

"We were very worried when they took an editorial stand against us right out of the chute," Renzel says, referring to the successful effort she helped lead last month that will force a public vote this November requiring the city to maintain its controls on commercial growth notwithstanding the objections of both city and Stanford planners.

"It was an odd thing," Renzel noted, "after their [*Palo Alto Weekly's*] editorial against us came out, which was just about the only coverage we received, we'd ask people to sign our petition and they would say, 'Yes, of course, I've been reading all about it in the *Palo Alto Weekly*,' so I think people around here take what they read with a grain of salt."

In fact, the list of missed, miscovered or slighted local stories, such as the issue that sent Renzel and several dozen of her friends canvassing for signatures, is so long that some north county residents now say they know more about Bosnia than they do about their own neighborhoods.

In Mountain View, for example, councilmembers continue to lavish their booty of reserved box seats at Shoreline concerts on themselves and their friends, overlooking the suggestion that the tickets, worth several hundred thousand dollars on the open market, might be put to more socially constructive uses.

In Palo Alto, the city-provided electricity keeps flickering on and off so regularly that it sometimes seems like the town is the throes of an ongoing air raid. Legions of frustrated Palo Altans who work out of their homes have learned to back up their computer files every time they use the bathroom—a situation that is not apparent to reporters who cover the city but live elsewhere.

Other issues, such as complaints involving local cable TV service, differences over public school curriculum contents, a hot school board race and resource-starved local libraries are regularly eclipsed in the *Mercury's* Peninsula section by reports from the personal lives of several lifestyle columnists, some imported from outside the area.

The only two bright spots remain Simon's tightly written and much too short daily Peninsula Insider column in the *Chron* and the reappearance of the *Tribune's* highly regarded Mary Madison, the long-time dean of Stanford reporters, as an occasional contributor to the San Francisco paper's campus and biomedical research coverage. "I was very pleased that the *Chronicle* sought me out," says Madison, who, despite her stature, is not a regular full-time *Chron* employee.

"Look, to be really fair you've got to realize that even at its lowest point the *Peninsula Times Tribune* provided 140 pages of local news a week, 20 pages a day," former editor Leonard Koppett explains. "There is no way a metropolitan daily like the *Mercury News* or the *Chronicle* can do that for an outlying suburban area. There isn't a metropolitan newspaper anywhere in the country that does. They simply can't do what a local paper can do." ☐