

PALO ALTO ODYSSEY

Carl's smoking ban idea doesn't fly

CARL was a Palo Alto start-up entrepreneur who had not quite made the cut.

During his career, he had created three businesses, and gotten a little funding for two of them, but none had taken off.

His wife was worried about him. Carl had been working 60- and 70-hour weeks for much of the last 15 years, and was exhausted. And now he was concerned that he wouldn't be able to live in Palo Alto any longer, just as his son was approaching high school age. Carl wanted his son to go to Paly; so he did not want to move from Palo Alto.

His wife had made the suggestion that he give up the high-tech rat-race, and pursue a vocation that would make him happy. She was an officer at a local

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bank; so, as she put it, she was willing to be the breadwinner while he, say, went to culinary school and became a chef.

Maybe someday he could open his own restaurant, she told him. At any rate, he could work as a chef, doing something he enjoyed.

When Carl came home at night, his relaxation was to cook. And he was a good cook. Their friends and neighbors praised him. The dinners he and his wife hosted for friends and neighbors were legendary.

But Carl was reluctant. "My cooking is my hobby," he said. "It's what I do at night when I come home after a stressful day. I'm worried that if I try to make a living off of it, or a vocational career; that it will spoil it for me."



CARL

It was a fair caution.

Carl's most recent start-up venture, which had failed, was to try and sell the Palo Alto City Council on the idea of using drones over downtown Palo Alto, to identify illegal smokers within 30 feet of businesses, which was forbidden.

Initially, he had gotten positive feedback from one city council member, who was a vegan. But the idea languished when he tried to bring it to

a larger audience. Carl was told that he was a fascist, and that such technology was inappropriate.

Carl had countered with the data that increasingly cities were wiring their downtown areas with video cameras, as a security measure; and that his drone technology was simply running ahead of the curve. It would be the way of the future, he argued; and he still felt that way; but in Palo Alto, at least this year, it was no sale.

Carl saw himself as a visionary who knew where the technology was going; and where the society was going; but who was ridiculed by small minds who were less visionary.

"Someday they'll see," he said to himself. "And they'll realize I was in the forefront."

More tomorrow.