

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

Miranda worries about city's mental health

MIRANDA continued her walk down University Avenue, trying to take in all the changes that had occurred in Palo Alto since she had grown up there in the 1950s and 1960s.

She was back to investigate selling the California bungalow in Southgate that her parents had bought in 1958 for \$28,000; and which the real estate agent was now telling her she could sell for nearly \$3 million.

It was the house she had grown up in, along with her parents and her brother.

After graduating from Stanford, Miranda had gone off to law school at NYU, and then a law career in New York. Her brother had moved to Eureka to be a pot farmer. He was dead, as were her parents.

It was now time for her, Miranda,

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to think about her next steps. Retiring to Palo Alto seemed tempting, and perhaps continuing to live in her old family house.

She liked the idea of living in a university town, and taking advantage of the many talks, lectures, author visits, and seminars by famous visiting scholars that were on the campus and open to the public, if you knew where to look and how to get on to the right mailing lists.

But \$3 million was a large chunk of her assets, so maybe she'd have to sell the house. She could see herself sliding into poverty if she lived into her

90s or beyond, if she wasn't careful with her planning.

She wondered about the people of her generation who had a lot less than she, and wondered about their fates.



MIRANDA

In the youth culture, it seemed like the new plan was to get rich quick; or to work until you couldn't walk any more, and then lie down in a ditch and die. The typical view of the young, she reflected. She'd had it herself in earlier years.

Miranda checked her wrist tracker. She had logged 5,326 steps so far that day, less than half of what she needed to hit her goal of 11,000 steps for the day.

She passed a newsrack where several newspapers were vying for the atten-

tion of passers-by. She couldn't believe it — the lead story recounted a teen suicide in Palo Alto. It was the second such incident in a month. High school students were killing themselves in her hometown. What was wrong with the world?

Miranda had many thoughts about the phenomenon — about the pressure to succeed that teens were under from parents and from the world about them; about the epidemic of “smart drugs” and other medications children were taking under pressure to succeed; and about the crazy body hormones in teenagers who were just going through the normal physiological changes of adolescence.

Miranda feared for the mental health of the town that she had grown up in.

More tomorrow.