

FIFTY YEARS IN THE MAKING

# The Story of Redwood City's Parks 1937-1987



City of Redwood City

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Richard S. Claire, Mayor  
Gerald R. Chandler, Vice Mayor  
Ernest C. Botschgi  
Robert H. Bury  
William J. ...  
Jack ...  
George Laber

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Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department  
Administrative Staff

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# City of Redwood City

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Cover photo of Red Morton , courtesy of Helen Morton

## Starting Out

Like all good stories, the story of Redwood City's Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department starts simply. Imagine a warm summer evening in the city. It's just after dinner time. People are putting away the dishes or sitting down with newspapers or turning on the radio. Outside, a breeze rustles the branches of the trees, and the cries of children at play drift through the air.

Right about now, as the light over the hills is turning golden, a young man with red hair is driving down Roosevelt Avenue in a gray Model T Ford. When he gets to the softball field at Hawes Park, he unloads the bats and balls he always keeps in the back of his car. Then he gets out the old line marker, fills it with chalk, and starts to line the field. Once that's done, he puts four quarters into the machine that turns on the field lights. By then, players are warming up and spectators are arriving. When the 200-seat bleachers are just about filled, twilight has fallen. The lights glow brighter, and as the players take the field, the crowd begins to cheer. It's time to play ball.

For Alfred "Red" Morton, the young man with the red hair and the Model T, that was a typical summer night in 1937. Hired that July to be Redwood City's first recreation director, Red ran an operation that was simplicity itself. He had two part-time assistants to help him oversee the recreation facilities at Hawes, Mezes, and Chestnut parks. His office was a shared space in the basement of the Carnegie Library, which was located at Broadway and Jefferson.



**Red Morton and  
Park and  
Recreation  
Commissioner  
Elmer Ross at  
Hawes Park**



The program Red put together that first year concentrated on the basics. He revived the adult softball league, introduced junior softball, and started a supervised program of playground activities. Since his salary was only \$50 a month, he continued to work full-time as a truck driver for Associated Oil, routinely putting in 70 hours a week between his two jobs.

Red's enthusiasm and spirit of hard work were contagious. In October 1937, Redwood City established its Park and Recreation Commission to help plan the city's future recreation facilities. In a time when it was tough to make ends meet financially, the commission looked for practical ways to accomplish its goals.

**Hawes Park,  
1940**



One of the first ideas was to use the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which then employed about 49,000 people across the country in city recreation departments. In 1938, while City Hall and the Library were being built under WPA sponsorship, a small group of WPA workers, directed by Red Morton, helped start the city's recreation programs.

Morton found another source of assistance. He enlisted the services of the city's school facilities and teachers. During the early years of the Recreation Department, the Sequoia High School gym and swimming pool offered a full schedule of activities for both adults and youngsters. This program of cooperation between school district and recreation department was the first of its kind in California.

While the individuals who started Redwood City's parks and recreation programs were practical, they were not afraid to dream. From a simple beginning, grand schemes developed. In 1944 City Manager Robert W. Mead, Red Morton, and other community leaders helped generate the support needed to pass a \$998,000 bond issue for postwar construction. The money was to be used to build "an improved Redwood City"—a city with better streets and sewers, a branch library, "and perhaps most important of all, a city with the Peninsula's best



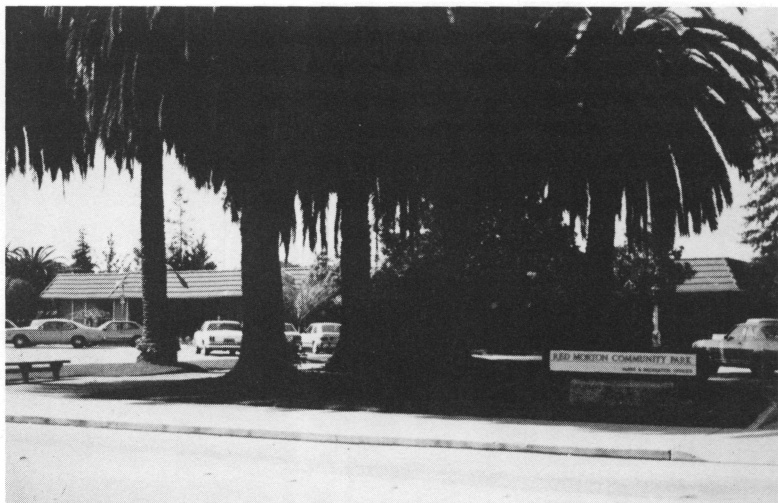
**Fire Department vs. Police Department basketball game (1920s), bike races at Sequoia High (1940), and stilt races at McKinley School (1940)**

recreation facilities," in the words of Ray Spangler, editor of the *Redwood City Tribune*. By 1946 the Park and Recreation and the Planning commissions had developed a 20-year plan intended to achieve that goal.

## "Eating, Working, and Sleeping Recreation Center"

As far back as 1938, Red Morton was campaigning for a centralized recreational facility for the entire city. A *Tribune* article from that year noted that Morton was "eating, working, and sleeping recreation center full-time." While the Community Park project had to be put on hold during the war years, Redwood City continued to look to the future. The

## Community Activities Building



minutes of the Park and Recreation Commission from December 1942 note that postwar plans would include development of a park in “a 30-acre area bordered by Roosevelt, Dickey, Myrtle, Madison, and Valota Streets.”

In 1945, the year the war ended, Morton presented the commission with a rough sketch of the recreation center site. William Penn Mott, Jr. turned that drawing into architectural plans, and within two years construction was underway. With one ball field in the park already in use, the Recreation Center was completed and dedicated on June 13, 1948. The foundation of the 20-year plan had been laid.

During the next two decades, Morton continued to lead the effort that would make Community Park the centerpiece of Redwood City’s park system. By 1956, when the San Francisco 49ers moved their headquarters to Community Park, the Armory, the Community Park Pool, and the Veterans Memorial Building had been built. The Police Youth Club was completed in 1962, and in 1965 the newly expanded 49ers building was named the Morabito Memorial Field House. In 1967 the Recreation Department celebrated its thirtieth anniversary by opening the Community Activities Building. That same year, the old Recreation Center was renamed in Red Morton’s honor.

Besides providing the inspiration for many of the city’s park facilities, Morton also helped shape what is now one of the finest, most diversified recreation programs on the Peninsula. The mainstay of the program was softball. During the ‘50s, Morton helped turn Redwood City into the softball capital of Northern California. In 1950 he became the Northern California Commissioner of the Amateur Softball Association (ASA). In 1955 and 1956, Redwood City sent teams to the ASA world championships. In 1956, the year Morton was named president of the Pacific Area of the ASA, Hawes Park hosted the association’s Northern California championships for the first time.

Adult softball was only one of Morton's contributions to Redwood City recreation, however. He also helped establish first-rate programs for children. "Red couldn't do enough for the kids," says James F. Knecht, who served on the Park and Recreation Commission from 1956 to 1978. "Anything to make things better for kids, he would grab onto."

Morton also worked hard for the city's senior citizens. In 1956 he helped Don Dimitratos, who was then assistant recreation director, found the Fun-After-Fifty Club. With more than 1,000 members, this organization has become an important part of the city's comprehensive program for seniors, headed by recreation supervisor Mary Kucala.



**A Fun-After-Fifty Club dance**

Another article from the *Tribune* in 1938, when Morton first started to envision Community Park, now seems prophetic. The writer characterized Morton as "a fellow who is a builder at heart, and once he has started building he cannot stop." At the time of his death in 1971, Red had more than fulfilled that assessment. In addition to the Community Park complex, the city's park system had grown to include Fleishman, Stulsaft, Dove Beeger, Spinax, and Marlin parks. Older parks had been renovated, plans for new parks were in the works, and the city's recreation programs were still expanding. In recognition of the role Morton had played in Redwood City recreation, Community Park was renamed in his honor in 1972, and in 1975 a memorial was placed in the park between Bechet and Griffin fields.

Former Mayor and Congressman William H. Royer, who was active in Redwood City government from 1947 until 1966, eloquently sums up Red Morton's role in the building of the city's parks. "Red was the guy who came up with the ideas, the one who did the inspiring," Royer says. "Since he was recognized as a leader in his field all over the state and also greatly respected at City Hall, he gave his department the clout it needed to get things done."



“Over the years, many people in the community have contributed to our parks,” Royer continues. “But what set Red apart from everyone else is that he was always there. No matter what time of day or what was happening, Red was there working. Redwood City recreation was his whole life. It was his first love, and he stuck with it all the way. Our parks and our programs wouldn’t be what they are today if it weren’t for Red.”

Many of those who knew Morton personally would add that their lives wouldn’t be what they are today if Red hadn’t been around. “Red brought a lot of professionalism to recreation in Redwood City,” City Councilman Robert Bury has said. “He was highly regarded in the field and won many awards. But I remember him most for the terrific friendships he had, from the professional athletes to kids. Red always lent a hand to people who needed help.”

**Red Morton  
with former  
commissioners  
Judge Wayne  
Millington (left)  
and Robert  
Whitmore  
(right), 1967**



## *Building Redwood City's Parks: A Community Effort*

While Red Morton richly deserves credit for the inspirational leadership he brought to Redwood City recreation, many other people have played key roles in building the city's parks. One such person is Pasco Balzarini, who served as the city's park superintendent for 31 years. In 1946, when Pasco took charge of the Park Department, which was then separate from the Recreation Department, he had only one full-time employee. "It was embarrassing," Pasco recalls. "I would tell people that I was the new park superintendent, and they would say, 'Since when do we have a park department?'"

By 1972, when the Park and Recreation departments combined, Pasco's crews had become well-known for the quality of their work—not only in the city but all over the Peninsula. During the '60s and '70s, the department won prizes in nearly every category for its displays at the San Mateo County Fair. The Park Department also helped make Redwood City the attractive community it is today. In addition to working on parks, department crews were given the job of maintaining landscaped areas along boulevards. They also planted thousands of trees throughout the city.

Max C. Weeks and Sally Hartman are two other people whose dedication and hard work helped shape the history of parks and recreation in Redwood City. Director from 1972 until 1980, Weeks was the person who oversaw the restructuring of the combined Park and Recreation Department. Hartman, now park and recreation superintendent, joined the department in 1960 and has directed the expansion of its recreation programs into such services as child care and health care screenings for seniors.

"Max and Sally carried on the tradition that Red started," says Chester "Bud" Hefner, a former Morton assistant whose career as a teacher, principal, and administrator in the city's school district spans 31 years. "Max was a good man with budgets and an excellent organizer. Sally was a real driving force. She helped stabilize the department and really got the women's programs going."

Hefner goes on to note that the city's parks could not have been built without strong community support. "Redwood City has always come on strong for recreation," he says. "This community has always been recreation-minded." Over the years, Redwood City has been fortunate to have civic leaders who were equally committed to recreation. The individuals whose names have been memorialized in Community Park all made important contributions to the growth of the city's park system.



**McGarvey Field**—Both the field in Community Park and the street that runs between Farm Hill Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue are named for Henry D. McGarvey. Born in 1867, McGarvey was a land developer. He inherited his large real estate holdings from his father, Owen, a building contractor who came to this area from New York and purchased 1,000 acres of land from the Arguellos. In 1945 Henry gave American Legion Post 105 the property for its hall on El Camino Real. He also sold the city the property that was turned into Fleishman Park.

**Bechet Field**—Red Morton once called Al Bechet the father of Redwood City recreation for the role he played in organizing city softball and basketball leagues in the '20s. A resident of Redwood City from 1928 until 1934, Bechet also led the effort to get a lighted softball field at Hawes Park. In World War II, Bechet was awarded the French Croix de Guerre and elected a member of the French Legion of Honor. After his discharge from the military in 1947, he made his home in Europe.

**Griffin Field**—Director of physical education at Sequoia High School from 1922 to 1960, Frank Griffin was a pioneer in his field. He achieved national recognition for his fitness programs, which were written up in magazine articles and adopted by schools throughout the country. Nicknamed "the Great White Father," he was known for his outlandish hats, which he collected on his many trips abroad. He was also famous for his sayings, one of which went: "Three things a boy must learn: swimming, to save a life; boxing, to defend himself; and typing. I have no use for a person who can't express himself legibly."

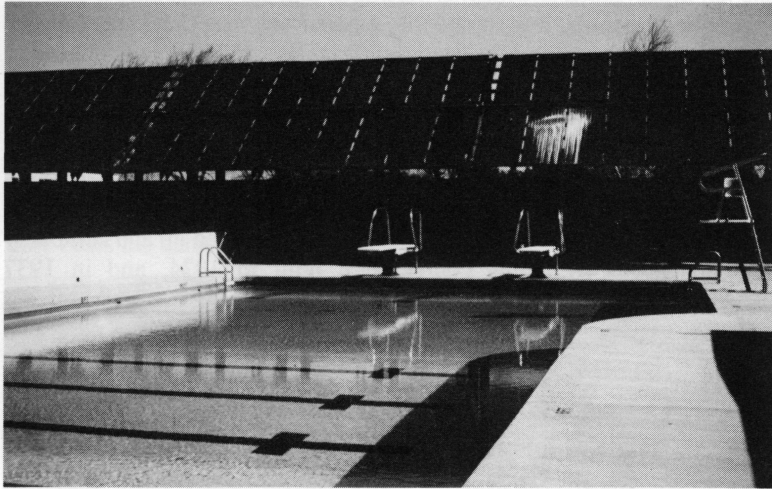
**Catherine Brennan Memorial Rose Garden**—A member of the Park and Recreation Commission from 1952 to 1964, Catherine Brennan proposed developing a municipal rose garden in 1959 and chaired the committee that started planning the project. Brennan was also the first chairwoman of the committee for the annual Spring Flower and Art Show (now the Spring Arts and Crafts Show), which began in 1960. She died in 1966, two years before the garden that now bears her name was completed.

**Mitchell Field**—H. Charles Mitchell came to Redwood City in 1930 and founded Mitchell's Bootery. Active in the Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club, he helped establish the Police Youth Club and was also one of the founders of the Peninsula Celebration Association. In 1953 he won the Outstanding Citizen of the Year award for his community service and his work with young people, and in 1963 he received a citation from the National Recreation Association.

**Herkner Memorial Pool**—City councilman, member of the Port Commission, and twice mayor, Sidney D. Herkner had an illustrious career in Redwood City government. During his second term as mayor,

the Redwood Shores development got underway, and the Community Activities Building on Roosevelt Avenue and the swimming pool at Hoover School were constructed.

Herkner, who died in 1976, left the city a \$100,000 bequest, which was combined with monies from the state to renovate the pool at Community Park. Renamed the Herkner Memorial Swim Center in his honor, the remodeled, solar-heated facility was dedicated on May 16, 1981.



Herkner  
Memorial Pool

## *Growing With the City*

Redwood City, which in 1867 became the first city to be incorporated in San Mateo County, has a rich history that goes back to the days of the Gold Rush. The story of how the community grew from a tiny village on Redwood Creek into a city of 55,000 people is reflected in the names of four of its parks. Mezes, Hawes, Stafford, and Stulsaft parks are named for people who played prominent roles in creating today's Redwood City.

**Mezes Plaza**—In the 1850s, all of what is now present-day Redwood City was part of a large estate known as Rancho de las Pulgas. This rancho belonged to the Arguello family, who had been granted the land by the government of Mexico in 1835. After the Mexican War, people began to settle along Redwood Creek, hoping that the U.S. government would refuse to recognize the Arguellos' right to the property. Simon M. Mezes, who had come from Puerto Rico to practice law in San Francisco, was hired by the Arguellos as an agent to protect their land title.

In 1854 Mezes succeeded in clearing the Arguellos' title. In return for this service, the Arguellos sold him a large portion of their estate. Mezes then proceeded to sell lots for \$75 each to the people already living in the village on Redwood Creek. He also completed a survey for a map of the town, which he named Mezesville. Although this name has vanished into history, the present-day arrangement of Redwood City's downtown streets can be traced to Mezes' map.

Mezes donated two blocks to Redwood City for plazas. In 1905 one of those blocks, which is now the site of the county's Hall of Justice and Records, was turned into a park known as California Square. The other block eventually became Mezes Plaza. Francis Hutchinson, former principal of Sequoia and Woodside high schools, remembers that in the 1920s Mezes Plaza was just a vacant lot that he and other kids in the neighborhood used as a playground. "There wasn't much there," he says, "except for some great trees for climbing."

In 1928 the Veterans Building was moved onto the Mezes Plaza block. Two years later, the park site was cleaned up and shrubbery was planted. Two tennis courts were built in 1934, and in 1937 playground equipment was installed. In 1946, at the request of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, an Army tank was placed in the park as a memorial to those who had served in the two world wars. Over the years, Mezes Plaza has been renovated several times, most recently in 1977.

**Hawes Park**—State Assemblyman Horace Hawes introduced the Consolidation Act of 1856, which created San Mateo County and unified the city and county of San Francisco. For framing this piece of legislation, Hawes is known as the "Father of San Mateo County." In 1857 Hawes acquired a large tract of land called Redwood Farm and moved to Redwood City. In 1863 Hawes donated land for the city's first large schoolhouse. The property is now the site of City Hall and the old firehouse (soon to become the new library). In 1869 Hawes gave the city \$2,500 for what was probably its first recreational facility, a gymnasium constructed on the school property.

Hawes Park was built in 1934 but not officially named until the next year. Dan Stafford, then a member of the city's Planning Commission, suggested the park be named after Hawes for his role in the struggle to keep the county seat in Redwood City. Later in 1935 the night-lighted softball field was constructed. In 1937 the Park Department installed a playground, which within a few years was expanded to include a lighted basketball court, horseshoe pits, and an archery range.

Until the building of Community Park, Hawes was the center for the city's recreational activities, which included softball, marble tournaments, pet shows, Easter egg hunts, and the Junior Olympics. In 1955 the city turned over the section of Hawes Park on Roosevelt Avenue to the school district for \$31,000 so that Hawes Elementary

School could be built. This land switch was another example of the close cooperation between the Park and Recreation departments and the school district, a tradition which had started in the '30s.

**Stafford Park**—Daniel R. Stafford, the man who named Hawes Park, was born August 11, 1870. His father, James Stafford, moved to Redwood City in 1866 and purchased a sloop which he used to haul lumber, grain, and other goods between San Francisco and Redwood City. In 1872 James opened a grocery store, which Dan took over in 1885 at the age of 15 and managed until 1926. Considered the city's leading grocer during those years, Dan then started a career in real estate and investments.

Active in local government, Stafford served as city clerk for 12 years, mayor for 10 years, and was on the city's board of trustees. In 1892 he organized the Chamber of Commerce. In 1946, two years before he died, Stafford gave the city eight lots of land for the park that now bears his name.



**Day Camp at  
Stulsaft Park**

**Stulsaft Park**—In 1937 there were about 10,000 people living in Redwood City. By 1960 that figure had almost quintupled. One person who helped make this growth possible was Morris Stulsaft, a San Francisco real estate developer who earned a fortune from land developments all over California. Projects Stulsaft started in Redwood City include the Woodside Plaza and Roosevelt shopping centers and a 2,000-home housing development in the area between Alameda de las Pulgas and Woodside Road. Stulsaft was also influential in bringing Ampex to Redwood City and sold property needed for the Kaiser Permanente Clinic site.

In 1951 Stulsaft gave the city 38 acres for the park that now bears his name. He knew about the mercury deposits in the area, but felt that the city was welcome to them. Redwood City eventually made about \$19,000 from cinnabar mining operations in the park. Dedication ceremonies for the park were held on September 6, 1952. In the '60s, the Park Department cleared and landscaped the site, developed picnic areas, and constructed a service road, a bridge, and rest rooms.

Stulsaft Park's wooded setting made it a natural choice for a children's day camp, which was started in 1960 and remains one of the department's most successful programs today. In 1966, at the request of area residents, playground equipment was installed near the Farm Hill entrance to the park, not far from where the cinnabar mine used to be.

## *Serving the Community*

The history of city park and recreation departments in the United States can be traced back to 1885, when Boston built a little "sand garden," the nation's first public playground. By 1906 the Playground Association of America, the forerunner of today's National Recreation and Park Association, had been founded. But city-run recreation departments did not really become common until the Depression.

In 1939 Major George Braden of the National Recreation Association came to Redwood City while making a survey of recreation facilities in the western states. "It is only in the past ten years that the United States has come to accept recreation as a real public function," he noted in a speech delivered after his tour of the city's parks. Braden went on to praise Redwood City for its progressive spirit. At that time, there were only 1,300 cities across the country with departments such as the one Red Morton headed.

For the past fifty years, the idea that recreation and public service go hand in hand has been a strong tradition in Redwood City. In keeping with this tradition, four city parks have been named for individuals who dedicated their lives to serving the community.



**Fleishman Park**—Herman G. Fleishman was the first Redwood City policeman killed in the line of duty. On the evening of January 22, 1939, Fleishman made what started out to be a routine attempt to stop a speeder but turned into a high-speed chase that finally ended in San Carlos. While standing at the side of the road, Fleishman and the man he was arresting were hit by a car. Fleishman died in the hospital several hours later.

In 1938 the city obtained land from Henry McGarvey for a playground. In 1939 Red Morton suggested that the newly completed park be named in Fleishman's memory. Both the police and firemen's associations provided funds for lighting, which included a seven-foot neon sign bearing the words "Fleishman Park." Over the years, the park has seen several renovations, and in 1982 it was completely redesigned.

**Dove Beeger Park**—In 1915 Dove Beeger graduated from the University of California with a degree in bacteriology. She then started a lifelong association with hospitals by working as a lab technician at St. Francis Hospital in San Francisco and Mills Memorial Hospital in San Mateo. In 1923 she married Henry A. Beeger, who was the first mayor of Redwood City after the adoption of the City Charter.

In the late '30s, Mrs. Beeger helped start the movement that led to the founding of Sequoia District Hospital in Redwood City. She assisted in a survey of hospital needs, was a member of the founders committee of the hospital, and served on its board of directors from 1951 until her death in 1964. For her work in helping to found the hospital, Mrs. Beeger was voted Redwood City's Outstanding Citizen of the Year in 1946.

The history of Dove Beeger Park starts in 1959, when residents of the Circle Road area visited the Park and Recreation Commission to request that the vacant lot across the street from the hospital be turned into a park. Eventually four families donated portions of their lots to make the park space more uniform. The park dedication ceremonies on May 19, 1963, were organized by the Redwood City Woman's Club.

**Spinas Park**—Andrew L. Spinas came to Redwood City from Eureka in a Model T Ford in the summer of 1926. That fall the 21-year-old graduate of Humboldt State College took a \$130-a-month job as a teacher at Washington School, starting what would become a 40-year career in Redwood City education. In 1937 he became superintendent of the Redwood City School District, a position he held until he retired in 1966.

When Spinas took over as superintendent, he managed a two-person office that administered 6 schools and 1,824 students. By 1966 the district had grown into the second largest in San Mateo County, with 18 schools, 12,000 students, and an annual budget which approached \$7 million.



“The good feeling in this district is due to Andy Spinas,” Trustee Lauress Wise once said. “We’ve had issues, but not the bitter ones other cities have had. If more school districts knew their community as well as Andy did, there would be few bitter issues.”

One aspect of the community that Spinas knew extremely well was its recreation needs. From 1938 until 1953, he served on the Park and Recreation Commission. With Red Morton, he helped develop the close working relationship between the school district and the Park and Recreation departments that has continued to this day.

Andrew Spinas Park dates from 1961, when the city began negotiations for a park site in the Friendly Acres area. In 1966 the newly completed playground was named for Spinas as a tribute to his many years of service in Redwood City education and recreation. In 1982 Spinas Park was completely renovated.

**Garrett Park**—George L. Garrett, Jr. was a policeman who was killed on May 8, 1981, during an attempted robbery at the California-Broadway branch of the Bank of America. Garrett saved the life of a bank officer, pushing her out of the line of fire just before the robber shot him twice at point-blank range.

Garrett, age 39, was a sergeant who had been with the department for eight years and was head of its narcotics investigation unit. He was known for his work with Redwood City youth. In a resolution read to the City Council, Mayor Mario Biagi noted: “Sergeant Garrett’s commitment to the youth of the community was exemplified by the countless hours he spent talking to school groups and parental gatherings about drugs and the harmful effect they have on youth.”

In 1971 a master plan for Garrett Park, which was then called Canyon Park, was developed. A neighborhood park association of 100 families was also formed that year. The city acquired all the rights to the land in 1978, and two years later work on the park got underway. Shortly after Garrett’s death, the city named the recently completed park in his honor. Dedication ceremonies for George L. Garrett, Jr. Park were held on July 10, 1981.



## *Pitching In*

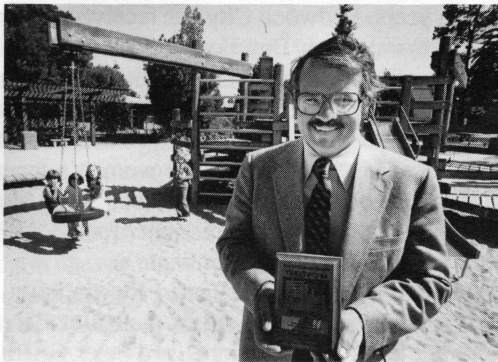
Neighborhood involvement is an important part of the story of Redwood City's parks. Neighborhood associations have helped promote the development of Stulsaft, Garrett, and Dove Beeger parks. Two other parks in the city have histories that show how people in Redwood City have pitched in to improve their neighborhoods. Their stories involve a college ecology class and two 14-year-old boys.

**Linden Park**—In 1970 a Cañada College ecology class presented the city with a proposal for developing a park on a small area of Hetch Hetchy right-of-way at the corner of Park and Linden. The City Council endorsed the group's plans for the project, and in 1971 Cañada College students did the initial site clearing. The Park Department then revised plans for the park and completed the work with the assistance of the Host Lions Club, which donated 300 man-hours and \$4,700 to the project. On July 23, 1972, Linden Park was dedicated. In 1985 the Park/Linden Street Park Neighborhood Committee asked the City Council to renovate the park. That work was completed in 1986.

**Palm Park**—In 1958 Carl Kerstan and Billy Crane decided that something should be done about the little triangle at the intersection of Palm, Kentfield, and Union. So the two boys got their friends together and cleared the space, planted a tree, and put up a homemade sign saying "Palm Park."

Originally, there was no palm in the tiny "park," which took its name from the street it was on. But in 1959 Margaret Sasfy Jones, a member of the Emerald Lake Garden Club, decided that the park should have a palm. So she planted a 3-year-old Canary Island date palm that she had raised herself from a seedling.

In 1970 a group of people from the Palm/Regent neighborhood signed a petition requesting a park-playground for the area and presented it to the Park and Recreation Commission. A plan for a park at Palm



Director Peter Griffiths displays Palm Park's Timberform Design Award

and Hudson was completed in 1975. Construction was finished four years later. In 1981 Palm Park was one of 21 parks around the world to be awarded a Timberform Design Award by Columbia Cascade Timber Company. The award praised the park's simple design, variety of recreational facilities, and ease of maintenance.

## *Joining Parks and Recreation with Community Service*

In 1986 the Park and Recreation Department changed its name to Parks, Recreation and Community Services. The new name was intended to reflect the department's greatly increased scope of operations. Child care, respite care, and special health services for seniors are just a few of the programs that come under the heading of community services. In 1986 the department assumed responsibility for the Fair Oaks Community Center, which offers such programs as employment training, immigration counseling, and surplus food distribution.

This expansion into new services has been accompanied by tremendous growth in the more traditional park and recreation activities. In 1938, the first full year Red Morton's department was in operation, Redwood City budgeted \$14,800 for parks and recreation. Today, Peter H. Griffiths, director of the department since 1980, administers an annual budget of more than \$6.5 million.

As in the past, much of this money is used to maintain and improve the city's park facilities. Since 1980, many of the city's older parks have been completely renovated, and three new parks have been constructed. A substantial portion of the budget also goes toward beautification of the city. Park supervisors Luis Hernandez and Jim Littlefield direct crews who maintain more than 13 miles of landscaped areas along boulevards and more than 46,000 city trees in addition to their park work. The department also reviews landscaping plans for all development projects in the city over four units in size. For the past seven years, Redwood City has received the Tree City USA Award from the National Arbor Day Foundation for its urban forestry program.

The department's recreation programs have also continued to expand. In 1937 Redwood City had 10 adult softball teams and a junior league. Today, recreation supervisor Bill Wooten oversees a program that has 115 men's teams, 29 women's teams, and 150 youngsters in junior league play. Wooten, like Red Morton before him, is the Northern California Commissioner for the ASA.

While the department has grown enormously in size and complexity, it still operates in the tradition that Red Morton started. For the past fifty years, one of the hallmarks of the department has been its high level of professionalism. Peter Griffiths is representative of the

newest generation of the city's park and recreation leadership. Griffiths, who has worked as a ranger for the National Park Service in the Grand Canyon, has a bachelor's degree in park management and has done graduate work in landscape architecture and public administration. Three other members of the department have master's degrees.

The department also continues its tradition of looking to the future. In its most recent projects, it has been working to ensure that Redwood City's parks and recreation programs will remain among the finest in California.

**Jardin de Niños Park**—Formerly Chestnut Park, this park was one of the original three to which Red Morton brought supervised playground activities in 1937. In 1981 the park was completely renovated. Wooden playground equipment was installed and a sunken sand-filled play area was constructed. That year the City Council renamed the park Jardin de Niños, or "Children's Garden," choosing a Spanish name in honor of the neighborhood's Hispanic population. The dedication of the renamed park took place on November 20, 1981, and in 1982 Jardin de Niños received a California Environmental Park Design Award from the California Parks and Recreation Society.

**Herbert Hoover School Park and Pool**—One of the newest and largest additions to the city's park system, Hoover Park was built to meet the recreation needs of the city's east side. The 11-acre complex is also the most recent example of a park project that involved the school district. The first facility, the swimming pool, was completed in 1967. In 1982 the city and the school district signed an agreement which gave the city use of an 8-acre portion of school property for a park site. The master plan for the park included two sports fields, a playground area, a handball court, and parking.

Late in 1984 work was completed and the park was in use. The large multi-purpose field was named for Lázaro Cárdenas, president of Mexico from 1934 to 1940, who is remembered in his country for his efforts in redistributing land and promoting mass education. Dedication ceremonies for the entire park were held on October 5, 1985.

**Union Cemetery**—Redwood City's first cemetery was an improvised graveyard somewhere west of the waterfront. In 1858 Horace Hawes acquired that property by foreclosing on a mortgage. When Hawes announced that he would not permit burials there, an association was formed to acquire property for a graveyard. In 1859, with the help of donations from Hawes and other people, a six-acre plot of land was purchased. The association members named the site Union Cemetery, taking their inspiration from a speech made by Daniel Webster in 1830: "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." Union Cemetery is California State Historical Landmark No. 816. Many of Redwood City's first citizens are buried there.

The Park and Recreation Commission first discussed converting Union Cemetery into a park area in 1939. In 1962, ownership of the cemetery, which had been given in trust to the state in 1859, was returned to the city. In recent years, American Legion Post 105, the San Mateo County Historical Association, and the Archives Committee of the Redwood City Public Library have been active in encouraging preservation of the site. In 1986 Hisashi Sugaya and Charles M. McCulloch were hired to prepare architectural plans for preserving the cemetery as a memorial-type park.

**Redwood Shores Parks**—In 1966 City Manager Howard Ullrich announced that three parks were being planned at Redwood Shores. He noted that Leslie Properties, the developer, had retained “the finest landscape architect in the country” and that the city would have control over the landscape plans. In 1968 the Park and Recreation Commission began to take part in planning for parks in Redwood Shores. Two years later Marlin Park was opened, and Dolphin and Mariner parks were completed in 1978.

Under Peter Griffiths, the department has continued to expand the recreation facilities at Redwood Shores. In February 1987, work on Shorebird Park was completed. Marina Park, which will be Redwood City’s newest park, is now in the planning stage. Plans are also being made to develop another 20 to 30 acres of park land in Redwood Shores. To cut costs and generate additional revenues, the department is investigating the possibility of financing new facilities through joint ventures with private business.

**Shorebird Park,  
completed in  
1987**





## *Looking Back*

Redwood City has come a long way since the days when Red Morton could carry nearly all the Recreation Department's equipment in the back of his Model T. But when you look back on that summer in 1937, it's easy to see that while much has changed, certain things remain the same. Just as the bright lights and the noise of the crowd still magically transform a night ball game, civic pride and community spirit still shape the parks that grace the city. "Sometimes we don't realize what we have here," Sid Herkner once said, "but this is a tremendous area. There's no place like Redwood City. Never sell it short. Never sell the people of Redwood City short."



# *Redwood City Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department*

## *Parks*

Dove Beeger Park, Whipple Avenue and Circle Road  
Dolphin Park, Turks Head Lane and Quay Lane  
Fleishman Park, Locust Street and McEvoy Street  
Garrett Park, 3600 Glenwood Avenue  
Hawes Field, Hudson Street and Roosevelt Avenue  
Hoover School Park, Woodside Road and Spring Street  
Jardin de Niños Park, Middlefield Road and Chestnut Street  
Linden Park, Park Street and Linden Street  
Maddux Park, Maddux Drive and Kensington Road  
Marina Park, Bridge Parkway and Marine World Parkway  
Mariner Park, Tiller Lane and Bridge Parkway  
Marlin Park, Neptune Drive and Cringle Drive  
Mezes Plaza, Warren Street and Standish Street  
Red Morton Community Park, 1120 Roosevelt Avenue  
Palm Park, Hudson Street and Palm Avenue  
Shorebird Park, Marine World Parkway and Island Drive  
Spinas Park, 2nd Avenue and Bay Road  
Stafford Park, King Street and Hopkins Avenue  
Stulsaft Park, 3700 Farm Hill Boulevard  
Wellesley Crescent Park, Edgewood Road and Arlington Road  
Westwood Park, Westwood Street and Briarfield Avenue

## *Indoor Facilities*

Community Activities Building, 1400 Roosevelt Avenue  
Red Morton Community Center, 1120 Roosevelt Avenue  
Veterans Memorial Senior Center, 1455 Madison Avenue  
Fair Oaks Community Center, 2600 Middlefield Road

## *Swimming Pools*

Herkner Memorial Pool, 1315 Madison Avenue  
Hoover Pool, Woodside Road and Spring Street