

## Christi wonders how service workers survive

CHRISTI, a recent Stanford grad and lifelong Palo Alto resident, shared her fear of being poor. She sat with her aunt Miranda on the patio of a coffeehouse on Ramona Street.

“Consider all the poor people who work at menial service jobs in Palo Alto,” said Christi. “I don’t want to become one of them. Like that girl over there at the cash register who keeps saying ‘Perfect’ to everyone who orders. How does she get by? Or the people who do our housekeeping and gardening; or wait on us at tables in the coffee shops and restaurants; or do the janitorial services?”

“None of those people live in Palo Alto,” Christi continued. “They commute from the poorer sections of the Bay Area. I don’t want to fall into that world.”

This is part 12 of a 24-part fictionalized serial appearing in the Daily Post, written by John Angell Grant.

“That won’t happen to you, Christi,” said Miranda.

“I’m not so confident,” said Christi, “Stanford degree notwithstanding, the difference between my world and their world is less and less secure. And the days are gone when you could have a good blue-collar job, and still live in Palo Alto.”

“Times have changed,” Miranda agreed.

“Times have changed,” said Christi. “It’s not like when you were growing up in the 1950s and 1960s. The safety net has dropped.”

“I think education is the key,” said Miranda.

“Yes, in part, I agree,” said Christi. “But people can be well educated, and still not well off. The elementary school teachers, the most important jobs in the world, what do they make?”

“Not much,” said Miranda.

“How do they survive?” said Christi.

“I don’t know,” said Miranda.

“They certainly don’t live here in Palo Alto; unless they are married to some big wage earner like my fiance,” said Christi.

“That is bad for the community,” said Miranda.

“I’m just being realistic,” said Christi.

“The country is evolving backwards into a medieval world,” said Miranda.

“It is,” said Christi. “Soon there is going to be a small overclass at the top of the pyramid; and a large underclass at the bottom of the pyramid. I want to be part of the overclass, not the underclass.”

“And I’m not a cynic, Aunt Miranda,” Christi continued. “Please don’t say that about me. I’m a realist. I wish the world were different, but it’s not. So in order to be part of this new overclass, I am going to marry a wealthy man, even though I don’t love him.”

**More tomorrow.**