

# Val - Always Helpful, Always Smiling

**TGN:** How long have you been our maintenance manager at Menlo Commons, Val?

**Val:** I came here in 1999 when they were looking for a friendly person to take over this job. Before I came to Menlo Commons, I was manager of a Safeway store in the South Bay.

**TGN:** I understand you do some additional work too.

**Val:** Yes. I own a recording studio for people who can't afford to pay for more expensive training. I teach vocal music to persons trying to get a job in the music industry. I work at Menlo Commons from 6:30 am to 3:30 pm then give vocal lessons from 5 to 8 pm. I also work with programs involving youngsters from group homes, a halfway houses in Chowchilla, and in juvenile halls who have shown an interest in music. My students have ranged in ages from 4 to 30 years old. I have also had the pleasure of working with and getting to know people like Smokey Robinson and MC Hammer! This year I received The Mayors Award from the city of Oakland for my contributions to the music industry. I am very proud of receiving such a prestigious award!

**TGN:** Why do you like working for Menlo Commons?

**Val:** I like to be able to help people, communicate with them, and listen to them. I like to be available to the residents and help whenever possible! I remember about 5 years ago a large antique clock fell on top of one of our elderly residents, the glass shattered and some pieces lodged in her chest. I think that had I not been there, she may not have made it! If I hadn't found her, and called for help I don't know that she would have survived! That was one of the proudest (and probably scariest) moments of my life!

**TGN:** Tell us about your church work.

**Val:** I have become the Chief Adjutant in the Pentecostal Assembly World organization. I am in charge of bringing order to each meeting and interacting with the people and the leaders of the church. I can interact with people, and be next to the leaders of the church. At church services, I lead the spiritual music and sing. On Wednesdays I teach Men's Bible Study classes. I mentor those in need of added attention.

Some of those in the Men's Bible Study classes are 49ers football players like Vernon Davis.

**TGN:** Why do you continue working at Menlo Commons?

**Val:** Oh, Menlo Commons keeps me "grounded". It is my base of operations. The "upside" of Menlo Commons is quite clear - it is a group of people learning to care about each other, once they have had interaction with each other. We need more of that. Otherwise it will be everybody to themselves. I see each building being active with the people who live there, and then each building being active with each other through building representatives. Also, the social events are being better attended, but they could still do better. In any event, the duties should not just fall on one person. Recently, I noticed that many new people have moved here - in one period of three weeks recently, four units sold! That is a good sign that something is being done right. There is the new front gate, appealing landscaping, even the planter boxes, help add to the attraction of Menlo Commons. People need to see a friendly face, and there needs to be someone who will help answer questions.

**TGN:** What are your wishes for Menlo Commons?

**Val:** I would love to see better elevator floors. They need replacing and now that will be done in 2015!. Improvements could be made to the lobby areas, and also to the garage floors. We need to have the Commons Room floors redone. We need more teamwork!!! The Board Manor, and I need to work together better!! If that is done, then maybe everyone else will follow suit and hopefully become more involved.

**Val:** Since this is the holiday season, give us an inspirational thought, Val.

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**Val:** To our 171 residents in 122 units: "Remember we are here together. Mutual Respect and caring for each other are essential to making our community a pleasant place to work and live!"

*"May your holidays be filled with joy, happiness, and blessings!"*

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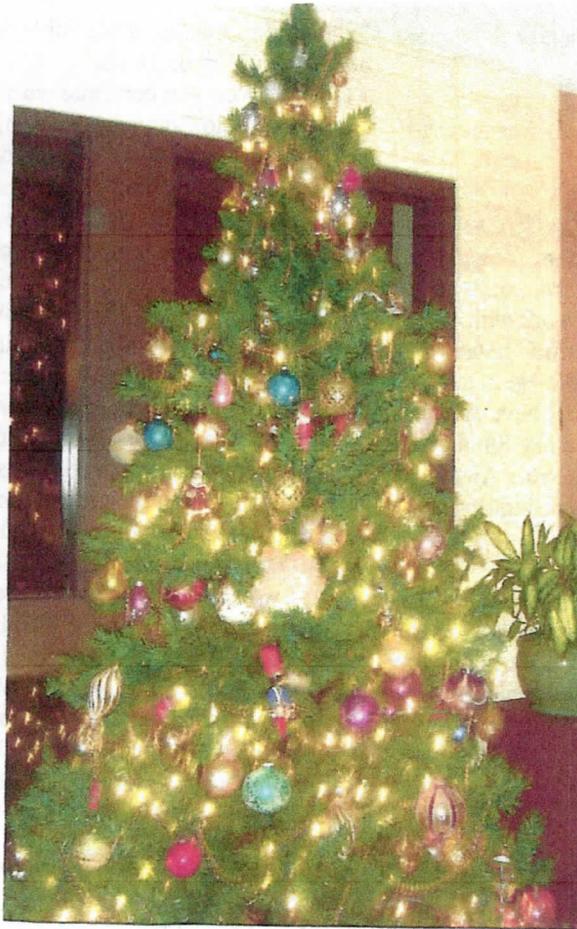


# Holiday Dinner Well Attended by Residents

Nearly 60 Enjoy Catered Dinner Celebrating the Season  
Hosted by Gwen Leonard, the December 12 event was enjoyed by all!



*Gwen Leonard Enjoys Party*



*Shirley Stewart Says Merry Christmas!*



*Sue Marshall Likes the Tree.*



*Sumptuous Feast Awaits All.*



*Gloria Dawson, Parnian Karboli, and Jerry Wilkerson*