



## **Los Trancos Woods & Vista Verde** **Newsletter – April & May 2022**

### **Are We Safe?**

I recently read the 2021 study of the Camp Fire listed at the end of this article. It was a real eye opener to the dangers we face living in a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI). What I gleaned from it was the fact that nearby burning structures was one of the biggest predictors of whether the house would burn in Paradise. Other smaller factors were surrounding debris, age of house (which meant more flammable construction practices), canopy cover, and flammable vegetation adjacent to the house. Here are some pertinent quotes, but you can peruse the article yourself to get the full picture.

“structural variables (e.g., eave construction details, numbers of windowpanes (double vs. single), vent screen size) [are] more highly correlated with home survival.”

“the protective effect of vegetation modification within 30 m of the house does not guarantee survival [but helps] when fire-fighting resources are not present. Vegetation modifications in this zone, however, do provide access and a safer means of protecting a home when firefighting resources are available.”

“The results of this study support the idea that both proximities to neighboring burning structures [houses, sheds, garages, outbuildings, etc.] and surrounding vegetation influence home survival with wildfire.”

Take-away: **What we do at each individual house will impact the fire resilience of the whole neighborhood.**

- 1) Look at house roof vents, eave vents, siding, windows and seriously consider improving for fire resistance.
- 2) Check all structures on the property for fire resistance. Are there openings for embers to get in or debris collected around the outside?
- 3) Clean up debris that has collected near the house and up to 30 ft. away. Debris may be leaves, downed limbs, old lumber, anything flammable.

What does it mean to be Firewise? Check out this web site [firewise.org](https://www.firewise.org).

*Submitted by Linda Drey-Nightingale, with additions by Chris Paprcka*

*Excerpts from 2021 study “Housing arrangement and vegetation factors associated with single-family home survival in the 2018 Camp Fire, California”*



### **What's that New Addition to Ramona Rd.?**

Have you ever noticed that big green box on Ramona Road near the Spanish Creek culvert? The County has finished installing a stormwater drain pipe down to the creek. But in doing so, they had to disturb a lot of the soil on the steep hill. So they put some plantings in the ground to stabilize the soil, which need regular watering. The green tank you see on top holds about 65 gallons of water. On the side there is a timer that runs every three days for 10 minutes to water the plants. The County comes on a periodic basis to refill the tank and keep it topped up with water. Thanks to the County for taking into consideration our erosion issues up here.

*Submitted by Ken Kormanak*

## Los Trancos County Maintenance District - Community Advisory Committee (CAC)

More exciting news - Jan Avilla has joined the advisory committee. Jan knows a thing or two about the neighborhood having lived in Los Trancos longer than most us, since 1971! Retired from 20 years teaching at Ormondale and as a self-employed office manager and bookkeeper, Jan's been involved with neighborhood disaster preparedness, the neighborhood book club, as a Living Classroom volunteer, and a member of the School Board Oversight Committee. As regards the CAC, Jan is interested in water run-off issues and the preservation of native plant and animal habitats, needing consideration in fire mitigation practices. She will be a great addition to our team!

Now is the perfect time to prepare for wildfire season. There are fairly small things you can do that can make a huge difference. Replacing vents with wildfire approved material, removing plant material within 5 feet of your house are just two things that have proven to save homes. You can be reimbursed for 50% of your costs for this and many other fire safety activities. You need to have a free fire safety inspection by the Woodside Fire Protection District completed within the last two years and get pre-approval for appropriate work in order to be eligible for the rebates. Inspection appointments are available on April 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>; contact Fire Inspector Michael Tamez at (650) 530-2100 or [mtamez@woodsidefire.org](mailto:mtamez@woodsidefire.org).

Home Fire Safety Incentive program details can be found at <https://www.woodsidefire.org/prevention/los-trancos-vista-verde-defensible-space> Check it out!

The Los Trancos County Maintenance District (LTCMD) CAC exists to advise and offer feedback to DPW and WFPD and to inform the community about LTCMD sponsored programs. Feel free to contact any of us on the CAC: Jan Avilla, Peter Blum, Amanda Lee (Co-Chair), David Smernoff, Bill Tagg and Tom Thayer (Co-Chair). Our email addresses and phone numbers are listed in the Community Resource Guide.

*Submitted by Amanda Lee, Co-Chair of CAC*

## Neighborhood Notes

- **For water-wise gardening** see <https://www.cnps.org/gardening> or <https://www.laspilitas.com>. Think drought!
- The **ticks are active!** Be aware when you are hiking that the ticks love to grab onto anything that passes by. Wear light colored clothing, so you can spot them quickly. Check yourself and especially those furry friends each time you get back from a hike. If a tick is attached be sure to pull straight out, grabbing it as close to the skin as possible. For more info, check out: <https://www.smchealth.org/lyme-disease-tick-testing>.
- Now that you have changed the hour on your clocks, remember that you need to **check all batteries** in your smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. It only takes 5 minutes, and it can save your life!
- Rain, rain, come again! **Rainfall data** thanks to Gene Hunner. Dec. - 12.5", Jan. - .6", Feb. - .1", Mar. - 1.6", season to date - 23.9"

## 2020-21 Community Resource Guide

Please take out your 2020-21 CRG and put in the following changes.

**My notes are not with me, so I have nothing to list. Be sure and email me if you see something that needs to be added, deleted or corrected in the CRG.**

If you have any changes to the listings please contact Linda at [dreynight@aol.com](mailto:dreynight@aol.com).

## Community Associations' Web Sites

Web site addresses are:

<http://lostrancoswoods.org/>

<http://www.vistaverdepv.org>

To subscribe to group e-mail lists:

[vvltw+subscribe@groups.io](mailto:vvltw+subscribe@groups.io)

[VistaVerdeCommunityAssoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:VistaVerdeCommunityAssoc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).

*Thank you, Jerry Jensen & Rob Kalman for maintaining web site*

*Thanks to Wen Gong for some interesting local history.*

# The Allure of Alpine Inn

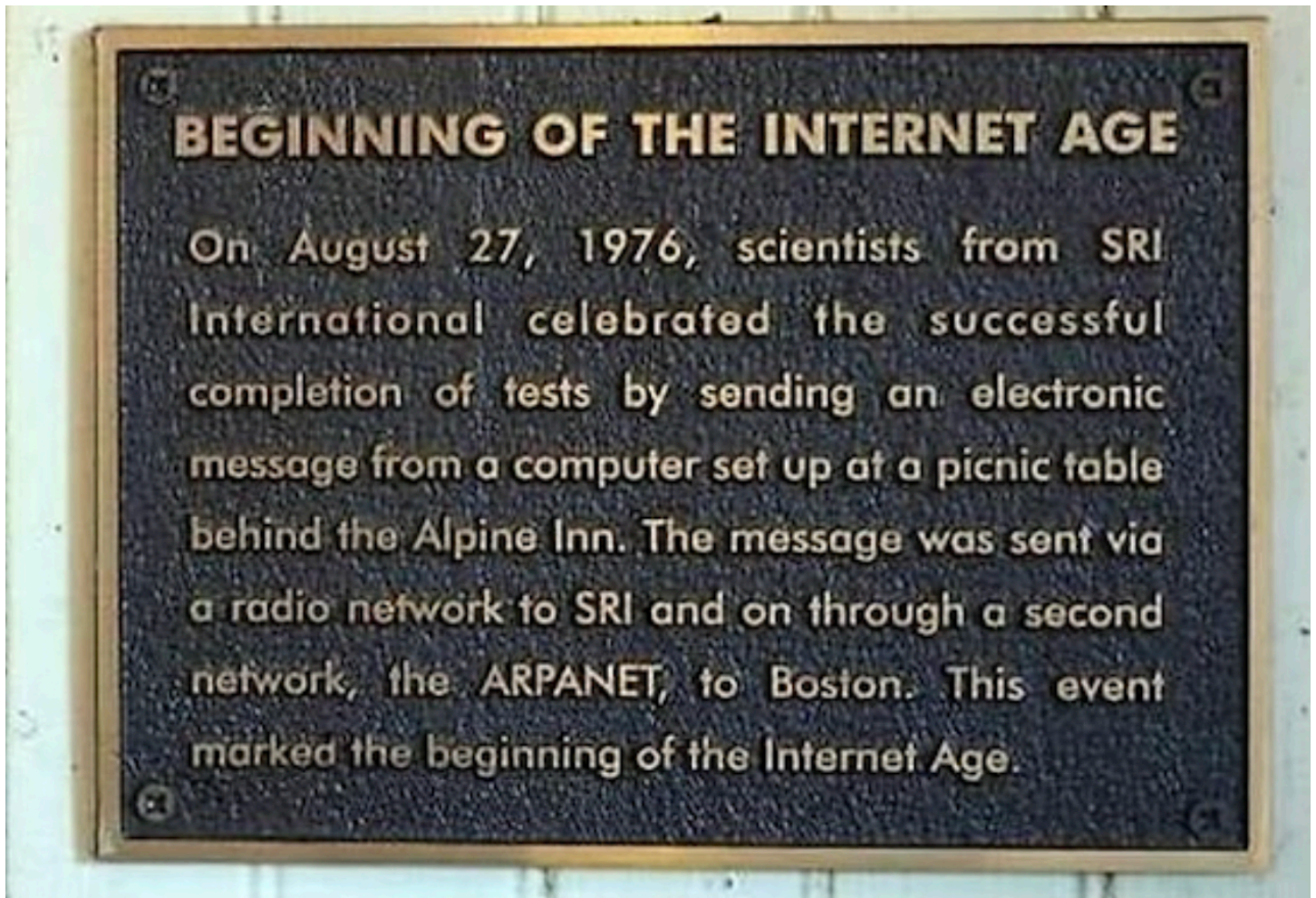
## Local History



by Wen Gong on March 22, 2022

Having bought our house in these hills on an impulse induced by the surrounding green spaces and the magic view of the valley, I was completely ignorant of the local history. Portola Valley seemed so far away though so close to the hustle and bustle of Silicon Valley. For a while I obsessively hiked every trail and checked out every local store. One day, I walked into this well worn little restaurant that seemed like a miracle for having survived so long. Its name “ALPINE INN” almost occupied the whole front of the wild west style wooden building in need of repair.

Inside the poorly lit tavern, Alpine Inn struck me as unlike any other local restaurants – it took me back in time to a dusty and hurriedly constructed 1800s’ rural roadhouse. My attention was immediately drawn to the unusually large, old, and beaten up wooden communal tables and benches full of carvings of visitors’ names and sentiments, a reflection of the past. A rudimentary open kitchen lined half of one wall, and the other half was taken up by a heavy dark wooden bar, a few bar stools, and a wall full of various beer bottles and old relics. On the other walls were faded photos of previous owners, notable people, and local school sports teams of the distant old days. A worn lone pinball table sat under the window facing the front parking lot. Though the place looked quite aged and dim, I quickly fell in love with its old world charm. But it was a small bronze plaque near the door that really caught my attention and fascinated me.



The engineer in me was pleasantly surprised by the fact that I lived near and drove by this important part of the internet's history. I thought, for a valley full of software people, wouldn't everyone want to stop by and see the birthplace of the Internet Age? However, I observed that Alpine Inn was not very popular. Its parking lot was usually empty except on the weekends when the cyclists and bikers stopped by on this scenic route. One really could not miss it as it sat right off the only main road in town with its odd little building and a disproportionately enormous sign on the top of the building, "ALPINE INN."

In early 2019, a couple of local residents took over Alpine Inn and transformed it into a magnet that has steadily attracted devoted patrons, even through the coronavirus pandemic. Ever since the new opening, I can not help noticing the constantly packed parking lot. I wonder if people are here for the history of the Internet, for the newly renovated inviting backyard beer garden that resembles an outdoor sports bar, or for the more unique food offered by the new owners.

The war in Ukraine made large-scale cyber warfare suddenly and frighteningly near reality. It reminded me of the 2021 New York Times BestSeller and award-winning book, [This Is How They Tell Me The World Ends](#), by Portola Valley author Nicole Perlroth. In her thoroughly researched story on the captivating and ongoing global cyber arms race that threatens to end the world as we know it, Perlroth writes about the history of Alpine Inn and its contribution to the internet:

*Just a mile down the road from where I grew up in Portola Valley, California, lies an old wooden roadhouse. There on the banks of a shady creek lies the Alpine Inn Beer Garden, a place us locals still*

*call “Zott’s,” short for the Rossotti’s, the previous owners. Zott’s has been around since the 1850s, first as a gambling house, then a saloon, and later a roadhouse serving burgers and beer, much to the chagrin of its prestigious neighbor to the east, Stanford University.*

*Stanford’s campus was dry. Under the deed of Leland Stanford, no alcohol could be served on campus or even in Palo Alto, and administrators worried about the flocks of students getting drunk down the road. Stanford’s first president had lobbied unsuccessfully to shut Zott’s down, calling it “unusually vile even for a roadhouse.”*

*It was, indeed, a scuzzy place for hell-raisers of all types and, looking back, a fitting birthplace for the internet.*

*Few customers today know it, but the entire digital universe is in orbit around one picnic table out back where computer scientists relayed the first message over the internet one summer afternoon in 1976. That August, scientists from SRI International—the research institute in nearby Menlo Park—pulled up to the Zott’s parking lot in an old bread truck to perform a demo for Pentagon officials who’d flown in for the occasion. The choice of locale was an inside joke; the SRI geeks had hoped there’d be some Hells Angels bikers in the mix. Sure enough, when they greeted the generals that day, one asked: “What the hell are we doing in the parking lot of a biker bar?”*

*“We thought you’d ask that,” one of the scientists had replied. “We wanted to do this demo in a hostile environment.”*

*The scientists proceeded to haul a chunky Texas Instruments computer terminal out to the far picnic table and, under the watchful gaze of cowboys and bikers, they hooked up a cable from the terminal to their bread truck in the parking lot. The SRI team had spent months retrofitting the truck into a giant mobile radio unit with \$50,000 radios inside. Once everything was wired, they ordered up a round of beers and fired off the first email over the internet.*

*Within milliseconds, it left Zott’s via the bread truck’s mobile radio unit and traveled to a second network—the Pentagon’s Advanced Research Projects Agency Network, ARPANET—and on to its final destination in Boston. The dispatch was the first time two distinct computer networks were linked. In another year, three networks would be “internetworked” and the web as we know it would be well on its way.*

*There’s still a plaque commemorating the BEGINNING OF THE INTERNET AGE on the wall, and a picture of the men and one woman standing by as their colleague, beer in one hand, typed out the first internet dispatch with the other. ...*

Alpine Inn has really become a local favorite. Its being the birthplace of the internet adds to the allure of this modern-day roadhouse.