

VEP MEETING

7:30 P.M. TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 27, 2001

GUNDERSON HIGH SCHOOL
* FACULTY LOUNGE *

AGENDA

* **The Power Crisis** *

PG&E representative will discuss and answer questions about California's power debacle.

* **VEP's Constitution & By-Laws** *

Discuss & vote on proposed changes.

* **VEP Community Service Awards** *

Discuss & vote on our annual appropriation.

* **Your Issues and Concerns** *

Everyone is welcome. Invite your neighbors!

VEP's February meeting

-Bob Aquino

If you are puzzled and amazed by the power situation in the State of California, you are definitely not in the minority. If one is to believe the newspapers, the legislature and the Governor also profess that they are not exactly sure how this happened. There are numerous hearings occurring but, like most legislative processes, most of the output is unintelligible to the average citizen--and will be a long time in being analyzed.

Although there's no guarantee that we can find an answer to these problems, VEP is attempting to give its membership a better view of the situation. At our February 27th meeting, PG&E's Government Affairs Director **Drina Collins** will explain and answer your questions about PG&E's perspective on the current California and Silicon Valley power crisis, some of the history behind the current situation, and what we can do until the industry is stable again. This should be a lively discussion, and one of vital interest to us all.

Because this issue is so important, we'd like a great turnout. If you've got a neighbor who is not a member, invite him or her along.

* * *

Two other topics are slated for our meeting that night. We'll be discussing and voting on proposed changes to our **VEP Constitution and By-Laws**. (Please see the summary article by David Noel in this newsletter.) We'll also discuss and vote on an appropriation for VEP's annual **Community Service Award**, the reward we give each year to one graduating senior each from Andrew Hill and Gunderson High Schools for their outstanding volunteer service in our community.

Please join us on February 27th. VEP is *your* neighborhood organization—we need you there.

It's time to renew your VEP membership!

-Dave Fadness

It's time to renew your VEP membership. We enclosed a remit envelope in our January newsletter for your convenience. If you still have it, fill it out, be sure to include your email address if you have one, enclose your check for \$15 made out to VEP, affix postage, and drop it in the mail. Easy as that! Better yet, just bring it with you to our February 27th meeting.

If you lost your dues envelope, just drop your check along with a note including your name (and your significant other's) and email and street address. Bring it with you to our meeting, or mail it to:

VEP
P.O. Box 18111
San Jose, CA 95158

By renewing your membership, you'll remain a part of the finest and most continuously proactive group of neighborhood volunteers in San Jose. You'll also get our monthly newsletter, the best way to keep abreast of our meetings and the events and issues that define our community and VEP's day-to-day involvement.

Importantly, your membership supports the efforts of our volunteer officers in their work to keep our neighborhoods safe and attractive. (None of our officers are paid for their work for VEP; they pay dues, too, just as you do.)

Part of your dues are used in our *Annual Community Service Award* to graduating seniors at Gunderson and Andrew Hill High Schools, encouraging outstanding young people to establish a life-long pattern of voluntarism in our community. (This year we are again proposing to reward each recipient with a \$1000 grant that they can use for college or occupational training.) The rest is used for mailing this newsletter, paying for insurance (needed in order to hold meetings at Gunderson), and for other minor costs of running the business of VEP.

We need you and appreciate your support. Fifteen dollars per family per year is a small cost to assure the best, most vigilant neighborhoods in San Jose. While it's fresh in your mind, please re-up today!

VEP teacher gains national recognition

-Dave Fadness

Under the capable tutelage of long-time VEP member **Gay Brasher**, Leland High School's Speech and Debate team was awarded first place by the National Forensic League in rigorous national competition for the 1999-2000 academic year. Brasher's team is a consistent leading contender, having placed fifth nationally among the most outstanding programs in 1998-1999.

Gay Brasher's renowned teaching instills confidence and poise in the public speaking abilities of the 249 (yes, 249!) enthusiastic students in her program. You may recall that

Gay was, for good reason, named San Jose Unified School District's **1998-1999 Teacher of the Year**.

We salute Gay for her extraordinary ability and caring, for her professional dedication, and for the skills she teaches our kids. We salute her students for their remarkable achievement of excellence—these will *certainly* be the leaders in our nation's future.

Two VEP schools rank among top in State

-Greg West

Two VEP area neighborhood schools were ranked high among schools recognized statewide by the California Department of Education for improving state achievement test scores. Both schools ranked in the top 5% for test score improvements.

Steinbeck Middle School was ranked 23rd on the list of nearly 1350 schools and Erikson Elementary School was ranked 32nd. Teachers and administrators at both schools are eligible for rewards of up to \$25,000 each for this exceptional improvement.

VEP NEEDS YOU

-Dave Noel

It's that time of year again when VEP seeks nominations for the executive committee. If you're interested in our community, joining the VEP executive committee is a great way to keep up with the latest breaking news, respond to situations that arise in our neighborhoods, and generally continue the tradition of VEP community involvement.

Our executive committee includes relative newcomers and members who have been on the board more than twenty-five years. We also have interested members who attend executive committee meetings and bring their energy to other activities, such as welcoming new neighbors and bringing refreshments to our general meetings (thanks Katherine Decker!).

Half of our current board members have served multiple terms as president. We need more members to join the board and bring their energy, experience, and contacts into the fold.

After 32 years of service, VEP is as strong as it has ever been, and our board is vibrant and dedicated. We need you to consider joining our executive committee to ensure that we continue to thrive for years to come.

Elections will be held at our March general meeting. Start thinking about it now. If you'd like to learn more, contact any of the VEP executive officers listed on the mailing page of this newsletter. If you'd like to start slow, the executive committee welcomes you to join our board meetings without obligation. We meet on the first Wednesday each month—just call to find out where and when.

Community safety

-Councilmember Pat Dando

On January 31st, I met with Gunderson High School Principal Linda Ferdig-Riley, San Jose Unified School District

Superintendent Linda Murry, Joanne Benjamin of the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), County Sheriff Laurie Smith, and Ted Marfia of the San Jose Police Department. The purpose of this meeting was to both address public safety concerns related to the recent death of a student at the Light-rail station and to identify further proactive measures to ensure the safety of Gunderson students and the community as a whole.

This round-table discussion produced a number of creative suggestions that will require a great deal of cooperation. Among the suggestions were:

- synchronizing bell schedules with Sheriff patrols to have officers at VTA stations during high-traffic times,
- greater communication of incident reports and statistical information between schools and VTA to identify and address minor infractions before they become serious,
- annually providing students with "riding tips," complete with the appropriate names and phone numbers to report incidents and concerns, and
- examine lighting and landscaping to improve visibility for security.

I now want to bring this discussion to the community. The same people who met on January 31st will be attending your VEP meeting on March 27th. This meeting will be an opportunity to hear what steps are being taken, ask questions, and offer suggestions. Together, we can ensure that our neighborhood continues to be a safe place to live.

VEP Constitution and By-Laws changes

-David Noel, VEP Vice President

One of our official goals for this year is to update our Constitution and By-Laws. The VEP executive committee met several times last fall to update these documents which were last amended in 1988. We are happy to report that we have reached consensus on the changes and are ready to submit them for discussion and approval by a vote of our membership.

I'll be the first to admit these aren't going to make the New York Times best seller list, but they are very important for our organization. What follows is a brief summary of the most significant changes. For a more detailed summary, see your November 2000 VEP News, or review the entire document on-line at <http://sites.netscape.net/hoavep>.

1. Change our name from VEP Homeowners Association to **VEP Community Association** to differentiate our organization from other homeowners associations that have common property and legal restrictions on property improvements.
2. Augment our purpose statement to emphasize our desires to promote volunteerism, civic involvement, and neighborhood preservation.
3. Expand membership eligibility to include households sharing a common interest with homes in our defined boundaries.
4. Clarify the officer recall procedure.

5. Establish a minimum requirement of six general membership meetings per year during which business of the organization may be conducted.
6. Define our April general membership meeting as our annual report meeting, and specify that the membership adopt a set of goals *and a budget* for the next year *within the first two general membership meetings after the annual meeting*.
7. Empower the executive board to act on behalf of the membership only if their actions are based upon, and consistent with the approved goals, purposes and budget of the organization.
8. Eliminate the requirement for secret ballot elections for *uncontested* offices.
9. Precisely define the role of past presidents as voting members of the Executive Board along with the current elected officers.
10. Officially allow officers to assist other officers with their specified duties.
11. Eliminate pro-rating of dues for members who join mid-year, but consider new members that join after October 1st to be paid through the end of the next year.
12. Precisely define the responsibilities of the nominating committee.
13. Increase the out-of-budget spending authority of the president from \$50 to \$100, and the spending authority of the executive board to from \$50 to \$500.
14. In the event that the Association is dissolved, donate all net funds to a *non-sectarian, community services* non-profit charity, *designated at that time by the executive board*.
15. Require that the funding source for the annual community service award be specified in the annual proposal to the membership.

Openings on CSJ Boards and Commissions

The City of San Jose has several commission vacancies that will be filled this Spring. Application forms and further information may be obtained from the Office of the City Clerk, Room 116, at City Hall, 277-4424. The application deadline is Wednesday, February 28th.

Applications are being accepted for the following commissions: Advisory on Rents, Airport, Arts, Child Care, Disability Advisory, Disadvantaged Business Development, Historic Landmarks, Human Rights, Library, Mobile Home, Parks & Recreation, Senior Citizens, and Traffic Appeals.

Upcoming Gunderson High School Events

-Bob Burns, Gunderson Athletic Booster Club

The Gunderson High School Athletic Booster Club is sponsoring the following two events. VEP members and their families and friends are invited to participate.

What: **Crab Feast**

When: March 10, 2001

Where: Gunderson High School Forum

Cost: \$35.00 per person; \$60.00 per couple

Doors open at 5:00 pm

Dinner served at 5:30 - 8:00 pm

Raffle at 8:30 pm (You must be present to win.)

Silent Auction/Entertainment: 5:00 – 9:00 pm.

For more information call: Kanika AhYo at 523-7662 or Linda Lee at 535-6340, ext 123, or at 266-4606.

* * *

What: **Golf Tournament**

When: May 7, 2001

Where: Santa Teresa Golf Club

First Tee Off at 10:00 am

Dinner following golf.

For more information call Louie Aldama at 360-9315 or Linda Lee at 535-6340, ext 123, or 266-4606.

President's Corner

-Greg West, VEP President

OK, folks, its time for me to arm-twist a little bit. We are coming up to our March meeting at which we elect officers to our Board. Nominations will begin at our February meeting.

I've found that, especially in volunteer organizations, a flow of new people and new ideas into the leadership ranks keeps the organization alive, healthy, and vibrant. I have served VEP as its President for nearly three years now and I have had an outstanding Board to work with over that time. I feel very good about the things that we, as a neighborhood, have done in that time. And, I look forward to continuing to serve the organization as a Past President and Board-Member-for-Life.

We believe that we have a very good candidate for my successor and will announce the name at the upcoming meeting. But, we will have at least one position on the Board to fill.

I have written many times about the benefits of being a VEP Board member, ranging from having a positive impact on the neighborhood to getting to know and work with some outstanding people, both inside and outside of the organization, and to gaining some understanding of how our local government really works. Not to mention the Holiday Feast that the membership sees fit to sponsor for the Officers and their spouses once a year (thank you very much). In addition, VEP is a very long-standing, recognized, and well-regarded organization in Santa Clara County.

So, if you want to help VEP to continue to be one of the best communities in San Jose and Silicon Valley, contact me or one of our other board members to find out more about board membership.

Daffodil Time

-John Marks

Daffodils are the first flowers of spring. Mine have been blooming since the first of the month.

They are also the symbol of hope for cancer patients and their families. Dollars raised by the sale of these flowers during *Daffodil Days* support research by the **American Cancer Society** for public education and patient services in our community.

Orders for daffodils will be taken through March 2, and the flowers delivered during the week of March 26.

Here's how to get involved. Bouquets start at \$10 for ten flowers. Other special arrangements range from \$55 to \$110. The most popular offering is the *Gift of Hope*, ten flowers in a vase delivered anonymously to a cancer patient. Gift of Hope bouquets are \$15, \$25, \$50, and \$100.

To place an order for daffodils, call (800) 227-2345, or check at www.cancer.org.

Neighborhood developments

- Greg West

Kaufman & Broad is planning a 765-unit single-family attached development on a 130-acre site at Vista Park Drive and Hillsdale Avenue, at the base of Communications Hill. The San Jose City Planning Commission considered the final supplemental EIR as well as the rezoning and pre-zoning of this property at its February 14th meeting.

Library used book sale

-Dave Fadness

The San Jose Public Library holds quarterly sales of used books, their way of making room for new editions and more recent bestsellers. These sales are held at the downtown Martin Luther King Library, 180 W. San Carlos Street.

You can buy a bagful of used books for only \$5. Individual books are 25¢ for paperbacks, 50¢ for hardbacks. They ask that you please bring your own grocery-sized plastic or paper bags. There is no limit to how many books you may buy.

Their next sale is February 21st through 24th. Sales on February 21st, from 5 to 8 pm, are limited to teachers and members of the *Friends of the San Jose Library* only. (You can join the *Friends* at the door—membership costs only \$5 per individual or \$10 per family per year.) Sales on February 22nd through 24th are open to the general public between 10 am and 4 pm.

You can get there easily on light rail; get off at the Convention Center stop. If you drive, park in the Convention Center garage. Enter the garage off Almaden Blvd, one block south of San Carlos Street. Parking validation is available in the library.

Future used book sales this year will be held April 25-28, July 25-28, and October 24-27.

For your information, used books are sold year-round in the **Best Friends Bookstore** (408.275.1515), a facility in the main library operated by the non-profit *Friends of the San Jose Library*.

Fertilize with Fava

-John Marks, *VEP's Green Gardener*

Many gardeners plant fava beans in their winter garden and reap the rewards all summer long. The reason for growing favas is their benefit to the soil. Fava beans are a legume, one of the top "green manure" crops available for local gardeners. Other soil amendments that you can grow are rye, wheat, barley and alfalfa, but imagine harvesting those! That's why fava beans are in a class of their own.

The roots of fava bean plants are colonized by bacteria that convert nitrogen from the air into a form that the plants can use. In spring, after the bean crop is harvested, the stalks are chopped into very small pieces, and the whole thing--stalk, leaves, roots, and all--can be turned back into the soil. Or they can be chucked out front for the recycling people to pick up, or put in your compost heap.

But what to do with those bean pods after you devour the beans inside? They're like little gondolas, some of them about a foot long. Save them for when you're planting your tomatoes. In the bottom of each hole, chuck in a layer of fava pods, add a layer each of phosphorous and cotton meal fertilizer, and top off with a handful of planting mix. Position the tomato plant in the middle of this, fill the hole, and stand back and watch! You'll need to run and get your tomato cage soon.

Your tomatoes should grow huge, green and healthy. You'll have no disease problems, such as blossom end rot, hornworms, gophers, aphids, or snails. Your *Early Girls* will come in early and produce all summer, and your *Better Boys*, *Celebrities*, *Sweet 100* and cherry with thrives too.

Also known as broad bean or horse bean, favas are used in Mediterranean dishes. Young ones can be eaten raw, a good target for your grandchildren. They can be steamed, used in soups, or combined with herbs in baked dishes. If nothing else, save your harvested fava beans for next year's crop. Or be an Evangelist and share the extras with neighbors.

Sometimes fava bean seeds are hard to find; they should be available at \$1.95/cup. Yamagami's Nursery in Cupertino sells fava beans for 95-cents/package. Orchard Supply should have them also.

Winter Chores

Put in hardiest annuals and perennials -- calendulas, pansies, snapdragons and violas. Gladiolas, calla lilies, canas lilies and tuberous begonias are good bets. Dormant roots of asparagus, rhubarb, artichokes, horseradish and strawberries are a good bet.

Apply dormant spray to fruit trees before leaf growth emerges. Spray peach and nectarine trees for peach-leaf curl by the end of the month. And remember to pluck those dandelion blossoms before the go to seed!

VEP survey: Preliminary results

-Greg West

Thanks to those of you who filled out the VEP Membership Survey in our January issue of the VEP News and returned it with your 2001 dues. About 20% of folks that have renewed their membership also returned a completed survey. Since we are still receiving dues envelopes, the results below are only preliminary. All response percentages are rounded off to the nearest 5%.

VEP News: 85% of the respondents said that they read the VEP News regularly. This is not surprising, since you had to read the VEP News to find our survey. An overwhelming 90% said that they liked the NEWS format. Nearly 100% say that the VEP News keeps them updated on important issues, 70% say that they get useful information, 60% are reminded of the next VEP meeting, and 50% are entertained by our sometimes feeble attempts at humor.

VEP Meetings: 45% of the respondents say they have not attended a VEP meeting in the last year, 45% say that they have attended between one and four meetings, and 10% say that they have attended five or more meetings. 65% ranked Neighborhood Development issues in the top three most interesting meeting subjects, 55% ranked Neighborhood Infrastructure, and 45% ranked Neighborhood Services in the top three.

VEP Web Site: 35% of the respondents say they have visited the VEP Web site, mostly just to browse.

Neighborhood Issues: 50% of respondents ranked Neighborhood Development in the top three neighborhood issues, 45% ranked the Lester Property, and 45% ranked Neighborhood Safety and Crime in the top three.

Advertisers: 60% of respondents say that they have used the services of one or more of our VEP News advertisers. Nearly all say that they have been satisfied with the advertisers' service.

If you have not yet renewed your membership, please dig out your January newsletter, complete our survey, and include it with your dues payment check to VEP.

Computer corner

-Bob Aquino, VEP's Computer Guru

Well, it's time to dust off the old crystal ball and see what's in the future for the computer user. It's a safe bet that computers will be getting faster in the future, but what is not clear is whether that will make any difference to the average user. Truthfully, we've reached a point of diminishing returns on processor speed. Absent any new, highly demanding applications, the average user will not perceive any advantage of a 2GHz machine over an 800MHz one.

To see where the next wave of improvements will come, you have to look behind your computer, not in it. If you look behind your computer, you will see a snarl of cables. Keyboard, mouse, speaker, printer, scanner, and other cables lie in an unsightly tangle on the floor. Can anything be done?

All those cables, which transfer data between the computer and its peripherals, could in the next few years disappear. This magic will be accomplished by a new feature called *Bluetooth*.

First, some history: Harald Bluetooth (yes, that's the correct spelling) was a 10th century Danish king. He united Denmark and Norway and was responsible for Christianizing both. Supposedly, in his time, disputes within and between families were settled by meetings of all the interested parties.

When referring to computers, Bluetooth is a short-range (10m, or approximately 30-foot) radio communication convention, designed to eliminate data cabling. Ericsson, a Scandinavian telephone equipment manufacturer, proposed it. Its applications cover a broad range of devices including cell phones, personal digital assistants, keyboards, printers, and so on. Clearly, this technology can not only help in cleaning up the mess behind your computer, but also expand the scope of devices that can be connected to the computer, thereby making it a more powerful control device.

You'll start seeing Bluetooth-enabled devices appearing on the market. Not surprisingly, given the ancestry of the concept, the first devices will be telephonic; however, over the next year or two, it should start appearing in the PC world.

Back to history: Harald's son, Swein Forkbeard actually conquered England and put his son Canute on the throne. I wait with bated breath for the definition of the Forkbeard protocol!

Opinion: The Price of Power

-John Marks

Since we ran out of it, I'll bet you've been wondering just how much it costs to produce power. It varies according to the source. The following table is a summary:

Hydroelectric costs 2-3 cents/kwhr,
Coal or oil costs 5-10 cents/kwhr,
Gas costs 10-15 cents/kwhr,
Nuclear costs 8-12 cents/kwhr, and
Solar costs 20-40 cents/ kwhr.

Now, bear in mind, this is only the cost of *producing* power; added to this for retailing are surcharges, such as the Energy Commission Tax, the Electric Emergency Procurement surcharge, the User Tax of 5%, transmission and distribution costs, public purpose programs, nuclear decommissioning, the Competition Transition Charge (a \$350 credit on my bill), and the Trust Transfer Amount. Don't ask me what these are; they're just there.

For those of you that thought solar would be the way to go, not only is the cost of building solar panels in the desert and transporting power to the users high, but production is intermittent. You can only produce power through photo voltaic cells during the day, and then only when the sky is clear. And you can't store electricity.

Don't confuse solar power with solar-thermal heating; the

latter is used to heat water, like for bathing, washing, and possibly room heat. It's labor intensive to install on your roof, deteriorates in the sun, and springs leaks. None of it produces electric power.

It might be interesting to note that of the energy that PG&E now buys, less than one percent is solar energy; over five percent is geothermal, and two percent is from biomass and waste. Their total from renewable sources is eleven percent.

Over 50 percent of their resources are fossil, 20 percent nuclear, and 22 percent large hydroelectric. (I don't know why they don't list hydro as renewable.)

So for Californians, the rule of the day and perhaps for the foreseeable future is CONSERVATION, similar to the way we learned to husband our water after the last draught. What's our incentive? Our pocketbooks, of course. Hopefully several new power plants now under construction in California will bring relief, but not for a couple more years at best.

[Ed. Note: John Marks, an electrical engineer with some special insights on this situation, is a retired editorial writer for the electric utility industry trade press.]

Airport noise

-Dave Fadness

Have you noticed that there are more flights and that airplane noise has been increasing in our neighborhoods? Someone else apparently has, as we found a flyer on our door the other day from someone who is "a resident of this neighborhood" who wants to share "the steps you can take to voice your concerns" about this growing problem.

If airplane noise is more than just an annoyance to you, that mysterious flyer included these addresses for noise and curfew violation complaints:

Jaime Locquiao at jloquiao@sjc.org

and/or

Gary Stowell, SJC Noise Abatement Manager

San Jose International Airport

Noise Monitoring Center

1732 N. First Street #600

San Jose, CA 95112-4358

(408) 501-7796

gstowell@sjc.org

If you choose to email them, be sure to include your name, address, and phone number so that your complaints will be entered into their official monthly noise report.

To control night-time noise in our community, San Jose International Airport has for years imposed a curfew for arrival and departure of large aircraft. Except in emergencies (or if your name is Larry Ellison), these planes are not allowed to take-off or land between 11:30 pm and 6:30 am daily. Curfew violations can be reported by calling (408) 452-0707.

The city has a *Airport Noise Advisory Committee* whose responsibility it is to review noise complaints from citizens

like us. They meet quarterly. For information on meetings, call (408) 452-0701.

Bulletin Board Ads

FOR SALE: E-Z UP shelter, 10 ft x 10 ft. Used only once. Was \$450, sell for \$200. Call Christiane @ 224-9125.

MR. FIX-IT will repair leaks, sticking doors, locks, latches, lights, and life's little ills. No job is too small. Call John Marks @ 629-6433.

* * *

VEP will print free ads for its members for transactions involving less than \$250, for lost-and-found, for announcements of general interest to our community, and for kids under 18 or retirees who are looking for work. Free ads must be submitted monthly for publication.

Commercial ads cost \$1.00 per line per month, 10 lines maximum, must be prepaid before publication, and may only be run once per calendar quarter. Commercial ads must be submitted quarterly. No graphics allowed. For information on full-sized ads with graphics (camera ready), contact VEP'S Treasurer listed on the mailing page of this newsletter.

One line contains 50 characters, including spaces. Mail to VEP, P.O. Box 18111, San Jose, 95158. Ads must be received no later than the 10th of the month for inclusion in that month's newsletter. Use the following form as a guide for submitting an ad:

NAME: _____

PHONE # _____

AD WORDING: _____

The VEP Executive Board reserves exclusive right to refuse any ad for any reason. VEP does not certify nor is it responsible in any way for the claims, goods, or services of any advertisers.