Lee Brandenburg has a passion for philanthropy, and believes in using his wealth to improve society and make a real difference in the world. "Brandenburg is our modern day Andrew Carnegie," says Denelle Fedor, Council Assistant to Councilmember Johnny Khamis. "His graciousness and unconditional giving...are lifelong gifts that make for a better community."

Through the Brandenburg Family Foundation, Brandenburg and his wife Diane, and their children Karen, Eric, Gary and Bill; grandchildren Diana Lee, Brenten Lee, Taylor Ann, and Jackson Lee; and... See BRANDENBURG, page 12

The Brandenburg Foundation donated $1 million to purchase Old Fire Station 1 for the San Jose Fire Museum. Photo courtesy of the San Jose Fire Museum.

Pro fireworks show – let’s go!

Almaden Lake Fireworks Show offers alternative to illegal fireworks

By William Bellou
Publisher

Fines for setting off illegal fireworks, even “safe and sane” fireworks, could put a dent in family pocketbooks. Fortunately the professional Almaden Lake Park Fireworks Show is an alternative to fireworks block parties.

The Almaden Family Fun Festival will be held at Almaden Lake Park on Independence Day from 2 to 10 p.m. The fireworks start after dark and will last nearly 30 minutes starting at approximately 9:16 pm.

Families can walk or bike to the park, bring blankets and enjoy the lake, the park and nature.

“1 hope to get as many sponsors as possible because I don’t want to use any taxpayer funds,” Khamis said. “I’m very excited to continue the District 10 Family Fun Fireworks Festival. It is important to recognize and celebrate the unity of being an... See FIREWORKS, page 5

Lee Brandenburg
A modern day Andrew Carnegie

By Lorraine Gabbert
Senior Staff Writer

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After he serenaded Diane, Lee Brandenburg was presented with a white fire chief’s helmet. Photo courtesy of the San Jose Fire Museum.
Attorney-client relationship is a very important one

By Donald J. DeVries
Special to the Times

This week’s question:
I have been reading your articles for years and I have noticed at the end of each one a certain phrase. It always says, “No attorney-client relationship is created by these articles.” Why do you say that each and every time?

Bonnie B.
Almaden Valley

Dear Bonnie,

You emailed in a very good question, Bonnie. And the answer requires a little explaining.

First of all, thank you for reading these articles for years. I started writing this column in 1986, enjoyed it then, and still enjoy writing it now for my Almaden Valley readers. And I hope that the quoted phrase you mentioned appears in each and every one of these articles. It is important for you, the reader, and it is important for me, the attorney writing these articles.

Now, let me respond to your question. When a person submits a question to an attorney, it could well be seen as seeking legal advice. That would not be surprising at all. However, there are many responsibilities undertaken by the attorney at the very beginning of any attorney-client relationship.

A contract is usually created between the attorney and the client. This contract could be in writing and therefore express or it could not have a complete picture of the facts at hand. That could well lead to a malpractice case against the lawyer for breaching that relationship.

When answering a question, the attorney having a fiduciary relationship come into play as well, such as the attorney having a fiduciary relationship with the client, one of the very highest character. One aspect of that is to preserve all client confidences, and that certainly is not true when a question appears in a newspaper.

So, Bonnie, you can begin to see why I have that note at the end of each and every article. It is very important for the client to understand that and it is very important for me to point that out. And if I ever forget this, I state that “No attorney-client relationship is created by these articles”, you please let me know!! Thanks.

Donald J. DeVries
Almaden Valley

Many other aspects of the attorney-client relationship come into play as well, such as the attorney having a fiduciary relationship with the client, one of the very highest character. One aspect of that is to preserve all client confidences, and that certainly is not true when a question appears in a newspaper.

So, Bonnie, you can begin to see why I have that note at the end of each and every article. It is very important for the client to understand that and it is very important for me to point that out. And if I ever forget this, I state that “No attorney-client relationship is created by these articles”, you please let me know!! Thanks.

Donald J. DeVries
Almaden Valley

Brandenburg
Continued from page 1

brand-grandchildren BellaGrace, and Aidan Christopher support local non-profit.

Brandenburg and Diane have also served on many boards of civic and charitable organizations, and received numerous recognitions, including “Silicon Valley’s Outstanding Philanthropist,” and “Most Outstanding Community Volunteers.”

In 2006, when the Almaden Business Association “Texas Hold ’em Fundraiser” was deemed illegal by the attorney general’s office, the Brandenburg Foundation stepped up, donating $10,000 towards furniture for the children’s story room at the Almaden Library.

In February, The Brandenburg Foundation donated $1 million to purchase Old Fire Station 1 for the San Jose Fire Museum. After he surrendered Diane with “Smoke Gets in Your Eyes” and “I Don’t Want to Set the World on Fire;” Brandenburg was presented with a white fire chief’s helmet and a “Muster Team Exemption Certificate” which was used long ago to exempt firefighters from poll taxes, jury duty, and serving in the military.

“We’ve been involved in downtown San Jose for a long time,” says Brandenburg. “History matters. As soon as we heard about the fire museum, we decided to buy the property for them. We saw the fire equipment they had stored, and we wanted to help them find a home.”

“It’s Lee’s dream,” says William B. Baron, partner at Brandenburg Properties, “to see thousands of school-aged children learning about fire, and life safety issues while having fun sitting in historic fire apparatus and sliding down a fire pole with grins on their faces.”

Due to their donations, the Brandenburg family is a lifetime Founding Partner of the museum. “I was honored to meet Lee and Diane and get to know them,” says Fire Museum President John McMillan. “They will always hold a special place in the heart of our San Jose Fire Museum Board. We have one of the best historic fire collections in the country, and because of Lee and Diane’s wonderful donation, we now have a great historic downtown fire station to complement it.”

In all, The Brandenburg Family Foundation has contributed more than $20 million to charitable causes throughout the South Bay including: Camp Campbell, Children’s Discovery Museum (Brandenburg Theatre), Downtown Streets Team, Martin Luther King Library...
Times Cover Story

“[I’ve been out here for 11 years and never won a golf tournament],” Chip told them.

“Well, Chip, you’re about to win,” said Diane. And he did.

Making his fortune

Brandenburg has worked for decades in real estate and development. The founding partner of Brandenburg Properties, he began his career in the mid-1950’s after graduation from San Jose State University and two tours of duty for the United States Army. He started in real estate sales, moving to entitle and develop custom home and multifamily subdivisions. He expanded into commercial, retail and office building development, and, through the partnership Brandenburg, Staepler & Moore, entitled and developed 17, five-star mobile home communities.

He has developed large-scale residential golf and resort communities in Northern and Southern California, southeastern United States and British Columbia, as well as other residential and commercial developments in California, Georgia, South Carolina, Louisiana and Texas.

“His a wonderful man, and a true gentleman,” says Baron. “Whom I've had the blessing of working with over the past 32 years.”

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Brandenburg pursued residential subdivision development, including Wooded Lake Estates in Almaden, developments in Willow Glen, and the first residential subdivision in Saratoga.

In the mid 1970s, his son, Eric, joined Brandenburg Properties.

Silver Creek Valley Country Club was a Brandenburg vision, and they also converted a former quarry into nearly 1,200 residential units, a Home Depot and Lucky Food Store along Capital Expressway.

Brandenburg Properties recently received approval from the City of San Jose to establish Heritage Oaks Memorial Park by Cinnabar Hills.

“There is only one memorial park in San Jose, so there's a real need for another one,” says Brandenburg.

“Lee instilled in all of us that good business is done from both the head and the heart,” says Baron.

Looking Back

Brandenburg was born on June 8, 1930, to Jessie and Melford Brandenburg. His father was a manufacturer’s rep selling boats and other marine products. Brandenburg grew up in Lynbrook, New York. The family moved to Rockville Center, New York, where he attended South Side Central High School.

Although his first job was delivering newspapers, at age 12, Brandenburg caddied at the Blackhawk Club in Rockville center. He was good enough to make the high school golf team.

After the parents moved to San Mateo, he attended San Mateo Jr. College and San Jose State, where he majored in psychology and trained to be a ROTC Second Lieutenant and a military police.

While at San Jose State, he met Diane and the two eloped to Reno on March 1, 1952. She continued her studies at San Jose State when he left for Camp Gordon in Augusta, Georgia for officer’s training, driving across the country in his old Studebaker.

One day while at Camp Gordon, Brandenburg was amazed to read, “The Masters at Augusta National” on the front page of the Augusta Chronicle. Without a second thought, he drove out to the golf course. When he arrived, there were security vehicles and highway patrol flashing lights at the front gate, so he drove 36 yards, followed a path, parked, and walked out to the first fairway.

“There were two guys teeing off,” says Brandenburg, “and I knew it was President Eisenhower. He was playing with golf pro Ed Dudley. There were two caddies, and a secret service guy on my side said, ‘What the hell are you doing here? Wait till the president puts out, and then get the hell out of here.’

If he had been 20 minutes earlier or later, he would’ve missed him. When Ike finished putting, he was facing Brandenburg, and he smiled and crossed the green.

“I said, ‘Congratulations, General,’ and we shook hands. I guess he couldn't resist a Second Lieutenant.”

Another time, at the Augusta National Golf Club, Brandenburg noticed a man pushing a wheel barrow filled with green members jackets. He was going to burn them because the golf club was getting new jackets. Brandenburg asked to look through them and to his surprise discovered Eisenhower’s green jacket. He immediately asked if he could have it. The man said he could as long as he didn’t sell it.

That same jacket is now proudly on display at The Brandenburg Historical Golf Museum.

Brandenburg and Diane were reunited when he served at the Presidio in San Francisco, where he played on the officer’s golf team.

When he received an early discharge from the military in 1954 after serving for 15 months, he realized he’d have to earn a living, so he took a job with the U.S. Interior Department, then got the hell out of here.

‘Ike to play Masters at Augusta

Brandenburg was playing in the Bing Crosby/Nickolson, Johnny Miller, and Jacklin, Frank Sinatra, Lawrence Mayes, Fred MacMurray, Tony Shepard, Arnold Palmer, Billy Casper, as well as Glen Campbell, Alan Shepard, and sometime companion of Lee, and the two make an absolutely lovely couple and team.”

“Lee is a remarkable young lady,” says Barton. “He’s always creating, always innovating. He’s a movie producer, an author, a thinker and real estate developer. A father, a grandfather, a great-grandfather, a husband and a friend to many. He’s an everyday guy that’s more comfortable adorned in sweats and a pair of moccasins than in a coat and tie, yet with an extraordinary heart, business acumen and gentle way about him. Moreover, he starts his day with the belief that people are good and honorable. He certainly is, and is an example for us to learn from and emulate. All that said about Lee, without Diane, there would be no ‘Lee’ as we know him. Diane has been a marvelous life partner of Lee’s and the two make an absolutely lovely couple and team.”

“It’s been a wonderful, remarkable journey,” says Diane. “I’m married to a man who never accepts the word ‘no.’ He won’t quit. What he’s accomplished in his lifetime... We’ve been very blessed. There have been challenges, but we marched through them.”