUR POLICE:**

We have lost our "Community Police Officer" from the SRPD due to the budget cuts. Subsequently, we are noticing slower response time or lack of response during some incidents. If you have experienced slow or inadequate response by the SRPD, we want to know! Send an email to [info@gerstlepark.com](mailto:info@gerstlepark.com).

## **GPNA GARAGE SALE REPORT**

Our annual Garage Sale was once again a success this year, netting \$953.19 to support the work of GPNA, and we were very pleased at the turnout of about 50 homes participating. However, there were only 5 vendors participating in the park, and we hope that next year there will be more participants in the park. We always welcome input about how this important event can be improved, so if you have any comments or suggestions, please email Chandra Murphy, GPNA Board President, at [murphdtm@yahoo.com](mailto:murphdtm@yahoo.com), or phone her at 482-8033. Just a reminder- if you have one of our large GPNA Garage Sale signs, we would greatly appreciate having them returned, so that we can re-use them next year and avoid the expense of having to make new ones.