

The Ranchos Independent

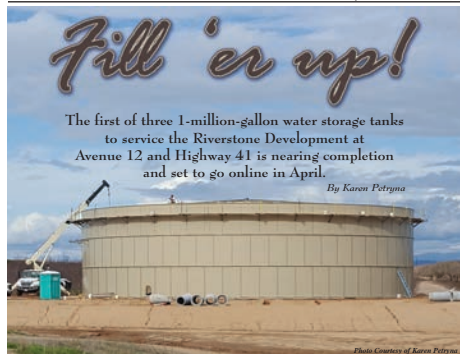


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Looking Back: Taking a look back at the top stories in the Ranchos for 2016



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Area Water Systems Consolidation Keeps Moving Toward Resolution

By Karen Petryna

County and State employees met on Dec. 16 at the Government Center to regroup and focus efforts to consolidate the water systems at Valley Teen Ranch (VTR) and the Liberty High School (LHS) complex with the Ranchos' MD-10a water system which supplies about 250 million gallons of water per year to almost 1,000 ratepayers in the Special Maintenance District Assessment area bounded by Road 36, Road 38, Avenue 13 and Kensington Drive.

The need for the end-of-year meeting, nearly nine months after consolidation plans were announced to the community, was precipitated by the County's recent submittal of

the latest version of the grant application to the State to connect MD-10a and VTR. The first was submitted by VTR's hired consultant, Provost & Prichard, after naturally occurring arsenic was detected in their water well over five years ago. The application, which included a required independent financial audit of MD-10a, showed the project did not look that attractive in terms of dollars spent per connection, or approximately \$30,000 per "equivalent residential connection," according to Joel Greathouse with the State Water Board's Division of Financial Assistance, based on his recent experience with similar projects' grant applications.

Long-Standing Water System Issues

People in the Ranchos have seen and heard a lot of activity in recent years, from the Ranchos Independent and other sources, concerning all three water systems. Efforts for the MD-10a water system by a number of successive County Engineers, Maintenance Managers, and Public Works Directors, have included attempts to stabilize it with projects of new wells and some type of storage capacity. And, as a public school and dis-

advantaged community with its own water issues, VTR has come tantalizingly close to being a conduit to meet those goals. In fact, a Conditional Use Permit to allow for water system upgrades that were recommended by the

County staff to the Madera Board of Supervisors in January of 2015 to connect VTR to MD-10a was part of that effort, as were negotiations with Shaw Development across Avenue 12 from LHS and also with Golden Valley Unified School District (GVUSD). But now, through a collaboration of several different organizational and individual efforts, a new consolidation project with MD-10a and VTR has finally come together to include GVUSD's Liberty High School complex, which serves 900 students plus District staff, and builds a much more attractive cost-to-benefit ratio for the grant

Please see **WATER** on P. 13

According to the Environmental Integrity Project Report of September 2016, VTR ranks 9th among the top 20 worst arsenic concentrations in California Public Water Systems a full three years after the EPA Notice of Noncompliance to the State.

U.S. Military Remembered by Local Youth

A Christmas Gift

On Wednesday, Nov. 30, a group of young men in the Ranchos packed boxes to send to our troops for Christmas. The group, called Royal Rangers, is a part of Lifetree Church and consists of young men between the ages of 6 and 12.

A total of 29 large boxes were packed for troops both within the U.S. and overseas. The packages contained comfort items including dental hygiene products, socks, razors, batteries, protein snacks, Christmas hats, candy and toys.

Two local Fresno State ROTC students, Clare Wardle and Tyler Fry, joined in the effort. Clare Wardle currently resides in the Ranchos, graduating from Liberty High in June of 2013. She will graduate From Fresno State in 2017, pursuing her career as an Army Officer in the medical field. Tyler Fry lives in Fresno and he will also graduate in 2017 and will enter the National Guard.



Members of the Ranchos' Lifetree Church Royal Rangers group prepare gift boxes for U.S. servicemen and women.

2016 • Top Ranchos Stories

from the pages of the Ranchos Independent

1 Austin Quarry/July•August•September • This was an on-going story that began with the Planning Commission approving the quarry in July and culminated in September when the Board of Supervisors approved the quarry by a 3-2 vote. District 1 Supervisor Brett Frazier voted "no."

2 Quarry Lawsuits/October • The ink had not even dried on the September Board of Supervisors' vote to approve the Austin Quarry when a flurry of lawsuits against the project were filed. The lawsuits were filed by the Madera Oversight Coalition, which had led the fight against it, and a competing quarry.

3 Riverstone Water/January • In January, the Riverstone housing development at Highway 41 and Avenue 12 unveiled their new 1 million gallon water tank. The first of three proposed, its construction struck a negative chord with many in the Ranchos who were still suffering through water issues of their own.

4 Knife Robbery/March • Ranchos residents pride themselves on our safe community, but every so often something happens to snap us back to reality. A young man was robbed of his car at knife point as he got off work one night. The assailants were later traced to Valley Teen Ranch.

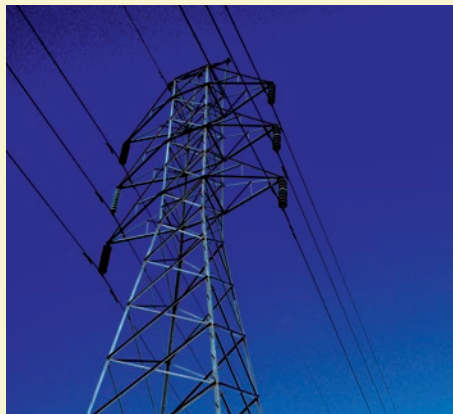
5 Bomb Scare/February • Avenue 12 got shut down for several hours as bomb squads from throughout the Central Valley responded to what looked like a dynamite-laden bomb discovered at a house by construction workers. Turned out it was a fake -- but no one wanted to take any chances.

6 Dead Trees/July • Throughout the Ranchos, the spectre of dead and dying evergreen trees were everywhere. The drought, coupled with improper care, was determined to be the culprit. While this was happening in the Ranchos, millions of trees in our national forest were experiencing the same.

7 Free Low-Flow/April • The community group SEMCU was able to acquire over \$220,000 in grant money to provide every home in the Ranchos with FREE low-flow water fixtures.

PG&E Might Cancel Project Through Ranchos

By Karen Petryna



In a news release issued on Dec. 8, PG&E announced it may cancel the project to run a new 68-mile 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission line south to north through the center of Fresno County to the Gregg Substation in southern Madera County. Called the Central Valley Power Connect Project and considered to be the precursor to a second phase of connection between the Gregg Substation and the Helms Pumped Storage Plant power station, the

project's predecessor received solicited comments from then SEMCU, Inc. President Igal Treibatch, who had petitioned PG&E to run the initially proposed line to Helms on a route outside Madera Ranchos through uninhabited land.

Citing analysis of the use of renewal energy in the Valley and recent energy use forecasts among other things as the basis for the potential change in plans, PG&E reported a further clarification on the status of the project will come in the next three months or so.

Liberty High Students Raise \$4,600 for Valley Children's Hospital

By Alyza Lovenguth

On Dec. 7, student leaders Joshua Bailey, Sarah Folsom and Kaleb Roth raised a total of \$4,600 for Valley Children's Hospital in this year's Letter-a-Thon event.

"We do this not only for the kids, but as a reminder to Liberty to be grateful for being healthy and being able to come to

school, because some children don't get the opportunity to do so," said Folsom, ASB secretary and Key Club president, during her speech concerning the Letter-a-Thon.

The Letter-a-Thon is a chance for students and staff to donate not only money but uplifting letters to Valley Children's Hospital. Although the Letter-a-Thon was run by Bailey and Folsom, Roth, the cre-

ator of "Beyond the Game," also made an appearance and a donation of \$4,000.

During Roth's Letter-a-Thon speech, he said, "I started Beyond the Game over the summer, thinking what can I do with my life that can help better my community and other people's lives? And I decided I was going to use football, something that I love, and add some real-life significance." Beyond the Game is a program

founded by Roth that collected \$10 from donors for every point the Varsity Football team scored, totaling \$4,000. During his speech, Roth continued to thank Students for Community (S4C) "... for the outlet it supplied." S4C is a locally renowned club at LHS that allows students to find, create and develop their own local

Please see **STUDENTS** on P. 13

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Letters

Dear Editor:

This is to the people of the Ranchos.

My daughter Kami and I would like to take a moment to express our gratitude to each and every one of you that extended your kindness, prayers, shared hugs, sent loving thoughts and helped us gather necessities for my deceased daughter's children.

As you may or may not know, we very suddenly and unexpectedly lost my daughter Mika. Mika left behind two children: Quinn, 4, and Kelsey, 2. Due to the circumstances surrounding Mika's death, no one was allowed in her home leaving Kami and I grossly unprepared for the children's arrival. They only had on pajamas which they received from foster care. No clothing, no toys, no diapers, no plates, cups or silverware. At 2 a.m. Kami posted to social media a call for help. We were desperate.

The response for assistance from the folks of the Ranchos was overwhelming. Within a matter of days, we had largely gathered everything that we would need in the immediate to provide care for the children and then some.

The children are thriving and adjusting to life without their Mama. They are excited about Christmas and each received a phone call from Santa where they promptly rattled off their list and assured Santa how good they have been.

We are full with gratitude and appreciation for each and every one of you. Your kindness carried us through some of the darkest of days. The continued acts of compassion and outpouring of love remain to touch our hearts.

Thank you to each and every one of you. We wish you the happiest of holidays.

The Jackson and Carranza families,
Judi, Kami, Quinn and Kelsey
Madera Ranchos

Dear Editor:

Human beings prefer freedom to collectivism and tyranny. Only those in complete denial disregard the negative consequences of policies that suppress liberty. Consider North Korea versus South Korea. And recall that in Berlin during the Cold War era, people weren't shot trying to go from West to East – not that anyone tried anyway. Finally, in the course of the last 55 years of the Castro regime, very few people jumped on rickety boats in Miami seeking a better life in Havana.

For those who follow what is happening in the United States – both in politics and with the economy – we can be grateful that even in the most oppressive economic environment – think your typical liberal city such as San Francisco or Portland – people remain

remarkably free compared to citizens in many other parts of the world.

One of the freedoms that we Americans enjoy is the freedom to travel. A citizen's ability to travel from state to state has been deemed by the United States Supreme Court to be a fundamental right that can only be restricted in the narrowest of circumstances. Part of this right is more than just going to another state or country and then returning. It means the freedom to leave. Permanently.

In California, we all know people who have bailed out for places where the taxes are low, regulations are light and the cost of living reasonable. But the evidence here is not just anecdotal.

In a recent piece in the Washington Times, economist Stephen Moore presents an amazing statistic: "Of the 10 blue states that Hillary Clinton won by the largest percentage margins — California, Massachusetts, Vermont, Hawaii, Maryland, New York, Illinois, Rhode Island, New Jersey and Connecticut — every single one of them lost domestic migration (excluding immigration) over the last 10 years (2004-14)."

But here's the kicker: The exact opposite is true in those states that supported Donald Trump by the largest margin. Those states – including Wyoming, West Virginia, Oklahoma, North Dakota, Kentucky, Tennessee, South Dakota, and Idaho — saw net domestic in-migration.

So what are the characteristics of those Hillary-supporting states that are bleeding productive citizens? Here, Moore doesn't mince words: "They are the loser states. They are all progressive. High tax rates. High welfare benefits. Heavy regulation. Environmental extremism. Super minimum wages. Most outlaw energy drilling. The whole left-wing playbook is on display in the Hillary states. And people are leaving in droves."

For those of us who follow these often wonkish statistics, let's be clear. We're not gloating – we're unhappy. California is a great state with virtually unlimited potential. But the demographic trends are not pretty and when one considers the crushing debt load that looms like a fatal disease, it's hard not to be deeply concerned.

Is there anything that can save the Golden State? In a very weird way, it is Trump himself who might save California by revitalizing the national economy. That would be ironic indeed. But if that doesn't happen and the great "California Exodus" continues, the economic death spiral will accelerate. And unlike East Berlin, when productive California citizens decide to leave, there is nothing the Progressives can do to stop them.

Jon Coupal, President
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

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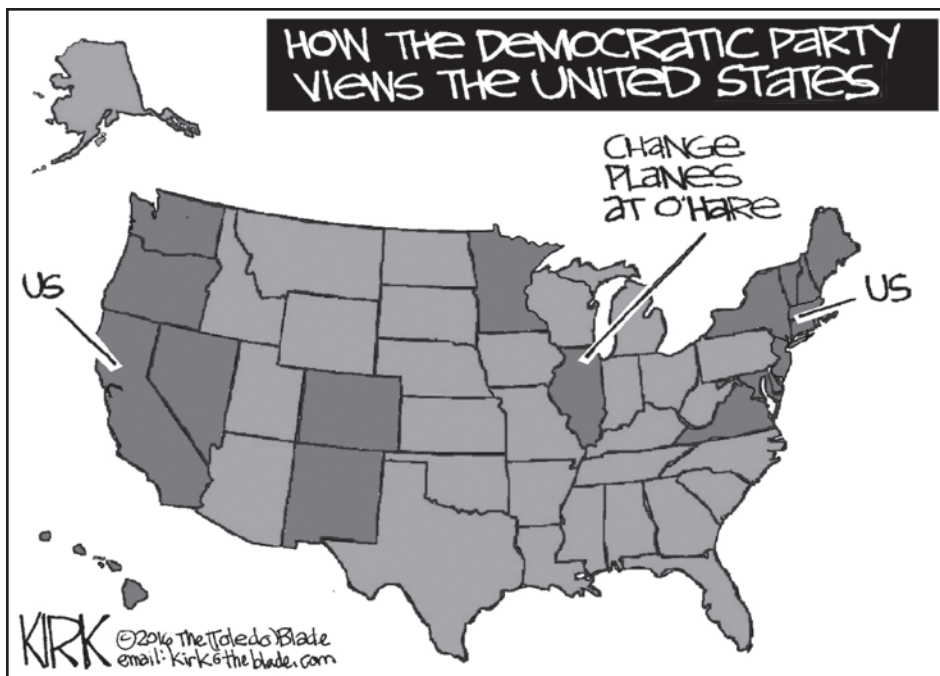
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Guest Editorial

The Muslim Registry that Wasn't

By Rich Lowry

The first thing to know about Donald Trump's alleged proposal for a Muslim registry is that it isn't a Muslim registry. This has been lost in a freak-out that has some brave souls already promising acts of civil disobedience to disrupt and overwhelm the prospective registry.

The source of the fracas is a comment from Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, a Trump immigration adviser and (excellent) candidate for Homeland Secretary director, to Reuters. Kobach noted that the administration might reinstate a Bush-era program tracking visitors to the U.S. from countries with active terrorist threats. This suggestion was spun into a first step toward herding our Muslim neighbors into internment camps.

Kobach was referring to the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS, which placed special requirements on adult male visitors from countries like Saudi Arabia. Implemented after Sept. 11 -- when, you might recall, adult male visitors from Saudi Arabia toppled the World Trade Center -- it collected fingerprints and photographs when visitors from the select countries arrived and required them to check in periodically to confirm that they were abiding by the terms of their visas.

It also required that certain individ-

uals from these countries who were already here go through a process of "special registration," including an interview with immigration officials.

This is a far cry from Franklin D. Roosevelt's notorious Executive Order 9066 setting in motion the Japanese internment of World War II.

It is said that the Bush program didn't lead to the prosecution of any terrorists. According to the Migration Policy Institute, "The New York Times reported in 2003 that, out of roughly 85,000 individuals registered through the NSEERS program in 2002 and 2003, just 11 were found to have ties to terrorism."

Although tracking down anyone here who has ties to terrorism isn't necessarily something to sniff at, the Bush program proved best-suited to identifying visa overstayers. Of the 85,000 initial registrants, nearly 14,000 were put into removal proceedings. For the critics, this is an indictment.

But why shouldn't it be easier to deport visa-overstayers, who constitute about half of the population of illegal immigrants? If we are serious about our immigration rules, our approach to visa-overstayers from all countries should be much more restrictive and hardheaded.

The requirements of the Bush program were watered down over time until it was suspended by the Obama administration in 2011. But the program wasn't illegal or unconstitutional (the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in its favor). Nor was it immoral -- foreign visitors should be subject to any reasonable strictures we impose in exchange for the privilege of coming here.

That the so-called Muslim registry is now a thing, a subject of high dudg-eon and hot debate, is testament to how the same media that complains about "fake news" is committed to manufacturing and driving its own narratives only loosely connected to reality. Whether the Trump administration revives a version of the Bush program or not, a similar campaign of obloquy will be directed at all of its immigration enforcement measures. It will have to pursue its agenda against a backdrop of media hostility and constant misinformation.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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The Ranchos Independent

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Randy Bailey.....Publisher/Editor

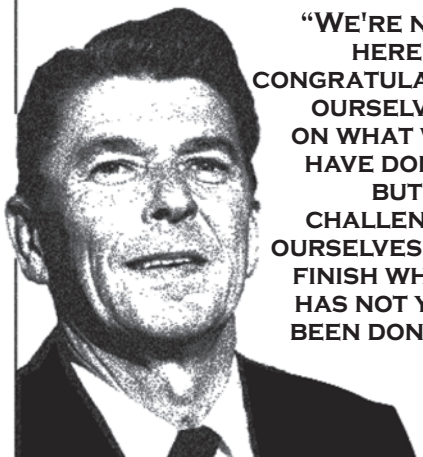
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Remember This at Christmas

I inherited my love of all things Christmas from my mom. It's not just that it's my favorite holiday, I love absolutely everything about this time of year. The lights, the music, the jolly old man in the big red suit. I simply cannot get enough of this season. In fact, I wish it lasted longer, though truth be told in my house it lasts longer than society would typically find acceptable. I won't go into details but let's just say if you feel like seeing a Christmas tree in November you don't just have to go to Wal-Mart.

I look forward to Christmas all year. My countdown usually starts sometime around the 26th of December. Yes. I'm that person. Not this year, though.

This year everything is different. This year my mom isn't here with me. To be honest, I'm having trouble immersing myself in the spirit of the season because this is

As you celebrate the birth of Christ, remember His words: "A new command I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another," (John 13:34 NIV). So, don't wait.

the first Christmas since she passed. Suddenly the season doesn't hold the same pull that it used to. It's missing its sparkle, its joy, its magic. I fear she may have been the magic all along.

She was the queen of Christmas. Mrs. Claus took her tips from my mom. She was filled with so much joy that it practically spilled right out of her pores and all over everyone and everything she came into contact with, including the house. She would decorate the entire thing from top to bottom. I used to make fun of how it looked when it was all done. Everything draped with garland, splashed with red and green and silver and gold, and filled to bursting with every seasonal knickknack her family had ever collected going back generations. You couldn't take a step without getting smacked in the face by

GEN ERATION WHY by eryn b. nyre



Christmas. I used to tell her that it looked like Santa threw up all over the place. I didn't appreciate it enough then. I miss it now.

I never would have thought that I would grow up to be just like her, draping my entire house in the physical manifestation of the Christmas spirit, but I did. This year is different,

though. Decorating has actually felt like a chore, like something I had to do because that's what was expected of me. I know she would want me to keep Christmas alive, which is why I

pulled the tree, the ornaments, the garland, the knickknacks and the giant Santa out of storage and forced myself to artificially spread some of the joy that I desperately wish I had in my heart. I know it's there somewhere, but right now it's buried with the grief of missing her.

I look around and see my mom in everything. In the tree that she bought in an after-Christmas sale. The dancing Santa we had to unplug because the cats would set it off all night long. The old candles and figurines that once belonged to her grandmother's grandmother and now belong to me. A Christmas Village that she surprised me with and almost single handedly built up for me because she knew I had always wanted one. Even though she's gone, she is still all around me this Christ-

Please see GEN WHY on P. 16

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The Bookshelf

Happy New Year from the Library

By Amanda Judd

We at the Ranchos Library cannot believe that another whole year has flown right by. What a nice time we had at our Annual Holiday Celebration. It was a wonderful time sharing stories and decorating for the holiday. Thank you to all that were able to come and contribute. It was a great pleasure to share your company.

We have brought in some really great titles this past year and we have worked really hard on developing and updating our collections. Please remember that we always take donations of new bestsellers. Donations of new books help us continue to grow and get the best of the best reading material. If you have questions about donations, please contact the library. It is also important to note that donations should be scheduled with the library and not placed in the book drop or left unattended outside of the library.

I want to take a special moment to thank all of the incredible volunteers of this library. These wonderful people come in and do whatever it takes to help keep this library looking good and running efficiently. I am thankful for each and every one of you and

your commitment to making the Ranchos Library the very best that it can be. I am thankful for your love of having such a beautiful library right here in this community and the dedication that you make to our little patrons.

On an ending note, I want to thank you all for your continued support of the Ranchos Library. Continue to stop in and check out all of the new things that are coming through. Continue to support the Ranchos Library through book donations, recycle donations, Bucks for Books and Amazon Smiles rewards.

The Ranchos Library wishes you all a Healthy and Happy New Year!

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Candidate Christmas Suggestions

I can't believe in only a few days we will be trying to remember to write 2017. Where did the year go? Thanksgiving is over and you've cleared all the leftovers and now it is time for Christmas dinner. You've probably already made plans for your dinner or going to grandma's house. Whichever you do, hope it is the best. The other thing that happened is we had an election this year. We are pretty sure that we know who our new president will be, but it won't be certain until Monday, Dec. 19 when the Electoral College votes.

I did some research on the two candidates to see what they liked to eat. They are both strange eaters. They were each asked the same questions:

1. Favorite things to eat on the campaign trail?

Clinton: Jalapeños (raw). Nibbles on them all during the day. She thinks it keeps her metabolism revved up and keeps her healthy.

Trump: Mainly only snacks.

2. What do you eat for breakfast?

Clinton: Well done scrambled eggs.

Trump: "I often skip breakfast, but if I do eat it, my favorite is bacon and eggs. Bacon done medium and eggs over well." (My kind of guy – I hate runny eggs.)

I read that Trump loves fast food. His favorite is McDonalds. If he doesn't eat at one of his restaurants, he will go to McDonalds and his favorite is Filet-O-Fish with fries and a diet coke. His favorite drink is a Diet Coke. He does not drink alcohol.

Hillary caused a bit of an uproar in the early 90s when Bill was running against George H. W. Bush and she commented about wanting to pursue a career rather than staying home making cookies. With that, the Family Circle magazine held a friendly cookie competition for the would be First Ladies (Hillary and Barbara Bush) that year. They both turned in Chocolate Chip Cookie recipes and Clinton actually won the title.

Here is her recipe. It was originally called "Hillary Clinton's Oatmeal Chocolate Chip Cookies." The magazine still runs the recipe, but now they call it "Clinton Family's Chocolate Chip Cookies"

Clinton Family's Chocolate Chip Cookies

- 1 1/2 C. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 C. vegetable shortening



(Butter can be substituted for the Vegetable shortening, but remember the cookies will come out a bit flatter)

- 1 C packed brown sugar
- 1/2 C granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs
- 2 C. old fashioned rolled oats
- 1 (12 oz.) pkg. chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350. Spray two large baking pans with non-stick cooking spray.

Combine flour, salt and baking soda on a sheet of parchment paper or wax paper.

Combine shortening, sugars and vanilla in bowl and mix with electric mixer until creamy. Add eggs, one at a time and beat until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in flour mixture and rolled oats until well blended. Stir in chocolate chips with a spoon.

Drop batter by well-rounded teaspoons onto prepared baking pans. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until golden. Let cool on baking sheets set over wire racks for 2 minutes. Remove cookies to wire racks to cool completely.

Christmas

Are you ready for your Christmas dinner? Need another dessert? Got older kids running around and you're hearing "Mom, there is nothing to do!" Here is your answer – a couple of days before Christmas they can make that dessert for the family: A Dump Cake.

Yes, I said "Dump." For you Trump haters, no fair calling them Dump Trump cakes! Just dump some ingredients in a baking dish, bake and you've got a delicious cake. Only thing you dirty is the baking dish, a knife to cut the butter, a can opener and maybe a small bowl to melt some butter in the microwave. No mixing bowls to wash and no beating.

The following recipe reminds me of a pineapple upside down cake.

Pineapple Dump Cake

- Preheat oven to 350
- 1 Box pineapple cake mix
- 1 stick butter, sliced into patties
- 1 Large Can Crushed Pineapple
- Small amount of brown sugar – no more than a couple of tablespoons.

In 9 x 13 baking pan pour in pineapple, juice and all. Sprinkle dry cake mix

Please see **RECIPE** on P. 9

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RECIPE cont. from P. 8

over the pineapple and spread evenly. Spread butter over top and sprinkle top with the brown sugar. Bake in preheated oven until golden.

The following recipe reminded me of a peach cobbler without all the fuss.

Peach Dump Cake

Preheat oven to 350

1 Lg. can sliced peaches

1 box Butter Pecan Cake mix

1 Cube Melted Butter

In 9 x 13 cake pan pour the peaches and juice, Sprinkle the cake mix over top to cover peaches. Pour melted butter over top. (Note: You can sprinkle a little cinnamon over top if desired) Bake in preheated oven for 50 minutes or until cake is done. Let cool 5 minutes, serve warm in bowls with ice cream if desired.

With the many varieties of canned fruit and pie fillings in the market and the flavors of cake mixes on the shelves, don't just limit yourself to peaches and pineapple. Let your kids pick what they want and you may be quite surprised.

Whatever you do and wherever you go on Christmas day, I hope and pray you have a great and blessed day and the New Year will be happy and prosperous for you and your family.

Senior Report

Happy Everything

By Patti Groh

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Please imagine that set to music, but hopefully not me singing it. I love Christmas music. I hear complaints about the radio and stores starting it too early, but it's not too much for me.

The first two Saturdays of December, Seniors sales were very successful and beautiful. If you missed the boutique, there are some great things left. Stop in at the Center for a look-see. The Treasure House had some nice Christmas things. Give it a glance at the next sale, Jan. 7, 2017.

The Seniors' new officers and board members were installed at the wonderful Christmas dinner/party on Dec. 13. Everyone is looking forward to having a great new year under the leadership of President Verlaine Elinburg and Vice-President Carol Wood. I know they look forward to your support.

There is a New Year's Eve party at the Center, starting at 6 p.m. It is a potluck appetizer buffet. Again, stay as little or long as you want. Games will be played after dinner. The Center will be closed on New Year's Day. It will also be closed on Monday, Jan. 16, 2017 which is Martin Luther King Day. A soup and sandwich luncheon is planned for Jan. 28. Tickets will become available starting in January, and we can only accommodate 70 people for this event so get your tickets early.

Looking just a bit further into 2017: tickets will become available in February to get your chance at the beautiful quilt made by Dot Husted; Bunco party will be held Feb. 25; corned beef and cabbage dinner will be March 17. That quilt I'm talking about is hanging at the Center. You definitely need to go in and see it if you haven't yet.

Members should mark their calendars for the general meeting, held on the second Tuesday of every month, at 6:30 p.m. You are needed there for your ideas and input on the Seniors' activities. Activities and lunch menus are listed on the monthly newsletter, available at the Center or local businesses.

Our member and friend, Marie Sell, passed away this month. A gathering was held at the Center in remembrance of her.

The members have all received their renewal membership applications and we need them all turned in ASAP so that we can get out an updated membership roster. Applications are available at the Center and we welcome new members. The only requirement is age 50 or older. Let me tell you, the Ranchos/Hills Seniors feel young and that feeling is contagious, so come catch it.

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Merry Christmas America



By Betty Van Valkenburg

Please note that the following attempt at “poetry” was written *last* Christmas while the presidential primary campaign was in full force and the historic election could not have been imagined. I don’t know that I would change a word even now, though, because our trust should not be placed in one president or congress, but in the timeless provisions of the Constitution of the United States. If followed, the Constitution will indeed help to keep us free, independent, strong – and yes, even greater.

As we hold our loved ones close this Christmas, let us pray for guidance for our elected leaders. May they seize this opportunity to put aside personal aggrandizement and political gain to insure that we enjoy the blessings of liberty and limited government envisioned in our founding documents. As Christmas and the new year approach, my wish is for peace and prosperity throughout our great land and a renewed commitment to civility and mutual respect.

With apologies to Clement Moore and to offended liberals everywhere, here goes:

Grandma’s Night Before Christmas, 2015

*’Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house,
Not a creature was stirring, except Grandma’s computer mouse.
Three stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that the grandchildren soon would be there.
Grandpa was nestled all safe in his bed,
Snoring loudly enough to waken the dead.
And Grandma in her office - typing tap, tap, tap,
Ne’er settled her brain for a long winter’s nap.
When on the TV there arose such chatter,
Grandma rose from her desk chair to see what was the matter.
When what to her cataract eyes did appear,
But politicians with messages assaulting the ear.
Away to the remote she flew like a flash,
To turn off the noise; it gave her a rash!
But then in a twinkling she heard on the telly,
Such fantastic news that it turned her to jelly.
The announcer on Fox read a report oh so grand,
Saying freedom would reign throughout the land.
Santa’d filled all the stocking with Constitutions, you see,
To protect all the rights of you and of me.
Then pointing his finger at politicians of fame,
Santa whistled and shouted and called them by name.
“Bah, Schumer! Bah, Boxer! Bah, Bernie and Clinton!
On, Carson! On, Carly! On, Cruz! But not Biden!”
“To the well of the House to the floor of the Senate,
Go do your duty - and put your heart in it.”
And away politicians flew in their first-class jet seats,
Back to their districts to face the voters’ heat.
They spoke not a word but went straight to their work,
And vowed to protect freedom, accepting no perks.
And Santa exclaimed, seeing things were now right,
“Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!”*

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Luke 2:11

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The Injection Section

Hello 93636,

When I began my professional automotive career in 1985, carburetors were the predominate fuel delivery systems of the day. BMW, Mercedes and some other automotive manufactures did have some fuel injected vehicles in production but they were primarily mechanical fuel injection. As "CAFE" (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards increased in the U.S., pressure for improved fuel mileage also increased, making way for the modern computer-controlled fuel injection vehicles.

One of the earliest electronic fuel injection designs was the throttle body system. It looked like a carburetor bolted on top of the intake manifold with wires connected. Fuel was sprayed into the intake manifold plenum where it was mixed with air and waited for an intake valve to open. These systems operated at very low fuel pressures (10-13 p.s.i.). They worked well but weren't much more fuel efficient than their predecessor, the carburetor. Throttle body was followed by the early generations of port fuel injection. These systems incorporated a fuel injector for every cylinder, relocated the injector to the bottom of the intake manifold runners and the fuel pressure was increased to a whopping 30-40 p.s.i. The first generations of port fuel injection did not control the fuel injectors individually. They were controlled by the computer in pairs or sets called "Gangs." Better still, but port fuel injection would eventually evolve into sequential fuel injection. With sequential fuel injection, each fuel injector is controlled individually and the fuel is directed at the intake valve at 60 p.s.i. just prior to its opening.

The newest version of gasoline fuel injection is gasoline direct injection. GDI engines are the fastest growing segment of the modern gasoline engine market. Seventy-five percent of vehicles sold in America are now GDI vehicles. GDI incorporates a high-pressure plunger type fuel pump driven by an additional lobe on the camshaft. Fuel pressures reach 3,000 p.s.i.

GDI engines come in two basic fla-

vors: traditional solenoid-type fuel injectors and piezo electric-type fuel injectors. The traditional solenoid-type injector is an electromagnet. When electrical current passes through the coil of wire inside the fuel injector, it creates a magnetic field. The magnetic field attracts the metal valve inside the injector upward allowing gasoline to pass on through. Because GDI operates at much higher fuel pressures, a stronger magnetic force is required to lift the valve. GDI solenoid fuel injectors operate at voltages ranging from 60-100 volts.

GDI piezo fuel injectors are a completely different animal. Piezo injectors use hundreds of thinly sliced crystal wafers stacked on top of each other. When a crystal wafer is subjected to an electrical shock, it expands and remains in that condition until it's shocked again. A single wafer expands little but hundreds stacked on top of each other expand enough to open the injector. Piezo injectors operate at voltages as high as 450 volts. The higher voltages increase the opening and closing speeds of the Piezo injectors allowing up to five injections per ignition event.

GDI systems do not mix gasoline and air in the intake manifold. They are separated until just prior to ignition. When the intake valve opens, the air entering the cylinder is swirled around in an outer ring. The fuel injector is positioned in the cylinder head so the gasoline is directed at a ramp machined into the top of the piston. The ramp concentrates and redirects the gasoline upward directly under the spark plug in the center of the ring. If you could see inside the cylinder it would look like a donut. The hole in the middle is the pocket of concentrated gasoline. The outer ring is primarily air. When the pocket of gasoline is ignited, a chain reaction begins. The initial pocket of fuel is just enough to start the flame front and is rapidly followed by a series of additional injection events adding just enough gasoline to keep the flame front moving. As the flame front travels outward it ignites the oxygen in the outer ring. This process requires a much lower air/fuel ratio and thereby increases fuel mileage and power.

Unfortunately, GDI systems have some serious draw backs. GDI technology increases fuel mileage but it also increases maintenance costs. Because GDI systems do not spray gasoline into the intake manifolds, the detergents in the gasoline never comes into contact with the manifold side of the intake

Please see **HANDS** on P. 14

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Call the Chamber for more information. 645-4001

Your Chamber at Work



With the community's help, over 100 bags of needed supplies for our veterans at the Fresno VA hospital were collected and distributed as the result of the Chamber's Annual Christmas Tree lighting event. Find out how you can be a part of this vital Ranchos group. Call 645-4001.

Be a Crab Feed "600" Sponsor

Is your business going to the Crab Feed? For \$600 you get a table for 10, get to put your company banner up at the event, have your name listed at every table, have your table introduced at the event and be listed in the Ranchos Independent. Call 645-4001.

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, always the second Wednesday of the month at 6:30 p.m. 37167 Ave. 12 Suite 5C. Call us at 645-4001.

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WATER cont. from P. 2

application project budget.

Background

Previously, when the local non-profit – South East Madera County United (SEMCU) – advocated for including LHS (based on a recommendation by County Engineer Alvina Prakash at the Dec. 9, 2015 Town Hall hosted by Supervisor Frazier), the State agreed, though they said they would complete the VTR consolidation with MD-10a first. But, thanks to efforts by County Public Works Director Ahmad Alkhayyat and his staff, the new Water Systems Consolidation Project, including a new drinking water well, a new storage tank and a new bank of solar panels that will cut the overall system's PG&E bill in half, is bigger and better than ever. Making the LHS consolidation with MD-10a the focus of the funding application to the State is the key, said Alkhayyat in a phone interview with the Ranchos Independent prior to the Dec. 16 meeting. The details are still being worked out, but southeast Madera County residents can expect a full report from State Water Board's Kassy Chauhan of the Division of Drinking Water, Greathouse and County staff at Supervisor Frazier's next Town Hall Meeting, likely to be announced in a notice with an upcoming monthly ratepayers' mailed billing as well as in the Ranchos Independent and on its Facebook site. The benefit of the new focus is the number of "equivalent residential connections" that the County can charge to the Project and which the State will pay for. VTR has about 17 equivalent connections, whereas the Liberty High School complex, including the Ranchos Middle School, has nearly 1,000.

A previous stumbling block for GVUSD was the fact that the high school's water system could not be extracted from the overall infrastructure of the school complex and its bond that residents are still paying off. To try to extract the schools' water system from the bond that all have contributed to solely for the benefit of MD-10a ratepayers was considered infeasible by the District's Bond Counsel, GVUSD Superintendent Andy Alvarado said. And, as County Planning Director Norman Allinder said, it would have been "... as sticky as buying a relative's used car."

Going forward, the next step is to get approval from GVUSD's Board of Trustees on the terms of the Grant Agreement with the State. Alvarado will give the board the news and the State and

County will prepare a full briefing for them and the public at the next District Board meeting scheduled for Jan. 24, 2017 at 6 p.m. at the LHS Library.

In the meantime, Alkhayyat's staff, including Engineers Mohammed Alqutami and Alvina Prakash, will expedite preparation of new design plans and cost estimates for the funding application in anticipation of a Grant Agreement with all parties (State, County, VTR, and GVUSD) being executed in the spring. The County Planning Division will update the California Environmental Quality Assurance (CEQA) Report and also establish the "fair cost" as Allinder said, for the price of an equivalent residential connection.

The project remains a priority for the Environmental Protection Agency and the State Water Resources Control Board, especially since both LHS and VTR have arsenic contamination in their wells. According to the Environmental Integrity Project Report of September 2016, VTR ranks 9th among the top 20 worst arsenic concentrations in California Public Water Systems a full three years after the EPA Notice of Noncompliance to the State.

The newest and best incarnation of the consolidation project still contains the essential elements envisioned and discussed at the last Ranchos Town Hall Meeting on March 30, 2016:

Application Status: Active; now includes MD-10a, VTR, and GVUSD (LHS)

Site Location: SAME (Ranchos)

New Well included: (Same — will be sized to pump 800 gallons per minute)

Potential Storage Tank: SAME (this will not be the LHS storage tank, but a new one)

Solar Panels: SAME (County staff will make a financial argument to include these in the grant-funded portion of the Project — regardless, they will be included to reduce energy costs, thanks to the foresight of Alqutami)

Grant Funding: SAME (\$5-10 million)

"The way the conceptualization of the Project has evolved, we've been able to develop a stronger application," Allinder said.

"I will sit on the Governor's doorstep if necessary, to get this project done," Supervisor Frazier said.

In a phone interview with Connie Clendenan, CEO of VTR, after the Dec. 16 meeting, she said VTR is on board to "be a good neighbor" and do whatever they can to promote this project in order to get clean drinking water for the kids.

Liberty High Wins Mock Trial

Liberty High School won the 2016-2017 Honorable Edward P. Moffat Madera County Mock Trial held on Dec. 6, 8 and 10. Liberty High School battled Madera, Madera South and Yosemite High Schools.

Liberty High's defense and Yosemite High School's prosecution teams competed in the championship round held on Saturday, Dec. 10 at 10:30. Liberty won the competition and will attend the State Mock Trial on behalf of Madera County.

"All of the teams did a great job, making for a very competitive contest," said Dr. Cecilia Massetti, Madera County Superintendent of Schools. "Mock Trial allows students to demonstrate their learning in a powerful way."

Liberty High School will represent Madera County at the state competition

March 24-26 in Riverside. Team members include Elizabeth Alvey, Elijah Banda, Cheyenne Collier, Wyatt Faccinto, Travin

Feramisco, Sarah Folsom, Calissa Haney, Lilyana Jones, Emily Koop, Kaylan May, Vivian Montijo, Madison Person, Zachory Pia, Amanda Polster, Gregory Reitz, Haley Yang. The team is coached by Keri De-long and former Mock Trial participants, Cody Egan, Carissa Miller, and Bethany Samarin.



Liberty High School's victorious Mock Trial team heads to Riverside in March for the State Championship.

Local attorneys Rachel Cartier and Daniel Martin also coached the team. Alyza Lovenguth from Liberty High School won the Courtroom Journalist competition. She wrote a news article based on Thursday's competition.

This was Liberty High School's seventh year participating and fourth win.

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Sidewalk Construction on Ave. 12

Dawson-Mauldin Construction, Inc. has been contracted by the County of Madera to complete sidewalk construction along the south side of Avenue 12 between Road 37 and Road 37 1/2. The project includes new sidewalks, driveway approaches, curb ramps, a bus turnout and shelter pad and minor lawn sprinkler alterations.

Dawson-Mauldin intends on beginning construction on or about Dec. 19. It is estimated that the project will take approximately one month to complete.

Dawson-Mauldin apologizes in ad-

vance for any delays or inconveniences that may be experienced as a result of their work and have asked for the Ranchos' cooperation. Careful planning has been made to allow for individuals' access to their property throughout the project construction. Dawson-Mauldin will make every effort to minimize any impacts.

If you have any questions or concerns you may contact Josh Kirk with Madera County at 559-675-7811 or Dawson-Mauldin at 714-378-1533. You may also contact Carmen Manganaan at 559-896-0098.

STUDENTS cont. from P. 3

community service opportunities.

The Letter-a-Thon is an S4C event, but it is also supported by the Key Club organization. Key Club, however, is nationally recognized and gets students involved in community service opportunities around the world. Both clubs have come together for the Letter-a-thon event with LHS donating a total of \$600.

"We [at LHS] are fortunate enough to have two active service clubs on campus: the nationally recognized Key Club and the locally recognized S4C," said activities director, Rebecca Harp-Sligh, during her own speech.

Currently, S4C is run by the Associated

Student Body Community Service Commissioner, Bailey, who was the lead coordinator of the Letter-a-Thon. During an interview, Bailey said, "Hopefully, what we donate to Valley Children's Hospital will comfort them during this special time of the year."

Both sophomores, Bailey and Folsom contributed as much time, if not more, than many juniors and seniors toward community events and services. As fairly young and successful leaders, both students worked within their ASB Leadership committee in order to make the Letter-a-Thon possible.

Bethany Sowell, developmental lead and external development coordinator at Valley Children's, said she was grateful and honored to retrieve the letters and \$4,600.

In Memoriam



Richard Hallert -- November 27, 2016

Richard Hallert, of Madera Ranchos, passed away on Sunday, Nov. 27, 2016 at the age of 71. He will be dearly missed by everyone who knew and loved him.

Richard was born in Oakland, Calif. and lived in the Bay Area until 2006 when he married Kathleen and moved down to the Ranchos. He never got used to the hot temperatures in the Valley, but loved the small community of Madera Ranchos which reminded him of Newark, the community where he had been living prior. Richard was an architect of 35 years and was an active member of The San Joaquin Chapter of American Institute of Architects. Richard had his hands in many committees such as the Lyons, Water and GVUSD Bond Oversight committees, to name a few. His love though was working as a Mentor at Liberty High School in the ACE (Architectural, Construction and Engineering) program of America, whose mission is to engage, excite and inspire students to pursue careers in design and construction. He loved those students and would always bring his famous snickerdoodles for them to snack on. He also had the honor of working with a local Boy Scout, who was working to achieve his Eagle Scout award, by designing the Ranchos welcome sign on Avenue 12, which is almost complete.

He is survived by his wife, Kathleen; his children, Rhonda Dotterer and Tim; Jennifer Hallert and Paul; Julie Hallert and Jay; and step-sons Daniel Woolstra and Amanda; and Nicholas Woolstra and Hayley; his brother David and wife Jane from Colorado; sister-in-law Susan Hallert from Oakdale; 14 grandchildren and many nieces and nephews. He will be buried in Hughson, Calif. near his brother.

HANDS cont. from P. 11

valves and oil deposits on top of the valve are not washed away. The oil deposits are baked onto the valve surfaces creating carbon build up. Once a sufficient amount of carbon is accumulated on the back side of the intake valve, the air entering the cylinder tumbles instead of swirls. This disrupts the donut pattern in the cylinder and the ignition sequence is compromised. The malfunction indicator lamp in the dash will illuminate and a misfire code P0300 will be set.

At this time the only way to remove the internal carbon deposits is to disassemble the engine and blast the carbon off using walnut shells. This process is obviously time consuming and costly. There are a couple of proactive ideas being circulated that may be helpful. One idea says switching to synthetic oil helps. Regular motor oil is derived from petroleum-based chemical compounds including hydrocarbons. Eliminating carbon

from your oil sounds like a good strategy to me.

The second idea suggests an addition to our routine maintenance schedules. Periodically a chemical should be sprayed into the intake manifold reducing carbon deposits before they have time to accumulate. I'm not sure about the second. It's possible the chemical may destroy the catalytic converters. In that case the cure is worse than the disease. I know many of us have these vehicles parked in our driveways so as more information becomes available I'll be sure to pass it on.

As always, I am looking for future topics. If you have any suggestions or questions concerning a vehicle, I can be contacted at complete_car_care@hotmail.com or Facebook me at Complete Car Care.

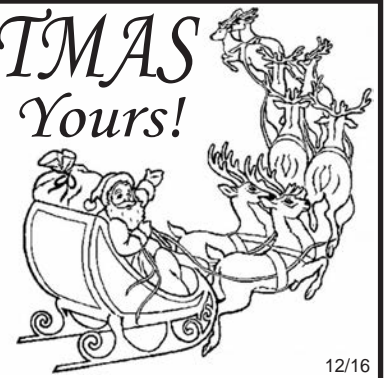
Please have a Merry CHRISTmas and a happy and prosperous New Year.

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By Brenda McElroy

Precious

A year ago this month, I had the joy of helping one of my senior clients decorate for Christmas. Due to her physical limitations, she had decided not to, but I could tell that putting up the tree and her favorite things would go a long way to lift her spirits so, I insisted. Little did we know that would be her last Christmas here.

We went out to the garage where she showed me stacks of Christmas bins. As I lifted the lids and pulled things out she chose the ornaments and decorations that were most precious to her. We brought them in. She sat and recollected where things went and I did my best to position the decorations to her preferences. It was dark outside when I left that day. She had a huge smile and as I drove away the glow of the tree lights through the window was a delightful scene. I knew her Christmas would be a little merrier surrounded by her favorite things.

In January, I packed her precious ornaments and trimmings in new bins to keep them separate from the rest of the decorations, with plans to purge and donate the discards. This was in keeping with her goal to downsize her belongings so that they

wouldn't be a burden on her family when she was gone.

Even though it was an hour drive to her place, she was such a delight that I looked forward to our almost weekly organizing sessions. The week after Mother's Day we met and continued the process of purging, discarding and organizing. The following Thursday I stood on her doorstep and no one answered. I was immediately concerned and called her cell phone and left a voicemail message. I was briefly relieved when I saw a return call from her. But it was her son, sadly informing me that she had unexpectedly passed away the day before. Through the window I spoke words of comfort to her furry little companion who was barking inside. She indeed was precious to many and is missed by all.

I share this experience to challenge you to focus on what's truly

I share this experience to challenge you to focus on what's truly precious to you this Christmas season.

precious to you this Christmas season. Organizing, whether it's your stuff or your life, is all about prioritizing — letting the cream rise to the

top and letting go of the rest. If everything's precious, then nothing's precious. Give priority to the people, things, and activities that mean the most to you. If you don't make those decisions, someone else will make them for you.

As my client's son opens the Christmas bins we packed last January, he will see the decorations his mom truly valued. By selecting what mattered most, it lightened her load and his too. Will others see what you value by your holiday traditions, decorations, meals and gatherings? Can you lighten your load and enjoy the season more by intentionally selecting that which matters most to you and letting go of the rest?

May you and yours find joy in focusing on what is precious to you this Christmas. For me, it is the joy of knowing Jesus — the reason for the season.

Contact *Organized by Choice* (because things don't always fall into place) at P.O. Box 26152, Fresno, CA 93729, call 559-871-3314 or email info@organizedbychoice.com. You can also visit their website at www.organizedbychoice.com.

SEMUCU speaks

Dry Well Installations in Ranchos Area Continues

By Karen Petryna

Primarily through the efforts of South East Madera County United (SEMUCU), nearly 50 dry wells, or “drain wells,” have been installed in southeast Madera since last year. Designed to reduce flood conditions and allow groundwater recharge, the simplified well design, created by local environmental and engineering consulting company Provost & Prichard and approved by Madera County Public Works has been used on volunteered residential properties to install the wells at no cost to owners throughout southeast Madera County.

As witnessed by District 1 Supervisor Brett Frazier, left, during his second tour of drain wells since February, SEMUCU has honed the installation procedure down to a pretty fine science. The 3C drilling company’s rig first installs a three-foot diameter hole at a depth of 5 feet. This ultimately holds a casing of the same dimensions into which crushed river rock is poured around a 4-inch diameter piece of slotted PVC pipe. The pipe then fits in a 50-foot hole that is ultimately drilled and through which surface water from rain drains.

After 3C changes from a 3- to a 2-foot diameter bit, they begin drilling to the bottom of the hole. The process involves grinding up the native hardpan then pulling it out of the hole and dumping it on the ground.

Next, a corrugated black pipe and the PVC well pipe are placed in the hole and a dump truck of crushed rock is backfilled between the two to fill it up and secure the piping in place. This creates a semi-permanent and good-sized storage capacity underground which virtually eliminates flooding in the surrounding area and allows the rainwater to slowly percolate through the conduit piercing the hardpan so that it can trickle down and be filtered by the soil until it reaches groundwater, generally found at a depth of 250 to 350 feet below ground surface in the region.

On the surface, the well is covered with a plastic grate which is cemented in place and covered with yet more rock to help ensure that the well stays in place and presents no danger of people, animals or objects falling in. Of course, some surface soil and debris does flow into the well with the rainwater and ultimately it will clog up with such material and lose its functionality. This process is estimated to take 10 to 20 years, depending on surface conditions. Hence the well is considered only semi-permanent, yet it never needs to be removed.

For additional safety and protection of groundwater, the County imposes the same placement restrictions on the drain wells that it does on septic wells such that they cannot be too close to other wells or surface structures or property boundaries.

SEMUCU continues to collect names of residential property owners who are interested in learning whether one or more drain wells can be installed on their property beginning again after the rainy season ends and as additional funds are donated to the cause. Please contact SEMUCU at 363-9095 if you are interested in getting on the free drain wells list.



District 1 Supervisor Brett Frazier, left, discusses a drain well installation with SEMUCU Foundation President Igal Treibatch and Madera County Fire Division Chief, David Allen.

GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

mas.

I don’t have any snarky comments for you this time around. No funny anecdotes about some silly twit that aggravated me or some piece of news that made me lose faith in humanity. No, this month I just want to share something that has been on my mind and heart since I lost my beautiful mom: Love each other. Cherish each other. Don’t let your family and friends doubt for a second how much you care about them and what they mean to you because you could be sitting in your office tomorrow afternoon and get a call that changes your entire life. Suddenly you will never see them again. You will never hear their laugh or wrap your arms around their neck and kiss their cheek. There is no second chance to make sure they

knew how important they were in your life. I’m lucky. My mom and I were very close. She was my best friend and we spoke nearly every day. I don’t doubt for a second that she loved me more than life itself and I am certain she knew how much I loved her. Still, there will always be things left unsaid, memories left unmade and love left unshared.

As you celebrate the birth of Christ, remember His words: “A new command I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another,” (John 13:34 NIV). So, don’t wait. Call, write, text, email, send smoke signals if you have to, but tell your loved ones how much they mean to you this Christmas and always because, after all, tomorrow is not promised.

May you all have a Blessed and Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

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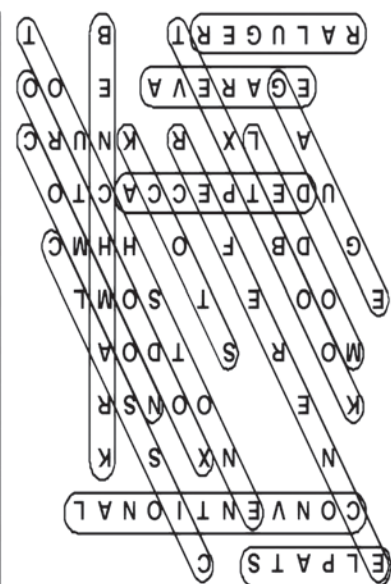
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ANSWERS

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ARG	DEN	MAXIM
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by Linda Thistle

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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

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Say you saw it in the Ranchos Independent

Strange BUT TRUE
By Samantha Weaver

- It was noted American playwright and essayist Arthur Miller who gave the following sage advice: "Don't be seduced into thinking that that which does not make a profit is without value."
- In the early 20th century, celebrated race-

horse Man o' War won 20 of his 21 career races. Interestingly, his one loss (often attributed to a terrible start and the extra weight he was carrying) was to a horse named Upset.

- Statistically speaking, you probably live within 320 miles of the place you were born.
- Have you ever experienced a social situation in which you have to introduce someone, but you can't quite remember their name? In Scotland, there's a word to describe the hesitation caused by that moment of panic: a tattle.


- According to a poll conducted by outdoor recreation retailer Gander Mountain, almost half of all hunters have some kind of ritual they observe to increase their chances for a lucky hunt. Some hunters go the entire season without shaving, some start each hunt at a particular time, some kiss the first bullet, some do an "anti-rain" dance -- the variations are endless.
- Getting married soon, but working with a tight budget? If you're considering cutbacks, you might not want to put the honeymoon on the chopping block. Researchers have

found that couples who go on a honeymoon tend to have longer-lasting marriages than those who skip the trip -- no matter how much or how little you spend.

- Thought for the Day: "If I seem to take part in politics, it is only because politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries. I wish therefore to wrestle with the snake." -- Mahatma Gandhi.

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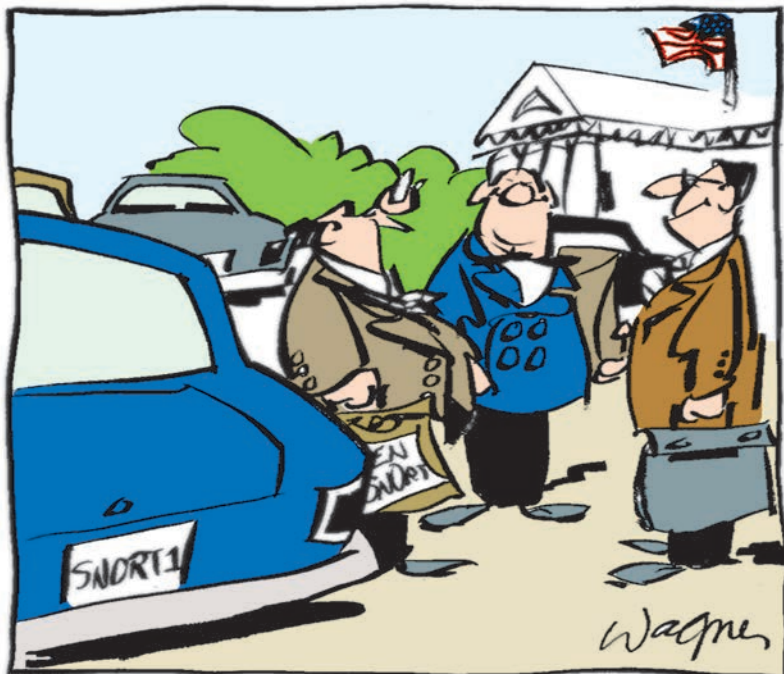
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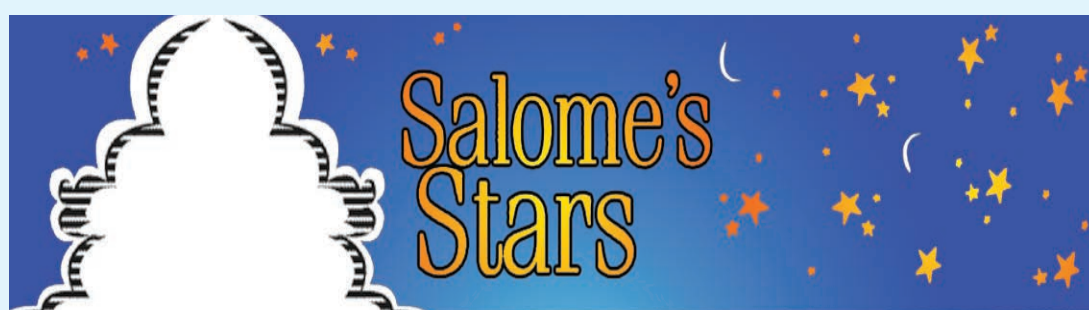
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GRIN and BEAR IT Wagner

"It's time to put the past, and all those campaign promises, behind us, boys!"



ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Make your holiday preparations one step at a time in order to avoid being overwhelmed and leaving things undone. That confusing family situation continues to work itself out.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Ease this year's holiday money pressures by letting your thrifty side guide you as you look for those perfect gifts that typically reflect your good taste and love of beauty.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You'll have a good handle on potential holiday problems if you delegate tasks to family members, friends or co-workers -- most of whom will be more than happy to help out.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Right now you are especially vulnerable to holiday scams that seek to take advantage of your generosity. Best advice: Check them out before you send out your checks.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) The upcoming holiday season gives the Big Cat much to purr about. Relationships grow stronger, and new opportunities loom on the horizon, just waiting to be pounced on.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) A changing situation brings conflicting advice about how to go forward with your holiday plans. Your best bet: Make the decision you feel most comfortable with.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Holiday plans get back on track after some confusion about the direction you expected to take. A potentially troublesome money matter needs your immediate attention.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Your holiday preparations are on track. But you need to confront a personal situation while you can still keep it from overwhelming everything else.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Tight financial matters ease a bit during this holiday season. But the sagacious Sagittarian is well-advised to keep a tight hold on the reins while shopping for gifts.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Don't put off making decisions about this year's holiday celebrations, despite the negative comments you've been getting from several quarters. Do it NOW!

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) The holidays will bring new friends and new opportunities. Meanwhile, be careful to use your energy wisely as you go about making holiday preparations.

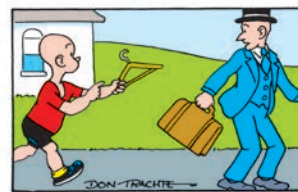
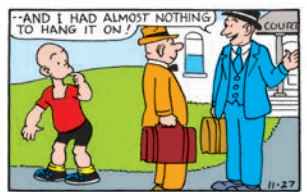
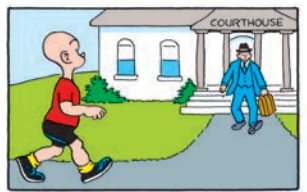
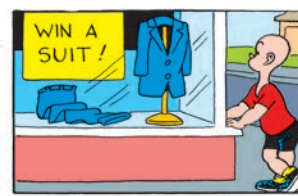
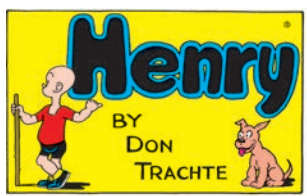
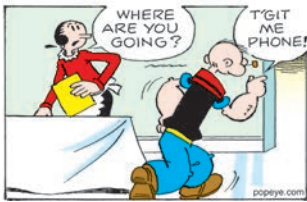
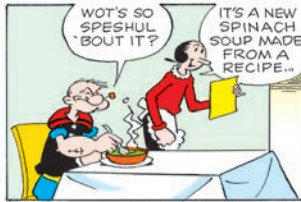
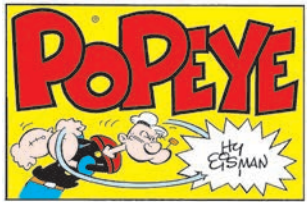
PISCES (February 19 to March 20) There's good news coming from a most unlikely source. And it could turn out to be one of the best holiday gifts you have had in years. Remember to stay positive.

Born this Week

You are respected for your honesty and loyalty. You make friends slowly -- but with rare exceptions, they're in your life forever.

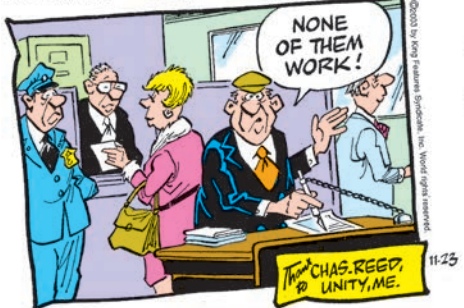
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FUN PAGES



THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

J'EVER NOTICE? THE PENS IN BANKS ARE CHAINED and GUARDED...BUT--

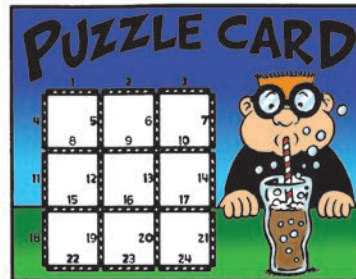
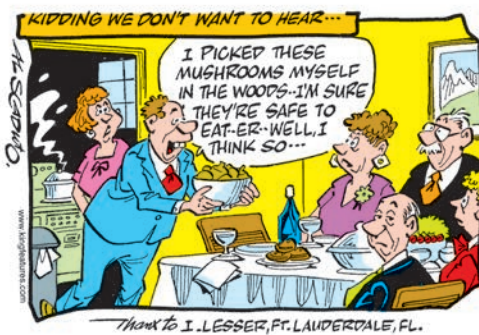


NEIGHBORHOOD PESTS WE CAN DO WITHOUT-- THE LOUD-MOUTHED PET OWNERS--

Thank to J. PALAZZO, SAN FRANCISCO, CA.



BY AL SCADUTO



A BUBBLY BAFFLER! Billy knows how to remove eight of the straws in our drawing and have four squares left. Do you?

Answer: Remove straws 2, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 23.

DON'T GET BOXED IN! How many squares and rectangles can you form by connecting the dots in our drawing?

Answer: We found 20 rectangles and squares of various sizes. Did you miss the two squares that you can form diagonally in the center?

THE "S" PYRAMID! As you move down the word pyramid shown here, each word contains the same letters as the word above it, plus a new letter. We give you all the S's. Here are some hints from the top down:

1. Symbol for sulfur (given).
2. For instance.
3. To seek an answer.
4. What we do in the sun.
5. Birds have them.
6. Cars must have them.
7. Large drinking cups.
8. Sweet places to work.



Wishing Well®

5	7	8	3	4	6	5	7	5	8	3	6	8
F	S	E	S	C	B	A	E	M	X	P	E	P
7	4	8	5	3	2	3	8	2	7	5	8	3
C	H	A	I	R	B	E	N	E	U	L	S	A
5	3	4	6	8	7	4	5	7	4	2	7	5
Y	D	A	F	I	R	L	H	E	L	G	Y	A
7	5	8	4	8	6	4	6	4	7	6	5	3
O	R	O	E	N	L	N	E	G	U	X	M	H
4	8	6	2	4	6	8	3	2	4	6	3	5
E	O	I	E	S	B	F	O	N	A	L	P	O
3	5	4	5	4	6	8	4	7	2	7	4	8
E	N	H	Y	E	E	D	A	R	E	F	D	U
2	8	7	2	7	2	8	7	8	7	8	2	7
R	T	U	O	T	U	I	U	E	R	S	S	E

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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MAGIC MAZE ● STANDARD

E L P A T S K C I T S D R A Y
 U C O N V E N T I O N A L S Q
 N L N J G E N X C S Z K X V T
 R K P E N L J O O N S R H E C
 A M O Y R W S V T D O A T R P
 E N O O L E K T I S O M L G E
 C G B D B Z F X O W H H M C U
 S R U D E T P E C C A C T O P
 O M L A J L X I R G K N U R C
 E D B E G A R E V A A E Y O O
 X R A L U G E R T W U B T S T

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally

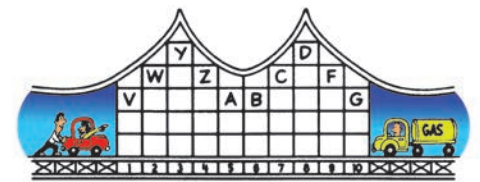
- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|------------|
| Accepted | Common | Orthodox | Stock |
| Average | Conventional | Reference | Textbook |
| Benchmark | Gauge | Regular | Touchstone |
| Classic | Model | Staple | |

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Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

A WORD BRIDGE!



Illustrated by David Coulson

The bridge above contains 10 supporting words. We give you the first letter of each word, plus plenty of hints.

1. Vitality and energy.
2. What we all work for.
3. World War II soldiers.
4. A Greek god.
5. Your goal in life.
6. A clothing protector.
7. A casual conversation.
8. Silly, foolish.
9. A person who snitches on someone (sl).
10. A type of feeling.



Answers: 1. Vm 2. Wage 3. Yanks 4. Zeus 5. Aim 6. Bab 7. Chrl 8. Daffy 9. Fink 10. Gut

TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

1. FOOD & DRINK: What is another name for the filbert nut?
2. TELEVISION: What was Chandler's last name on the comedy series "Friends"?
3. ARCHITECTURE: Who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.?
4. LANGUAGE: Where did the term "the blind leading the blind" originate?
5. MYTHOLOGY: In one of Hercules' fabled labors, he had to slay a beast that kept sprouting new heads. What was its name?
6. U.S. CITIES: What city carries the nickname "Iron City"?
7. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: The direction of starboard on a boat means what?
8. LITERATURE: What famous Latin American author wrote the novel "The General in his Labyrinth"?
9. MUSIC: Where did the Rolling Stones get their name?
10. MONEY: Prior to the euro, what was the name of Greece's currency?

Answers

1. Hazelnut
2. Bing
3. Architect Maya Lin
4. Hindu texts, the Upanishads. The phrase also appears in the Bible.
5. Hydra
6. Pittsburgh
7. The right side of a boat when looking forward
8. Gabriel Garcia Marquez
9. From a Muddy Waters blues song
10. The drachma

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Click on "Local News" at

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



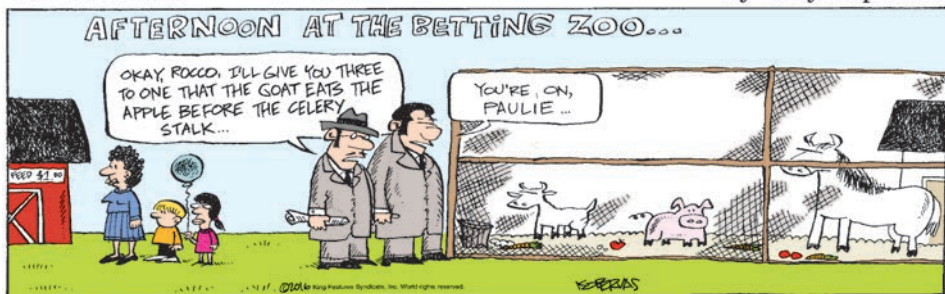
R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



Intelligent Life

by David Reddick



HOCUS-FOCUS

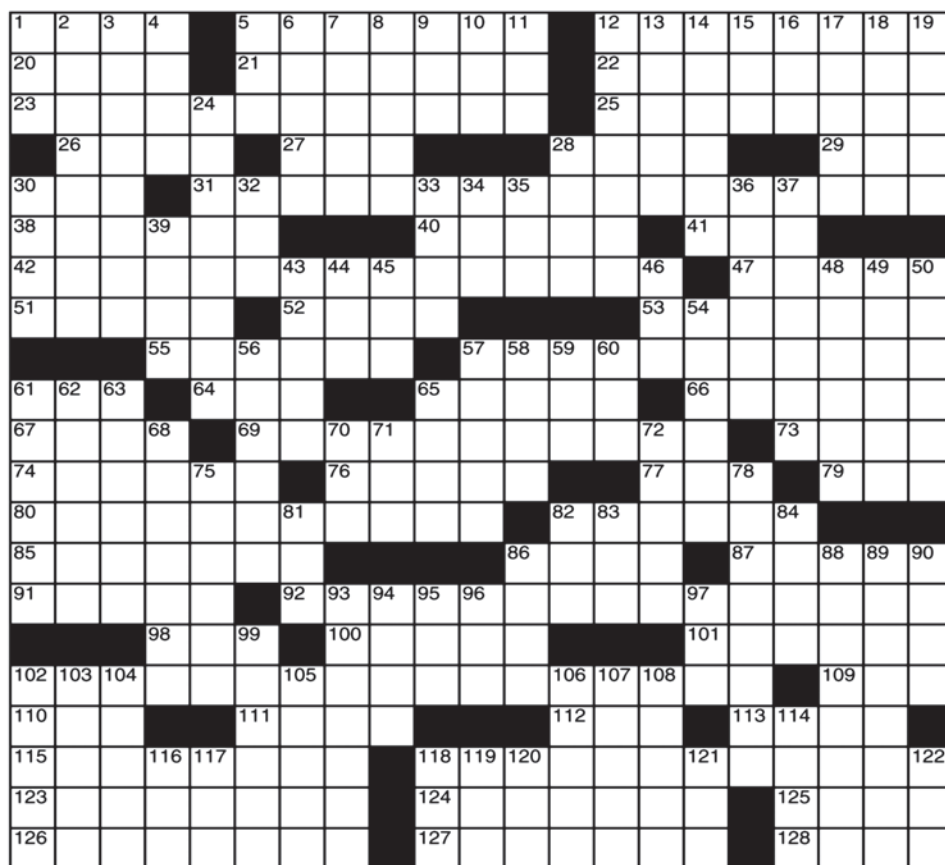
BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

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Find at least six differences in details between panels. www.TheRanchos.com

Super Crossword



- ACROSS**
- 1 Neighbor of Chile
 - 5 Chemist's outerwear
 - 12 Some captives
 - 20 Copies
 - 21 Magic's city
 - 22 Fearmonger
 - 23 Centennial pageant winner
 - 25 Start to chew
 - 26 Clinic fluids
 - 27 Enjoy a meal
 - 28 DVR biggie
 - 29 Baste, e.g.
 - 30 Text giggle
 - 31 Output of Tolkien
 - 38 Highly skilled people
 - 40 Prudential competitor
 - 41 "— found it!"
 - 42 Member of a noted racecar-driving family
 - 47 Surplus item
 - 51 Be a cast member of
 - 52 Oklahoma tribe member
 - 53 Placed in the middle, to a Brit
 - 55 The NBA's "King James"
 - 57 120-Down character
 - 61 Uru.
 - 64 Wildlife lair
 - 65 Proverb
 - 66 Add liberally
 - 67 Most August newborns
 - 69 Popular energy drink
 - 73 Anderson of "WKRP in Cincinnati"
 - 74 Rome's country, in French
 - 76 "Für —" (piano piece)
 - 77 Sun, e.g.
 - 79 — Moines, Iowa
 - 80 Prism, cone or sphere
 - 82 Beach shoe
 - 85 Stands for hot dishes
 - 86 Melody
 - 87 "Salud!," say
 - 91 Dutch genre painter Jan
 - 92 Port-au-Prince's land
 - 98 No. on a road sign
 - 100 Navigator Islands, now
 - 101 Cry upon release
 - 102 1991 Denzel Washington film
 - 109 Gave a meal
 - 110 Hubbub
 - 111 Chiang Mai native
 - 112 Johnny —
 - 113 Pool coverer
 - 115 Open ocean
 - 118 Parts of it appear at both the starts and ends of this puzzle's eight theme phrases
 - 123 Bel Air resident, e.g.
 - 124 Funicello of the screen
 - 125 Cry in church
 - 126 Nonclerical females
 - 127 "Possibly"
 - 128 Veg out, say
 - DOWN**
 - 1 Cook's spray
 - 2 Like serials
 - 3 Pick again
 - 4 KGB funder
 - 5 Lav, in Bath
 - 6 Specter in politics
 - 7 Make swollen
 - 8 Magna —
 - 9 — par with
 - 10 Stick in
 - 11 Moreover
 - 12 Natural home
 - 13 With 84-Down, lunchmeat with pimiento
 - 14 Goal in Zen Buddhism
 - 15 Uno plus due
 - 16 French bud
 - 17 Knife of TV ads
 - 18 Oxalate, e.g.
 - 19 Vermont ski town
 - 24 Wearing a lounge robe
 - 28 Color a little
 - 30 Tibetan priest
 - 32 Ending for enzymes
 - 33 She sang "Smooth Operator"
 - 34 "— darn tootin'!"
 - 35 4G — (T-Mobile offering)
 - 36 Retaliate
 - 37 Like some criticism
 - 39 Singer Ochs
 - 43 Actor Greene
 - 44 — -Z
 - 45 Luc's denial
 - 46 Chilling stuff
 - 48 Camera stand
 - 49 Fixed up
 - 50 Studmuffin
 - 54 West Germany's Ludwig
 - 56 Deprived
 - 57 Not genuine
 - 58 Wheel turner
 - 59 Little jerk
 - 60 Patients' gp.
 - 61 First groups of invitees
 - 62 Snappy reply
 - 63 Net minder
 - 65 California's — Woods
 - 68 Splinters
 - 70 MBA, say
 - 71 — -ray Disc
 - 72 Feature of the word "go"
 - 75 — -Kit (police tool)
 - 78 Tub traction aids
 - 81 Medit. land
 - 82 "Or — hear"
 - 83 From way back: Abbr.
 - 84 See 13-Down
 - 86 Shut angrily
 - 88 Structure of a plane without the engine
 - 89 Belfry locales
 - 90 Knotted
 - 93 Quarterback Boomer
 - 94 Spanish for "daddy"
 - 95 Ball caller
 - 96 "Sk8er —" (2002 hit)
 - 97 Chick- — -A
 - 99 Hold dear
 - 102 Taj —
 - 103 Singer Menzel
 - 104 Drenched
 - 105 1953 Alan Ladd title role
 - 106 Disney mermaid
 - 107 Religious branches
 - 108 Die down
 - 114 Rent- —
 - 116 Chop down
 - 117 — -mo
 - 118 Animal gullet
 - 119 A, in France
 - 120 '75 TV debut
 - 121 Ang of film
 - 122 Certain M.D.

FUN PAGES

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