

# VEP NEWS

• VEP COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION •

Representing More Than 2,000 Families In The Blossom Valley Area Of South San Jose Since 1969

FEBRUARY 2014

## VEP'S MEETING

7:30 p.m. Tuesday

► **February 25th, 2014** ◀

Vista Park Community Room  
475 Hyde Park Drive

## AGENDA

### ★ Almaden Ranch ★

Presentation by  
**Gerry deYoung, President, Ruth and Going**

### ★ Proposal for Group Tree Trimming ★

Presentation by  
**Kevin Lee, Our City Forest**

### ★ Martial Cottle Update ★

### ★ VEP Business Meeting ★

**Announcements & Updates**

**Vista Park Cleanup Day, March 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Mayoral Candidates Forum, March 27<sup>th</sup>**  
**Gunderson High School Auditorium**  
**(No Meeting on Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup>)**

**Update from TAPS Security Patrol**  
**VEP Annual Membership Drive Continues**

### ★ Your Concerns and Ideas ★

Your chance to voice your opinion and/or to seek VEP's help

Everyone is welcome. Invite your neighbors!

## VEP's February General Meeting

*By Marilyn Rodgers*

### ► Presentations:

**Overview of the development at Almaden Ranch**, located on Almaden Expressway at Cherry. **Mr. Gerry deYoung** of Ruth & Going will provide information on stores, eateries, and amenities that will be included in this new shopping center complex.

**Mr. Kevin Lee, of Our City Forest**, will provide highlights of a new proposal for neighborhoods such as VEP. This initial presentation is to determine interest in the VEP area regarding hiring a tree trimming contractor, at a group discounted rate.

**Martial Cottle Update – Alicia Flynn and Eric Goodrich** will return to provide information of interest regarding the Perimeter Trail and Martial Cottle Park.

### ► VEP Business Meeting/Updates/Announcements

Brief introductions, announcements and updates will be included. The March membership meeting will be the Mayoral Candidates Forum, to be held on **Thursday, March 27th**, at 7pm at Gunderson High School Auditorium.

### ► Your Concerns and Ideas

We want to hear from you! Together we can work toward positive resolution. This approach continues to make VEP neighborhoods strong, healthy, and attractive.

We look forward to seeing you, your friends and neighbors, on **February 25th**. Please join us!

## January's Meeting Synopsis

*By Marilyn Rodgers*

President Marilyn Rodgers began the standing-room only January meeting with introductions of current VEP Board members and VEP Past Presidents who were in attendance. Peter Hamilton, Policy Aide to Councilmember Don Rocha and Michele Dexter, Aide to Councilmember Johnny Khamis were also welcomed. Ms. Rodgers stated that January begins the annual membership drive for VEP. A drawing for a free membership would be held later in the meeting. She also announced that planning for the March meeting was well underway. The March meeting will be devoted to a VEP sponsored Mayoral Candidates Forum. The Forum will be held the end of March at Gunderson High School.

Ms. Rodgers introduced the first speaker, Eric Goodrich. She introduced Mr. Goodrich as the new Park Manager for Martial Cottle Park. She indicated that the previous Park Manager, Don Rocha (no relation to the Councilmember) had been promoted to another position within the Santa Clara County Parks Department.

*Continues on the Next Page*

◆ **2014 is VEP's 45th Year!** ◆

Continued from Previous Page

Mr. Goodrich then took a few minutes to provide information about his background which included many years as a Park Ranger and an MBA from San Jose State. He spent much of his childhood in the southern portion of Santa Clara County, and most of his adult life as a resident of San Jose, currently living in the Thousand Oaks neighborhood. He described his pleasure in being named Manager of the Martial Cottle Park, and how he is looking forward to working closely with the neighborhood.

Mr. Goodrich provided information on the upcoming Perimeter Trail Opening and ribbon cutting in which VEP Community Association is co-hosting, along with County Supervisor Mike Wasserman and the Santa Clara County Parks Department. The Opening Celebration is planned for Saturday, February 1st at 10am. The ribbon cutting will be held at a temporary gate located on Chynoweth (west of Snell) at Dusenburg. Street parking will be available. For residents who would like to walk over to the ceremony, three Pedestrian Gates will be open at 9:15am that morning. Those gates are located at: Snell and Branham, Branham close to Vistapark Drive (east of Carlton Plaza), and at Wellington Park Drive. The trail opening will be for the first portion of the trail – from Snell and Branham, along Branham to behind Carlton Plaza, along the homes on Birmingham and Wellington to Canoas Creek. The trail passes along Canoas Creek southeasterly to Chynoweth, and east on Chynoweth to Duesenburg. Eventually the trail will cross over Canoas Creek and proceed to another gate at Chynoweth (south of Gunderson High School), and around the remainder of the property. The remaining portion of the trail will open at approximately the same time as the planned Park opening, scheduled for December 2014/January 2015.

The chain link fences will remain up along large portions of the perimeter of the park property and trail. Please Note: Only a portion of the perimeter trail will be open for public use beginning on February 1st. The remainder of the future park property is not open to the public – it is an active construction area.

One member, who has lived on Wellington Park Drive for the last four years, voiced concern about the placement of the gate at the end of her street. She was specifically concerned about people parking their cars on a street with very limited parking for homeowners. The intent was that the Pedestrian gates, especially the one located at the end of Wellington Park Drive, were intended for pedestrians – people walking to the trail entrances. She was encouraged to keep track of numbers of people who were parking in front of homes on this street. Should it become a problem for the residents/homeowners, additional measures could be taken, through the City, to restrict vehicle parking.

Everyone was encouraged to participate at Saturday's Trail Opening. Dogs on leashes are welcome.

The next presentation was about the 2040 Santa Clara County Expressway Plan. Dan Cullen, Deputy Director Infrastructure Development, and Ivana Yeung, Transportation Planner provided an overview of the plan, including information on Almaden Expressway. At VEP's request, the remainder of the meeting was spent on issues regarding Capitol Expressway. Staff had brought visual displays for attendees to review, as well as handouts including a survey requesting information from attendees on frequency of their usage of Capitol Expressway. Four areas of concern, with recommendations for improvement, were voiced by attendees. The first, and primary concern, was that of the long-standing problematic intersection and on-ramp at Capitol Expressway/Narvaez/Hwy 87 North. This part of the discussion quickly became very animated and passionate. The trigger for the initial concern was the visual display referencing the Level of Service (LOS) rating for this section of Capitol Expressway as being a B-C, in a scale of A-F. Several attendees shouted out comments

**Mark Your Calendars!**

★ **VEP's March Meeting** ★



## **Mayoral Candidates Forum**

**Thursday, March 27<sup>th</sup> @ 7:00pm**

**Gunderson High School Auditorium**

**622 Gaundebert Lane, San Jose, 95136**

indicating that it should be rated an F rather than a B. One statement of concern regarded the fact that the development planned for building an additional 2400 homes on Communications Hill is close to going forward, and the required traffic mitigation and possible funding for improvement of this location, would not be available for use, should the LOS rating of "B" for this location not be changed immediately. As resolution of this concern was not forthcoming, the discussion was directed to the other areas of concern and hope for improvement.

The second area of concern and request for improvement focused on the issue of closing the gaps that have always existed in pedestrian/bike facilities on the south side of Capitol Expressway, between Route 87 and Vistapark Drive. Currently, pedestrians and bicyclists who use the Capitol light rail station have to walk in the gutter along this stretch of roadway. The third concern and request for improvement was directed toward the need for improvements of the sound-walls on the south side of Capitol Expressway between Route 87 and Vistapark Drive. There currently are large gaps and/or where a soundwall is in place, it is aging/deteriorating (built in the early 1970's) and needs to be replaced. The fourth major concern voiced was that of disappointment as to the road surface condition, and especially had to do with the landscaping on our Expressways. As the major vehicle transportation arteries in our County, the hope is for a more pleasant environment especially for improved landscaping, with particular concern for the desolate stretch between Snell and Route 101.

Additional concerns were voiced regarding areas along Almaden Expressway. Of particular interest was the stretch recently improved between Branham and Blossom Hill Road. Concern was raised that this area will once again be overwhelmed with traffic by current and future projects being built, such as —Almaden Ranch."

As time for the meeting was coming to a close, President Marilyn Rodgers indicated that the organization would continue to follow-up with concerns and progress of these two expressways. (Please Note: VEP sent a letter highlighting these concerns to both the 2040 Expressway Plan Policy Advisory Board, and to our elected officials. See a copy of the letter included elsewhere in this edition of the VEP newsletter.)

Ms. Rodgers also encouraged participants to attend the meeting planned for Almaden Valley Community Association. That meeting will focus on Almaden Expressway. It is scheduled for Monday, February 10th at 7pm, at the Almaden Community Center/Library, on Camden Avenue.

Ms. Rodgers thanked the Roads staff for their willingness to provide a special presentation on Capitol Expressway for our community.

The free membership drawing was won by Peggy Golden.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 25th.

## VEP Annual Membership Drive Mailing Party

By Debra Suydam and Marilyn Rodgers  
Photograph by Katherine Decker

In January, VEP Community Association starts its Annual Membership Drive. An important aspect of the membership drive is to mail to every member and to every non-member resident in the geographical area of VEP, an invitation to —oin their Community Association.”

The invitation includes an introduction to VEP; describing activities and accomplishments of the organization, such as educating members on issues of interest to them. VEP also advocates for the community on common issues of concern with government and elected officials.

VEP Community Association is one of the largest volunteer community associations of its type in San Jose, and in Santa Clara County. It is also the longest (oldest) continuing organization of its type—now 45 years! We appreciate you, and look forward to your continuing support as you renew your membership. We also hope that you will encourage your neighbors to renew or join!

We want to thank the following volunteers for their assistance in stuffing, sealing, and labeling over 2000 envelopes:

Katherine Decker  
Jeanne Mullins  
Marilyn Rodgers  
Debra Suydam

We would like to thank Adina Pierce for maintaining the database and printing the labels for this project. Also thank you to Bob Aquino who manages the mailing of the newsletter, and took this large membership mailing to the main San Jose Post Office.



# SeniorNet

Bringing Wisdom to the Information Age

The Willows  
SeniorNet  
Learning Center

## Willows SeniorNet: 20th Anniversary (Mar. 15)

From Joyce Monda at Willows SeniorNet

Willows SeniorNet held its first registration on March 9, 1994. Three-hundred senior adults came to sign-up for computer classes where there were 120 available seats. Students were enrolled on a first come, first served basis, for 1 of 10 classes in Introduction to Computers. The computer lab consisted of 6 computers, each shared by 2 students. By May of 1995, Willows SeniorNet had the largest membership of all SeniorNet Learning Centers (at that time there were 55 centers) with over 500 members, and now had 17 computers. By 1996 the number of SeniorNet Learning Centers had expanded to 75 and Willows SeniorNet still remained the largest. Senior adults were still showing up in droves to enroll in computer classes; there was too much demand for Willows to handle. In April, 2000 Almaden SeniorNet opened its doors. For a few years there was a Center at the Cypress Community Center also opened in 2000. We began in 1994 with one computer class and now offer 16 different classes in 4 sessions per year. Since 1994 more than 15,000 students have taken computer classes from Willows SeniorNet.

Over the years, Willows SeniorNet has continued to add new classes and remove those that are no longer in demand. We continually evaluate the organization's relevance. Our Center began and was set up with Personal Computers using the Windows Operating System. This is because the idea of teaching computer skills to senior adults came from IBM retirees. The first funding and computers came from IBM and Pacific Bell. The majority of the classes still utilize the Windows Operating System. Many of the concepts taught are transferable to the Macintosh/Apple Operating System. Now we also offer iPod and iTunes classes.

We have held registration and classes at the Willow Glen Community Center for twenty years. This is in thanks to a partnership with the City of San Jose.

Willows SeniorNet will hold its 20th Anniversary Registration on **March 15, 2014**. In-person registration begins at 1:30; however, students can also register online at: [www.snicsj.org/willows](http://www.snicsj.org/willows) beginning early March, or by mail-in or in-person delivery to the WG Community Center.

**NOTE:** Willows SeniorNet is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization with a 100% volunteer staff. Thus, it is possible to offer classes at very low costs: 8-wk classes are \$20, 4-wk classes are \$15. An annual fee of \$40 for the first year, \$30 thereafter, is collected for the National SeniorNet Network.

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## A Letter from VEP to the 2040 Expressway Plan Policy Advisory Board, Elected Officials

February 5, 2014

Sent via email

Expressway Plan 2040 Policy Advisory Board  
c/o Mike Murdter  
Director - Santa Clara County Roads  
101 Skyport Drive,  
San Jose, CA 95110

### Subject: Capitol Expressway

Honorable Chairman Wasserman, PAB Members, and staff:

On behalf of VEP members who attended our special, standing-room-only meeting on January 28, I thank Roads staff for their overview presentation on Expressway Plan 2040. We appreciated their particular focus on Capitol Expressway which serves most of our residents and is the northern border of our membership area. The following requests were made to staff at our meeting, in regards to Capitol and Almaden Expressways, two frequently utilized roads in our community.

#### 1. Capitol Expressway

**A.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include Tier 1A priority emphasis on a near-term solution to congestion and safety problems that have existed for decades at the Capitol/Route 87 interchange; in particular, on the northbound Narvaez Avenue approach to Route 87. We take issue with the Capitol Expressway Fact Sheet that shows "LOS A-C, Minor Delays" in the Copperfield-to-87; we know from daily experience, and have a VTA traffic report to substantiate that it can take as much as 15 minutes to drive those few blocks during morning peak times. We are bitterly aware that incorrect LOS ratings in this corridor have allowed development to proceed in our area without mitigation there. These errors must be corrected and a long-term solution must be expedited. Our preference is that an ultimate Capitol Expressway/Route 87 interchange design be prepared and funds be pursued for implementation. The final stage of development is now being proposed on Communications Hill. Money is being extracted for traffic mitigation and we want it to be spent on a plan that will end our daily misery.

**B.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include closing gaps that have always existed in pedestrian/bike facilities on the south side of Capitol Expressway between Route 87 and Vistapark Drive. Ped-

# VEP helps us solve community problems

-estrians and bicyclists who use the Capitol light rail station have to walk in the gutter along this stretch of roadway. It's time that they be given a safer passageway. If trees must be removed from the expressway median to accomplish this, we ask that they be replaced with 24-inch boxed specimens and that water service be provided.

**C.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include closing gaps that have always existed in the sound walls on the south side of Capitol Expressway between Route 87 and Vistapark Drive. Existing walls are obsolete (built in the 1970s) and unlikely to comply with current sound attenuation as defined in San Jose's General Plan. We were able to convince the developer of apartments on the north-east corner of Capitol/Vistapark to add a 4-foot wooden extension to a portion of the eastbound wall, west of Vistapark. That addition was welcomed by homeowners and suggests what will be needed for the remaining wall. Where the SPRR Lick Spur once crossed Capitol, there is a 100-foot gap which severely compromises sound attenuation on either side.

**D.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include funding for improved pavement and landscape maintenance between Route 87 and Snell Avenue and the installation/maintenance of landscaping on the utterly desolate stretch between Snell and Route 101.

#### 2. Almaden Expressway

**A.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include conservative planning for capacity required to mitigate traffic impacts of currently planned and anticipated future development (like Almaden Ranch, urban villages, etc.). Our concern is that traffic from these projects will overwhelm the improvements just made between Branham and Blossom Hill Road.

**B.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include Tier 1A priority funding for grade separation of the Almaden Expressway-Blossom Hill Road intersection.

**C.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include Tier 1A priority funding for an Almaden Expressway/Route 85 interchange design and near-term implementation. We've waited too many years for this to happen. It's a dangerous mess.

**D.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include landscaping (and water service) in the median of Almaden Expressway from Branham Lane to Route 87.

**E.** That Expressway Plan 2040 include improvements in the Almaden Expressway/northbound Route 87 approach ramp.

Thank you for including these improvements as high priorities in Expressway Plan 2040.

Sincerely yours,

**Marilyn Rodgers**, VEP President

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## VEP Hosts Mayoral Candidate Forum, Mar. 27

By Dave Fadness

VEP is holding a Mayoral Candidates Forum in the theater at Gunderson High School at 7 pm on Thursday, March 27. This event will be co-sponsored by Almaden Winery Neighborhood Association. San Jose's front-running mayoral candidates will attend, tell us about their platforms and answer audience questions. This is your chance to see and hear them in person, side-by-side.

Our moderator that night will be San Jose Mercury-News Editorial Writer Rachel Wilner. Rachel is widely respected and very well versed on local politics and issues.

VEP sets the stage a candidate forum by sending questions in advance. Candidates are asked to respond in writing. Then, we publish their responses in our newsletter-in advance of the Forum.

*These are the questions we asked:*

-Why are you running for Mayor?

-If elected, what are your top four priorities?

-In 2012, 69% of San Jose voters passed Measure B. If elected, will you support funding for court costs (and other necessary expenses) needed to prevail in the challenge and subsequent appeals to Measure B? Explain why or why not? Once successful in the courts, will you work for full implementation of Measure B? Explain why or why not.

-What are your priorities for economic development in San Jose? - What would you do to make San Jose more attractive in competition with other cities and states?

-Name at least three ideas you have for continuing budget deficit reduction and restoration of city service levels.

-If the city's financial picture improves, what three priorities would you fund (not including public safety)?

-What cost savings would you pursue to make more funds available for essential services? Which services would be given priority?

-Do you support an increase in San Jose sales tax, bond, or parcel taxes? If so, which one(s) and why?

-As a city and region, there has been long-standing support by elected officials for public transportation/transit; unfortunately, to the detriment of streets and roads. Would you provide leadership for a more balanced approach in the spending of current transportation dollars? Why or why not?

-Increasingly, issues that affect San Jose residents are not under the exclusive domain of city staff and officials; but rather overlap with other agencies, (e.g., County, VTA, Caltrans, etc.). An example that impacts our members is the serious, long-term traffic problems at the Capitol Expressway/Narvaez/Hwy 87 onramp. As mayor, what would you do to resolve inter-jurisdictional problems like this?

-San Jose vehicle deaths rose to more than 40 in 2013. Vehicle vs. pedestrian/bicycle deaths exceeded 25. Three of those deaths (in addition to several serious injuries) occurred in VEP neighborhoods. What solutions would you pursue to end this problem?

-What would you do to improve employee morale and retention and to encourage city employees to increase productivity and lower costs while maintaining or improving quality of service? Describe at least two ideas.

Look for the candidates' answers in our March newsletter. Remember, we'll format them as a "pull-out" section that you can use when deciding your vote on June 3.

Mark your calendars now, tell your family, friends, and neighbors - and be sure to attend our Forum on March 27. It's free and open to the public.

## Martial Cottle Park:

### Perimeter Trail Officially Opened February 1st

By Adina Pierce and Marilyn Rodgers

The morning of February 1st was sunny and crisp – a beautiful day for the opening of the first phase of the multiuse Perimeter Trail for the Martial Cottle Park property. As people funneled-in through the temporary gate at Chynoweth and Duesenburg, there were smiles and warm conversations. It was evident that neighbors and trail enthusiasts alike were excited about this milestone event in the development of the soon-to-be Martial Cottle Park.

VEP Community Association was pleased to be a co-host of the Ribbon Cutting event, along with County Supervisor Mike Wasserman and Santa Clara County Parks. Parks staff provided several visual displays for attendees to view, learn from, and ask questions regarding the park property and trail. Only a portion of the trail opened on Feb 1st – the remainder will open with the Park opening, scheduled for December/January 2015.

Many people arrived with their dogs, anxious to take them for a walk on the trail. Several people brought their children to witness this historic event, some of whom were younger than one year old. A "grandma" also attended. At 104 years old, she planned to "walk the trail" and was an inspiration to all!

Three Pedestrian Gates were opened at approximately 9:30am, providing access to the trail, so that attendees could walk from the northern portions of the surrounding neighborhoods. Those pedestrian gates are located at Snell and Branham, at Branham close to Vistapark Drive (just east of Carlton Plaza), and at the end of Wellington Park Drive.

At exactly 10am, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors President, Mike Wasserman began the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony. He elicited smiles and laughter as he announced there would be "a long speeches by elected officials". He introduced the elected officials who were present including San Jose City Councilmembers Johnny Khamis and Ash Kalra, County Supervisor Dave Cortese, and San Jose Water District Board representative Linda LaZotte. Also introduced were VEP Community Association President Marilyn Rodgers and Colony Green President Judy Elrite.

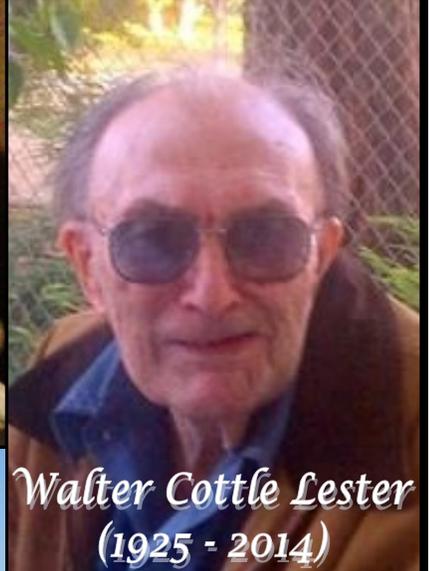
Supervisor Wasserman hesitated during his brief speech, not speaking for several seconds. Following this pause, he proceeded with a shocking announcement. Mr. Walter Cottle Lester had passed away the evening before (Friday) at his family home, located on the Life Estate portion of the property. Mr. Lester was 88 years old. Many in the audience gasped in surprise. Appropriately, Mr. Wasserman dedicated the ribbon cutting to "Walter".

Following the ribbon cutting, most attendees proceeded to enjoy the "trail walk with Mike," with the remaining attendees staying behind to talk and enjoy the visual displays. Over 350 people attended this event. In addition to the human attendees, 83 dogs were present, one horse, and 2 donkeys (who encouraged human attendees to dispose of their litter via the buckets on their backs!).

The trail is multiuse – available for people to walk, run, push carriages, or ride bicycles. Dogs are allowed, on leashes. No motorized vehicles (except wheelchairs) are allowed on the trail. Signs are posted at each pedestrian entrance listing the trail rules.

Following the event, Parks staff continued to record the number of people coming onto the trail. By 4pm an additional 110 people had taken the opportunity to enjoy the trail.

Several VEP Board members eagerly took pictures of the ribbon cutting and the trail walk, including Katherine Decker, Adina Pierce, and Peggy Golden. See the pictorial display, on the following pages (page 6 and 7).



Walter Cottle Lester  
(1925 - 2014)



# Martial Cottle Park Perimeter Trail Opening Day Feb. 1, 2014



## In Memoriam to Walter Cottle Lester

By Marilyn Rodgers

Mr. Walter Cottle Lester passed away on Friday, January 31st in his family home, located on the Life-Estate portion of the property he donated to the people of Santa Clara County and the State of California. His donation will become the Martial Cottle Park, dedicated to educating current and future generations about agriculture, historically, as well as the importance it continues to play in Silicon Valley/Santa Clara County and California. Mr. Lester was 88 years old. He died in the home that he was born in, as was his sister, mother, and many aunts.

Mr. Lester's funeral was held on Sunday, February 9th, at OakHill Cemetery. Several VEP members attended the service. The VEP Community is saddened by Mr. Lester's passing. Everyone had hoped he would see the Park opening, scheduled for early next year. Thankfully he was aware that the Perimeter Trail was scheduled to open on Saturday, and that his carefully laid out plans for the property would take place, as he had wished.

Mr. Lester is being acknowledged as the special man he was. Articles about him and his wonderful gift are being printed/reprinted all over the United States (particularly in Midwest —~~fan~~ country"), and beyond. Articles (in print *and* online) have been carried in major news outlets as well, including the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times. The article published in the Los Angeles Times is being reprinted, below, as we felt VEP members would enjoy the information that this particular article covers. It includes information on Mr. Lester's family history, as well as acknowledging his unwavering determination to keep the property intact for the education and benefit of current and future generations. This was the promise he made to his mother.

VEP would like to pay special tribute to Mr. Lester. All those who enjoy and benefit from your wonderful gift, Mr. Lester, will remember you.

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The article, below, was reprinted from the Los Angeles Times, and can be found online, at - <http://www.latimes.com/obituaries/la-me-walter-cottle-lester-20140209,0,3287238.story#ixzz2tBBhWuEY>

### Walter Cottle Lester dies at 88; farmer held out as Silicon Valley grew

By Steve Chawkins

February 8, 2014

Though he lived in a region known worldwide for hyper-enthusiastic, round-the-clock innovating, Walter Cottle Lester wasn't a big fan of change. As Silicon Valley's subdivisions and office buildings surged around the farm his family had started more than a century before, he refused to sell. Reclusive and soft-spoken, he turned down potential earnings as high as \$500 million. Instead, he arranged to donate his spread, the last big farm in the city of San Jose and one of the last in the sprawling Silicon Valley, for public use as a historic park. Most of his 287 acres will remain in agriculture.

Lester died Jan. 31 in the farmhouse where he, his mother, his sister and several aunts and uncles were born. He was 88 and had been in declining health for several months, said his friend Frank Giordano. Lester never married and had no children. His sister Edith, blind and deaf, also never married and lived with him until her death in 1999. The two communicated by arranging alphabet blocks set in a wooden frame.

Born July 7, 1925, Lester was the son of Henry Walter Lester and Ethel Edith Cottle, both members of pioneering farm families in an area known for its bounty of fruits and vegetables. The "Valley of Heart's Delight", as it was called, supplied one-third of the world's prunes, as well as a cornucopia of tomatoes, grains, onions, carrots, cherries and walnuts.

Lester's father was a big prune grower but also kept his land planted in barley and hay. Cattle grazed his pastures.

In 1944, Lester, who was kept out of military service by a heart murmur, became his father's full partner in the farm. It was the same year the farmhouse got electricity, he later recalled.

Even as the world beyond the farm changed dramatically, change on the farm came slowly.

In the 1950s, San Jose boomed. With gung-ho city manager A.P. "Dutch" Hamann directing his so-called "panzer division" of bureaucrats through numerous annexation deals, San Jose grew from 17 to 137 square miles over two decades. Land values soared; in the Santa Clara Valley, some 60,000 acres went out of production and farmers, as the age old joke goes, headed for La Jolla to raise martinis. But not the Lesters.

When IBM was scouting out sites for its California research facility in the 1950s, the family was adamant about keeping its land out of the company's grasp. In a 2007 oral history interview, Lester recalled his parents hearing about IBM's interest in a particular parcel and declaring, "No, we don't want that thing up against this place here." "And so the orchard wasn't available," Lester told researchers for the Santa Clara County Department of Parks and Recreation. "It wasn't for sale. They didn't get it and that was it."

After his parents died, Lester was just as obstinate. "Any developer was his enemy as far as he was concerned," said Susanne Wilson, a former Santa Clara County supervisor whose district included Lester's farm. Lester was leery of politicians and wary of government. Wilson said an odd coincidence helped her build his trust: She was a farm girl from Gonzales, Texas, a town that in 1836 sent reinforcements to the besieged Alamo in San Antonio. One of those doomed men was George Washington Cottle, a Texas hero who may have been related to Lester's mother. On a trip to Texas, Wilson took a photo of Cottle's name on an Alamo monument and later presented it to Lester. However, such gestures went only so far. Regardless of proposed legal safeguards, Lester feared that officials would find a way to sell his farm for development after he was gone. He also thought relatives would accuse him of coercing his sister, the farm's co-owner, into the transfer, Wilson said. "He would almost get to the point of signing something and find a reason not to do it," Wilson said.

After Edith Lester died without a will, her brother inherited her half of the property and suddenly faced estate taxes of roughly \$100 million, his former attorney, Dave Cortese, told The Times.

"A team of professionals at the time were telling him to sell half his property to subdividers to pay the taxes," said Cortese, who is now a Santa Clara County supervisor. "But he wasn't satisfied. He wanted the ranch he grew up on to be preserved — not half of it."

In a complicated, years-long process facilitated by Rusty Areias a farmer and former legislator who was then state parks director, the tax bill was whittled to about \$5 million in return for Lester's donation. "As reclusive as Walter was, he agreed to meet face to face with Rusty right in his house," Cortese said. "They started talking about well production, and, next thing you know, Rusty said he'd earmark enough from a parks bond to pay the tax bill."

Finalized in 2004, the transfer calls for joint ownership of the property by the state and the county, with the county running a visitor's center, farm exhibits, trails, and picnic areas after paying construction costs of \$26 million. More than half the land, which still grows fruits and grains, will be leased for agricultural production.

The groundbreaking at Martial Cottle Park was on Aug. 9, 2013. Martial Cottle was the son of Edward Cottle, who arrived from Missouri in 1854 on a wagon train with 600 head of cattle. He settled in the Santa Clara Valley and 10 years later bought land that spanned what is now the park.

"It's part of history here," Walter Cottle Lester, Edward's great-grandson and Martial's grandson, told the San Jose Mercury News in a rare interview in 2013. "I was born here. I've spent my entire life here. It would be nice for kids in future generations to know what it was like before it all changed."



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## Snell Avenue(\*)

Can you imagine meeting 400 cows crossing Snell Avenue at the heavy commute hours?

Probably not, but it wouldn't be the cows that would bother Thomas E. Snell if he were alive today.

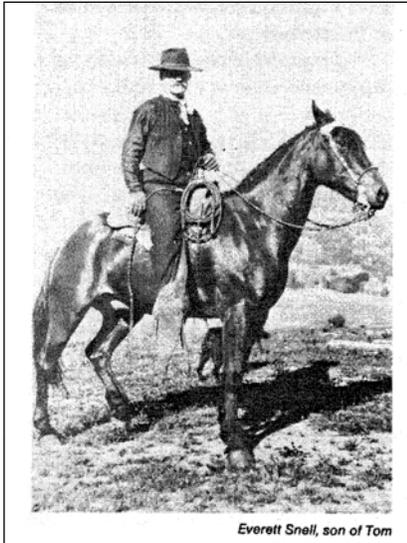
A century ago on the little dirt road through his dairy—one of the biggest in Santa Clara County—Snell couldn't have visualized the traffic jam his herd would create now.

By the 1980s there were only homes and gardens, but from 1856 until his death on Aug. 4, 1903, Snell farmed and raised cattle on nearly 700 acres where Snell Avenue —“Signposts” march south of what is now Blossom Hill Road.

Besides this ranch, part of the Santa Teresa grant, he owned 6,000 acres in Hairs Valley, now a big chunk of the county's Grant Ranch park.

Snell was born in Essex County, Massachusetts in 1830. In 1851, at the age of 21, he took passage on the Euphrates bound around the Horn to California and the gold rush. Outfitting in San Francisco, Snell hurried off to the mines at Curtis Creek in Tulumne County, later trying his luck at nearby Jacksonville, Jamestown and Wood's Creek. Today Jacksonville is at the bottom of a lake and nobody is sure of the location of Curtis Creek.

June of 1852 found him at French Camp hauling freight from nearby Stockton to the mines. He stayed at the old camp of early French trappers through the fall, ranching and cutting wood for sale in Stockton. With the first rains Snell headed back to Tulumne County and Poverty Hill where he mined and operated a store, hauling his supplies from Stockton, until late in 1854 when he came to San Jose and established a butcher business and later a milk route.



Everett Snell, son of Tom

He bought the land south of town, stocking it with dairy cattle, and on April 9, 1857, married Catherine Hart, also a native of Massachusetts, who had come to California as a young girl. She was to become the mother of seven Snell children.

Thomas E. Snell and his neighbors petitioned for a road into the area in 1869, now known as Snell Avenue.

By the early 1880s the Snell ranch was one of the largest producers of butter in the county and its owner was serving as a clerk on the Oak Grove School Board. Snell was also one of the founders of the Farmers Union.

In 1883 he purchased the 6,000-acre Shafter ranch in Hall's Valley, which included the Smith Creek Hotel property, and it was here he died 20 years later at the age of 72.

John D. Shafter was another New Englander, a native of Vermont, who also came to California via the sea route, arriving in San Francisco in October 1849, and going to the mines in El Dorado County.

Shafter returned to Vermont in 1852, but was back in California with his wife and son by 1859, settling first at Point Reyes where he operated dairies. In 1870 he came to Santa Clara County and bought the Fred Hall ranch, which he later sold to Snell.

The land was originally part of Rancho Canada de Pala granted to Jose de Jesus Bernal by Gov. Juan B. Alvarado in 1839. Joseph D. Grant, a San Francisco financier, began buying up Bernal holdings north of Shafter's ranch in about 1880.

Lick Observatory was completed five years after Snell bought the Shafter place and the hotel at Smith Creek was a stop-over for visitors from all over the West who made the trip up the winding mountain road to look through the big telescope.

Construction of the road and the observatory brought settlers into Hall's Valley and Snells' early neighbors included Frank Hubbard, Christian H. Roelling, Santos Bernal and Frank Tiernan.

Snells' Smith Creek Hotel was the polling place for Mount Hamilton district, for several years, and in 1886 Snell's ranch was being discussed as the site for the depot on the proposed railroad that was to be built from Evergreen over the hills to the San Joaquin Valley.

A newspaper item in the October 6, 1886, weekly San Jose Mercury noted that people are under the impression there are several saloons in Hall's Valley, but there is only one besides the bar attached to the grocery store, and the one saloon is only open half the time because of lack of business."

*[(\*)Ed. Note: This story was taken from "Signposts Revisited-A Collection of Streets and Roads Where We Live" by Pat Loomis, 2009. VEP will reprint in future editions stories of other historic "signpost" streets in our area. Special thanks to History San José for permission to reprint these fascinating stories. Thanks also to Dave Fadness for sharing these tales!]*

Leigh Moore

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## It's Time to Renew Your VEP Membership!

VEP membership is based on a calendar year, January through December, so it's time to renew your membership. You'll find a remit envelop in this newsletter. Please be sure to fill in the information requested, enclose your \$20 check made payable to VEP, and mail it back to us as soon as possible--while it's still fresh in your mind. That's all there is to it!

In a very real sense, renewing membership is your vote of confidence and support for the work we do as VEP volunteers. Yes, we get an occasional "Thank you," but proof positive of your appreciation is your willingness to renew membership each year. We also appreciate the nice comments many of you offer along with your renewal—for that, we offer our thanks!

VEP membership is the best value you'll ever experience. Renew today and ask your neighbors to join our growing family. Thank you.

### What is VEP Community Association?

- VEP is an all-volunteer organization of your neighbors working to improve our neighborhoods.
- VEP sponsors many projects and events that improve safety, our quality of life, and the appearance of our community.
- VEP volunteers make our neighborhood's needs, views, and concerns known to government at all levels.
- VEP was founded in 1969. We are one of the largest, most successful, and most continuously active and enduring grass roots volunteer organizations in Santa Clara County.

### Why join VEP?

- To receive our newsletter nine times a year.
- To receive monthly email alerts.
- To keep our neighborhoods beautiful, safe, strong, and prepared.
- To participate in and support effective neighborhood activities and representation.
- To support VEP's annual *Community Service Awards* for high school graduates.
- To be part of an outstanding volunteer community organization with 40 years of success in our neighborhoods.



# Calling All VOLUNTEERS

## Vista Park Volunteer Project Saturday, Mar. 22

By Dave Fadness

Volunteers are needed for a volunteer project at Vista Park. It's time to replenish wood chips in the play lots again. Our task will be to move a mountain of chips from the parking lot and distribute them around the playground.

The city will provide the wood chips (Fibar), wheelbarrows, shovels, rakes, and brooms. All volunteers will be asked to sign the usual waiver forms, giving them workers' comp coverage; volunteers under 18 will need their parent's signature. Bring your energy and be sure to wear sturdy work clothes and shoes, a hat, and gloves.

We'll start at 9 am sharp on Saturday, March 22. Vista Park is located at 475 Hyde Park Drive. Registration will begin at 8:45 am. We expect to have the job done by noon. (Come even if you can only help for an hour or two.)

Gunderson students will be there, but we'll need more hands. Call or email me ASAP if you're willing to help (408-578-6428 or drfadness@sbcglobal.net). Thank you!

## \*\* VEP Membership Application \*\*

*Note: none of the following information will be shared with any third party.*

**\*\* Please type or print legibly \*\***

Last name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

First name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email address(es): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Comment(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Can you give VEP a few volunteer hours? \_\_\_\_\_

### *I am willing to volunteer for:*

- Beautification/clean-up projects
- VEP News/mailling prep
- Memorial Day Parade & Festival
- Distribute flyers
- Serve on a committee
- Serve as a VEP officer or committee chair
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Please let us know:*

- I prefer getting my newsletters by email.

Mail your \$20 check to:

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

**Thank you!**

# Neighbors In the Know

## \* Gardening, with John \*

By John Marks

**Daffodil Time:** 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, public education, and patient services in our community.

Orders for daffodils will be taken through Feb. 28, and the flowers delivered during the week of March 22. Here's how to get involved. Bouquets start at \$10 for 10 flowers. Other special arrangements range from \$55 to \$75. The most popular offering is the Gift of Hope: 10 flowers in a vase delivered anonymously to a cancer patient (\$25). To order, call 879-1032, opt. 3, or check out [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org), or send e-mail to [svdaffodildays@cancer.org](mailto:svdaffodildays@cancer.org).

**Watering Tips:** Keep those indoor plants warm and cozy; never water them with cold water, or allow the watering can to sit overnight first. This also minimizes the amount of chlorine, a chemical harmful to many delicate indoor plants. If you use a water softener, remember that salts added to soften water is not good for sensitive houseplants. Use distilled water that you buy at the store.

If your plant's leaves do turn brown, you need to get rid of toxic salts before they kill the plant. Do this by flushing the soil thoroughly. Take it to the sink, or outside. Run water through it twice. If the container is too large to handle, use a turkey baster to remove excess water from the saucer under the container after you flush the soil.

Flush a third time using water to which you have added half a teaspoon of vinegar per quart of water, which will leach out accumulated salts. Then use a vinegar/water solution instead of regular water every other week when watering. The vinegar neutralizes the harmful salts and will lower the pH of the soil, making it more acidic and keeping it salt-free. Your houseplants will love it. The new growth will be lush and green.

You can also over-water, especially bougainvillea vines outside. If they drop their blossoms too soon, you need to use a little benign neglect. Refrain from watering until you feel that it has almost reached the wilting point, then soak the soil to a depth of two or three feet. Some gardeners think of these vines as being tender tropical - they really are hardy.



## A Year of Salads, Sandwiches, & Soups

Online @ [ayearofsaladssandwichesandsoups.blogspot.com](http://ayearofsaladssandwichesandsoups.blogspot.com)

By Kathy Wood, Baker

My 5 year old granddaughter just received her first pair of glasses. My daughter-in-law watched as Lyndsay slowly walked around reaching out to touch things cautiously as if seeing them for the first time. She proceeded to stop in front of a mirror and stare at her reflection lingering as if to figure out who this person was. No one realized her eyesight was so bad until she began having trouble in school; what a blurry world she must have been living in.

What if putting on a pair of glasses could prompt us to see things differently? Which pair of the following glasses would you desire to own? Reality: seeing things or people for what or who they really are. Tolerance: accepting people and their actions whether you agree or not. Future: being able to know what is going to happen down the road so changes can be made now. Attitude: there are days when we all could use an attitude adjustment. Seeing & Understanding other People's Point of View: a long title but worth every word and self-explanatory.

There are drawbacks to some or all of these glasses; sometimes seeing TOO much isn't good either. Maybe these glasses should come in a set for whenever the need arises. I can envision one person of an arguing couple yelling —“Put your attitude glasses on!” with the response of —“Maybe you need to put on your reality glasses!” What they really need is to don their Seeing & Understanding other People's Point of View glasses.

No glasses, besides the ones on the end of your nose, are needed to make this sandwich recipe. I have always enjoyed a good Monte Cristo sandwich but have not made one at home until now. This isn't a healthy, good-for-you choice, but, it tastes so good that you may need some Pretend It's Healthy glasses!

### Monte Cristo Sandwich

#### Ingredients:

1 egg  
2/3 cup water  
2/3 cup all-purpose flour  
1 3/4 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper  
dash of cayenne pepper  
1 quart of canola oil, for frying  
8 slices texas toast, French bread slices, or bread of choice  
4 slices of cheese, preferably Swiss (I used Provolone)  
4 slices turkey  
4 slices ham  
confectioners' sugar, for dusting.

#### Instructions:

In a medium shallow bowl, whisk together the egg and water. In a small bowl combine flour, baking powder, salt and peppers; add to the egg mixture, mixing until batter is smooth. Set aside in the refrigerator. Heat at least 5 inches of canola oil in a deep fryer to 365 degrees. Assemble sandwiches by placing one slice of turkey on one slice of bread, a slice of cheese, then one slice of ham. Top with a second slice of bread. Continue with other 3 sandwiches. Remove batter from refrigerator; dip one sandwich at a time into batter until completely covered. Gently place in heated oil and fry, turning once, until golden brown. Remove to paper towels. Sprinkle with some sifted confectioners' sugar before serving. A small bowl of your favorite preserves (I used raspberry) is a delicious dip-into or spread-over-top accompaniment.



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# VEP Community Schools Calendar

## February / March 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
16	<b>17</b>  <b>Presidents' Day</b>	<b>18</b> Oak Grove PTO Board Mtg. ~ 6:00-8:00pm ~ @District Office Board Room	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
← <b>San Jose Unified Schools on Winter Break ~ NO SCHOOL</b> →						
23	24	25	26	27	<b>28</b> Gift Wrap Fundraiser Begins @Carson School Falcon Dance ~ 6:30-8:30pm ~ @JMMS Cafeteria	1
2	3	4	<b>5</b> SELAC Mtg. ~10:30-11:30am~ @JMMS Library	6	<b>7</b> Gift Wrap Fundraiser Bonus Day @Carson School	8
9	10	<b>11</b> PTA Meeting ~ 7:00-8:00pm ~ @Carson Library	<b>12</b> PTSA Meeting ~ 6:30-8:30pm ~ @JMMS Library	13	<b>14</b> Gift Wrap Fundraiser Ends (All Monies Due) @Carson School	<b>15</b>  Sadie's Dance 7:00-10:00pm @GHS Forum
16	<b>17</b> 	<b>18</b> Gunderson's Got Talent™ ~ 3:15-6:15pm ~ @GHSTheater	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>
← <b>Oak Grove Schools on Spring Break ~ NO SCHOOL</b> →						

### Community Schools Contact Information

**Carson Elementary School ~ Home of the Cougars**

WEB: <http://www.sjUSD.org/carson/> PHONE: (408) 535-6287

**Parkview Elementary School ~ Home of the Panthers**

WEB: <http://parkviewca.com/> PHONE: (408) 226-4655

**John Muir Middle School ~ Home of the Falcons**

WEB: <http://sjUSD.org/john-muir/> PHONE: (408) 535-6281

**Gunderson High School ~ Home of the Grizzlies**

WEB: <http://www.sjUSD.org/gunderson/home/> PHONE: (408) 535-6340



# VEP Community Calendar

## February / March 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
16	<b>17</b> 	18	19	<b>20</b> 2014 State of the City Address ~ 6:00-7:30pm ~ @San Jose McEnery Convention Center 50 West San Carlos	21 *PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED* GO TO the Official Webpage <a href="http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e8kfiqc2f2f5dbe&amp;llr=ffcsvncab">http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07e8kfiqc2f2f5dbe&amp;llr=ffcsvncab</a>	22
23	24	<b>25</b> VEP Community Meeting ~ 7:30 PM ~ @Vista Park Community Room	26	27	28	1
2	3	4	<b>5</b> D10 -Office Hours" Meeting w/Johnny Khamis ~ 8:30-9:30am ~ @Almaden Community Center Community Rm. 6445 Camden Ave	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	<b>17</b> 	18	<b>19</b> D10 -Office Hours" Meeting w/Johnny Khamis ~ 5:30-7:00pm ~ Lime Tree Espresso 171 Branham Lane	20	21	<b>22</b> Volunteer Work Project @Vista Park 8:45am-NOON 475 Hyde Park Dr.

### Important Dates to Remember!

#### VEP Community Meetings

February 25, 2014

March 27, 2014 - Mayoral Forum



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#### VEP Community Events

Community Garage Sale  
 Saturday, May 3, 2014

# THE VEP NEWS



## VEP Community Association

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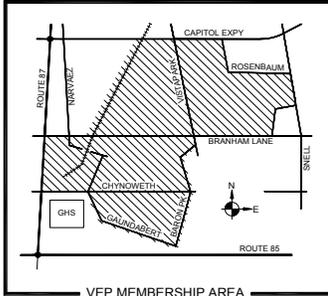
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Published monthly by VEP Community Association, a not-for-profit organization of volunteers established in 1969 to serve and represent more than 2000 homes in the Blossom Valley area of southern San Jose. VEP is dedicated to neighborhood maintenance and improvement in its membership area as well as to active involvement in civic affairs. This newsletter is mailed monthly to all members in good standing, to our advertisers, and to schools and government officials serving our membership area. For membership or paid advertisement information, contact our Treasurer or write to the address listed above.

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VEP MEMBERSHIP AREA



Check our website: [www.vepca.net](http://www.vepca.net)

Community Room

Vista Park

in the  
 7:30 pm

Be sure to attend  
 VEP's Community Meeting  
 Tuesday, February 25th