

Dear East Palo Altans:

Yes, July is here already. We celebrated our third birthday on July first. God continues to shower His love on us . . . each has again received the very precious gift of life, and each of us is fortunate to be part of a vital, evolving entity that is coming into its own.

Of course I realize those people on our corners and in some of our neighborhoods prevent us from enjoying our part of the 'good life.' We've just got to clean up those neighborhoods and those corners.

We presented arguments in the Wilks suit against the city in December 1985. We were sure we would've had a decision from the California Supreme Court by now; however, this is not the case. We'll just have to be patient a little while longer. Remember the words of some of the community's seasoned citizens, "God would not have brought us this far to deny us now!"

On June 30, 1986, we approved the City's budget for the 1986-87 year. Among the amounts allocated, the Police Department and Public Works Department received the lion's share with Management Services, Community Services, and Community Development receiving lesser amounts.

Recently some of you were jolted by the deaths of two star athletes, Len Bias and Don Rogers. Except for the fact that they were star athletes, their deaths really weren't that much of a shock; every day in cities and towns across this nation and around the world, young people, and some not so young, are losing their lives to drugs. They trade the rest of their lives for a brief high. Americans have known for a long, long time that use and abuse of drugs - alcohol, cocaine, heroin, and nicotine, to name a few - were epidemic in their neighborhoods, in their schools, and in their communities.

Here in our community we have been upfront in admitting that drugs are a problem. I've constantly implored residents to not be part of the scene . . . as users, buyers, or sellers. It is heart wrenching to drive down Bell, Verbena, Clarke, et cetera, and observe our youth waving fistfuls of green bills as they solicit and harass everyone walking or driving by. Additionally, it is disgusting to see some of our 'upstanding' citizens out there making their buys. Yes, it is time for an all-out war against drugs in order to eliminate their use and abuse among all members of our community, particularly our children. By working together - community, church, school, and police - we can stop both community residents and outsiders from breaking our laws (buying, selling, and using drugs violates city and state laws).

We must conduct an education program to help those youth who disrespect themselves and us by hustling drugs; they must understand that those fistfuls of green bills don't go very far when they are confined in jail or prison for long periods of time. That is, of course, if they don't lose their lives in the process either due to an overdose or to the violence that often results from trying to protect one's stash or drug turf. Even when they manage somehow to elude death, many times their lives are permanently impacted. They cannot readily perceive that the crime boss reaps most of the profits, living the good life usually far, far away from the street drug scene which produces the 'milk and honey' to support his lifestyle.

A few days ago, the City in conjunction with SASA and area labor unionists hosted a reception in honor of staff and members of the board of the African National Congress (ANC) and the South West African Political Organization (SWAPO). According to ANC and SWAPO representatives, correct information about events taking place in South Africa is either withheld from most Americans or is flawed to give a picture that is entirely opposite to what really is occurring. They feel that the applying of sanctions is the only way to eliminate apartheid without losing many lives. They asked that people do whatever they can to support applying economic sanctions against South Africa.

We close feeling that although we still have a long road ahead of us, our progress to date has been noteworthy. We've developed a decent track record; we've been able to deliver an acceptable level of services to community residents. Through God's great and abiding love, we still have the vision, the will, and the means to serve all of the residents of this beautiful City. Peace.