

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

Returning to a different Palo Alto

MIRANDA was back in Palo Alto for the first time in years. It was the town she had grown up in, and it had changed considerably.

As she walked down University Avenue, Miranda remembered an episode from *The Twilight Zone*, in which a man commuted home routinely from work one afternoon, only to find his small residential town had gone through a time warp and changed. There were houses where there had been empty lots; some shops he knew well had vanished, replaced by unfamiliar buildings.

Miranda had the same feeling, as she walked down University Avenue.

The old Varsity Theater, where she'd seen so many movies, had turned into a high-tech coffee shop where you could rent a room with a white board and wifi and convene your business brainstorming meetings; so you didn't need to have your own office anymore, if you were seeding a start-up idea with no funding, out of your studio apartment.

This is part 1 of a 24-part fictionalized serial appearing in the Daily Post, written by John Angell Grant with illustrations by Steve Curl.

A few doors down Miranda saw a tea shop, where there used to be a bar, and where she'd heard Jerry Garcia play banjo in his folk music days, long before the Grateful Dead.

Miranda walked into the tea shop and up the side stairs to the balcony, where Jerry had sat and played his banjo. She remembered the crowd, and she remembered the times.

Walking down University Avenue, she could see in her memory the old stationery and hardware stores of the past, replaced now by upscale eateries. She imagined the shops from then, and the businesses from now, superimposed over each other; and she meditated on the passage of time.

Life was short; things changed quickly. When you were living

in an area, those changes were gradual, and you didn't see them. When you returned from afar, after a passage of time, the changes were striking.

She picked up the local newspaper and sat down on a bench, reading that even those fancy new upscale retail businesses were now being squeezed off of University Avenue, in reaction to the demand for start-up office space. Unless the city council stepped in and intervened, those businesses would be gone, since the demand for start-up office space in Palo Alto had risen so high.

"Hi, Miranda," said a voice.

There was a homeless-looking guy, standing in front of her. He looked familiar.

In a shock, Miranda realized it was Eddie, her brother's friend from elementary school. Eddie was dressed shabbily; in torn and stained clothes. He had a long red beard.

More tomorrow.



MIRANDA