

**ATHERTON police arrest two in
\$100,000 wine cellar heist. Page 5**

The Almanac

THE HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER FOR MENLO PARK, ATHERTON, PORTOLA VALLEY AND WOODSIDE

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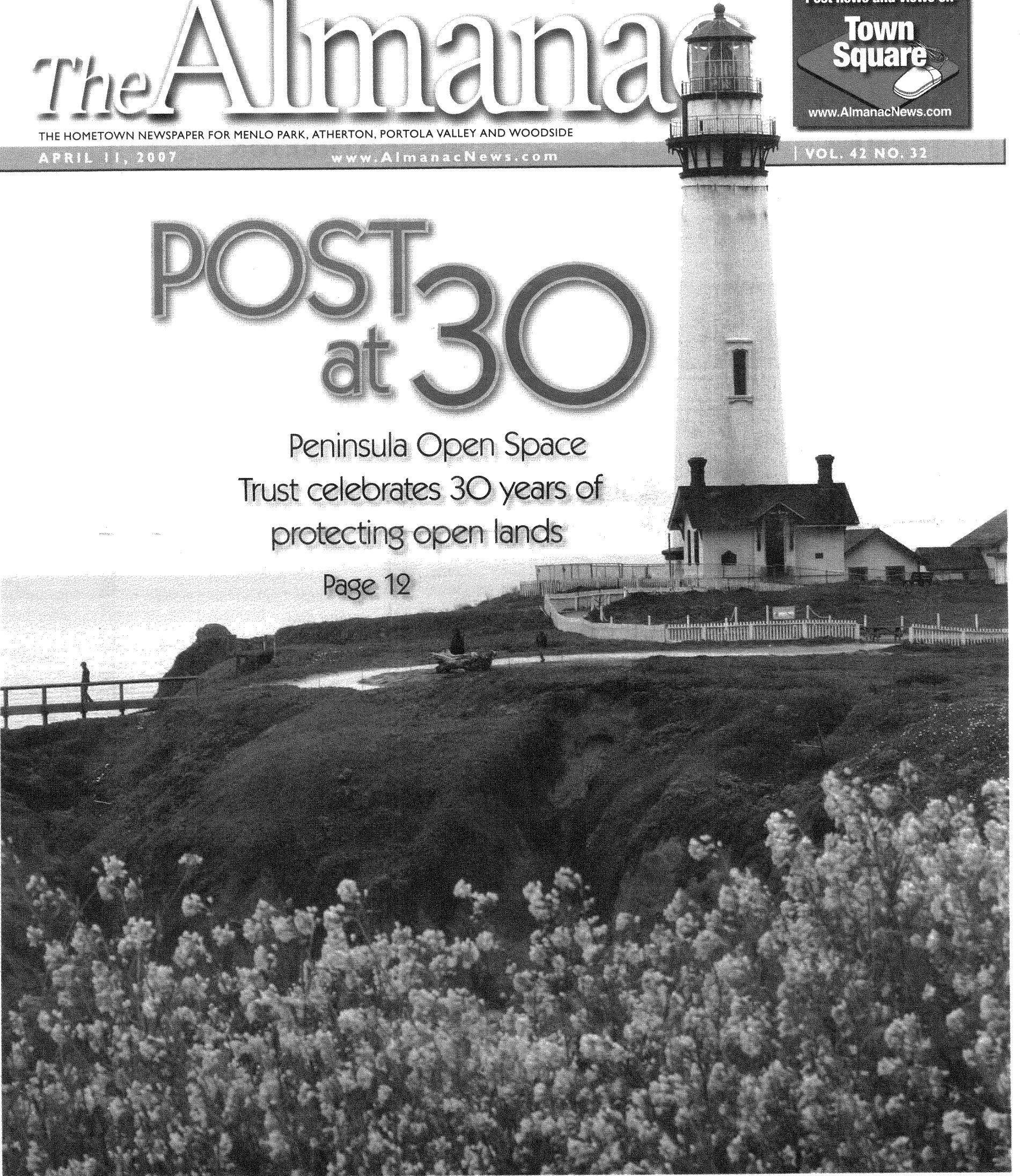
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VOL. 42 NO. 32

POST at 30

Peninsula Open Space
Trust celebrates 30 years of
protecting open lands

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POST at 30 COVER STORY

The local land trust will celebrate 30 years and 60,000 protected acres on April 20 at its new green headquarters in Palo Alto

By Marion Softky

Almanac Staff Writer

Thirty years. 60,000 acres! These acres of fields, farms and forests protected by the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) have made an amazing difference in how San Mateo and Santa Clara counties have developed — or rather, not developed — over the last 30 years.

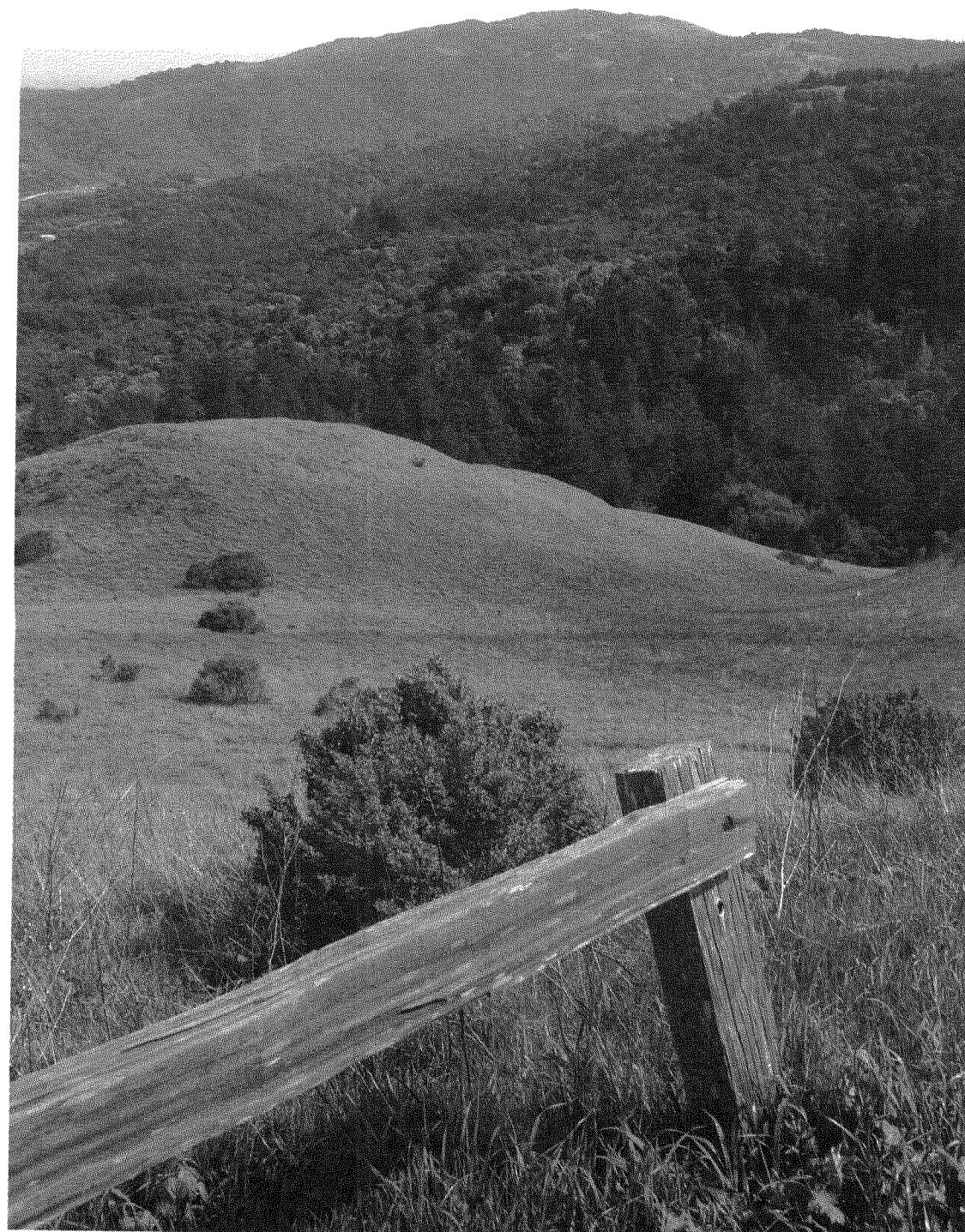
Thanks to the efforts of POST and its companion government agency, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD), almost 80,000 acres of land along San Francisco Bay, in the mountains, and toward the Coast are protected for natural landscape with limited use for farming, ranching and recreation. POST holds 10,000-plus of these acres in conservation easements and restrictions on private lands held for agriculture or other conservation uses.

From Bair Island on the Bay, to Windy Hill in the mountains, to Pigeon Point on the Coast, POST purchases have blocked thousands of homes that were once planned. Daly City and San Francisco have not sprawled south; the Bayside cities of San Mateo and northern Santa Clara counties remain contained, largely because POST and MROSD have purchased and protected open space lands surrounding them.

“POST has kept the Peninsula open,” says founding Chairman Ward Paine of Portola Valley. “Without POST, the Peninsula would have ended up like the Santa Monica Hills, all full of homes.”

POST’s most ambitious effort so far, to “Protect the Endangered Coast,” ended triumphantly in 2005 after raising more than \$200 million to protect 20,000 acres of one of the world’s great coastlines. Already it has secured some 17,000 acres, with more in the pipeline. “We’re just about there,” says Karie Thomson of Woodside, who led the coast campaign.

Ms. Thomson now chairs POST’s board of directors. “We’re the most successful land trust in



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

Windy Hill, a Peninsula landmark, was POST’s first major contribution to the Peninsula greenbelt.

the country,” she adds enthusiastically. “In terms of numbers of acres and amount of money, we’re one of the most efficient and ambitious.”

POST will be celebrating its first 30 years, Earth Day, and a new green headquarters in downtown Palo Alto on Friday, April 20. It plans an open house from 4:30 to 7 p.m. at 222 High St.

After almost 30 years at 3000 Sand Hill Road, the venture

‘Without POST, the Peninsula would have ended up like the Santa Monica Hills, all full of homes.’

WARD PAINE,
POST’S FOUNDING CHAIRMAN

capital center in Menlo Park, the land trust needed cheaper, larger quarters closer to transportation. At just the right time, the Foundation for Global Community left its offices in a former auto-body shop that had already been remodeled and provided with a solar-paneled roof. POST bought the building and did another level of green remodeling.

“Reduce, re-use, recycle, that’s been our whole approach from

the beginning,” says POST President Audrey Rust on a tour of the building that still has a new-car smell. Recycled carpets, reject tiles from an environmentally regulated quarry in Tennessee, paint without nasty compounds, carpet and fabric made out of recycled plastic bottles. Etcetera. Ms. Rust bubbles with enthusiasm for the new building with its mezzanine and sunny meeting rooms.

The building even has showers to encourage the staff, which is up to 24 people, to exercise. “Eighty-five percent of our employees are biking, walking and taking the train,” Ms. Rust says. “We bought Caltrain passes for everyone.”

In fact, Ms. Rust herself walks to work twice a week from the far side of Atherton. “It’s fun to walk through neighborhoods and look at everyone’s gardens,” she says.

Why POST?

POST was an outgrowth of the first government agency established to preserve land as a greenbelt for the Peninsula. Founded in 1972 by a public vote, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District now owns more than 55,000 acres of open land in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties; close to 12,000 of those acres were first obtained by POST, and sold to the district.

It was Herb Grench, the first general manager of MROSD, who realized that a government agency was too constrained by regulations and open meeting laws to move flexibly in the real estate market. “He and the board decided a government agency could not deal with private landowners as well as a private entity,” Mr. Paine explains. “And he was right.”

Mr. Paine assembled a high-octane board of Silicon Valley heavyweights to direct the new private land trust. Original members included Mel Lane, Bob Augsburg, Tom Ford, Rosemary Young and Sheldon Breiner.

Mr. Augsburg, a recently retired vice president of Stanford, became the first executive director; he served for 10 years. “Those were the prime 10 years of my life,” he says in an interview at The Sequoias in Portola Valley. “We started with \$20,000 and ended where they are now. It’s incredible.”

The gift of landmark Windy Hill to POST by Corte Madera Associates launched the fledg-

Community

NEWS OF LOCAL PEOPLE AND EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

POST dedicates 'Mel's Lane' to coastal savior

By Marion Softky
Almanac Staff Writer

At last, Mel Lane, who played a unique role in saving both a San Francisco Bay and the California coast from rampant development, has a monument dedicated in his name.

"Mel's Lane," a quarter-mile segment of the California Coastal Trail just south of the Pigeon Point lighthouse, honors Mr. Lane, the co-founder of Sunset Books and Magazines, who served as the first chairman of the California Coastal Commission in 1972.

Nearly 100 people journeyed to Pigeon Point on the San Mateo County coast on November 4 as the Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) dedicated Mel's Lane.

"Mel has devoted much of his life to preserving California's coastline," said POST president Audrey Rust. "This is the perfect

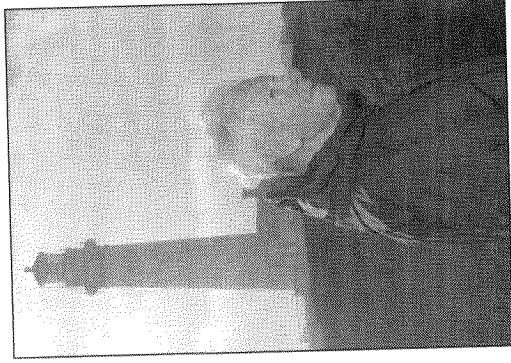
when POST bought the three-acre scenic bluff with tide pools, known as Whaler's Cove, for public use.

The "Lighthouse Inn" bed and breakfast, along with its water treatment and sewage plant, is now gone. Mel's Lane includes a trail along the bluff, a deck overlooking the cove, a kiosk at the lighthouse entrance, and a ring of stone benches known as the Council Circle to recognize major donors to POST's campaign to "Save the Endangered Coast."

POST has already preserved 18.3 square miles adjoining Pigeon Point through this \$200 million campaign, Ms. Rust said.

Last summer, with POST's help, the lighthouse and Whaler's Cove were transferred to the California State Park system. They are now "Pigeon Point Light Station State Historic Park."

Also speaking at the dedication



Elisabeth Fall Photography

Mel Lane enjoys the view from Mel's Lane with the Pigeon Point Lighthouse in the background.

time and place."

Ms. Rust was standing on the site where a nine-unit motel was under construction in 2000,

MENLO WATCH

...and even select "City Council,"

Council to name
... mayor Dec. 6

■ INFORMATION
For information, call POST at 854-7696, or go to openspacetrust.org.

were representatives of other organizations and agencies that contributed to saving Whaler's Cove and other properties along the coast: San Mateo County; the state parks department; the Coastal Conservancy; and the Coastal Commission.

Sam Schucat, executive director of the Coastal Conservancy, hailed Mel's Lane as one of the most visible segments of the California Coastal Trail. This is being created piecemeal along the whole California coast, he said, "inch by inch, permit by permit, ribbon-cutting by ribbon-cutting."

Mr. Lane, a longtime resident of Atherton and founder of POST, basked in the tributes and walked out the boardwalk.

Susan Hansch, chief deputy director of the Coastal Commis-

Mel Lane

sion, credited Mr. Lane with establishing the model for the Coastal Commission when he chaired the original Bay Conservation and Development Commission, which reined in the wholesale filling of San Francisco Bay.

Mr. Lane was able to get conflicting people and interests to work together, Mr. Hansch said. "It was how he led meetings, how he pulled the public in. He made people feel welcome."

"I view Mel as a California and national treasure," Ms. Hansch concluded. "He led the commission through its first difficult days. He made the democratic process work." ■

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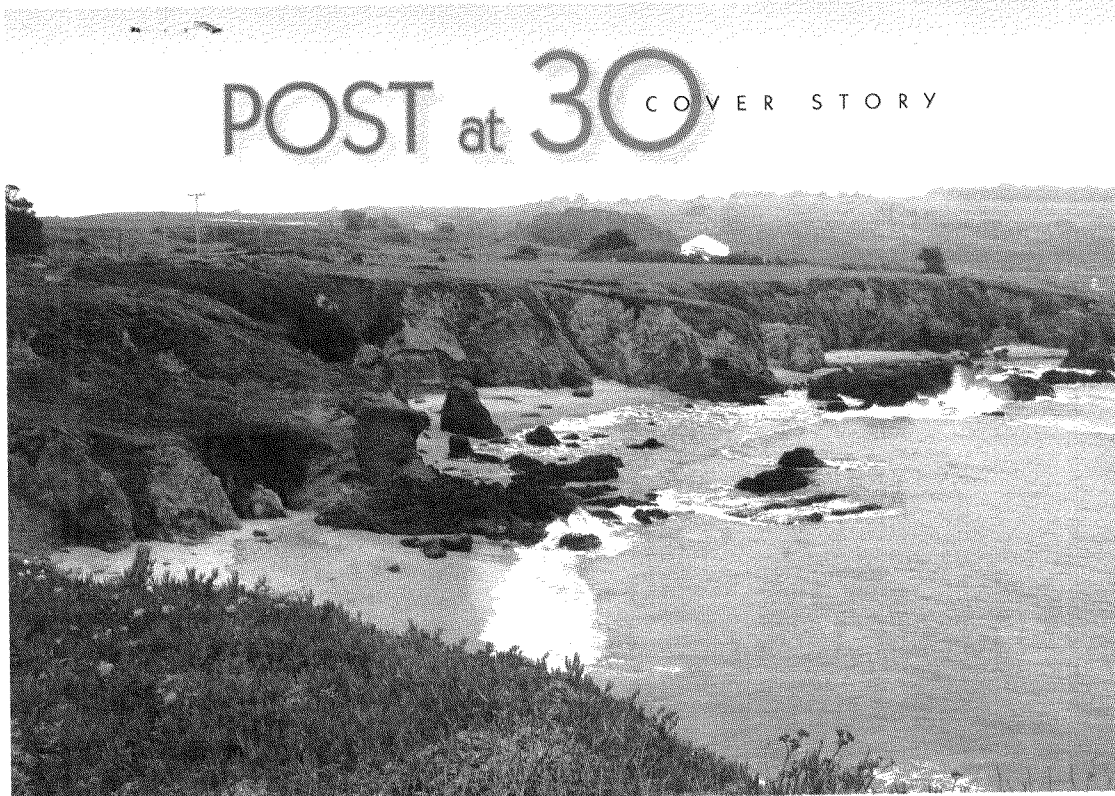
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Whaler's Cove, just south of the Pigeon Point Lighthouse, gives classic views of the rugged California coast. POST bought the three scenic acres in 2000 for \$3 million, and tore down a motel under construction. Now visitors can see the lighthouse and rocky shore from a viewing area, Mel's Lane, and the California Coastal Trail.

POST

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"We have as much to do in the next 30 years as in the last 30," Ms. Rust replies.

"Absolutely," says Ms. Thomson, who is bringing the energy she used to lead the campaign to raise \$200 million for the coast to her new position chairing POST's board of directors.

Ms. Thomson wants POST to acquire more corridors that will link existing open space preserves, both as habitat for animals and trails for people. "People put up fences, and then wildlife can't get through," she says.

POST also plans to extend its land protection southward into Santa Cruz and southern Santa Clara counties, Ms. Thomson says. "We'll be looking at partnerships with existing organizations such as Sempervirens Fund."

POST will continue seeking to pursue conservation easements that can keep land in productive agriculture and ranching, rather than being sold for development. "We own conservation easements on 18 properties," Ms. Thomson says.

As POST holds more conservation easements, it must monitor them to make sure the owners continue to meet the terms of the easement, Ms. Thomson notes. And that responsibility is pushing POST to emphasize stewardship of the lands it owns, as well as lands under easements. "We have 120 volunteers who monitor easements and remove invasive species," she says.

Ms. Rust warns that the open lands that people think are



The Almanac/Veronica Weber

Karie Thomson, the new president of POST's board of directors, at her Woodside home.

saved may not be. Bolsa Point Ranches, near Pigeon Point, for

example, would have allowed 51 homes — before POST bought it.

Ms. Rust also reflects on new challenges, like getting permanent protection for coastal watersheds on which so many people depend for drinking water. "That's a lot different from Windy Hill," she says.

Another challenge is to bring along the next generation, and involve young people in the movement, Ms. Rust says. If you want to protect land and resources permanently, "the only way to do it is to assure that people continue to care."

"We have an obligation to protect one of the world's most precious places." ■

POST-protected properties

Key properties in San Mateo County protected by POST:

- Windy Hill, 1,312 acres
 Acquired by POST in 1981; Transferred to MROSD in 1981
- Cowell Ranch, 1,270 acres
 Acquired by POST in 1987; transferred to California state parks and local farming families in 1992
- Phleger Estate, 1,252 acres
 Acquired by POST in 1991; transferred to Golden Gate National Recreation Area/National Park Service in 1995
- Bair Island, 1,623 acres
 Acquired by POST in 1997; transferred to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the state of California in 1998
- Rancho Corral de Tierra, 4,262 acres
 Acquired by POST in 2001-2003; awaiting congressional funding
- Whaler's Cove at Pigeon Point, 3 acres
 Acquired by POST in 2000; transferred to California state parks in 2005
- Driscoll Ranch, 3,681 acres
 Acquired by POST in 2002; transferred to MROSD in 2006
- Arata Ranch, 1,312 acres
 Protected by POST conservation easement in 2004; continues to be owned by the Arata family