

The Ranchos Independent



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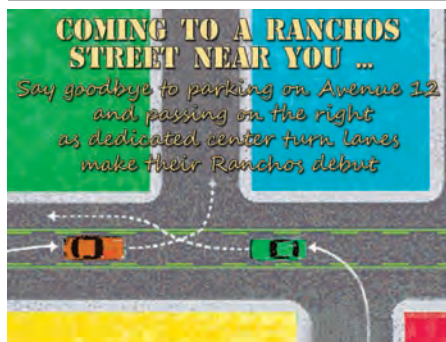
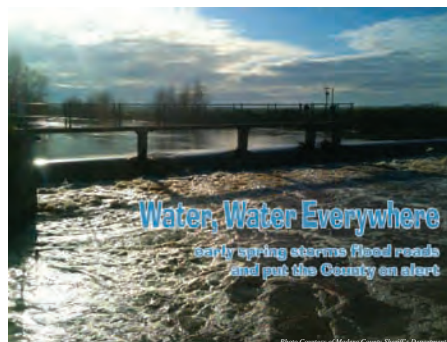
The Official Publication of Southeastern Madera County

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In This Issue

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Body of Man Found in Orchard South of Ranchos

If Ruled a Homicide, Will be Fourth in 2011 for Madera County

By Randy Bailey

The Madera County Sheriff's Department is investigating the death of an older African American male found on the morning of Dec. 21 in an olive orchard on the southwest corner of the intersection of Avenue 7 and Road 34. The body was discovered about two rows into the olive orchard off of the road. The naked body was discovered by a worker shortly before 9 a.m.

An autopsy was performed but failed to render a cause of death and Sheriff John Anderson is calling the death "suspicious." The Sheriff's Department is now

waiting for the results of toxicology tests, which won't be made available for two to three weeks.

The victim remains a "John Doe" at this hour but is described as a light skinned, elderly African American. He stood 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighed 160 pounds. He was completely bald and sported a salt-and-pepper-colored mustache and goatee. He also had a 9 inch scar across his torso. One outstanding characteristic was that he had a "cauliflower ear" on the left side, possibly indicating that he was a boxer at one time.

Anyone with information is urged to call the Madera County Sheriff's Department at 559-675-7770.

One of Four, if Ruled Homicide

If this is ruled a homicide, it will be the fourth this year. In chronological order

of 2011 coroner cases:

1. **January 25, 2011 – Murder/Suicide** – 23-year-old Crystal Lynn Lewis (DOB 9-15-1987) killed her 5-year-old daughter in the home where they lived, located on Windsong Way just north of Ahwahnee, roughly a half mile south of the Madera/Mariposa county line. Crystal's body was discovered under the William Sells Jr. Bridge at approximately 7:30 a.m. in Mariposa County about 2 and a half miles from Crystal's home. It is believed Crystal jumped to her death.

2. **February 17, 2011 – Bass Lake Double Murder/Suicide** – the suspect, who died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, was identified as 71-year-old James H. (Jim) Williamson (DOB 2-27-1939). The victims are identified as San-

Please see **BODY** on P. 20

Madera County's Top Drug-Sniffing Dog to Retire

A pint-sized Springer Spaniel, who for nearly 10 years has demonstrated almost daily why he is Madera County law enforcement's greatest pride and joy, retires at the end of this month. K9 Zak earned a reputation as a top dog among drug sniffing canines by local, state and even federal officials.

Bred in England, this highly trained Springer Spaniel came to the United States in 2003 and on the 4th of July of that same year was paired with the only partner he's ever known, Sergeant Tyson Pogue.

His achievements are many and to give you an idea of just how exceptional Zak is, here are some K9 stats, chalked full of successful alerts and seizures during the course of his nearly decade long service:

- Zak was deployed more than 600 times to search for narcotics resulting in more than 200 felony arrests.

- Zak has alerted officers to more than 350 areas found to contain narcotics resulting in the seizure of more than 4,300 grams of methamphetamine, 21,000 grams of marijuana, 1,515 grams of cocaine, 158 grams of heroin, several vehicles and \$785,000 in cash. The street value of the narcotics seized is around \$350,000.

- Zak located the odor of narcotics more than 4,000 times during our more than 1,500 hours of training and countless public K9 demonstrations.

- Zak and his handler, (partner and friend) also served on Madera County's Drug Task Force known as MADNET.

- Zak has not only been an asset to the Madera County Sheriff's Department, but he has been deployed to assist countless agencies including the Fresno Police Department Major Narcotics Unit, the Mariposa County Sheriff's Dept., United States Forestry Law Enforcement Division, California Department of Corrections, California State Pa-



Sergeant Tyson Pogue and Zak.

role, California Department of Fish and Game, Madera County Probation, Madera County Narcotic Enforcement Team, Madera County Department of Corrections, Madera Police Department, Chowchilla Police Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Madera Unified School District, Yosemite Unified School District, California Department of Justice Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, United States Customs, United States Drug Enforcement Agency, United States Office of the Interior, Kings County Narcotic Task Force, Merced Mariposa Narcotic Task Force, Central Valley Marijuana Enforcement Team, Central Valley High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force, Merced Gang Suppression Enforcement Team, Madera County Gang Enforcement Team and the California Highway Patrol.

Back in 2003, barely two months into his job, Zak was already making headlines. With almost 50 arrests already under his collar, Zak started making his presence known especially during one particular traffic stop in Oakhurst. K9 Zak was deployed during the stop and quickly alerted his handler to a backpack just behind the passenger seat. Inside, Deputies found a bag filled with a usable amount of methamphetamine. A glass pipe would be found in the driver's pocket and a vial filled with meth in the passenger's pant pocket.

Later, Zak was back in the news again, this time, for helping the Madera Police Department close a complicated drug case. It all started when Madera Police Officers seized nearly \$100,000 from a vehicle in the city of Madera. While the Police Department has K9's, they don't have dogs trained to sniff out narcotics, so the Madera Police Depart-

Please see **K9 ZAK** on P. 20

2011 • Top Ten Ranchos Stories

from the pages of the *Ranchos Independent*

1 Drug Cartel in the Ranchos/July •

Every community has some crime, but when you wake up and discover a multi-state bust going down in your backyard, involving the Mexican Sinaloa drug cartel, it makes you stop and think. Over the next few months the criminal activity in the Ranchos took an uncomfortable increase.

2 Thieves Strip LHS Stadium Wire/August •

Talk about the Grinch stealing Christmas. After all the years it took to get a stadium completed and what it meant to the students, the athletes and the community, thieves broke into the stadium and stripped all of the copper wires. Everything. Over \$56,000 in damage and just before the first football game of the season.

3 Sgt. Moncada Street Dedication/November •

For the first time anywhere in Madera County, a segment of residential street was dedicated to the memory of a fallen hero, Sgt. Raul Moncada. He lived here, grew up here and his family still resides on Road 37 that was dedicated in his honor. His life cut short by an IED in Iraq, he will not be forgotten in the Ranchos.

4 Re-striping of Avenue 12/June •

Nothing has the potential of throwing a small community into an uproar like messing with something that everyone takes for granted on a day-to-day basis, like its main road. But the County of Madera came out, re-striped Avenue 12 to provide a dedicated center turn lane and got rid of cars (and trucks) parking on the sides of the road and the community accepted it flawlessly.

5 Massive Stash Found in Ranchos/February •

An unassuming home on Avenue 12 piqued the curiosity of a Sheriff's Deputy who noticed some burning in the back yard. By the time all the ashes had settled, hundreds of thousand of dollars in stolen property from all over the Central Valley was discovered, along with drugs, money and criminals. Wow.

Please see **TOP 10** on P. 18

“If I were a thief, you would now be a victim” - Basic Holiday Safety Tips

Are you doing your part to help keep your Holiday season a safe one? The Madera County Sheriff’s Department made a list for shoppers to check so they can find out for themselves if they are doing all they can to avoid falling prey. Sheriff John Anderson is also issuing his annual list of basic tips highlighting simple steps citizens should take to stay safe all year long.

Protecting your vehicles and

valuables stored inside:

Don't leave your car unlocked even if you know you will be gone for just a few minutes.

Don't leave purchased items in plain view inside your car. Instead, store them in the trunk of your vehicle where they can't be seen.

Don't leave your vehicle unlocked when gassing up. You'll have better peace of mind knowing your car is secure when filling your tank and paying

at the pump.

Don't leave your car unlocked while driving. Thieves can easily open a door while you wait at a stoplight. Keep your doors locked at all times.

Protecting you and your valuables while shopping:

Don't place your purse in your shopping cart when shopping for gifts or groceries. Turn your back for just a second, and your bag may be gone.

Don't leave your purse in your cart when placing items in your car.

Don't place your personal effects on the hook of a restroom stall or on the floor where thieves can reach them. Instead, keep them close to you at all times.

Always park in a well-lighted area. Always try to shop with a buddy.

Always prepare your children

Please see VICTIM on P. 18

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A Few of My Favorites at Christmas

By Garin Gonzales

Happy holidays, everyone! I hope you all have a fun and safe holiday season. All of the Madera County library branches will be closed from Dec. 22 for a nice little “vacation,” but we will be back at work (although my job is so terrific I hardly believe it’s work) on Dec. 27. So now would be a good time to come in and borrow some books, DVDs, CDs and anything else that will help entertain you throughout the busy season. I also wanted to remind you of the new library hours. Effective Jan. 3, 2012 our hours will be changing:

Closed Monday

Tuesday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Wednesday and Thursday: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Friday and Saturday: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Closed Sunday.

Thanks to all those people who came into the library and filled out our questionnaire. You asked for new hours and the county board of supervisors listened and made the changes. Sometimes the squeaky wheel does indeed get the grease.

A Few of My Favorite “Things”

Okay, now the fun part of the article: These are a few of my favorite holiday ... things. This is a list of my top five books, movies, songs and anything else I can think up off the top of my head. Now, I’ve always celebrated Christmas with my family, so my list will definitely skew toward that particular holiday. Please don’t be offended if you don’t see any Hanukkah holiday items on my list. Here goes:



A Christmas Story – Still my favorite holiday movie of all time and TBS won’t let me forget it. Around the holidays, TBS airs the movie for 24 hours (as they say, check your local listings). It’s the story of Ralphie, the boy who wants nothing more for Christmas than “an official Red Ryder, carbine action, 200-shot range model air rifle with a compass and this thing which tells time built right in to the stock!” This movie never ceases to make me laugh and it comes from great source material...

In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash by Jean Shepherd – This is the book *A Christmas Story* came from, but it’s so much more. Shepherd’s nostalgic look back to childhood in his Indiana home town is heartfelt, hilarious and genuinely sweet.

Father Christmas by the Kinks – This cynical little ditty never gets old for me, and it’s good rock and roll. Sample the chorus: “Father Christmas, give us some money, don’t mess around with those silly toys ... we’ll beat you up if you don’t hand it over, we want your bread so don’t make us annoyed. Give all those toys to the little rich boys.” A perfect Bah Humbug!

All of the Stop-Motion Christmas Specials – Forget the Grinch. The best holiday specials aren’t animation, they’re made in pain-staking stop-motion! Who can forget *Santa Claus is Coming to Town*? Or how about *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*? My favorite moment: When Rudy meets his wife-to-be Clarice: “She thinks I’m cuuuute! She thinks I’m cuuuute!” These specials are fun, oddly psychedelic in parts and timeless. Also, “Bumbles bounce.” (If you don’t get that reference, it’s okay. Your heart is just a lump of coal, that’s all.)

Christmas with the Rat Pack – When I was working my way through library school, I did part-time work as a DJ for holiday parties and the like. While the party was getting warmed up, I would play this holiday CD from Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. and friends. No one ever complained because these songs are like a comfortable Christmas sweater: Always cozy, always comfy and always appropriate for the season. My favorite? *I’ve Got My Love to Keep Me Warm*, by Dean Martin.



Well that’s all for now, folks. If you’d like to come into the library and tell me all about your holiday favorites, I’d be more than happy to listen. And if you’d like to check out some of these holiday “treats” (some of which are available in our library), be sure to bring your library card. In fact, don’t leave home without it!

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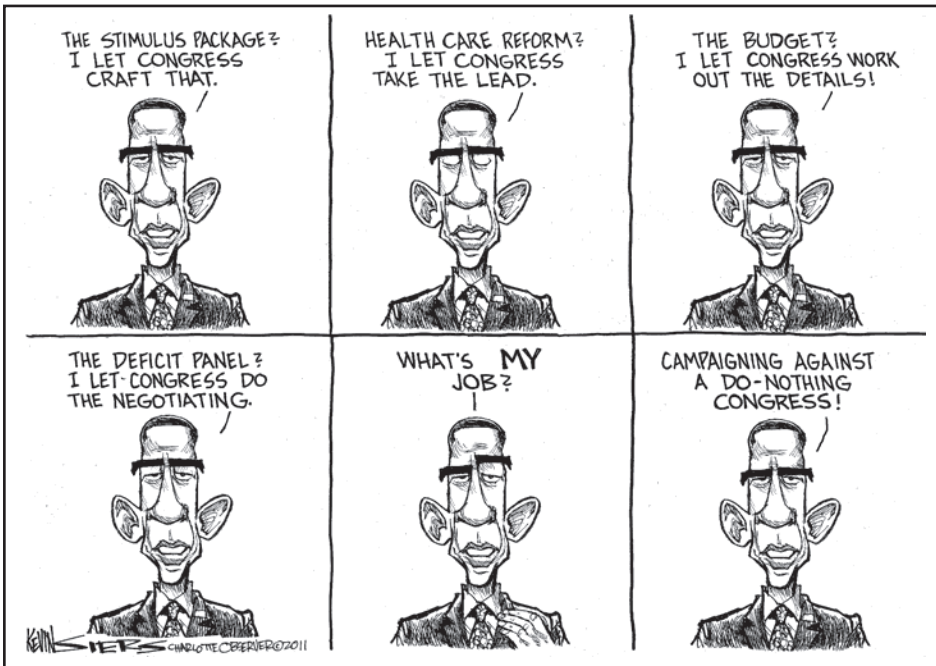
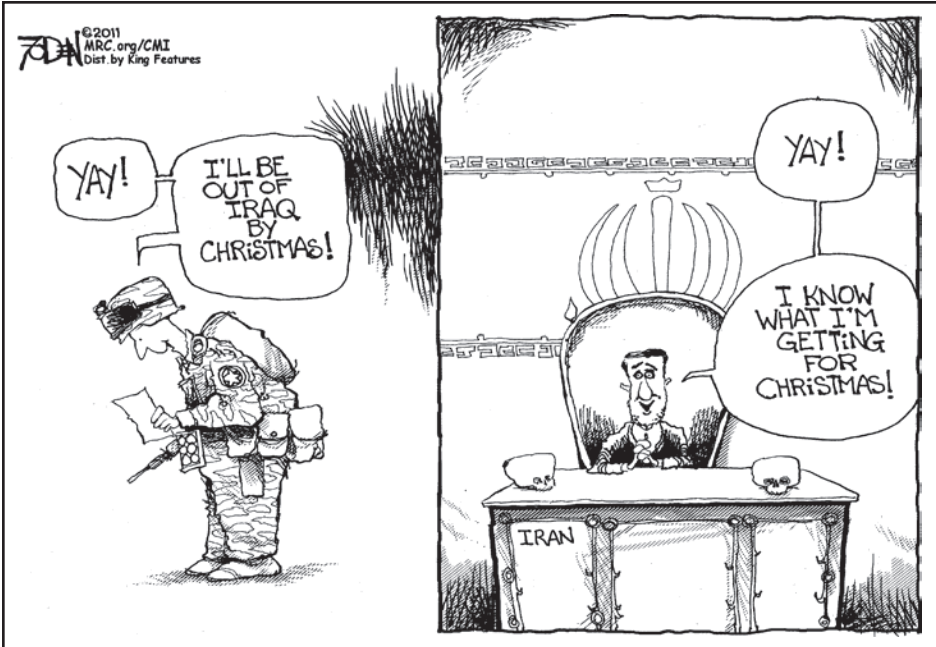
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Editorial

Seven Years Later ... Thank You

By Randy Bailey

It's hard to believe. Seven years ago this month was the first Ranchos Independent that had my fingerprints all over it. A very sick Bill Bell knew that his time on earth wasn't much longer and he desperately wanted someone to keep the Ranchos Independent alive. At that time, local papers were being bought up by larger regional papers and he didn't want to see that happen. As a matter of fact, he didn't want to see the Ranchos Independent be bought by someone outside of the Ranchos because he felt that such a person just "wouldn't get it" about what the Ranchos is all about. People outside of the area courted Bill but he held firm until yours truly came along.

I've told the story before, but the way I first made contact with the Ranchos Independent was a letter to the editor I had sent in favoring Sierra View Elementary school joining in with the newly formed Golden Valley Unified. I had included my name, address and phone number on the letter (like you're SUPPOSED to ... a concept seven years later that I can't get certain pockets of my readership to grasp) and Bill inadvertently published ALL of that information in the paper. I was pretty hot when I went into the Ranchos Independent office that first time but was laughing it all off by the time I left.

Not too long after that I was calling on another advertiser for a magazine that

I used to publish and the advertiser told me that the Ranchos Independent was for sale. I started talking to Bill Bell and after a few visits he was convinced that I would be a good fit for the Ranchos Independent.

I'm still here.

In the seven years that I've had the paper I've seen a lot of things happen in the Ranchos. Most recently I've witnessed the shrinking number of businesses in the Ranchos. I've seen the impact that has had on the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce, a venerable institution that has been helping area businesses for the last 20 years, but now finds itself struggling. I get people asking me how things are going down at the newspaper and I tell them, "Great ... if I could keep the number of advertisers up." Four years ago I could go back to advertisers who hadn't advertised in a while and try to get persuasive with them. Today, those advertisers aren't just being coy or frugal with their advertising dollars; they don't exist anymore.

The bottom line for the majority of Ranchos residents is, "Who cares? If XYZ Company is gone in the Ranchos I'll just pick it up on my way home from work in Fresno."

And there's the rub. We get this self-fulfilling prophecy going where we hold back our dollars in fear of supporting an enterprise that "might not make it" and what happens? It doesn't make it.

Wow. What a surprise.

So there's one less BBQ restaurant. One less pet grooming/pet supply store. No place to go locally and get trophies or custom gifts. No place local where you can get your eyeglasses adjusted.

Why? Because WE didn't support them.

I thank you all for supporting the Ranchos Independent these past seven years but this Christmas my wish is not for me. My wish is that you all see the incredible diversity of businesses here in the Ranchos and that you use them for their goods and services. You'll be doing the right thing by patronizing local people who have the same interests at heart that you do. If you don't, don't be surprised when you wake up one day and there's no one left.

The Ranchos Independent

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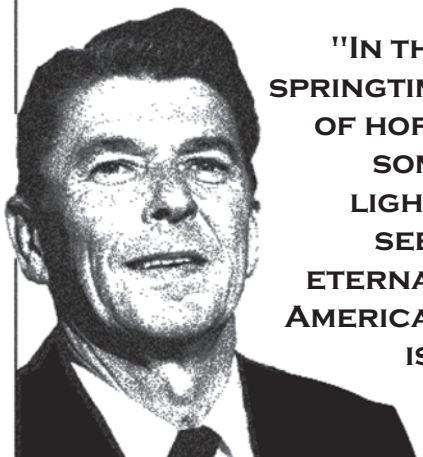
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Letter to the Community

North Fork Rancheria Resort Project Update

2011 Holiday Season

Annual Progress Report

Madera and the North Fork Rancheria have worked side-by-side for nearly 8 years to build a destination hotel and casino resort that will generate much-needed JOBS, COMMUNITY FUNDING, and BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY for the region. It is time again to update our community partners on our progress and continued aspirations - and express our thanks for your support.

Will the Project happen?
 Yes! We remain convinced that the project will move forward based on its sound technical merits including its favorable impact on the community, strong local support, proven historical connections to the land, and adherence to the letter and spirit of state and federal law.

What's the Project Status?
 Awaiting final approval. With the federal government's provisional approval in September 2011, we crossed a major approval milestone. We are now in the home stretch - though several important hurdles remain. The final favorable decisions that we expect and need to begin construction could be made at any moment. At the same time, our project remains vulnerable to delays from outside political forces. So stay tuned, we'll keep you posted.

What can You do to help?
 Help us bring jobs and growth to Madera - Take these 3 action steps!

- 1 - Like us on the facebook page - Support Madera Casino
- 2 - Complete a support form on our web site www.NorthForkRancheria.com
- 3 - Write the governor -- gov.ca.gov/m_contact.php

Ask our elected representatives not to cave to irrational fears or special interest propaganda. The North Fork Rancheria is merely seeking the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by other tribes to use Indian gaming as a means to improve both our Tribe and community. In return, we promise to continue the North Fork Mono tradition of constructive, collaborative, and transparent partnership!

As always, we welcome your questions, suggestions, and support to improve our shared project and community. We can be reached at (559) 877-2461 or through our web site.

Here's to a blessed and fruitful 2012. Happy Holidays. Best Wishes.

The Tribal Council of the North Fork Rancheria
 Elaine Bethel Fink (Chair), Maryann McGovran (Vice Chair), Avis Punkin (Treasurer), Bonnie Hale (Secretary), Pat Beihn (At-Large)



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- \$45-50 million in annual purchases
- \$30 million in annual public funding

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The Stock Report

My Very Favorite Time of the Year

By Audrey Stock

Hi neighbors,
Have a holly, jolly Christmas! It is Christmas time and my very favorite time of the year. I have been signing and sending out 120 Christmas cards with Christmas letters. I have already been getting Christmas cards from family and friends. It is good to get caught up on people I only hear from once a year. I love the lights on all of the houses. We live in such a pretty little community. My own outside lights are up, thanks to my family. My old-fashioned Christmas tree with colored lights and special ornaments that I have collected over the years is in the front room and makes my heart glad. I am making my lists and checking them twice. It looks like I am going to run out

of time if I don't get a move on. I am starting to make my family members' favorite Christmas cookies and candy. It sure makes the house smell good. My son, Bob, from Hawaii will be here soon. My granddaughter Amy and husband Sean will be here with their dog. Next will be my granddaughter Melanie from the state of Texas. I

am excited to see them all. My spare rooms will be full and all of the local family members will be in and out. I will be able to cook to my heart's content. We will break out the games and try to remember how to play them.

Seniors News

The Ranchos/Hills Seniors had their annual Christmas Dinner and Installation on Dec. 12. Yes it is that time of the year when our different organizations install their new officers for 2012. The new officers for the Ranchos/Hills Seniors are not really new; they did such a good

job last year that we elected them to serve for another year. Our one new officer is Diane Maxfield. Welcome Diane, we are pleased to have you on the board. The Ranchos/Hills Seniors are already planning actives for next year. There will be a New Year's party at the center on Dec. 31 There will be no monthly sale on Jan. 7 but save Apr. 7, 2012 for the annual Ranchos/Hills Senior Home and Garden Festival. If you are into bike riding save Apr. 21 for the Ranchos/Hills Seniors' 3rd Annual Bike Ride. Working on all of these projects keeps us seniors young, if you don't think so come on over and give us a try. We never stop.

Like to Travel?

If you love to travel with a fun bunch of people save May 9-19, 2012 for an 11-day journey through the states of Georgia and South Carolina. We will fly out of Fresno with only one stop in Denver and on to Atlanta, Ga. No hassle with either LA or San Francisco Airports. One special treat will be dinner at Paula Deen's Lady and Sons restaurant in Savannah, Ga. I can taste that southern cooking already. If you

would like to learn more call Joann Blancett at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center at 645-4864 to start planning now for this wonderful vacation. Joann has all of the paperwork you will need to fill out for the trip so you can start saving now.

I know that there are a lot of people with musical talent in this community. I belong to the Golden Valley Baptist Church and we are looking for some local talent to play in our church. If you are interested call me at 645-1407 or Pastor David Jones at 559-7609. Best wishes for a wonderful Christmas holiday and a Happy New Year.

Say you saw it in the Ranchos Independent

Watch the Sugar, Sugar

Are you or someone in your family a diabetic? Or have you been told by your doctor that you are borderline diabetic? You feel like it is the end of the world. For those of you that have just been diagnosed, I know exactly how you feel. When I was diagnosed almost 20 years ago and was told that I couldn't eat sweets any longer, I felt for sure Mars Candy Company, makers of Snickers, my favorite candy bar, and Baskin and Robbins ice cream, Pralines 'n Cream that I loved, would for sure go bankrupt because I couldn't have their products any longer. But they survived as did I. I can honestly say I have not had a Snickers in a long time, although I will admit to having one of the little miniature bars a few times and I can't remember the last time I had some Pralines 'n Cream.

For those of you that need to, if you stop eating anything with sugar long enough you will get so used to it that after a while you will get to the point that sugar will taste so sweet to you that it is yucky, believe me!

I receive an e-mail from a couple of sites that help the diabetic still have some good-tasting desserts and help keep your sugar level down.

The first recipe is pastry cups, filled with fruit.

Cherry Berry Pie Cups

1 refrigerated pie dough (1 top and 1 bottom crust)

20 oz. no sugar added cherry pie filling

1 pint fresh raspberries

2 oz. topping, whipped cream pressurized (optional)

¼ cup Splenda sweetener – granulated

Preheat oven to 425. Remove one crust from pouch. Place on a cutting board or flat surface and roll out lightly to a 10-inch diameter. Using a 4-inch round cutter, cut out six rounds. Set scraps aside and



repeat with second crust.

Lightly press the pastry rounds into 12 muffin cups pressing into bottom and up sides to create pastry cups. Prick cups with a fork and bake for 5 minutes.

In a medium bowl, mix together the cherry pie filling and the sweetener. Gently fold in the raspberries. Spoon about 3 tablespoons of the filling into each crust lined cup.

Bake for 18 to 20 minutes or until the edges and sides of the cups are browned and the filling is bubbly. Let cool slightly and serve warm or cool. Garnish each cup with a dollop of topping if desired.

112 Calories, 16.1 g. carbs and 3.2 g.

sugar each cup.

Do you forgo a piece of pumpkin pie because there are just too many calories, or it just has too much sugar in it? How about a sugar free –

Creamy Instant Pumpkin Mousse

1 8 oz. tub topping – thawed

1 small package sugar free instant butterscotch pudding mix.

¾ C low fat milk

1 tsp. cinnamon

¼ tsp. ground ginger

1/8 tsp. ground cloves

1 – 15 oz. canned solid pack pumpkin

In a large bowl beat together the pudding mix and milk until slightly thickened. Add the pumpkin, cinnamon, ginger and cloves, and mix until well combined.

Gently fold in the whipped topping in three additions, Pour ½ cup of the mousse into each of the 8

Please see **RECIPE** on P. 15

There you have it – three recipes that should let you have dessert and not destroy your sugar count. I sincerely hope you are able to keep your glucose under control because we all know what can happen to you if it gets out of control.

Good luck!

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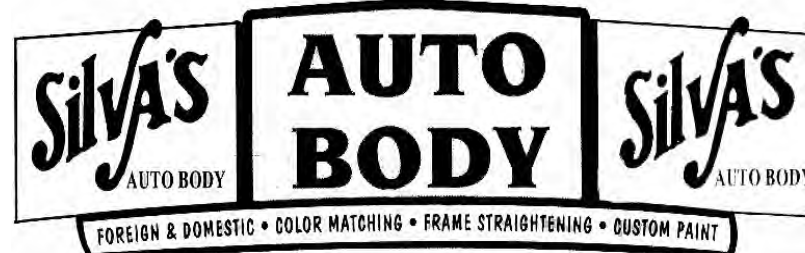
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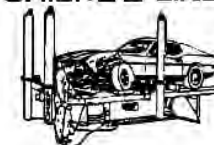
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Letters

Dear Editor:

We had what I believe was the strongest windstorm since I have lived in this area, 33 years. Some of our buildings' roofs were destroyed. We had spent 2 ½ days the previous weekend putting Christmas in our yard; of course it blew away and some things were destroyed and there were many other things around here hurt by the wind.

I must say one of the things that upset me the most was seeing the red, white and blue barn (located at Highway 41 and Avenue 12) had been partially torn apart. I think our area takes pride in that patriotic barn and I can't tell you how many people I have seen taking pictures of it. I would certainly be happy to make a donation toward its restoration and I am sure there would be others willing to help as well. If you could tell us where to make a donation and if the owners would be willing to repair the barn I would be most grateful.

Thank you,

Linda Manter
 Madera Ranchos

Dear Editor:

To our friends and supporters of the North Fork Rancheria,

Thank you for all your kind inquiries regarding today's events. Based on the evolving nature of these matters, it is probably prudent for us to limit what we say until we know more and can be sure that we are providing useful and accurate information. Yet we wanted to be responsive to your numerous inquiries in the timely, transparent, and respectful manner that reflects how we have always done business. Accordingly, below is the official statement we released today. There will certainly be more information in the near future.

Interim North Fork Rancheria Statement On Events of 12/6/11

The North Fork Rancheria has offered its full cooperation in the investigation being conducted by the Office of the Inspector General for the U.S. Department of the Interior. The

investigation apparently concerns the use and disclosure of the limited funds advanced to the Tribe for its proposed casino project under its development agreement with Station Casinos.

This information is routinely made available to tribal citizens in considerable detail, including general ledger records of each and every check drawn from the project and other unrestricted tribal funds. The Tribe therefore does not understand the basis for the investigation, and is dismayed that information that the Tribe would have been more than willing to provide is instead being secured with a search warrant.

Please direct further inquiries to:

John A. Maier
Attorneys to the Tribe
 510-835-3020
 jmaier@jmandmplaw.com

Official inquiries relating to today's events should be directed to John but feel free to contact me regarding other community matters. In the interim, we are grateful for your continued support and promise to keep you apprised of developments. As has always proven the case through this long and arduous process, together we will prevail and build a better Madera!

Kind regards,

Charlie Altekruze
 North Fork Rancheria Community Relations

The Ranchos Independent welcomes your letters. Whether you're a fan or someone looking for something to line the birdcage, we want to hear from you. The only rules? Sign it, be civil or forget about it.

Send your letters to:

email:
ranchosnews@yahoo.com

mail:
The Ranchos Independent
 37167 Ave. 12 #5C
 Madera, CA 93636

fax:
559-645-4002

Say you saw it in
the Ranchos Independent

A New Holiday Tradition ... Not!

*'Twas the week before Christmas,
Fast asleep in my bed,
I awoke to the sounds,
Of some thumping o'erhead.
Was it the prancing and pawing,
Of a reindeer hoof?
Alas, it was twits,
Running amok on my roof.*



GEN ERA TION WHY by eryn b. nyre

I remember how much I loved Christmas vacation when I was little – a whole week or two off from school, the cold weather, the sweets, Christmas and all the beautiful traditions that went along with it from the caroling to scouting Christmas lights. I was not, however, previously aware of the tradition that involved stomping on your neighbor's roof. Is this some sort of Santa beckoning ritual? Are they stomping down

though, to be fair, it could have just been my morning hair – it startles me sometimes when I catch an unprepared glance at my reflection first thing in the morning.

I hollered at them to get down in the sternest, most authoritative tone I could muster first thing in the morning, which took some effort, and with morning voice I be-


lieve I sounded more like Harvey Feirstein than the drill instructor I was aiming for. All of which turned out to be pointless because the very moment they saw me, they were running in all directions. I proceeded to yell anyway, the goal was to wake up the parents of these kids so they could suffer along with me and the rest of

I ask again, where are the parents? Mine knew where I was and, even if I did lie, which never fared well with the James Bond-style tactics that my parents displayed during my adolescence, they would constantly check up on me so if I wasn't where I said I was going to be, they always found out. But these children had parents cut from a different cloth, because their response was, "I can't watch them every minute, can I?"

my apartment complex.

I had hoped that the bride of Frankenstein appearance, the blatant threats screamed in their general direction and the ominous swashbuckling abilities I displayed with the mop that was drying on my back patio was enough to discourage them from returning. But all hope was lost because the next morning, before my alarm had a chance to stir me from my peaceful slumber wherein Mark Ballas was taking me for a spin around an enchanted dance floor, my eyes flipped open to the

Please see **GEN WHY** on P. 11




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Say you saw it in
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GEN WHY cont. from P. 10

sounds of four or five adolescent boys reenacting Stomp above my head. Once again I stormed out to my patio and yelled at them to get down, and once again they ran like little girls.

Now, my first inclination was to cover the roof with barbed or electric wire, but it would seem that some people frown on maiming and electrocuting youngsters, even the ill-behaved ones that don't seem to think running around on someone else's roof, waking people up and causing a disturbance, is considered bad form. Now, of course, I don't want them seriously injured, but some superficial cuts and scrapes, or maybe a couple of jolts of electricity ought to right their behavior, and it is painfully clear that either their parents don't care what their children are doing, or don't know where they are that early in the morning; either way, someone had to teach them a lesson and I humbly volunteered my services. Of course, despite my best arguments, my landlord opted to go door to door to talk to the parents instead of my

idea of a surprise blitz attack using some minor pain as a means of behavior modification. I suppose if it gets the little brats off the roof, I could live with it.

I ask again, where are the parents? Mine knew where I was and, even if I did lie, which never fared well with the James Bond-style tactics that my parents displayed during my adolescence, they would constantly check up on me so if I wasn't where I said I was going to be, they always found out. But these children had parents cut from a different cloth, because their response was, "I can't watch them every minute, can I?" I suppose not. But what you can do is instill in them a sense of right and wrong, and a healthy fear of consequences for the latter. In the meantime, I am going to lay down industrial strength glue all over the complex roof, the kind that dissolves shoe leather and will adhere the soles of their feet directly to the shingles and secure them in place for an indeterminate amount of time. At least then the parents will know where they are at all hours of the day.

Donate Your Car for Deductions

Donate your unwanted car by Dec. 31 to Cars4Charities and you will get a year-end tax deduction of at least \$500 on your itemized federal taxes. You'll also help one of hundreds of respected charities at the same time. Cars4Charities will handle the entire donation process, from start to finish. They'll turn your unwanted vehicle into cash and send the entire net proceeds to the charity you select from their impressive list. The process is effortless. You

can even donate your car online at www.cars4charities.org.

Your vehicle does not have to run or be in good condition and it will be picked up in a matter of days, free of charge. Cars4Charities will provide you with all the paperwork you'll need. To claim your 2011 deduction, your title must be signed and postmarked by Dec. 31, 2011. For details, please visit www.cars4charities.org or call 1-866-448-3487 (GIVE-4-US).

Master Gardener Events for 2012

Start the New Year off with good gardening practices in a workshop or at a garden advice session offered by Madera County Master Gardeners.

Saturday, Jan. 14, 2012, 10 a.m. - noon: "Citrus Trees: Winter Care," hosted by Master Gardener Peg Coffin. This workshop will be held at Madera Community College Center, Three Sisters Demonstration Garden (Rain location: Room R3A), 30277 Avenue 12 just west of the Madera Ranchos. This free workshop includes handouts. There is no charge to the public and parking is free. Reservations are

requested: 559-675-7879, extension 210, or mgmadeera@ucdavis.edu.

Saturday, Jan. 21, 2011, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.: "Garden Advice - Bare Root Planting and Care," hosted by Master Gardener Kathy Eisele. A table staffed by Master Gardeners will be available in the Garden Shop at Lowe's, 2100 E. Cleveland, Madera. Bring your gardening questions and problems and get free, expert advice. Questions? Call 559 675-7879, extension 210, or write mgmadeera@ucdavis.edu.

Visit the Madera Master Gardener website at cemadera.ucdavis.edu/.



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The Best Christmas Gift Ever

Until he changes his mind, the Pastor's Desk will be written by Mike Bailey and is being renamed "Progress not Perfection." He is not a pastor but he has a message. With approximately 17.6 million American adults who abuse alcohol or are alcohol dependent, his message is timely and relevant.

Editor

By Mike Bailey

Over the past three years I have learned an extraordinary amount. The best thing I have learned was how little I actually knew. I was always the smart aleck, the one with the wise-crack, the comeback, the one who thought that everyone should hear my opinion.

Now, my character defect is still present, but, I've learned to hold my thoughts for a couple seconds and give thought to what is about to be said. I'm not perfect and I have my moments, remember it's "Progress, not Perfection." I always wanted people to like me because I was smart. People really don't like smart people. It is perceived as arrogant and cocky, for good reason. Now I listen and

Now I listen and actually hear what people are saying. I stand back and realize I'm not the smart one, I do not have all the answers, I'm not the one who can fix people. People sometimes just need to be heard, and comforted. I am not the one who can solve their problems, I can't even solve mine. All I sometimes really need to do is be a FRIEND. I have learned so much and realize that I have not even scratched the surface of the wisdom of CHRIST.

actually hear what people are saying. I stand back and realize I'm not the smart one, I do not have all the answers, I'm not the one who can fix people. People sometimes just need to be heard, and comforted. I am not the one who can solve their problems, I can't even solve mine. All I sometimes really need to do is be a FRIEND. I have learned so much and realize that I have not even scratched the surface of the wisdom of CHRIST. King Solomon tells us that the beginning of true wisdom is found only when you are humbled to the fact that you realize you still need to learn and grow every day.

The True Meaning of Christmas

One other thing I have learned is the true meaning of Christmas. This year all I wanted for Christmas was a Christmas tree. Seriously, that is all I wanted. You see, if I have a tree, I have a place to put it. If I have a place to put it, then I have a place for my boys. If I have a place for my boys, then I have a job. If I have a job, then I can take care of my kids, then that means I am an asset to society. Not a burden to anyone, anymore. That is gift enough for me, just being normal. I understand that it is not about what I get, or what I get you. It is about the small things, just being with family, friends and loved ones because you never know if this will be your last Christmas or their last Christmas.

I am going to out myself, my name is Mike Bailey and I'm an Alcoholic. The reason I am doing this is because what I am about to say will probably out me anyway.

On Dec. 18, 2002 I lost my Uncle Joe to cancer. Ten days later, the 28th of December, my sister Sheila, at the ripe old age of 40, died of a heart attack. Last March we buried the dearest, sweetest woman – the woman who truly was "everybody's mother," my Aunt Faye. On December 7 of this year I lost my Aunt Irene (Uncle Joe's wife) to heart complications. We buried her on Dec. 12. Now get this: on Thursday, Dec. 15, Aunt Irene's youngest daughter, Pam Bailey, had a brain hemorrhage and died at 8 p.m. that evening. This is someone that just three days earlier I shed tears with, broke bread with and comforted her with the hope of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, like that, she is gone. You never know what tomorrow brings, or if there will be a tomorrow for any of us.

Give yourself the best Christmas ever; really know what it is truly all about. Learn John 14:6; commit it to your heart, mind, body, soul and life!

Merry Christmas!.

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What's on Your Plate?

As we approach the New Year, a good question to ask yourself is: "What's on my plate?" Don't worry; I'm not talking about dieting and counting calories. Although, come to think of it there are some really good comparisons between filling our food plates and filling our schedules.

When you overfill your plate you're likely to end up feeling lethargic, unproductive, and maybe even a little sick. (Does that bring back any holiday dinner memories?) Over-filling your schedule can do the same

thing. We get drained by a surplus of activity; worn out by a non-stop schedule. We push and push until our bodies say, "Enough!" Our immune systems are compromised and we end up sick.

Sometimes when there are so many good foods to choose from our "eyes are bigger than our stomachs" and we just can't eat it all. Likewise we often say yes to more than our schedules can hold and that's when things fall through the cracks. We simply can't follow through with all we commit to.

Worst of all is when we don't regulate what's on our dinner plate and end up not being able to squeeze in dessert! (I admit it; I'm a big dessert fan.) When we don't plan ahead our schedules fill up and we're likely to neglect some of the sweet and most valuable things in life.

So how do we alter this lifestyle? Begin with identifying your life values. List the four or five things that are your top priorities in life. Those become the plumb-line from which to gauge what stays, what goes, and perhaps what needs to be added to your schedule.

Rather than being a victim of the wishes

and demands of others on your time, be intentional about what you choose to do and not do. Based on the priorities you've identified, outline specific goals that will give you focus and direction. Follow up goal-setting with specific steps of action that will enable you to see your values lived out in your daily lifestyle.

For instance, say building a strong family is one of your values. A goal might be to spend more time together. A step of action might be to have dinner together "X" number of times per week.

Once you've established your plan, give yourself permission to set boundaries for things that would interfere with that plan. If your committee is having a late afternoon meeting, let them know you have a commitment and need to leave by 5:30.

Another goal for your family value might be to have your home a place of comfort and refuge for family members. A step of action might be to clear the clutter and make it a place the family enjoys coming home to. You might be thinking, "I just don't have time to get it that way and keep it that way!"

In their book *Organizing for the Creative Person*, Dorothy Lehmkuhl and Delores Cotter Lamping say, "I don't have time" is an excuse; "That isn't the best use of my time now" represents a conscious decision. When you say, 'I don't have time to clean my desk every day,' think about this: If someone were to give you \$1,000 every single day you cleared off your desk, would you find time to do it? We all would!"

The goal here is to make conscious choices about how we use our time and for those choices to enhance rather than inhibit what we value most. This will take some time for planning and determination to follow through, but the results will be a life worth living.

Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a joyous New Year!

You can contact Brenda McElroy to have questions answered at *Organized by Choice* (because things don't always fall into place) at P.O. Box 26152, Fresno, CA 93729, email her at info@organizedbychoice.com, visit her website www.organizedbychoice.com or she can be reached by phone at 559-871-3314.

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12/11

A Brief History of Christmas, Courtesy of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center

By Verlaine Elinburg

Christmas has been celebrated on December 25 since 336 A.D. The tradition started as a Christian holiday honoring the birth of Jesus and has evolved into an international holiday that embodies family togetherness and good cheer.

While some still regard Christmas solely as a religious holiday, Christmas has become, for many, a day to celebrate family and be merry. In the spirit of holiday cheer, many observe the traditions of Santa Claus, mistletoe, Christmas trees and Christmas cards described below.

The tradition of Christmas trees was started in 16th century Germany. Martin Luther, a German theologian, is thought to have popularized the concept. On a brisk, clear Christmas Eve, Luther was walking home under a bright, starry sky, which was so beautiful that he wanted to recreate its beauty for his children. His idea was to decorate a large evergreen with glowing candles, a custom we still honor today in more modern forms.

And last, but not least, the Christmas card, probably the most popular way to express holiday sentiments, was started in England in 1843. The first Christmas card was printed in

the United States in 1875 by Louis Prang, a Massachusetts printer. By running nationwide contests for the best Christmas designs, Prang helped launch Christmas cards into a multibillion dollar industry.

Another Trip in the Works

The year has not ended and the Ranchos/Hills Seniors are looking forward to their vacation, the 11-day Southern Journey: History and Beauty of the Legendary South. Atlanta, historic sites, and the Rev. Martin Luther King and Margaret Mitchell House and Museums. From Columbia to Myrtle Beach, with drives from lakes and black-water rivers to the 60-mile-long Grand Strand at Myrtle Beach. Georgetown and Charleston; the famous Brookgreen Gardens; going back through history to our first permanent settlers of 1700, including the magnolia plantations and gardens which were founded in 1676. Sa-

vannah, with its cobblestone streets and elegant homes and gardens; the first African Baptist Church and the oldest African-American Church in the United States which played an important part in the Underground Railroad. Jekyll Island's, the Historic District, a cluster of 19th-century mansions . . . the list goes on and on. The Trip is set for May 9 – 19, 2012. For additional attractions and information on the 11-Day Southern Journey stop at the Senior Center and obtain a flyer, or call 645-4864 for additional information.



The itinerary for the next Ranchos/Hills Seniors' trip to the historic south.

Regular Items

The Department of health comes periodically to the center for free checkups. The screenings include: Personal health history review, blood pressure and blood sugar test, nutrition and health education and a low-cost blood test is available. The health screenings are for 50 and above and for referrals to medical providers and community services the contact number is 675-7893

to make an appointment.

A nutritionally balanced lunch program is available Monday through Friday at 11:30 a.m. and a suggested price for 60 years and older is \$1.75. Reservations are needed 24 hours in advance prior to 11:00 AM – so remember to call Joann at 645-4864.

We have a growing exercise program being held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at 10 a.m. The participants are getting more than just exercise by attending. They have fun, share laughs and meet new friends and get updates on their fellow members and get current news and updates on what is happening at the Center. There is room for you and you may attend all three days or just one or two of them. New to the agenda is Tuesdays at 12:30 p.m. with a variety of cards games to be enjoyed. Come and learn some new games.

Check your calendar for daily events for each day of the week. If you do not have a copy of the newsletter, stop by the Senior Center for a copy or find additional copies at the Ranchos Market, Hurst Hardware and at many of the businesses on Avenue 12. The Farmers Market at the center has a variety of vegetables and fruits, jams and jellies are available and the Boutique has many "on the spot" gift items.

FLIP SIDE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

**Sunday, December 25th services will
be on Christmas Eve, December 24th
@ 4:00 & 6:00 PM**

New Years - ONE Service @ 10:00 AM

Regular Service Times: 9:00 & 10:30 AM
Full children programs during both services and
youth during the 10:30 am service.

For more information on church activities visit
our website at www.acts176.com or E-mail
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All events take place at Flipside Christian Church unless otherwise stated. Address: 37193 Avenue 12, suite 3H Madera, CA 93636
For more information on these events and other church activities visit our website at www.acts176.com or email info@acts176.com

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RECIPE cont. from P. 8

serving dishes. Chill for at least 30 minutes before serving. Each serving is 97 calories, 16.2 g. carbs, and 6.1 g. sugars.

Knowing how much I like any dessert made with lemon, this one is for lemon bars.

Old Fashioned Lemon Bars

Crust:

- 1/3 C Splenda granulated Sweetener
- 1/2 C whole wheat flour
- 1/2 C white all-purpose flour
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 4 T margarine, hard or cold butter
- 2 T buttermilk
- 1/4 tsp. salt

Topping:

- 2 tsp. powdered sugar, optional
- 2 large eggs
- 1 egg white
- 3 T white all-purpose flour
- 1/2 C Splenda sugar blend for baking, or 1/2 C EACH Splenda granulated and granulated sugar
- 2/3 C fresh lemon juice
- 1/3 C low fat buttermilk
- 1 T fresh grated lemon peel


DIRECTIONS:

CRUST: Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray an 8-inch square baking pan with nonstick baking spray. In a medium bowl, mix together flours, Splenda, salt and baking powder. Cut in margarine (or butter) until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle buttermilk over mix and blend. Press onto the bottom of the prepared pan. Chill for 15 minutes and then bake for 15-20 minutes or until lightly browned.

TOPPING: While crust is baking, prepare topping. In a large bowl, beat eggs and egg white with 3 T flour and 1/2 C of Splenda or Splenda/sugar blend. Beat in 1/3 C buttermilk, lemon juice and zest. Pour into hot crust. Turn oven down to 350 and bake bars an additional 18-20 minutes or until top is set. Cool completely. Just prior to serving, dust with powdered sugar if desired. Cut into 16 bars. 107 calories, 15 g. carbs and 3.8 g. sugar for each bar.

There you have it – three recipes that should let you have dessert and not destroy your sugar count. I sincerely hope you are able to keep your glucose under control because we all know what can happen to you if it gets out of control.

Good luck!



LIBERTY Groves

Community Open House Meeting

When: Wednesday, January 18th, 2012
It is an open house meeting so feel free to arrive anytime between 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.

Where: Liberty High School - Cafeteria
12220 Road 36 Madera, CA

The Cafeteria is located in Building B beside the Theatre. It is the 1st large building on the right as you enter the parking lot from Road 36.

Community Open House Meeting

Come learn more about the Liberty Groves Project!

The Liberty Groves project team is pleased to host a community open house meeting. We encourage you to attend this meeting to learn more about the Liberty Groves project and directly interact with the project team members who are responsible for designing the:

- Water, sewer, & storm drainage systems;
- Circulation (vehicle, bicycle, & pedestrian) system;
- Financing and urban services plan; and
- Land use & zoning for the Liberty Groves Project.

Each of these team members will be available to speak about the project and answer your questions in a one-on-one or small group setting.

Note: The Liberty Groves Open House Meeting is being hosted and paid for by the project applicant

Project Background

The Liberty Groves project is a proposed 1,320-acre master-planned, mixed-use community. Liberty Groves proposes a diverse mixture of residential, commercial, office/light industrial, recreational, and other necessary services and community amenities. The project site is located just west of Liberty High School along Avenue 12 and abuts existing development within the Madera Ranchos community.



Your participation is important to us!

As the Liberty Groves project is still in the early stages of the approval process, we encourage you to attend this meeting to provide your thoughts and voice any questions you may have.

12/11

If you would like to learn more about Liberty Groves, please visit our website at www.libertygroves.com, email us at info@libertygroves.com, or call us at (559) 307-5431



Libert High School Winter Formal Proves ‘Tis the Season ... for *Dancing!*



Junior Jordan Nehring doesn't need to be on the dance floor to dip his date, Amy Chavira, at the Liberty High School Winter Formal.

By The LHS Hawk Talk Staff

Liberty High School's Winter Formal, hosted by the sophomore class, was held on Saturday, Dec. 4, with the theme "Tis the Season" providing the backdrop for a night of dancing and fun at Holland Park West, located in northwest Fresno. Liberty students arrived to a holiday themed dance ablaze with shades of red and sparkling ornaments and decorations.

In order to add something a little extra this year, the sophomore class hosted a full hot chocolate bar, complete with chocolate-dipped stirring spoons, a plethora of flavored marshmallows and more toppings than one could ever need. The cold temperatures on formal night made the hot chocolate bar the hit of the night and was visibly appreciated by Liberty High students and the staff members who were present.

The majority of the formal attendees had the opportunity to go to dinner with their dates before the dance and then were greeted upon arrival at Holland Park West to good music and plenty of picture taking. They then got to hang out with friends and dance the rest of the



Olivia Neal (left) and Cirephina Dalisay don't let sore feet ruin their fun! Instead, they kick their shoes off and dance the night away

Sierra View and Webster Elementary get Competitive



Sierra View running back Junior Rodriguez (center) eludes Webster defenders in a 35-24 flag football loss on Dec. 2.



Webster running back Angel Leon (with ball at right) turns the corner against Sierra View in a 35-24 victory on Dec. 2.



Webster volleyball player Sabrina Folsom (center) returns a hit against Sierra View. Sierra View defeated Webster 2-1 on Dec. 2.



Sierra View volleyballer Paige Peterson (center) returns a hit from the front row in an 18-21, 21-18, 15-10 victory over Webster on Dec. 2.

evening away.

Winter formal was well-attended this year, and almost every student stayed until the end. All proceeds went to the sophomores to help with their various class expenses and next year's prom.

GVUSD Calendar

District wide

- Dec. 19-Jan. 7 - No school- Winter break
- Jan. 16- No school
- Jan. 17- Board meeting

Sierra View Elementary

- Jan. 19- Parent Club meeting
- Jan. 28- Coffee with principal Imperatrice
- Jan. 31- 100 Days of School Celebration
- Feb. 2- Spelling Bee

Liberty High School

- Jan. 18- Principal's Round Table
- Jan. 19-26- 2012/2013 registration presentations
- Jan. 30- Parent FASFA workshop
- Jan. 31- NSL Talent Show
- Feb. 3- Rally- Movie Night Awards

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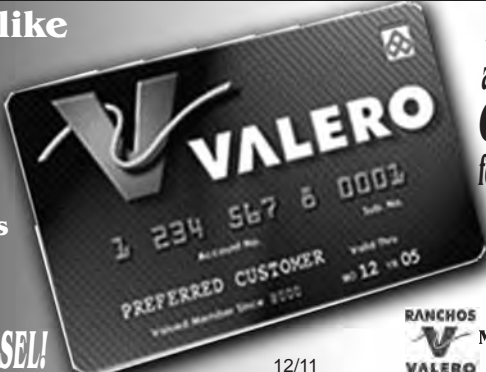
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Madera Man Hammers Wife's Head Receives Lengthy Prison Sentence

Victim's Daughter, 12, Saves Mom's Life

On Monday, Dec. 19, Bruce Armstrong was sentenced to a lengthy term in state prison according to Michael R. Keitz, District Attorney for Madera County.

Armstrong, 34, of Madera, was convicted by a Madera County superior court jury earlier this year on April 14 for two separate actions which occurred in 2008. During his first assault, Armstrong entered his wife's workplace where he choked and threatened her. Three days later, Armstrong and his wife quarreled when he commenced striking her in the head with a hammer in front of his children. His assault was thwarted

by his twelve year old daughter, whose courageous actions distracted him long enough to allow her mother to escape to a neighbor's residence.

Following the trial, Armstrong's attorney, Steven Geringer, brought a motion to have the case reheard. The motion was addressed yesterday and denied by Judge David Miner. Miner then sentenced Armstrong to 29 years and 4 months in state prison for his two separate actions.

According to District Attorney Keitz, "Events of domestic violence undermine the fabric of family life and our society. The District Attorney's Office takes domestic violence seriously. This was a very tragic case."

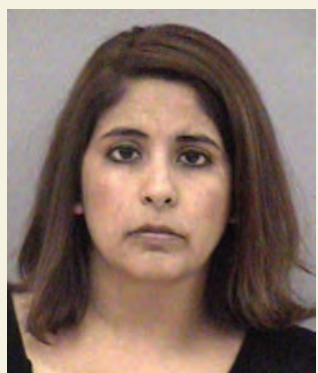
This case was prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Mary Thornton.

Madera County School Employee Accused of Stealing from Students

A 38-year-old Madera woman sits behind bars facing embezzlement charges, accused of stealing student fundraising money.

Victoria Macias Perez, employed as an Administrative Assistant at Eastin-Arcola High School, located on Avenue 8 in Madera County, faces two counts of felony embezzlement. She's accused of stealing nearly \$3,000 from an account that holds funds raised by the continuation students.

According to Reports, Deputy Sheriff Robert Blehm was dispatched to the high school late Friday morning, Dec. 2. The school discovered a discrepancy in the account.



Victoria Macias Perez, 38, has been accused in two counts of felony embezzlement of stealing nearly \$3,000 from an account that holds funds raised by students at the school where she works.

\$690 appeared to be missing. Perez, who handles deposits and withdrawals, was questioned and she reportedly admitted to writing a check to herself in that amount

back in September, but claimed she had every intention of paying it back.

However, she's also accused of stealing \$2,000 last May as well. It's alleged that she managed to replenish the account with proceeds she made from the sale of a vehicle ... and justifying the discrepancy as a miss accounting of funds.

Perez was taken into custody and transported to Madera County Department of Corrections where she remains behind bars with bail set at \$10,000.

TOP 10 cont. from P. 2

6 Medicinal Marijuana in the Ranchos/November • California had passed a law stating the marijuana for medicinal purposes was OK, but it was up to the individual counties to decide if they wanted it or not. Madera County had decided it didn't want it, yet here was a very friendly little shop on Highway 41 at Avenue 15 that hadn't got the memo. After the story ran the shop disappeared.

7 "Sinkhole"/January • Everyone knows that for the most part the Ranchos is hot and dry, but not last winter. There was water everywhere and it was putting a lot of area infrastructure to the test. Unfortunately, Road 36 between Avenue 9 and 10 failed that test when an 80-year-old irrigation pipe system beneath the road gave out and created a huge sinkhole. The County had it fixed within two weeks.

8 Superintendent Koligian Quits/May • After building Golden Valley Unified up to be the premier school district in Madera County with test scores and proficiencies rivalling Clovis schools, heat was coming from a newly elected school board and it appeared that Koligian thought that this was the best time to get out of the kitchen. She went to Tulare and Andy Alvarado moved into her spot.

9 North Fork Casino Moves Forward/September • After roadblock after roadblock was put in their way, the North Fork Rancheria finally got a favorable determination from the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs saying that gaming on the proposed site would be in the best interest of the Tribe and not detrimental to the surrounding community. Money, jobs and fun for the area.

10 Ranchos gets a "Mayor"/May • As part of a promotion among Ranchos-area charitable organizations, Tom Hurst of Hurst Hardware was "elected" the honorary mayor of the Madera Ranchos after a hard-fought election where all the "votes" were bought through donations. At the end of the day, 75 cents of every dollar raised went to specific charities and the remaining quarter went to the Ranchos Kiwanis who put on the whole event. Hail to the chief!

VICTIM cont. from P. 3

about what to do in the event you become separated.

Always have your keys in your hand when returning to your vehicle.

Protecting you from online scams:

Beware of high-tech scams such as phony e-card greetings. If you receive an e-mail card and are advised to download the latest software to view it, don't do it. You may be giving someone complete access to your computer.

Phony lottery or sweepstakes notices that you're a winner. You get an e-mail or phone message suggesting you visit a website or return the call to collect your prize. Don't respond. Delete the message.

Phony sales found online. Whether it's eBay, Craigslist or any other venue, do your homework and find out if the company hosting these ads is legitimate.

Protecting your home:

Create open lines of communications with neighbors and businesses within your immediate area.

Take outgoing mail and packages to the post office or courier. When away at the holidays, request that the post office hold your mail delivery and ask your neighbors to retrieve and hold

packages that may be delivered to your home.

Consider installing motion-detector lights around the outside of your home. Light timers also help if you're away and when home. Lights often provide a deterrent, keeping would-be thieves at bay.

When at home or away, always draw your shades to keep outsiders from looking in and previewing what and who's inside.


Keep windows and doors locked at all times. If you need to leave an extra key, don't leave it in a flower pot or under the mat – leave it with a neighbor you know you can reach.

Secure all doors with quality deadbolts and add bolts such as a deadlatch to all windows and sliding glass doors.

Vehicles stored in the garage should be locked at all times. Don't ever keep those keys in plain view.

Motion detectors can also serve as a deterrent. Set up timers to run at random inside your home which will the impression that someone is home.

If you go on vacation, Citizens on Patrol conducts house checks. If you can't reach a neighbor, call the Sheriff's Department, but also let neighbors know if and when you may be gone. If a strange vehicle is seen in your driveway, neighbors will know to call 911.



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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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	×		-		23			
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	+		÷		2			
10		25		13				
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Changing the Holds in Semantic Judo



By Christopher Green

Conservatives, as the name implies, tend to be people who wish to conserve the values and institutions which have made our nation the greatest in the history of the world. The word "conservative" also suggests a certain resistance to change. The notion that conservatives are all about resisting change has been exploited by liberals to cast conservatives as implacable defenders of the filthy rich class and heartless exploiters of the poor.

Conservatives and libertarians must be aware of the power of phrasing our message

in a positive way as we move forward in our efforts to reform our broken government fiscal system. Obama and most of his fellow progressives are once again framing the fiscal debate as a choice between preserving the social safety net and increasing taxes on the rich. We conservatives and liber-

tarians have for the most part played into the hands of progressives by not challenging their semantics. This must stop now!

There is ample evidence that high tax rates actually depress tax revenues. We must stop implicitly ceding to the liberals the faulty premise that increasing tax rates will increase revenues. The Tea Party and its allies should rather turn the words of the progressives to their own advantage. We must always talk about a two-track approach to finally restoring a dynamic national economy. These two equally important tracks are: increasing government revenue by lowering the tax rate and simplifying the tax system; and controlling spending, which must include entitlement reform.

Every time that Obama says increasing taxes needs to be part of the solution to the budget problem, Speaker Boehner should be saying, "I couldn't agree with the President more completely. We do need to increase revenues to the treasury including revenue from the richest Americans, and the way that

history has proven time and again that revenues can be increased over the long term is to lower tax rates."

Let us take the pledge as members of the Tea Party to remember that whenever in our daily lives we hear an acquaintance or a co-worker say, "We need to increase taxes to solve our fiscal problem," we should never respond, "No, I disagree with increasing taxes." We should rather say, "Yes, I agree with you. We need to raise taxes. Let's raise more tax revenue in a sustainable way as we grow the number of private sector jobs and the GDP by lowering the tax rates and reforming our tax system."

Madera Chapter Tea Party Meetings

The Dec. 15 meeting presented guest speaker Frank Bigelow, Madera County Supervisor District I, and candidate for assembly. Clint Olivier was also introduced and is running for congress against Jim Costa.

If you haven't already, please take the

We must always talk about a two-track approach to finally restoring a dynamic national economy. These two equally important tracks are: increasing government revenue by lowering the tax rate and simplifying the tax system; and controlling spending, which must include entitlement reform.

time to join us. We would appreciate your presence in allowing you the opportunity to discuss current issues and ideas or to just listen. These meetings are educational so we can proceed well-equipped with the facts, not with the many untruths that are consistently spread throughout

the mainstream media.

Most all of the Madera Chapter meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month from 6 - 8 pm at Di Cicco's, 516 South I Street in Madera. The next scheduled meeting is Jan. 19. Should there be a change in scheduling, please confirm meeting dates or guest speakers on the Central Valley Tea Party website at www.centralvalleyteaparty.com and select the events tab on the blue menu bar then scroll to find your area's chapter for current scheduling of meetings, including speakers and topics of discussion.

For more information contact Madera Ranchos Tea Party Coordinator, John Smedley, by e-mail at jcsmedley@comcast.net, or call 559-645-7031. You may also contact Madera Tea Party Coordinator, Rick Farinelli, by e-mail at richardfarinelli@sbcglobal.net or call 559-706-5386.

Happy New Year! Let's pray 2012 is the year in history that America was saved from its current path of serious decline. Yes, we CAN save her.



Christmas Time for 4-H

The Sierra Shadows 4-H club was very busy this past month. There are currently 18 projects being offered this year to the members of the Sierra Shadows 4-H Club. A few of those projects had a meeting this past month.

The swine project had a meeting and we learned what items we would need to have in order to show a pig at the Chowchilla and Madera County Fairs. We also discussed the conformation of a pig. We discussed what our next meeting will be

about and the swine project leader is planning some very interesting field trips.

The rabbit project held its monthly meeting where the leader introduced "showmanship" to the new members by watching a CD of showmanship. They were then able to practice their showmanship routine on their rabbits. The rabbit project members are getting ready for Small Animal Expo.

The woodworking project held its monthly meeting and the leader talked about safety and let the members know what projects they will be working on this year.

The outdoor project held its monthly meeting and came up with some very interesting things to do this year. The group planned its first field trip and is excited about this outing.

The public speaking project also held its monthly meeting and talked about what type of presentation they will be doing. They have some great presentations lined

up. We will be having six members attending Madera County 4-H Presentation Day this year.

The cooking project met and made homemade chicken noodle soup, garlic cheese biscuits and, for dessert, they made an apple dump cake and a cherry/pineapple dump cake. They then had the pleasure of eating their own cooking.

The dog project meeting was held and they discussed dog obedience and showmanship since they will be learning both this year. They are also starting to practice for the small animal expo.

The food preservation project was held and members learned how to make apple butter. They also learned how to make an orange and clove pomander. They picked pomegranates for their next meeting, where they will make pomegranate jelly.

The floriculture project met and made beautiful floral arrangements. They also went over many different flower identifications.

The Sierra Shadows 4-H Club held its annual Christmas party on Dec. 13 at the Sierra View Elementary School cafeteria. At the party members participated in an ornament gift exchange, collecting Toys for Tots and enjoying a pot-luck dinner. In addition, we donated 20 blankets to a Ronald McDonald House representative.

Some members are gearing up to attend LCORT (Leadership Conference of Regional Teens) which will be held from Jan. 27 - 29, 2012 at the Wonder Valley Ranch in Sanger, which is open to members who are in 7th, 8th and 9th grade.

Youth between the ages of 9 to 18 years old may join 4-H. The Sierra Shadows 4-H Club leader is Terri Fernandez who can be reached at 559-645-4836 or at trrfernandez@yahoo.com. The next club meeting will be held at the Sierra View Elementary School cafeteria on Jan. 10, 2012 at 7 p.m. Hope to see you there.

Happy Holidays from the Sierra Shadows 4-H Club.

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Source: Forbes.com



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by Linda Thistle

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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

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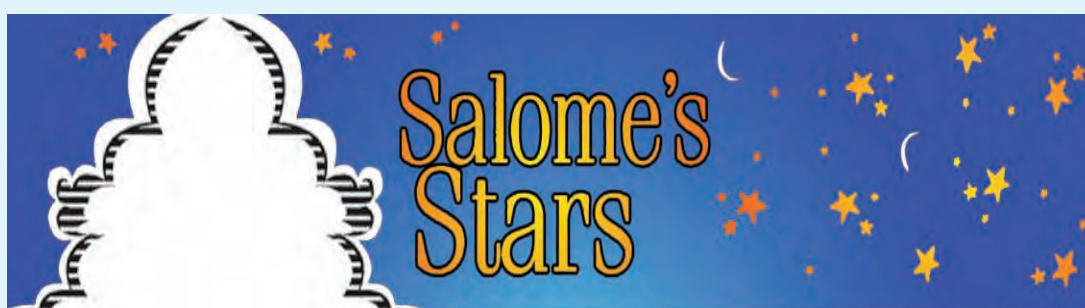
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



ARIES (March 21 to April 19) I know, dear Lamb, that you don't like anyone trying to take charge of one of your projects, but try to be a bit more flexible. A new idea could help hasten a positive result.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) I'm sure, like the time-thrifty Taurus that you are, that you've done much of your holiday shopping. But don't relax yet. Wrap those gifts now to save yourself lots of unwanted pressure.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Be receptive when a family member or friend asks to confide in you. Your positive reaction could ensure that he or she will have a happy holiday experience.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Don't be rushed into wrapping up that workplace problem. Consider leaving it until after the holidays. This way you'll have the facts you need to reach the right resolution.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) You'll get news that will make you glow brighter than the lights of the holiday season. Be sure to use what you learn both carefully and kindly, to avoid giving the wrong impression.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) That frayed relationship could be mended in time for the holidays if you were more flexible. Give a little, and you could get back a lot more than you imagined.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Things might not seem to be settling down as quickly as you would prefer. But it might be just a little holiday time flutter. You'll soon get news that will lead to more stability.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Stop getting so involved in everyone's personal problems that you lose precious time with loved ones. Remember, even the Supreme Court closes for the holidays.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) All signs point to a bright holiday, with all of those pesky problems finally resolved in your favor. Share the good times with people you love and, of course, who love you.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Your plans should not be set in stone and cemented over. Leave some openings in case you need to make changes. Spend the holidays with your nearest and dearest.

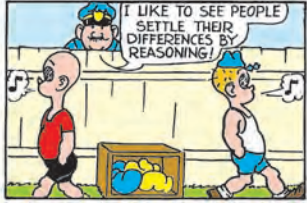
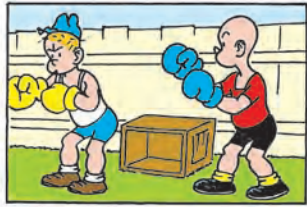
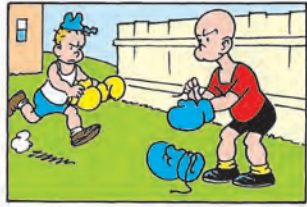
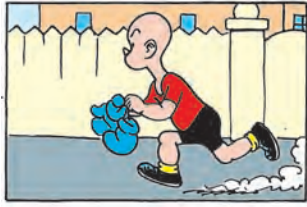
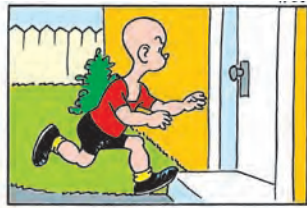
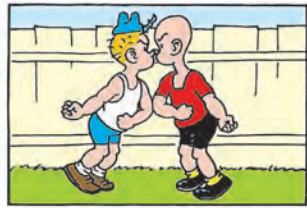
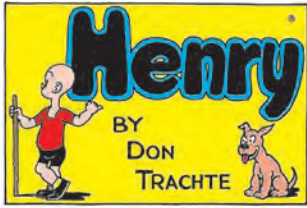
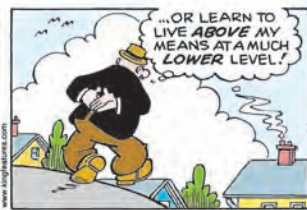
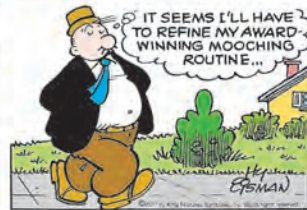
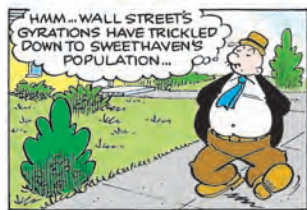
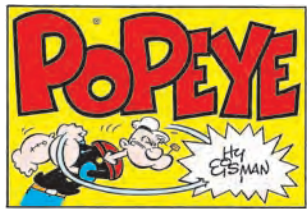
AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Surprise! This holiday finds you on the receiving end of the generosity of those who are usually the recipients of so much that you give so freely and lovingly.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) That piece of good news assures that you'll be swimming in clearer, calmer waters this holiday season. There might be a storm or two ahead, but you'll weather it all in fine style.

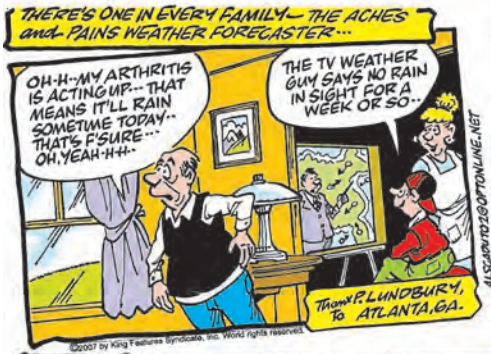
Born this Week

You have a flair for seeing things as you'd like them to be, as well as a gift for turning your perceptions into reality.

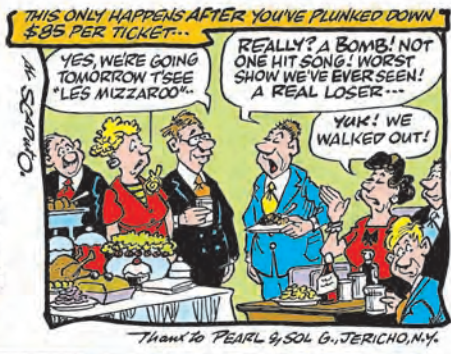
FUN PAGES



THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME



BY AL SCADUTO

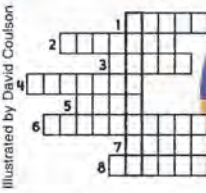


A NEAT FEAT OF JUGGLING!

FIG. 1
Place a nickel in the center of a small piece of cardboard and balance it on the tip of your forefinger (Fig. 1).

FIG. 2
Now try snapping the cardboard away with the fingers of your other hand, leaving the coin still balanced on your finger (Fig. 2).

Junior Whirl
by Charles Barry Townsend



A WINTER PICNIC!
Let's visit the folks in Florida. In our puzzle grid, there is room for eight picnic-related words. Below are hints to get you started. There is a dark frame around one of the columns in the grid. If you correctly name all of the words asked for, the letters in this frame, top to bottom, will spell out what you don't want on the way to a picnic.

DOODLE PICS! The two pictures shown here are graphic presentations of familiar words, phrases or names. You have one minute to identify both.

FIG. 1: COFFEE

FIG. 2: EAT AT JOE'S

Answers: 1. Ground coffee, 2. Sign on the dotted line.

THE "L" 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 L's. Here are some hints from the top down.

1. Roman numeral 50. 2. A musical tone.
3. A fermented beverage. 4. Not imaginary.
5. Before the due date. 6. Why vampires hate Buffy.
7. Sports TV loves them. 8. Fresh water eels.

- Uninvited guests.
- Good in or out of a sandwich.
- Can include almost anything good to eat.
- Serves as a table.
- Goes great with hard-boiled eggs.
- Usually the main course.
- Can ruin your fun.
- A great picnic drink.

Wishing Well

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

- Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions - forward, backward, up, down and diagonally.
- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|---------|
| Charyn | Grand | Logan | Tsangpo |
| Colca | Hells | Nine Mile | Valla |
| Fish River | Horseshoe | Shnizow | Waimea |
| Fraser | Kings | Tara River | |

TRIVIA TEST
By Fifi Rodriguez

- LITERATURE: Ollivanders is the name of a shop prominently featured in which series of novels?
- PSYCHOLOGY: What unnatural fear is represented in disorder oneirophobia?
- MOVIES: Which Alfred Hitchcock movie features a main character who is confined to a wheelchair?
- MUSIC: Which rock-and-roll group had a hit with the song "Got to Get You into My Life"?
- TELEVISION: What is the setting for the TV soap "Another World"?
- ANCIENT WORLD: Who was one of the chief founders of the philosophy of Cynicism?
- POETRY: Who wrote the words, "God's in his heaven/ All's right with the world"?
- ART: For what type of work was the 16th-century artist Titian best known?
- MYTHOLOGY: Who is the Greek goddess of love?
- GEOGRAPHY: What is the deepest lake in the world?

Answers

- The "Harry Potter" books
- Fear of dreams
- "Rear Window"
- The Beatles
- Bay City
- Diogenes
- Robert Browning
- Painting
- Aphrodite
- Lake Baikal in Siberia, Russia

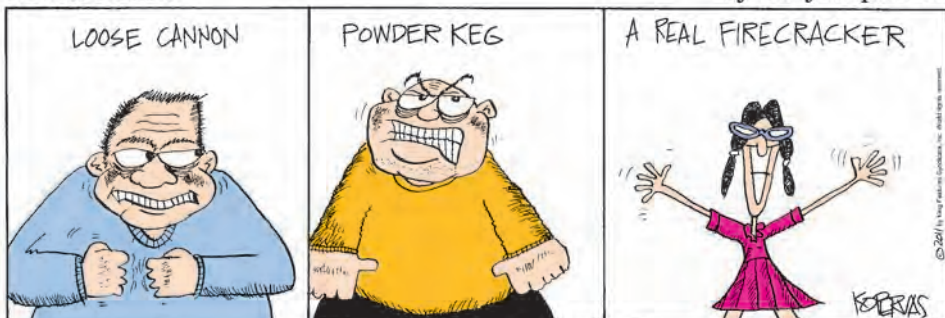
Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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JERRY CRAFT



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



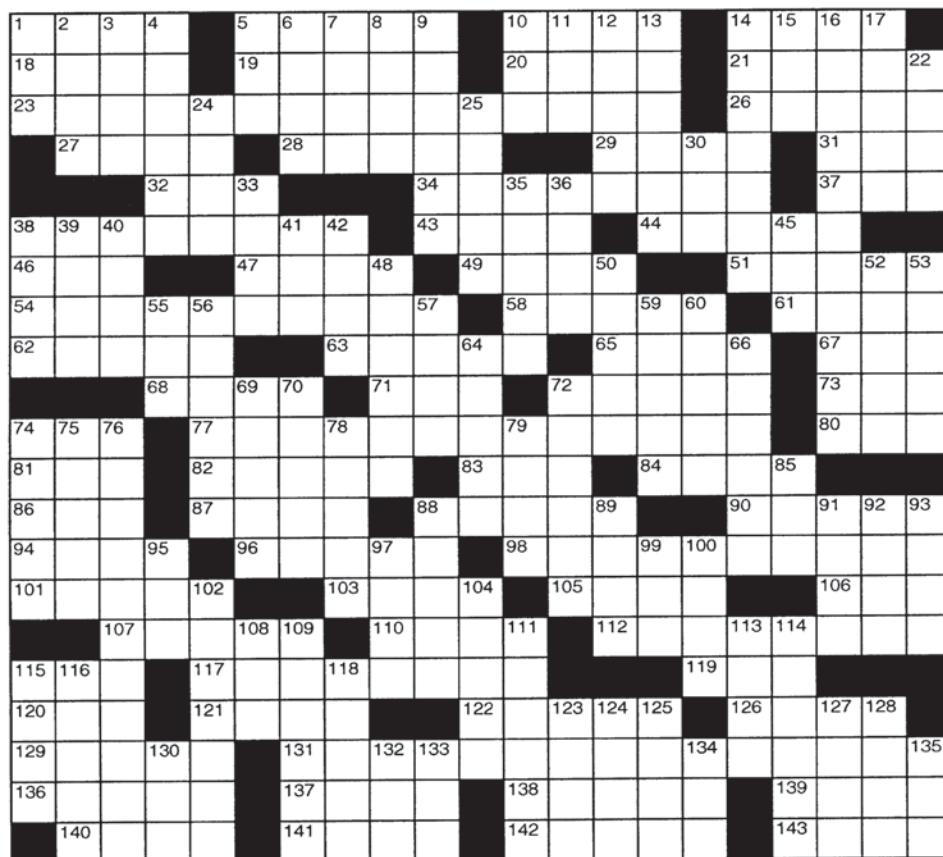
HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Picture is different. 2. Window has curtains. 3. Shovel is different. 4. Tree is missing. 5. Ottoman has no skirt. 6. Lampshade is different.

Super Crossword



- | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| ACROSS | 54 Rose Nylund's portrayal for one | 98 "The Name of the Rose" author | DOWN | 42 Goes downhill fast? | 92 Summer-time treats |
| 1 "— it the truth?" | 61 Skin problem | 101 Send the money | 1 Pitches | 45 Stephen of "Interview with the Vampire" | 93 Lamebrain |
| 5 Restrain volcano | 62 Irwin of "The Crocodile Hunter" | 103 Salt serving | 2 Where the tall corn grows | 48 Loses a lap | 95 Russian space station |
| 10 Conduit fittings | 63 '78 Peace Nobelist | 105 — Alto, CA | 3 Gallagher of Oasis | 50 Phi Beta — | 97 Tranquil |
| 14 Active | 65 Pestiferous person | 106 Dover's st. | 4 Aftershock | 52 79 Down's homeland | 99 Lilly of pharmaceuticals |
| 18 "The Green —" ('56 hit) | 67 Unmatched | 107 Fight site | 5 New Deal agcy. | 53 Passover meal | 100 Morning wear |
| 19 Victorian ornament | 68 Went like hotcakes | 110 Temporary wealth? | 6 "Very funny!" | 7 Runner Zatopek | 102 4 p.m. vehicle? |
| 20 Rachel's sister | 71 Apprehend | 112 Butcher's offering | 7 Runner Zatopek | 8 Room without a view? | 104 Muslim dietary term |
| 21 TV's "The Wonder —" | 72 Cumin or coriander | 115 "The — and I" ('47 film) | 8 Room without a view? | 9 Alaskan bear | 108 Sgt. or cpl. purchase |
| 23 Guns n' Roses hit | 73 Stretch the truth | 117 "Fait —" | 9 Alaskan bear | 10 Shady character? | 109 Like lemons |
| 26 — nous | 74 Health concern | 119 Ending for "auction" | 10 Shady character? | 11 Wahine's wreath | 111 WWII admiral |
| 27 Soprano Gluck | 77 Billy Rose song | 120 Sought office | 11 Wahine's wreath | 12 Joe of "Dr. Quinn" | 113 Shorten a sail |
| 28 "— a day's work" | 80 Organ of equilibrium | 121 Penny or peseta | 12 Joe of "Dr. Quinn" | 13 '62 Four Seasons hit | 114 Threat words |
| 29 Sleuth Nancy | 81 Poetic pot | 122 Wrong | 13 '62 Four Seasons hit | 14 Glasses | 115 Desire |
| 31 Herriman's "Krazy —" | 82 Reference volume | 126 Architect Saarinen | 14 Glasses | 15 Dress size | 116 Looked longingly |
| 32 Mythical monster | 83 Patriotic org. | 129 Conductor Seiji | 15 Dress size | 16 "Ramblin' Rose" singer | 118 — a customer |
| 34 In flight | 84 Prepare prunes | 131 Rose McGowan movie | 16 "Ramblin' Rose" singer | 17 Stage backdrop | 123 Concerning |
| 37 Adjective suffix | 86 Bar supply | 136 Murcia mister | 17 Stage backdrop | 22 Clockmaker Thomas | 124 Lightweight gun |
| 38 One of "The Three Tenors" | 87 Linguist Chomsky | 137 Take — the chin | 22 Clockmaker Thomas | 24 Grocer's measure | 125 Large herring |
| 43 Rock's — & the Gang | 88 Scope | 138 Spring for | 24 Grocer's measure | 25 Tearjerker? | 127 Whirl |
| 44 Pine | 90 Unbroken | 139 Actress Ward | 25 Tearjerker? | 30 Vane letters | 128 Christianity, today |
| 46 Kimono cummerbund | 94 "Divine Comedy" figure | 140 Live on lettuce | 30 Vane letters | 33 Gullet | 130 Affliction |
| 47 Interrogates | 96 Caroline, to Ted | 141 Bean on the bean | 33 Gullet | 35 Perch | 132 Wolfram — Eschenbach |
| 49 Cranny's companion | | 142 Hope's "The Prisoner of —" | 35 Perch | 36 Run through | 133 Squid's squirt |
| 51 Toomey or Philbin | | 143 North Carolina campus | 36 Run through | 38 Male swans | 134 "Wings" abbr. |
| | | | 38 Male swans | 39 Help a hood | 135 Solo of "Star Wars" |
| | | | 39 Help a hood | 40 Formal ceremony | |
| | | | 40 Formal ceremony | 41 — blond | |
| | | | 41 — blond | | |

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Due to overwhelming requests, SEMCU will sponsor additional grant writing classes in January. One of the additional classes will be Grant Writing 101 and the other class will be Grant Writing 102, which is writing practical applications. Please contact us to register for the upcoming grant writing classes and to suggest projects for which SEMCU could help get grants.

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