Palo Corona park getting lots of new trails

**By CHRIS COUNTS**

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District last week unveiled a new loop through the park’s East Field. Three new trails form the loop, which meanders for a little less than a mile through stately oaks and gently sloping meadows. The loop provides a far less strenuous alternative than the hike up to Inspiration Point and features a variety of enticing picnic spots.

“This is going to be a very popular loop,” predicted Al Miyamoto, the park district’s operations manager. As part of the project, two obsolete sections of road in the park were retired and grasslands were replanted. And three more trails, each leading to dramatic vistas, are expected to be accessible as well.

James Sulentich See GM page 21A

Beloved Pine Cone writer dies at 79

**By MARY BROWNFIELD**

Margot Petit Nichols, creator of The Pine Cone’s Sandy Claws column and one of the paper’s most distinctive voices, died Friday afternoon from heart failure one day short of her 80th birthday. A talented journalist who made words her career and lived in numerous countries, Nichols was perhaps best known locally for her column profiling dogs she encountered on the Scenic Road footpath above Carmel Beach, but she also specialized in thoughtful profiles of local chefs, writing book reviews of books by local authors and was the paper’s assistant arts editor for almost 10 years. Her colleagues at the newspaper loved her for her charm and grace, her knowledge and wisdom, her quiet poise and her dry sense of humor.

“Margot’s going to be missed by us even more than by our readers,” said publisher Paul Miller. “She was an intellectual, but she wasn’t the least bit pretentious. And she had an amazing gift for injecting charming wordplay into her stories.”

By the time Nichols moved to Carmel-by-the-Sea as a widow and started freelancing for The Pine Cone in the late 1980s, she was a seasoned journalist and wordsmith. She had spent several years living in the Napa Valley, where she founded the Images Unlimited Advertising Agency that put her in contact with many of the area’s winemakers and chefs — many of whom became longtime friends. Nichols occasionally recounted stories about her days there, including pick-nicking with chef Jacques Pepin, who brought ham sandwiches.

Chef, restaurateur and KCBS radio personality Narvai David, who called Nichols “marvelous commitment to the art of eating” and her “recognizing the human effort of restaurateurs.”

“She was a lovely lady. She was very kind and thoughtful,” said David.

Nichols’ column was not the only local water activist, George Riley, with a group called Citizens for Public Water, even claimed the public has been “blanded by the speed” in which the regional project has been given the OK.

“The point is there are costs related to the water issue that are not being resolved and not being discussed and not being understood by the public,” Riley said. “Perhaps these issues should be vetted more thoroughly.”

Though most who commented on the project before supervisors were in favor of it, there were also questions about costs, oversight of the project’s financing and other water supply possibilities.

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