

**LETTER FROM THE EDITOR
by Francine Millman**

On behalf of the Scott Valley Homeowners' Association Board of Directors, we would like to wish everyone a happy, healthy, prosperous and safe New Year.

As you will learn when you read this issue of *The Voice*, your board has been busy working on various issues important to everyone in the immediate Scott Valley area - from researching the Alto Tunnel issues, to becoming involved in the CERT program, to scheduling our upcoming Annual Homeowners' meeting, which we hope most can attend.

We cannot, of course, do this alone. Your participation in attending Emergency Preparedness workshops can only serve to make this a stronger community, should disaster strike.

In addition, it is time once again for annual dues. Your \$40 per household is tax deductible and will assist in keeping you informed through these newsletters, as well as by being used to maintain the valley - gardening, repairs not paid for by the city and any other issues that arise along the way.

We look forward to a new and positive year and hope as many of you who can join us in making our Valley strong, sign up to do so.

**IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN -
BECOME A SVHA MEMBER**

A new year has begun and it is time to renew your annual, tax deductible homeowners' membership. Your Board of Directors is working hard on the issues that represent Scott Valley homeowners, while keeping everyone informed on our progress. Please send your \$40 to: Scott Valley Homeowners' Association, P.O. Box 392, Mill Valley, CA 94942.

**ANNUAL HOMEOWNERS'
ASSOCIATION MEETING**

The Annual Scott Valley Homeowners' Association Meeting will be held on March 12, 2002 at 8pm at the Scott Valley Tennis and Swim Club. We look forward to discussing whatever topics you have on your mind relating to Scott Valley.

**AN ALTO TUNNEL PRIMER
by John Palmer**

This is the third in a series of articles written for the benefit of Scott Valley, Alto-Sutton Manor, and Chapman Meadows homeowners to provide background for evaluation of the proposal to re-construct the Alto Tunnel.

III: ENGINEERING STUDIES, 1972-1994

Since the Alto Tunnel was closed to train traffic and sealed in 1971, several firms have performed engineering studies on it, although not all for the same purpose. Initially, before Scott Valley was fully developed, the Golden Gate Transit District wanted to acquire the tunnel for use as a high speed commuter rail line, and commissioned a study for that purpose (the 1972 Kaiser study). Residents and civic leaders in the cities on both sides of the tunnel were strongly opposed to the idea, which was quickly dropped, and the tunnel remained closed at both ends.

In their study, Kaiser's engineers made the following observations:

- Both halves of the tunnel were taking on water, the south more so than the north;
- Most of the wooden support posts were wet and substantially deteriorated, conditions which posed a severe danger of cave-ins along the tunnel's length;

- There was exposed rock (no lining) in the middle of the tunnel;
- The visible rock showed signs of spalling (breaking off along the surface), which could trigger a progressive failure if the support system continued to disintegrate;
- The rock was of the Franciscan group, consisting of sandstone, conglomerates, and shales, which was of a "low shear strength when saturated";
- Because the supports were timber, fire was a particular hazard in that it could destroy the support system of the rock structure.

The engineers recommended that the bulkheads at both tunnel entrances be modified to allow circulation of air, since moisture inside the sealed tunnel was accelerating the deterioration of the timber supports and increasing the risk of collapse; this recommendation was never implemented.

In 1981, the County of Marin commissioned a formal study from Copple Foreaker Associates, Consulting Engineers, which included an inspection of the tunnel. Assisting in the study was the firm of Harding Lawson Associates, Engineers and Geologists (HLA), which prepared a supplemental report. The stated purpose of the Foreaker study was "to determine the present condition of the tunnel, to make an appraisal of existing and future potential problems resulting from defects or deterioration, and to study the feasibility of various ways to make the tunnel safe."

In other words, the Foreaker study was commissioned to prevent further deterioration of the tunnel and to prevent damage to the homes which had since been built over the entrances to the tunnel and above its length, as well as to determine if it could be safely used for other purposes. Ironically, less than six months after the Foreaker study was completed, the tunnel's south entrance collapsed, an event described in Part II of this series, severely damaging one of those homes.

The Foreaker study reiterated and concurred with all the findings and recommendations of the Kaiser study, and included the following further observations:

- The timber support system was now "almost totally destroyed from decay" and "will offer only a fraction of its intended support for a few more years and then will be totally destroyed by decay";
- There were several small failures and one large cave-in inside the tunnel;
- "The condition of the timber is such that repairs would not be feasible" and "if the tunnel is to be maintained, a completely new support system is necessary."

The Foreaker study went on to enumerate three alternatives to deal with the tunnel:

1. "Accept the risk that the tunnel will have large cave-ins which will reach the surface";
2. "Replace the deteriorated timber support system" for about 2/3 of its length at a projected cost in 1981 dollars of \$2,835,000 (which did not include the cost of acquiring the rights-of-way, over which the railroad had only easements, and any homes, of which there are two, which would probably have to be condemned in order to proceed with that work).
3. Fill the tunnel for several hundred feet at both ends and re-seal it. This was eventually done, although not before the 1981 collapse of the southern end.

In March of 1982, after the collapse of the tunnel, Copple Foreaker Associates revised its July '81 study to take into account the emergency work done to shore up its southern end, and modified their earlier recommendations to include more extensive preventative measures.

The Harding Lawson Associates (HLA) report dated May 1, 1981 noted the precarious position of homes above both entrances to the tunnel and described the geologic conditions found in

both the tunnel and the hill through which it was bored. Among HLA's conclusions were the following:

- The tunnel was in imminent danger of collapsing, possibly all the way to the surface (this did occur seven months later);
- "The obvious most effective mitigating measures would be to either line the tunnel with steel and concrete supports or fill it with concrete", estimating that cost to be between \$5,215,000 to \$6,519,000 (in 1981 dollars), which again doesn't include any of the ancillary real estate costs described above.
- "Shotcrete lining over the existing timber supports would probably be ineffective since the timber would continue to deteriorate and the shotcrete above would provide no appreciable structural support".

In 1994, the Marin County Department of Parks and Open Space commissioned a study from Brady and Associates to look at the possibility of creating a North-South bikeway, which included studying the feasibility of reconstructing the Alto Tunnel. This report noted that the Alto Tunnel would cost more than any other segment of the bikeway, and stated that "the length of the tunnel would also make it difficult to light and secure for bicycle use".

In evaluating the cost of the tunnel's reconstruction, the Brady study suggested that new steel supports be installed for only about 64% of the tunnel's length, leaving 783 feet supported only by the existing timber and shotcrete. Brady estimated that the cost of this reconstruction would be \$4,600,000 (in 1994 dollars).

Although its goal of promoting bicycle use, especially for commuting, is a worthy cause, the Brady study did not take into account HLA's conclusion that the entire length of the tunnel must be reinforced with steel in order to assure its safety. The danger of fire in the wooden supports, an issue raised by the Kaiser

engineers, was also not discussed in the Brady study.

When discussing its potential cost, advocates of reconstructing the tunnel usually quote figures and recommendations from the Brady study, but not those from the HLA study, which advised more thorough reinforcement of the existing structure prior to any re-use. Therefore, it appears that the cost estimates of the Brady study, which again do not include the additional expense of acquiring the pertinent real estate referenced earlier, are incomplete.

Stay tuned for Parts IV and V, which will discuss the Quincy Engineering Study of 2001 and current proposals to reconstruct and rebuild the tunnel – pro and con, as well as the alternative solutions presently being considered.

SV COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

Please send any ads for services you require or have to offer those in Scott Valley to the SVV@promptconsulting.com.

TENNIS CLUB DIRECTOR POSITION AVAILABLE

Position: Member, Board of Directors
Scott Valley Swimming &
Tennis Club
Requirements: Proprietary Member of Club
Term: 2 years starting March, 2002
Pay: Serving Your Community!

The Scott Valley Homeowners Association appoints two members of the Scott Valley Swimming and Tennis Club Board. This representation, which is provided for in the Swim and Tennis Club by-laws, ensures that neighborhood concerns are heard as the club plans programs for its members. The only requirement is that the appointees be proprietary members of the club.

Directors serve a two year term starting March 1. The primary responsibilities are

attending monthly meetings which are held in during a weekday evening. This is a volunteer position.

If you would like to be considered for appointment or have any questions, please call Tom Ashley 388-0109. The Homeowner's board will make its selection in February.

**COMMUNITY EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS UPDATE
BY BARBARA JENNINGS**

Since the September 11th terrorist attacks, members of our own community have been much more concerned about being prepared should such a crisis occur in the Bay Area. To help communities handle an emergency during the first crucial hours or maybe days, the Mill Valley Fire Department offers Community Emergency Response Training (CERT) classes. The last such class held last November was full. Future classes are scheduled for January 8, March 7, June 4 and October 1, 2002.

These classes are taught for two hours on five consecutive evenings at each of the five Southern Marin fire jurisdictions: Tiburon, Mill Valley, Southern Marin Fire, Sausalito and county (the Marin City station) lead by the firefighters on duty at their stations. The course covers Awareness, Fire Prevention and Suppression, Disaster First Aid, Search and Rescue and a Hands-on Exercise.

There are numerous ways Scott Valley residents can be involved in emergency preparedness. At the very least everyone should have enough food, water and supplies for up to 72 hours in the event of a long-term disaster. You can also get involved at the neighborhood level, become a member of a CERT Team, or, if you have medical background, become a disaster medical responder. If you are interested in helping our neighborhood establish an emergency plan or would like to volunteer to provide emergency services, please call Barbara Jennings at 381-2624.

Scott Valley Voice

This is a collaborative effort of the
Scott Valley Board of Directors

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