

# Landlords Force Referendum on Rent Law

By David Skidmore

After lengthy and careful consideration, the East Palo Alto City Council voted four to one to pass a Rent Stabilization and Just Cause Eviction Ordinance on Nov. 23. The final vote came after the Council considered the recommendations of an appointed Rent Legislation Task Force as well as opinions expressed by both landlords and tenants at two public hearings on the issue. The

City's action, however, is already being challenged by a group of landlords who have succeeded in forcing a referendum on the new rent control ordinance.

Responding to appeals that the City take action to alleviate tenant hardship, the Council approved an ordinance which sets limits on the rents which may be charged by landlords, requires landlords to pay tenants

interest on security deposits, and forbids evictions except where just cause can be shown. The ordinance was scheduled to take effect on December 23.

However, a landlord group known as the Private Property Rights Committee has succeeded in temporarily suspending the Rent Stabilization ordinance until a referendum election can be held on the issue. On

December 22 the group presented the City Clerk with a petition signed

**Ordinance puts limits on the rents; pays tenants interest on security deposits; forbids eviction except for just cause.**

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# THE EAST PALO ALTO PROGRESS

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## Explosive Meetings

### on Rent Control

By Eric Trebor

For almost two months before a rent control ordinance was enacted, the question of rent regulation dominated the proceedings of the city council. Bent on reaching an equitable solution to the housing problem in East Palo Alto, the council created a rent control task force in September. Its 92 page report became the sounding board for public testimony that began on October 31.

At the very first hearing, it became clear that the opposing forces did not represent a deep cleavage in the community since antagonists to rent control were, with few exceptions, large

lord claimed, "A desire to keep rents low, according to Webster, is like communism." Another, clad in shorts, showed a near-feature length color videotape of a dilapidated apartment house on the east side of the freeway. Such an attempt to discredit rent control, however, seemed to fall flat. As Kuumba Tendaji pointed out, the building in question and other run down structures got that way prior to rent control.

People supporting a rent control ordinance noted that the free market simply hadn't worked from a renter's perspective. According to Dr. David Cox, rents increased at a rate of higher than 17% over the past two years, while the consumer price index rose only 9%. He said that apartments in East Palo Alto are more expensive per square foot than in surrounding communities. In addition, Cox and others observed that a free market system has produced little additional building over the past two decades, and, conse-

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**... run down structures got that way prior to rent control.**

landlords, most of them absentee. Supporters, on the other hand, comprised both renters and homeowners in East Palo Alto. This is not to say that the hearings were harmonious. Acrimony was so strong it seemed almost physically present and the behavior of several landlords at times did violence to even the most liberal definition of propriety.

The fundamental argument of landlords was that the free market would guarantee their profits and, through the law of supply and demand, provide ample housing at affordable rents to tenants. Rent control, they contended, would rob landlords of pride of ownership as well as profits, and tenants would bear the brunt of poor upkeep. Many buildings would decay or be abandoned and new development would grind to a halt.

Such standard reasoning was at times embellished with assertions and presentations that would have made the Marx brothers envious. One land-

## Provisions of Rent Ordinance

The Rent Stabilization and Just Cause Eviction Ordinance approved by the City Council contains the following major provisions:

— An appointed, seven member Rent Stabilization Board will be charged with the tasks of registering rental units, determining the allowable annual general rent adjustment, hearing individual adjustment petitions, pursuing sanctions against violators of the ordinance, and informing tenants of their rights.

— The ordinance covers most rental units except those where the owner possesses four or fewer units throughout the City. Motels, hotels, nursing homes, government subsidized units (e.g., Runnymede Gardens and The Light Tree apartments), and new construction are exempt.

— Base rents will equal the rent in effect on April 1, 1983 for each unit. The general yearly increase will be equal to the rise in the housing costs component of the Bay Area Consumer Price Index. Landlords who have experienced unusually high cost increases may petition the Board for an individual rent adjustment exceeding the allowable under the general adjustment. The petition would be automatically approved unless objected to by an affected tenant. When an individual adjustment petition is challenged the Board must appoint a hearing examiner to rule on the approval/disapproval of the petition.

— Security deposits must be placed in a Federally insured account and interest earned on this money must be returned to the tenant.

— Landlords will be required to show just cause when evicting tenants. A limited number of justifiable causes for eviction such as the destruction of property or nonpayment of rent are enumerated in the ordinance.



Not everyone in East Palo Alto was indoors on Superbowl Sunday.

## Seniors' Strength

By Carmel Oakes

One of the more pleasant aspects of our community is its diverse population. A virtual rainbow of ethnic groups live here side by side in peace, each respecting the uniqueness of the others while nurturing its own particular culture. The youth and the elderly form a large bloc. In comparison with other communities in San Mateo County, East Palo Alto has a young population which is aging slowly. Surprisingly though, 1132 senior citizens, 65 years of age and older, live here. Today, people are living longer and have more retirement years. With aging, though, comes a multitude of problems. Many older Black Americans live close to the poverty level. Because of the types of work in which older Blacks were involved all their lives—service and manual—their incomes are deplorably low. On the other hand, older Blacks fare better emotionally and have

greater staying power than do their white counterparts as they move into retirement and later life.

While lacking 'real' financial security and not having had much real involvement with the world of formal education, Blacks seem to sustain themselves psychologically as they age. They use adaptive strategies that have helped them through a lifetime of coping, such as the extended family networks and prayer. These strategies continuously fortify them, and give them a sense of control over their lives.

Thus, being disadvantaged within a larger disadvantaged group may not be as discouraging as it seems. That is, Blacks, having always been disadvantaged in this society, have had to hone their coping skills very finely in order to survive. On the other hand, upon experiencing the

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## Legal Threat Against City Still Alive Despite Favorable Superior Court Ruling

By Nick Alexander

As landlord interests gear up to fight rent control in East Palo Alto, their strategy of overturning the June 1983 cityhood election through the continuing voter fraud suit is proceeding slowly. Although the California Court of Appeals in San Francisco has received a notice of appeal, a deputy clerk there says the case could sit for at least two years before being heard.

Pete McCloskey, attorney in the civil suit financed by the apartment-owner group Palo Alto Parks Association (PAPA), has predicted he will win a reversal. And in statements to the press he said the ruling upholding the election has "monumental significance" because "what (the judge) did was give a stamp of approval for a campaign worker to go into the home of a voter and help that voter fill out his absentee ballot."

Tom Adams, defense counsel for the City of East Palo Alto, says, however, that the other side's post-verdict

enthusiasm is nothing more than a face-saving smokescreen.

"We don't think appeals judges are favorable to reversing an incorporation," said Adams, who observed that the litigation was "tremendously abu-

**"Never in the state of California has anyone lost his or her home through the process of incorporation."**

sive" in its "attack on the right of minorities to vote." He stated that he "hadn't seen anything like it since the voter registration struggles of the South."

Not conceding to the 15-vote margin of defeat, the anti-incorporationists challenged some 300 votes with allegations that persons had been tricked or coerced in their homes and that ballots were tampered with or cast by nonresidents. Over 100 East

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# Jessie Jackson Sharpens the Debate

By Elena Becks

Jessie Jackson's candidacy is a rallying point for the broad section of the population adversely affected by Reagan administration policies and, as such, is a cause of concern for the powers that be.

The Reagan administration has set U.S. society and the world on an extremely dangerous course. Reagan has taken decisive steps to cut away all of the reforms and gains for which so many fought so hard in the 50's, 60's and early 70's. All sectors of society—Blacks and other Third World people, the poor, women, the elderly and working people in general—are being deprived of the resources that went to housing, medical care, the social services and the environment. Money is being pumped into an already bloated defense department to the tune of three trillion dollars over the next five years. The deficits that Reagan entered office vowing to slash are instead rising out of control.

If Reagan is re-elected in 1984 the disastrous policies of his last four years will continue to push the U.S. and the world to the brink of economic collapse and war.

Jessie Jackson's campaign is important because it will sharpen the debate on the issues of importance to those hurt by the Reagan Administration. Even his fellow Democrats will be forced to more clearly divorce themselves from Reaganomics because Jackson remains outspoken in condemning the Reagan regime. John Glenn and Walter Mondale, the two front running Democratic hopefuls, have been noticeably quiet on any issues of controversy during this campaign.

## Registration will also bring increased representation for Blacks in local state and national offices.

They must respond to issues raised in the Jackson platform if they hope to gain any credibility.

Jackson's campaign is especially significant for Black People in this country. Jackson hopes the campaign will help register an additional two million Black voters before the 1984 election. The registration of eligible Black voters has increased in the last two years. Part of the impetus for continuing this trend is the fact that

Reagan's winning margin in many states is far outstripped by the number of unregistered eligible Black voters. States like the Carolinas and Tennessee are included in this category. Most telling, however, is New York state where Reagan won by a margin of 165,000 votes. Since fewer than 10% of Blacks voted for Reagan, the 900,000 unregistered New York voters would have delivered the state's electoral vote to Reagan's opponent.

Increased registration will also bring increased representation for Blacks in local, state, and national offices. It is particularly important for Black people who have been continually denied even their most fundamental rights to begin to turn back the damage of administration policies and to give a significant thrust to the overall struggle for democracy and equality for Black people in this country.

In the arena of international politics, Jackson has loudly condemned the invasion in Grenada, U.S. intervention in Nicaragua and El Salvador and the sending of U.S. troops to Lebanon as "Big stick diplomacy." He has sharply criticized the military buildup at the expense of the poor,

which is in sharp contrast to recent bellicose remarks made by presidential cabinet member Ed Meese on the poor and hungry. Jackson is the only candidate that has called for an immediate end to the South African

## Glenn and Mondale must respond to issues raised in the Jackson platform.

racist system of apartheid. He has also demanded a reduction in nuclear arms and a halt to the Euromissile deployment.

Reagan's attacks on behalf of the rich have been so broad that Jackson calls on the formation of the rainbow coalition. The rainbow coalition encompasses the have-nots—all those who historically have been allowed little or no input into mainstream politics. Jackson calls upon Blacks, Chicanos, Asians, Native Americans, women, seniors and workers to create a new force which will forever turn back the political social and economic trends long after the outcome of the '84 election.

### The East Palo Alto Progress

A non-profit monthly community newspaper serving East Palo Alto, California. Persons interested in contributing articles, photography, or poetry may do so by submitting them to The East Palo Alto Progress.

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### REFLECTIONS SNOITCELFER

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Me get up to go to work  
To go to school  
To go to play  
Whatever I may do  
What good can we do?  
We ought not to miss

Reflections of the day  
Reflections of the night  
Reflections of the time  
NaNa NaNa Naaa Naaa Na

I knowing it not to be  
Still imagery, rather  
A moving reality in which  
There are tricks and schemes  
Illegal regimes . . . Oh!  
It's all within the  
Theme of time's song that's playing  
On the physical of me  
Riding my mentality

Brutal solutions, starvation,  
pollutions  
Can you see the poverty  
Mis-representations, mis-education  
Negative vibrations, broken  
aspirations  
Evil temptations

Some they be  
Star chasing and  
Time gazing and knowing  
Not demselves and . . .  
Johnny wants to be  
A super star hope no  
Get a superscar

Sister is it not cold on a street?  
On a hot summer time day  
Night passes the evening  
Could be one o'clock in a morning  
She say she's earning a living  
Painted faces and plastic smiles  
And even smoother than oils

Reflections of the time  
The I & I dem debating  
Time materes reason come  
To reason with life's concerns  
For now and in long afters

It is good to see  
And for it to be so  
Love embracing strength . . . cause  
Too many times we get  
Dent, broken some bent

Reflections of the time  
I knowing it not to be  
Still imagery rather  
A moving reality

## Seniors' Strength

Continued from page 1

disadvantages involved in being seniors in a youth oriented society, whites are more likely to be much more seriously affected because they have not developed their "coping" skills.

Retirement gives seniors time to think and reflect. They view themselves not as liabilities but rather as human resources. Seniors attend church, join advocacy organizations, consider themselves a strong political force, take a keen interest in national (Reaganomics) and foreign (Grenada) affairs and join social groups.

It is in social groups among their peers that seniors function best. Old age is a great equalizer. Realizing their vulnerability, seniors everywhere have developed a camaraderie. No relationship is more important than friendship; also, none is so rare. A group of seniors, known as the East Palo Alto Senior Citizens Club, enjoy such a friendship. They meet regularly at Brashear Hall, located at the headquarters of the Ravenswood Recreation and Park District, to chat and chew. Remembering the hard, menial work they did for so long, retirement represents a release from a punishing work life. Income from Social Security and Supplemental Income may be modest but it is steady and reliable.

"I enjoy my retirement," said Ruth Myers, the Club's president. "I don't move like young folks, but thank God I can still move!" Mrs. Myers believes in prayer and still attends church regularly.

"I take medication, and I have arthritis and high blood, but I love living. You have to take care of what you have left," remarked Mrs. Lillie Johnson, another member, as she executed a lively dance step.

"Thank God for life," added Katie McCollum. "I really don't feel old. It's all in the way you think."

And so it goes, offering help and consolation to each other during periods of crisis and continuing to plan future events. It was this group that planned and executed its first City Christmas Bazaar. The bazaar was so successful that planning is underway to make it an annual event. Among those who contributed to its success were the following:

The Brentwood-Oaks School Choir; the St. Francis Spanish Children's dance group; Faye Knox, accompanied by her daughters, electrifying the audience by her impromptu piano playing and sing-a-long; and Vullindela and his steel drum group playing many Caribbean melodies.

To be poor, Black, and aged is not a pretty picture. Black elderly have a life expectancy much lower than whites. The number of years they receive retirement benefits is less than their white counterparts. Nevertheless, kin and non-kin engage in reciprocal sharing and mutual help. Blacks still depend on kinship network for help and favors. Religion continues to be a significant component of their later years. Prayer is still their means of handling worries. The lyrics of the gospel song "Sometimes I Look Back and Wonder How I Got Over" may be the signature of the Black elderly. This emotional strength, evolving out of their religious involvement, serves them in good stead as they move into their "Twilight Years." It enable them to "keep on getting up." As one senior put it, "The Lord has been with me. The Lord has blessed me to live this long." And while life has been tough, he's thankful. "So far," he said, "I've enjoyed it."

## Women's Self Defense Course Offered

The Women's Self Defense Collective of the Mid Peninsula will offer two beginners' self defense courses for women beginning January 11th. Women of all ages and all degrees of physical fitness are welcome to join either of the eight-week courses.

The courses will help women learn

a range of self defense options: verbal assertiveness skills, basic striking and blocking techniques, hold escapes, and defenses for a variety of everyday situations. An important goal of the courses is to aid in strengthening women's perceptions of themselves as strong, capable people. The Collec-

tive, formed in 1974, has taught many workshops and eight-week courses.

Both classes will begin January 11th and meet for the following seven Wednesdays. One will be held at Escondido Village, Stanford University, from 5:30-7:30. Free childcare should be available, with advance

notice, at this timeslot (call Jane at 497-1101 to make arrangements). The other course will be held at the Mid Peninsula YWCA, 4161 Alma, from 7:15-9:15. Each eight-week course costs \$35, and scholarships are available. For more information call 324-1142 or 497-1101.

## LEGAL THREAT

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rights to privacy and freedom of association.

Although absentee balloting is a widely used avenue of campaign activity in California, its use in East Palo Alto appeared to have been singled out for attack by the plaintiffs' lawyer. Superior Court Judge John Cruikshank, in his written decision, indicated that McCloskey's complaint that voters' rights to a secret ballot were intruded upon "should be directed to the Legislature," not to the courts. Similarly, finding "no fraud or collusion," Judge Cruikshank declared valid the votes of 30 people whose ballots were hand carried by a deputy registrar to the county clerk's office in violation of a state election code that county officials had been unaware of.

Judge Cruikshank also noted the out-of-court harassment of voters by incorporation foes, "the reluctance of voters to come forth and testify . . ." and the fact that the "lawsuits

were financed not by citizens of the community, but by (absentee) landowners . . ."

Most city officials, meanwhile, share a guarded optimism about surviving the legal offensive. Mayor Barbara Mouton asserts that the legality of the city's birth has been confirmed, but if there are (conservative) judges in the higher courts who might be inclined to raise issues not pertinent to the election's proven integrity, then "the

### The legality of the city has been confirmed.

longer the city exists and functions well, the less likely it is that those persons will rule against it."

The Mayor also commented on the irony in the court case's spotlight on alleged deception, having come on the heels of a fraudulent "Save Our Homes" campaign promoted by the forces behind the lawsuit.

## REFERENDUM

Continued from page 1

by 2000 persons calling for a citywide vote on rent control. The city clerk must verify that the petition was signed by at least 10% of East Palo Alto's registered voters. The referendum election will be held April 10.

In accordance with state law, receipt of the petition automatically forced a suspension of the ordinance until a vote can be held. Responding to fears that some landlords might resort to unreasonable rent increases during the interim, the City Council voted on December 23 to create an urgency ordinance to be effective until the election. The ordinance limits rent increases to 8% above the amount of rent charged on July 1, 1983. It also stipulates that evictions require just

cause, such as non-payment of rent or destruction of property.

The Private Property Rights Committee has also filed to begin circulating an initiative called the Property Owners Civil Rights Initiative. The proposed initiative asserts that owners have the "right to establish the price for which that property can be sold, leased, rented, transferred, or exchanged. The City of East Palo Alto shall make no law to abridge that right." For this measure to reach the ballot its backers must gain petition signatures from at least 15% of the registered voters within a period of 180 days.

These actions appear to be the latest in a series of related challenges to the authority and legitimacy of the new city. The campaign against incorporation as well as the subsequent

"Never in the state of California has anyone lost his or her home through the process of incorporation," said the Mayor, recalling CCain's (Citizen's Committee Against Incorporation Now) theme that self-government would bring a ruinous property tax rise.

### New Misinformation Campaign

In a related development, a new misinformation campaign has been launched to undo the city's regulations protecting tenants from exorbitant rents and unjust evictions. A group sponsored by the Palo Alto Parks Association (PAPA) calling itself the "East Palo Alto Private Property Rights Committee" has submitted a petition to the city clerk, forcing two options on the city council: repeal the rent ordinance enacted on November or have its existence decided on in a referendum. (The council, however, did pass December 23 an urgency

measure which effectively keeps alive the rent freeze, imposed last July 1, to last until July 1, 1984 or until the result of a referendum vote is known.)

Given the referendum backers' past patterns of rent gouging, along with the lack of construction in East Palo Alto, their claim that rent control will

### Cross examinations were a gross violation of witnesses' constitutional rights to privacy and freedom of association.

deter "investments" has sparked some indignation.

"They have never invested any money in this community," said councilman Ruben Abrica. "Now they want to protect their practices of speculation by calling it 'civil rights.'"

"I think that people will not buy it," he said.

lawsuit challenging the validity of the election has been heavily financed by a group of predominantly out-of-town landlords. Eighty-three percent of the apartment buildings in East Palo Alto are owned by these landlords.

### Campaign against incorporation and lawsuit heavily financed by out-of-town landlords.

The Palo Alto Park Association, consisting of a group of landlords owning 2400 units in East Palo Alto, has assessed a fee of \$20 per member to help bankroll both the lawsuit against the City and the fight against rent control. The efforts of this group have

been aided by the huge Tri-County Apartment Owners Association which includes 3200 landlords operating in Santa Clara, San Mateo, and Santa Cruz counties. As early as last August, Tri-County solicited a fee of \$2 per unit from its members as contribution to the campaign against rent control in East Palo Alto.

The East Palo Alto Council of Tenants has vowed to fight for defeat of the referendum. The group has called upon tenants to show their support for both the Council and the Rent Stabilization and Just Cause Eviction Ordinance. The group plans an intensive campaign to organize tenants which will include meetings, leafletting, voter registration, workshops on tenants' rights, and the staffing of an information table at the Valu-Max supermarket on Saturdays.

## EXPLOSIVE . . .

Continued from page 1

quently, there was no reason to think it would do better in the future.

Perhaps the most interesting moment of the hearing occurred when Mitch Allard, a landlord from Saratoga, said that he did not favor rent control but would settle for a moderate ordinance. He admitted that rent control works in places like San Jose, Oakland, and Hayward. After his statement, several other apartment owners expressed a willingness to accept some version of rent control.

Meetings on November 7 and 14 involved discussion among the council members on what specific features a final ordinance should have. Considerable discussion on the 7th took place over the need to reduce turnover of apartment buildings to realize windfall profits. Councilman Satterwhite suggested the possibility of

having a tax that would penalize owners who do so.

It was indicated that the need for such a tax stems from the ever-higher mortgages resulting from frequent sales. Such increased costs are typically

### Landlord admitted that rent control works in places like San Jose, Oakland, and Hayward.

passed on to tenants in the form of higher rents. Mrs. Wilks, the only council member opposed to this kind of measure claimed, "Many speculators appear to be our friends."

At this meeting council members also agreed to support a just cause eviction clause (4-0, Wilks abstaining), to exempt all new construction from

the rent control ordinance, and to plan for new, low-income affordable housing. (For a list of key features of the final ordinance, see p.1.)

On November 14, Councilman Satterwhite suggested that the city government explore an alternative ordinance that would outline voluntary rent control. At the following meeting (Nov. 17), the city attorney reported back that such an ordinance would violate state and federal anti-trust laws. The council, therefore, dropped the idea.

Those apartment owners most unwilling to compromise over rent control condemned what now appeared to be inevitable. Joseph Horvath called rent legislation "obnoxious and oppressive" and threatened, "We shall have a referendum, that's for damn sure." And then the atmosphere grew increasingly volatile as

red faced landlords expressed dissatisfaction with the proceedings by cursing and punctuating the air with their fists. Their only comfort, apparently, was a rambling speech by Councilwoman Wilks which drew landlords' hearty applause when she stated that she would vote against rent control 10 times if need be.

In spite of the apartment owners' antics, council members Abrica, Blakey, Mouton, and Satterwhite voted to introduce the ordinance. And on November 23, before a highly supportive audience, rent control was approved by the same four members. In concluding this hectic and high-pressure series of meetings, Mayor Mouton said, "The City is living up to its obligation to protect all of its citizens. It is extending protection to an element of the population that hitherto hasn't had it."

## Child Abuse: Frightening Statistics—And Help

By Magdalena V. Rosales

Child abuse, including sexual assault of children, is a crime that has long been ignored. Our society's unwillingness to confront this problem has contributed to the victimization of children by leaving them unprotected. The sexual abuse of children has remained a hidden issue even when estimates reveal startling statistics:

- 100,000 to 500,000 children are assaulted each year in the U.S.
  - 38% of women are sexually assaulted as girls before the age of 18.
  - One out of every seven male children will be assaulted before the age of 18.
  - In over 75% of all child sexual abuse cases, the abuser is an adult the child knows and trusts, a family member, a neighbor, a babysitter, a relative, or a family friend.
- In this societal conspiracy of silence

and denial, we have failed to provide children with realistic prevention strategies. Most parents fear assault of their children by a stranger and therefore only prepare children for this possibility. Children are warned to not speak to strangers or not take candy from a stranger, etc. These cues intimidate children and yet fail to equip them with realistic strategies for self-protection. These warnings also ignore the more common assault situations altogether. If a child learns to avoid strangers, she/he is not prepared to deal with the advances of a family member or "trusted" adult.

The protection of our children and the elimination of this grave social problem can only happen if we educate ourselves about the facts of child assault and empower children by providing adequate strategies to avoid danger. When assaulted a child will

recognize that she/he is not to blame and can then seek out a supportive and understanding adult for help.

The Child Assault Prevention Project, developed by Women Against Rape in Columbus, Ohio, recognizes the socialized vulnerability of children and looks to their empowerment through a prevention model that builds their strength, extends their mobility, promotes their independence, and guarantees their freedom.

The program uses workshops to educate children and adults on the reality of assault. For children in elementary school there is a one hour workshop in which CAPP volunteers work through a series of role-plays that teach children how to effectively deal with the bully in the schoolyard, the stranger, and the suspiciously affectionate relative. The model emphasizes children's basic rights to be SAFE,

STRONG, and FREE, and teaches them to exercise these rights. Children learn that self-assertiveness, peer support, and adult support can help them escape dangerous situations. The workshops for parents and teachers cover the facts about assault and offer practical information for dealing with it in our lives.

In this community, CAPP is being implemented by volunteers from the Mid-Peninsula YWCA Rape Crisis Center and the Mid-Peninsula Support Network for Battered Women. In the following months, CAPP will be administered in the Palo Alto School District and where possible in East Palo Alto. If you are interested in volunteering, would like more information about CAPP, or would like the program to come to your children's school or church, please call Mary at (415) 964-6503 or Cari at (415) 494-0972.

# History of East Palo Alto, Part V

## Racial, Economic Motives Spurred Opposition to Cityhood in 1958

By Bob Lowe

This article was in our last issue, but due to a production error it did not appear in the correct form. We reprint it here with the paragraphs in the right order.—EDITORS

The previous article in this series suggested that the 1958 conflict over incorporation in East Palo Alto was not simply a battle over economics. A consideration of race must be added to matters of financial interest in order to fully account for divisions over the question of cityhood.

The fiercest opposition to cityhood East of the Bayshore came from the then white University Village area. Residents there complained that their taxes would go up to support improvements to older areas of East Palo Alto. It was also relevant, however, that most of the Black population at that time resided in these older neighborhoods

### An aversion to crossing the Bayshore masked a racist outlook.

and that Blacks were the strongest proponents of cityhood.

Financial considerations also mattered on the all-white West side of the highway where property values were considerably higher than on the East. West siders' opposition to incorporation, like that of antagonists East of

Bayshore, involved the fear that they would have to subsidize less affluent, less white sections of the community. But a more explicitly racial motive for their opposition had to do with Ravenswood High School.

In 1957 the Trustees of the Sequoia Union High School District set the boundaries for Ravenswood High, its fifth school. The attendance area initially comprised all of East Palo Alto plus Menlo Park on the East side of the Bayshore. While the new school would be predominantly white, its boundaries encompassed virtually every Black family in the 100 square mile District.

Vigorous protests culminated in a petition signed by 3,669 East Palo Alto and Bellehaven residents who represented a hodgepodge of different interests. Such pressure resulted in a minor boundary change that sent some Black students from Belle Haven to Menlo-Atherton High (where all high school students from East Palo Alto and Menlo Park had previously gone). This satisfied neither those protesters who wanted to guarantee greater racial integration or those who wanted less. Many West siders fit the latter category.

Angered by the Sequoia Trustees' refusal to allow them to stay within the Menlo-Atherton High School attendance area, a group of West side residents sought annexation to Menlo Park. Earl Beattie, the leader of the

group, offered this rationale: "Maybe by annexing to Menlo Park we would have a voice in shaping school districts that we want our children to go to and not to have them shunted across the Bayshore. I'm quite furious about that!"

Since there was nothing inherently dangerous or inconvenient about walking across the University Ave. overpass to get to Ravenswood High School, it is obvious that Beattie and like-minded individuals were really concerned with the racial makeup of the new school. They reasoned that incorporation of the entire East Palo Alto area would lock them into a community and a high school that would become increasingly identified with Black people.

An aversion to crossing the Bayshore, like a disinclination to carry a financial burden that would benefit older neighborhoods, masked a racist outlook. Yet those with the greatest wealth in East Palo Alto feared incorporation for more strictly economic reasons. Virtually all the industrialists in East Palo Alto joined the Kavanaughs, the largest landowners, in vocally opposing incorporation because of the taxes they believed would accompany cityhood. With the exception of the Kavanaughs, none resided in East Palo Alto so its racial composition little mattered to them.

Fear of taxation prompted Ted Wunderlich of McCammon-Wunderlich

to claim that his business would leave East Palo Alto if it incorporated. More importantly, Clarence Kavanaugh formally filed to annex his 100 acre industrial tract to Menlo Park. This act alone convinced many people that East Palo Alto would not have a sufficient tax base to run the city.

Though enough signatures for incorporation were gathered, they did not represent a sufficient percentage of the community's property to permit an election. So the matter was

### West siders' opposition to incorporation involved the fear that they would have to subsidize the less affluent.

dropped in August of 1958. That Kavanaugh's move was purely an attempt to avoid potential taxes became clear when he tried to re-annex his land to East Palo Alto after the drive to form a city died.

The next installment of the series will complete a first cycle of East Palo Alto's history. It will point out the consequences of the failure to incorporate in 1958. And from the vantage point of this key event in the community's development, it will gather together essential strands of the past that bear on more recent history as well as on the future.


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