

The Ranchos Independent



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Volume 15 Issue 12 2019

The Official Publication of Southeastern Madera County

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In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



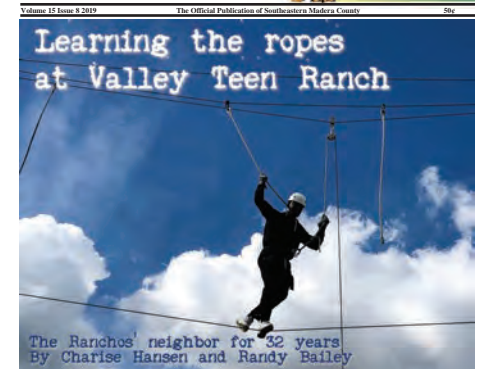
In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



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Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



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Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



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Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



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Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



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Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23

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Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23

Top Madera Official Steps Down After Scorching Public Comments



Madera County's Clerk/Recorder/Registrar, Rebecca Martinez, along with other residents of Madera County, spoke to the Madera County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday, Dec. 10 regarding allegedly abusive behavior by Madera County's Chief Administrative Officer, Eric Fleming.

By Randy Bailey

A handful of Madera County residents showed up at a County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday night, Dec. 10, to speak during the public comment part of the meeting concerning Chief Administrative Officer Eric Fleming and the Supervisors were stunned into silence by what they heard.

The most damning comments came from Madera County's Clerk/Recorder/Registrar, Rebecca Martinez. Martinez is Madera County's longest-serving elected official.

"Today I am here to speak not only for myself, but also for anyone that fears repercussion for speaking out," Martinez said. "Despite the fact that Mr. Fleming and I have had a good working relationship for the last three years, I have to say that I am disappointed and dismayed over the allegations presented.

Martinez further said, "This issue takes me back to the 2012-2013 Grand Jury report. That report addresses the very core of the issues at hand like bullying, intimidation, threatening subordinates, demonstrating retaliation, sending threatening and intimidating emails – in this case text messages – and lastly engaging

in angry, verbal tirades."

It has been reported that Fleming, 50 and a divorcee, was attempting to develop a relationship with a Fresno woman who was seeking a divorce from her husband, who happened to be a Madera County Corrections staff member. Fleming's attempts resulted in a restraining order filed by the woman through the Fresno Police Department. A series of threatening and vulgar texts to the woman, from Fleming and sent from Fleming's County-issued cell phone, were discovered.



Eric Fleming, the newly resigned Madera County Chief Administrative Officer.

"In addition to the discordant exchanges and publicly demonstrating animosity with the two longest serving female elected officials, this board consciously refused to support not only the two female elected officials, but rejected the findings of the Grand Jury," Martinez said. "Absolutely nothing

was done to protect us, or me, for that matter. Instead we were labeled trouble-makers."

In 2013, the Madera County Grand Jury investigated the County Government Center under Fleming's leadership. It looked into a series of complaints, prima-
Please see **SCORCHING** on P. 11

2019 • Top Ranchos Stories

from the pages of the *Ranchos Independent*

1 Safely Surrendered Baby Law/February • On a bitter cold February morning, a new-born was discovered in the road at Avenue 36 and Road 13½ with its umbilical cord still attached. The baby was safely taken to Valley Children's Hospital but the mother was never found. The story explored California's baby surrender law.

2 Life and Death in the Ranchos/May • A man from Fresno went to the State Foods Supermarket and proceeded to shoplift. When confronted by the store manager, the man said, "I've got a gun and a knife and I will shoot you right now." A concealed-carry Ranchos resident held him until Deputies came.

3 A Shooting in Fresno/September • Avenue 12 into the Ranchos was shut down for a couple of hours on Sept. 19 at Highway 99 and residents didn't know why. Turns out there was a shooting in Fresno and the victims escaped and got as far as Avenue 12 before they gave out. No one died.

4 One Man's Treasure .../July • Part of country living is having more space for hobbies and "collections." But when they become out of hand -- and an eyesore -- Madera County has laws and remedies for neighbors affected by the blight. This story gave a beginning course on those remedies.

5 Aedes Aegypti/May • With all of the intense rain we had in early 2019, an unwelcome byproduct was the "Ankle Biter" mosquito that came with it. Carrying the deadly Nile Virus, by the August issue we reported a death in Fresno from this insect. We looked at how to protect yourself.

6 Tesoro Viejo Fire Station/July • One of the benefits of new housing developments is the valuable infrastructure that can come with them. Madera County Fire Station No. 7 was built in the Tesoro Viejo development and was the first fire station built in Madera County in eight years.

7 New Psych Hospital/September • A new children's behavioral health facility is going to be built at Valley Children's Hospital. The 24-bed facility will serve children, but plans are to ultimately also be able to help adults and seniors. It should employ about 250 people.

8 D.A. Linn Cancels Claim/February • Ex-Madera County D.A. David Linn made a \$15 million claim against Madera County for damages from his public censure in March of 2018. After an election that saw Sally Moreno selected as the new District Attorney, Linn cancelled the claim in February.

9 Valley Teen Ranch/August • A Ranchos neighbor for 32 years, the Valley Teen Ranch story was finally told in the pages of the Ranchos Independent. From its humble beginnings to where it stands today, the history of the facility for at-risk youth was explained in detail.

10 California Oil Boom/November • Sometimes the stars just align. A combination of parts of California becoming available for oil leases for the first time in decades, coupled with oil "fracking" technology and Madera could be part of a potential oil boom. Black gold. Texas tea.

all stories can be found at www.TheRanchos.com

Election Registration Options

Rebecca Martinez, County Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters reminds voters that the upcoming election to be held on Mar. 3, 2020 is a Presidential Primary. As a party election, it is very important to know how you are registered because that is what determines the type of ballot you will receive. Voting for President depends on the party with which you are registered.

If you are registered with a Political

Party:

- You can only vote for a candidate running for President in the same party.

If you are registered with No Party Preference (Non-Partisan), you can vote in the Presidential Primary for the following parties:

- American Independent
- Democratic

Please see **OPTIONS** on P. 11

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Letters

Dear Editor:

Home is where your story begins. On January 1, 1980 we made The Ranchos our home. We feel like pioneers moving here at a time when there was only one gas station. I had a view of the mountains from my kitchen window. The view soon gave way to houses, but the trade-off was gaining wonderful neighbors. As we started our family, these neighbors became our kids' best friends and we enjoyed hosting parties and Bible Clubs on our block. Webster, a K-8 back then, was an extension of the nurturing environment of our neighborhood.

So many wonderful memories with families and teachers who also became dear friends. We couldn't have asked for a better place to raise our family. We continue to feel connected to our community through Flipside Church and through this newspaper. I'm grateful for Bill Bell and Randy Bailey who have dedicated countless hours to provide The Ranchos Independent. There have been times in recent years when we've felt a pull toward Fresno, where our grandkids and work are, but after 40 years, I think we're here to stay.

Brenda McElroy
Madera Ranchos

Dear Editor:

People of the Madera Ranchos and adjoining developments, now that I am moved into my new home out of California, I want to thank you for providing me with the opportunity to acquire a sense of community again.

As a child I was one of several kids running up and down our streets in Fresno and our block had many returned veterans from WW II. There was a camaraderie in those men and those fathers that I noticed but could not appreciate as a child; but those fathers made that block safe for all of us hoodlums running up and down the street all day. The mothers were normally at home and made sure we were fed and behaving but it was the fathers that did most of the discipline duties when we did as we should not. I grew up with a sense of community until I did my active duty in 1967-1968 and that movement disrupted the continuity of a community.

Thirty years ago, or so, I met Debbie and became a member of the Ranchos Community. After 20 years or so living in this community I found myself outraged about the use of water user's funds and obligations to finance a municipal well outside the service area of that user's district

and in the midst of our neighbors with private wells with no advance notice by county or local "leaders" with the result being a disadvantage to those private well-owning neighbors of mine. I found that I had a community that I felt had been wronged and found it to be a single "business as usual" item for a long, long line since 1960 on this community by temporary County employees.

At one of the Liberty High School Graduations, a young lady spoke of her classmates spending the last 12 years growing up together going to grammar school, middle school and now high school so they had become their own dysfunctional family/community. There was a great appreciation of that comment by the crowd. A generation of people have been able to grow up in your community as this class did, that is a good thing.

The ladies at the grocery store, the guys at the Napa, Happy and crew, the many restaurant workers that fed Debbie and I, the hard-working people supporting and working at the library have for years daily helped this community of the Ranchos that I dealt with. Avenue 12 is full of mostly local merchants that have weathered businesses in the middle of nowhere between Fresno and Madera that assist the community daily. There are women and men of character that I was able to meet and associate with that will always be friends that hold a sense of community for the Ranchos area. Randy at the paper was willing to print letters in the past where public concerns needed to be known and addressed -- that is key to a community.

When it came time for Debbie and I to depart I looked for a community that had a history of caring for itself and its members and I believe we did find that. People have family members going back to pioneers that homesteaded here five generations ago and they have cared for their families and their communities with no outside assistance historically, and that sense of community was what I wanted after being able to experience that in the Ranchos.

Thank you, Pete, Mike, Ray, Gary and the boys that burnt meat and James Dean. Thank you, Linda, for allowing me to work with you. Thank you, Don. You are so generous with your music. Thank you all around our little neighborhood on Charlton that made a safe place for children and old people that lived there. Thank you, Tom Kellner, for igniting my community activism for corrective action. It seems that I benefited from many people down there over the last 30 years that are making this time good for me. Hasta lobotomy ...

Chuck La Rue
Parts Unknown

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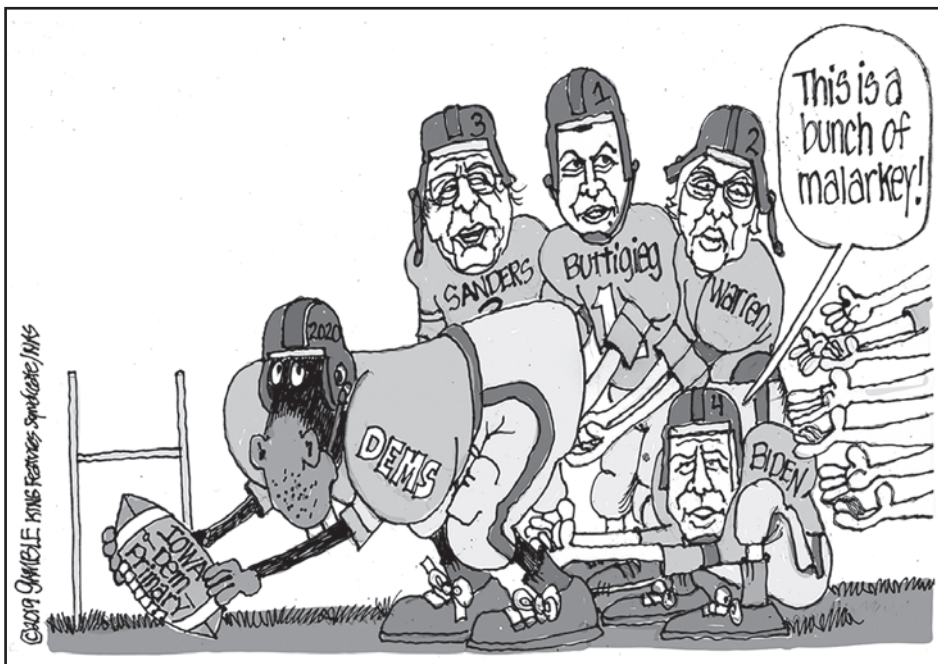
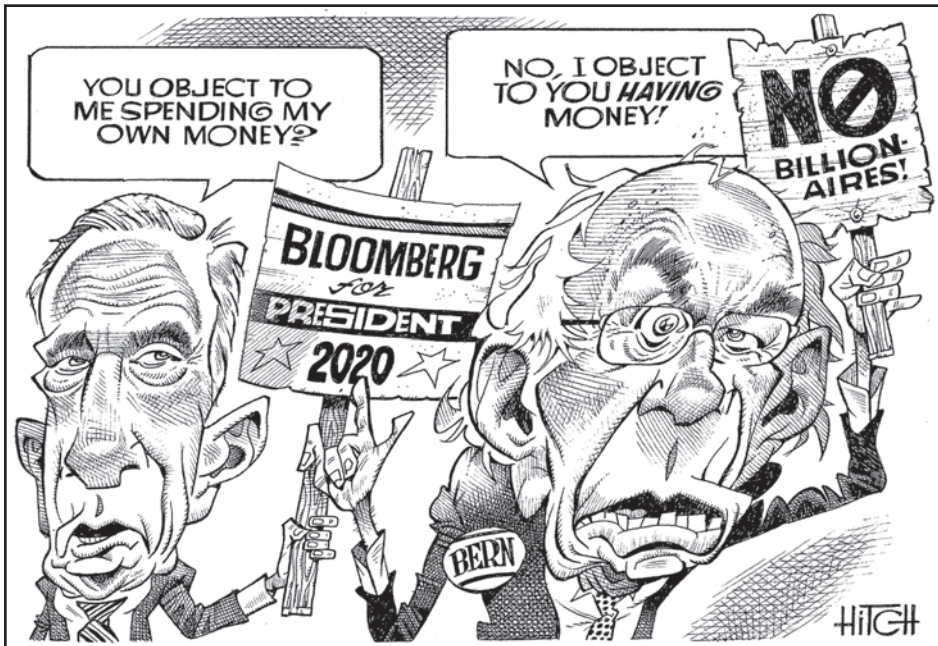
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Editorial

They Said it Wouldn't Last

By Randy Bailey

It was 15 years ago this issue that I first wrote something for the Ranchos Independent. My business partner, Kim Allison, and I had just bought the Ranchos Independent from previous owner Bill Bell and she and I were convinced that a William Randolph Hearst lifestyle couldn't be that far off. We were going to be newspaper moguls!

Over the next 15 years, life went on. A few years after our purchase, Kim decided newspaper publishing was not for her and she moved to Washington state where her family lived and where she lives to this day.

My daughters were 14, 12 and 10 when Daddy bought the paper. Every month once the paper is printed, it has to be counted, divided into routes for the Ranchos and delivered to the Madera post office. And if there is an advertising insert, they have to be inserted (duh!) into the paper before they make the trip to the post office. With three daughters, I've always had a built-in paper-stuffing crew. With a circulation of 4,400 papers per month, I estimate good old Dad has made his girls handle just about a half million newspapers for the Ranchos in the last 15 years.

Thanks, Dad!

There were three others who were indispensable in putting out the paper

over the years: My Mom, Aunt Maxine and Aunt Jean. Thank God for retirees that loved me.

Mom helped every month right up until March of 2011 when she passed away. Aunt Jean, in addition to writing her recipe column for the Ranchos Independent, helped with my bookkeeping and was there every month for putting the paper out. As you probably know, she passed away in September and she is sorely missed. I've still got Aunt Maxine helping and she is a godsend. She's always the first one there and the last to leave. She has helped me physically take the papers to the Madera post office when I was short-handed and she has brought me post office bins (the buckets you have to put the papers in for delivery) so many times I can't count.

I couldn't have done it without them.

But my number one help, in more ways than just with a little newspaper, is my wife Vicki. She has been there right beside me every step of the way. In October we celebrated 35 years of marriage, but it seems like just yesterday that we were dating and going to school and starting a family.

We lived in Fresno not too far from Fresno Air Terminal near Maple and Dakota. We loved our little house, even though it was starting to get a little snug for her and I and three little girls. But when we got broken into for the second time I said, "That's enough." My youngest brother lived in the Ranchos and a house near his was vacant, so I did some homework and 23 years ago we made the move. I never could have dreamed that would have eventually led to meeting Bill Bell and eight years later buying the Ranchos independent from him.

Life is funny like that. I was talking to my doctor just the other day and we were discussing how you had to trust God, mostly because you don't know what's going on and you *SURELY* don't know what God's going to do. I told him that while we're all looking at an elephant through a magnifying glass, God is standing back looking at the whole elephant. From trunk to tail, He sees it all and has a plan for it.

I don't know His ultimate plan for me and Vicki and the Ranchos Independent, but I've enjoyed the ride so far. Thanks everybody.

The Ranchos Independent

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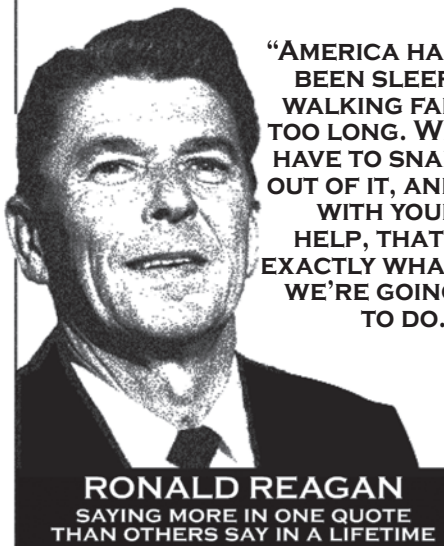
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Jean Briner -- Columnist, Advertising Sales Emeritus

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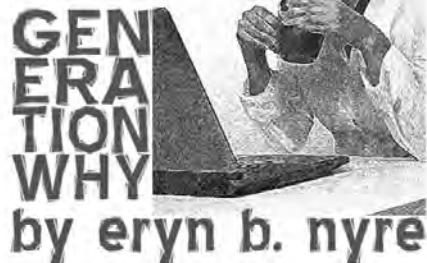
RONALD REAGAN
SAYING MORE IN ONE QUOTE
THAN OTHERS SAY IN A LIFETIME

A Christmas Favorite

As I sit here typing this, I am sipping a piping hot cup of the best homemade cocoa on the planet, courtesy of my father's recipe, and gazing around at a house full of ornaments, trinkets and knick-knacks. Some are shiny and new, some are very old and handmade, but all of them mean the same thing to me: The Christmas season is finally here.

I don't think it would come as much of a shock to anyone if I said that Christmas is my very favorite time of year. I love absolutely everything about it. I'm not even ashamed to admit that I wished it lasted longer. I mean, I don't want to put the tree up before I carve the pumpkin or anything, but come November first you can find me camped out in Walmart's Christmas aisle singing carols and wondering if it would be too much to buy one of those fake snow maker machines so I can blanket my front yard in powdery goodness.

To me, Thanksgiving dinner tastes better next to a Christmas tree. It brings out the flavor of the turkey and stuffing. I do wish I could get away with leaving my decorations up through Valentine's day, though. Who needs expensive dinners in overpriced, overcrowded restaurants when you can have a romantic carpet picnic under a finely flocked and decorated tree? I'm starting to get concerned that the reason I'm still single is that



my soul mate is living in the North Pole ... and is an elf.

The last three Christmases have been rough for me. I've barely wanted to decorate and certainly haven't really embraced the Yule spirit that is usually running through my veins all 12 months of the year. This year, however, I feel it finally coming back to me and suddenly it looks

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like Santa Claus came down the tree and vomited Christmas all over my house. It makes me happy. I'm thinking of turning one room into the 12 Months of Christmas Room. If anyone can make this a thing, I can.

I don't want to make it seem like Christmas is about things or possessions to me, because that's not my intention and not how I see this time of year. Christmas is about the birth of our Lord and Savior. It is a time to celebrate His arrival to redeem us with His atoning sacrifice. I don't lose sight of that amid the baubles and bric-a-brac. To the contrary, the decorations remind me of the many

Please see **GENWHY** on P. 7

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GENWHY cont. from P. 6

blessings I have in my life, blessings that I owe to Jesus.

I love my Christmas decorations not only because they remind me of my many blessings but also my many cherished memories. My Christmas village reminds me of my Grammy and how classy her house always looked at Christmas. My Santa and snowman candles remind me of my Nana and her funky little decorations she would pick up at garage sales and secondhand stores.

This year my favorite piece of decoration is my brand-new tree. Yes, it is artificial. I know, I know ...

insert horror struck gasp here, but you know what? It is fabulous. My family has had artificial trees as far back as I can remember and I think they are divine, especially this one.

Look, I understand the appeal of real trees. The beauty. The authenticity. The lovely pine smell. The sap. The maintenance. The mess. The disposal. You see where I am going with this? The right artificial Christmas tree can be an elegant alternative to the real thing. And because it can last for years it becomes part of your Christmas memories, like the handmade Santa and Mrs. Claus dolls your great-great-grandmother made that

were passed down to you.

At any rate, I can't get enough of my new tree. I keep staring at it. It looks like something I found in a snowy forest and Griswolded home on the roof of the Family Truckster. I wrapped it in glistening red garland like a big candy cane. (I also love garland. It's shiny and stylish. It's like tinsel without the frustrating cleanup). Then I topped it off with a brand-new peppermint bouquet tree topper that finishes the red and white look perfectly. Have I mentioned how much I love this tree? My mother would have loved it, too. I don't know if there is hot chocolate in heaven but if there

At any rate, I can't get enough of my new tree. I keep staring at it. It looks like something I found in a snowy forest and Griswolded home on the roof of the Family Truckster.

is, she is probably drinking a big mug of it right now and looking at my beautiful Christmas tree here with me.

The splendor of the season is everywhere. It's in the

chilly, fog-filled and frost-covered mornings. It's in the bright and colorful window displays. It's in the twinkle of the lights and the ring of the bells. 'Tis the season! The season of giving. The season of hope. The season of renewal. It is the coming of Christ. The birth of our redemption. The arrival of our grace.

So Merry Christmas to everyone. May the Spirit of the Lord fill your heart with warmth and blessings today and always!

SAY YOU SAW IT IN

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Soup Weather

(December 2009)

Editor's Note: With the passing of Aunt Jean, I have decided to bring you a "Best Of" of her recipes over the past 10 years. Good recipes are timeless and I hope you enjoy them all over again.



**Aunt Jean's
Ranchos
Recipes**

by Jean Briner

Have you ever heard "It's sandwich weather" or "It's dessert weather"? I haven't either, but you probably have heard, "It's soup weather." It got below freezing a couple of nights and it has been raining off and on now for the past week, so it is definitely "soup weather."

Soup can be made with or without meat and just about any kind of vegetables. It can be made with water, stock or milk. Putting all that together, the possibilities are limitless.

After Thanksgiving there is always

turkey soup, but you don't have to wait until the turkey is devoured and only the ugly bones are left. I'm not fond of cooking the carcass for soup anyway – it is just too much work. I'm always afraid of those little bones getting into the broth so we take as much meat off the bones as possible, toss the carcass and freeze the meat until time to make soup. If I were to use the bones, I would definitely strain the broth before using it.

This is my favorite way to make turkey soup without using the stock from the turkey carcass.

Turkey Soup

- 2 cans chicken stock
- 1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes
- 1 16 oz. pkg. frozen mixed vegetables
- Half medium onion – chopped
- 1 cup diced carrots
- Couple of potatoes peeled and diced
- ½ cup alphabet or star macaroni
- 1 can cream style corn
- Half small head of cabbage sliced & chopped
- Leftover turkey pulled into small pieces
- Salt and pepper to taste

Pour the stock into a large soup pot. Add the tomatoes and mixed vegetables and the chopped onion. Add enough water to cover vegetables well. Add salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil and turn burner down to simmer for about 25 minutes. Add the carrots and simmer another 10 minutes before adding the potatoes. Taste to see if more salt & pepper is needed. Add more water (or another can of stock) as you go to cover the vegetables well. Let this

Soup can be made with or without meat and just about any kind of vegetables. It can be made with water, stock or milk. Putting all that together, the possibilities are limitless.

simmer until the tomatoes have broken down and the frozen vegetables have softened – this should take about 45 minutes to an hour. Turn the heat up to a low boil and add the macaroni.

You should stir this because the macaroni tends to stick to the bottom of the pot. As soon as the macaroni is done, turn the fire back down to a simmer and add the cream corn, and the cabbage. When all this is cooked, add the turkey and simmer until the meat is hot.

I know you could throw everything into the pot all at once, but I feel it just tastes better cooked in layers. And remember, this is my recipe so I want you to personalize it as you like. I love cooked carrots, that's why I add additional carrots. If you or your family doesn't like something I have listed, don't use it. If you like something else – put it in. Another thing, if you don't have any leftover turkey use a couple of boiled chicken breasts. If you boil chicken for the soup, be sure to use that liquid in your soup instead of water.

We also had a ham for Thanksgiving. When most of the meat was trimmed off, I got the bone to make split pea soup. One of the simplest soups to make except you have to

Please see **RECIPE** on P. 9

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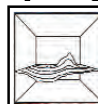
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the Ranchos Independent

Click on "Local News" at

RECIPE cont. from P. 8

watch it closer than most as the peas have a tendency to stick.

Split Pea Soup

- Ham Bone
- 1 lb. bag split peas
- Chopped Onion
- Chopped carrots
- Chopped, peeled potato
- Salt & Pepper

In a large pot boil the ham bone in plenty of water to cover. As it cooks, foam will form on the surface of the liquid; just spoon it off and discard. In another pot I put the peas that have been rinsed and picked through to take out any small rocks. I cover the peas with enough water to cover well and cook on a medium flame. Do not season at this point but be careful as they will stick if cooked too fast.

When the ham bone has cooked for about 30 minutes take it out of the water and trim what meat may be left on the bone. Discard the bone and set aside the meat. In the broth from the ham, put the onion, carrots and potato and a little salt and pepper. Cook only until the vegetables are done. As soon as the peas are soft, drain any excess water and pour the peas into the pot with the vegetables and add the ham. Simmer until peas are completely softened and soup is thick. Check for seasoning. I've read that you shouldn't salt the peas when they are first cooking as it will make them tough. Don't know how true that is, but I've always waited until they are cooked to add salt – just in case it is true.

Don't Forget Dessert

What would a soup dinner be without dessert? I'm leaving you with one of our family's favorite. When my niece Eryn, who lives in southern California, is planning to come for a visit she will call my sister and in the conversation will say, "Grandma, will there be Republican Dessert?" Well of course there will be. We asked one time why they call it Republican Dessert – the answer was "It's so rich, the Democrats can't afford it."

Republican Dessert

- 1 C flour
 - 1 stick margarine – softened
 - ½ C Chopped nuts
- Mix together like pie dough and press into bottom of 9x13 pan. Bake for 10 minutes in preheated 350 oven.
- 1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese

1 C. Powdered sugar
1 large container Cool Whip
Cream together the cream cheese and powdered sugar. Fold in the container of cool whip. Put on top of cooled crust and freeze.

- 2 small pkgs. Instant chocolate pudding mix.
- 2½ C milk

Mix pudding mix and milk as directed on package but do not add any more milk. Spread over second layer and freeze.

1 small container Cool Whip
Spread this over the pudding layer and freeze. If desired, toasted coconut can be sprinkled over the top.

I hope you have a Blessed Merry Christmas and a very Happy and prosperous New Year.

Talk to you next year!






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By Brenda McElroy

Solutions to Holiday Struggles

When we walked into the tiny lobby/breakfast area, it looked as if our anniversary weekend hotel wasn't living up to the deal it appeared to be online. We got the keycards and headed to the car for our bags. As we passed by some rooms being cleaned, I noticed a man carrying a gallon container of solution. The words "BED BUGS" stuck out to me with flashing lights. We made a quick U-turn and hurried to the lobby for a refund. There we were, in Monterey with no place to stay.

Joseph and Mary experienced "no place to stay" as well. I'm sure they were much more disturbed by those circumstances with her

due date drawing nigh. Fortunately for us, with the help of HotelTonight.com, by evening we were tucked into a beautiful room with a crackling fire. They however, found shelter in a stable with a manger in place of a portacrib.

Feelings of sadness, disappointment and weariness often accompany this "most wonderful time of the year." Unmet expectations can quickly deflate our hopes, increase our stress and leave us feeling like victims of our circumstances.

After Christmas, but before you put away the last box of decorations, sit down with your laptop or pen and paper. If either of these problems resonate with you, consider the solutions and benefits. Then, set yourself up for a more peaceful and productive holiday season in 2020.

Problem #1:

You experience regret at the end of the season due to things you didn't get to do or didn't get done.

Solution:

- Make a list of activities, traditions, and holiday prep that you want to do next December.
- Be sure to include the things you missed this year and feel free to leave some things off.
- Put the list in your "Reminders" app for a notice to appear in early November 2020 or clip the list to your November page in next year's paper calendar.

When November 2020 rolls around, assign each item a date in December before your schedule fills up. As other things arise you can say no, because you actually do already have something scheduled or make a conscious choice about which to prioritize.

Benefit:

By creating the list at the end of this holiday season, things are still

After Christmas, but before you put away the last box of decorations, sit down with your laptop or pen and paper. If [holiday] problems resonate with you, consider the solutions and benefits. Then, set yourself up for a more peaceful and productive holiday season in 2020.

fresh in your mind. Next year you'll be more in control by assigning dates and times for new things, traditions and the general holiday prep projects and activities.

Problem #2:

Your house looked as crazed as you felt the night before you

hosted the family Christmas dinner.

Solution:

- Grab your 2020 calendar again and block out time for three organizing sessions (kitchen/pantry, living room/dining room, guest bedroom/bathroom) prior to Thanksgiving. Schedule more, if needed.
- Purge and declutter these areas.
- If the holidays hit before you're done, use the garage or your catch-all room to temporarily store the excess.
- Set a reminder on your calendar early in January to tackle the bags/boxes of stuff that were relocated with a completion deadline of January 31.

If it's still not done — call me!

Benefit:

You can think more clearly when your space is decluttered and open

Please see **ORGANIZE** on P. 15

Golden Valley Baptist Church

**Come celebrate
the birth of Christ at our
Christmas Eve
Candlelight Service**

**December 24, 2019 @ 6:30pm
12414 Road 37 - Madera Ranchos**

**"For unto you is born this day
in the city of David a Savior,
which is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11**

**Merry Christmas
to the Ranchos and Beyond!**

**Sunday School 9 a m
Sunday Worship Service 10:30 a m
559-645 1700**

12/19



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12/19

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Madera Voter Registration Fraud

Madera County Registrar of Voters Rebecca Martinez and District Attorney Sally Moreno announced today that 12 felony counts have been filed against Defendant April Atilano stemming from a voter registration scheme during the 2018 Gubernatorial Election.

“In July of 2018 my office received several registration cards that were distributed by April Atilano, EVP 2018,” stated Martinez. “In August as my staff began processing the registration cards they noticed many irregularities with the cards and notified me of their findings.”

Election staff, trained to perform signature verification on vote by mail ballots began noticing several discrepancies in the registration cards including missing or incorrect information and signatures that did not match the voter’s signature

on file. After bringing several to the attention of Rebecca Martinez, the Registrar immediately ordered that all cards associated with Atilano or EVP be quarantined and that the affected voters be contacted to confirm intent. Many of the voters associated with the suspicious cards informed election officials that they had not attempted to re-register to vote and did not want to change their party affiliation as the cards had indicated.

“We collected all of the relevant information including copies of what we determined were fraudulent cards as well as copies of the voter’s genuine registration cards,” explained Martinez. “We then forwarded all of the information to the Secretary of State and the Madera County District Attorney for investigation.”

“Any time there is an allegation of voter fraud or an attempt to game the

foundation of our democracy, we take it very seriously,” stated Sally Moreno, Madera County’s top prosecutor. “Our investigation unit, after reviewing the information from our local Registrar and the Secretary of State, conducted a criminal investigation.”

A copy of the criminal complaint filed in Madera County Superior Court charges April Atilano with 12 felony counts of violating Section 18101 of the California Election Code. The complaint alleges that the defendant unlawfully, knowingly, and willfully completed or caused and procured the completion of, in whole or in part, an affidavit of registration and voter registration card, with the intent to cause the registration or reregistration as a voter of a fictitious person or of any person who has not requested registration or reregistration as a voter.

“We have filed 12 felony counts against Ms. Atilano and we intend to prosecute this case to the fullest extent of the law,” explained Moreno.

April Atilano, a resident of Monterey County, has been ordered to appear in court on the charges in November. If found guilty she faces up to ten years and four months in jail.

“We hold the sacred right to vote in high esteem and anyone who attempts to meddle with the voting process will be rooted out and held to answer for their acts,” Martinez and Moreno said in a joint statement. “Voters should know that the voting system in Madera County is not only transparent, fair and accurate but also protected from those who wish to interfere.”

OPTIONS cont. from P. 2

- Libertarian

A notice has already been sent to you where you can choose one of the parties above. If you need another, please call. If you don’t want to vote a party ballot, no action is needed.

If you are registered with No Party Preference and want to vote in the Presidential Primary for one of the following political parties:

- Green

- Peace & Freedom
- Republican

You must re-register to vote with that party by Feb. 17, 2020.

To check your registration status and political party, go to www.voterstatus.ca.gov. You can register online at www.registertovote.ca.gov.

For more information, please call the Elections Division at 559-675-7720 or toll free at 800-435-0509.

Si desea información en Español, llame a 559-675-7720 o 800-435-0509.

SCORCHING cont. from P. 2

rily from female County employees. Martinez said the culture of bullying, intimidation and threatening subordinates continues at the Government Center.

“Today, we find ourselves in familiar territory. We’ve heard similar allegations, this time from a private female citizen, but have had other female citizens who have complained, that happened to be county employees, one of which was paid \$10,000 to go away,” Martinez said. “At some point, you knew there were issues and you elected to turn a blind eye. You, as a board, own this.”

There was another Grand Jury in 2018 that centered on Fleming. This time it was for running up a \$13,500 tab for County lunch meetings on his County credit card over a two-year period. In addition, earlier this year he was arrested by Fresno police and charged with Driving Under the Influence on the night of July 3. Fleming is awaiting trial on that charge.

Martinez concluded her statements by saying, “In closing, this board has supported and trusted this CAO for years to the detriment of his accusers. Frankly, I don’t know how we will have the ability to

rightfully discipline employees, when they have violated County policy, if you continue to allow the person holding one of the highest positions of trust in the County to violate without consequence.

“Employees have lived in a hostile work environment long enough. Show them you are taking this matter seriously and give them their voice back. Let them be allowed to complain or speak freely, without fear. You have to own this and do the right thing for the people you serve. This is your chance to right the wrongs.”

Fleming, who has been Madera County’s CAO since 2010, has been part of Madera County administration since 2005. He had previously released a letter on Dec. 6th stating his intent to resign from Madera County sometime in 2020. After Martinez spoke, the Supervisors adjourned to closed session, joined by Fleming.

Fleming did not return to the open meeting after the closed session concluded.

On Friday, Dec. 13, the Board of Supervisors announced Fleming’s resignation. “The board has approved Eric Fleming’s resignation agreement and release,” said Board Chair Brett Frazier. “The resignation is effective immediately.”

State Wants Highway 99 Funds for Rail Projects

Madera County Board of Supervisors Unanimously Oppose the Draft 2020 Interregional Transportation Improvement Plan which Delete’s Funding for the Planned Widening of Highway 99 from Avenue 7 to Avenue 12

At an October Madera County Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board unanimously opposed the Caltrans Draft 2020 Interregional Transportation Improvement Plan (ITIP). The Draft 2020 ITIP would reallocate gas tax funds from highways to rail transportation in response to an Executive Order signed by Governor Newsom on Oct. 1, 2019 that directs Caltrans, “to reduce congestion through innovative strategies designed to encourage

people to shift from cars to other modes of transportation.”

The Draft 2020 ITIP proposes the deletion of three Central Valley transportation projects which will move \$61.3 million to the column of “uncommitted 2020 ITIP programming capacity.” Those uncommitted funds, according to the draft plan, will be held in reserve “for priority rail projects and other priorities aligned with Executive Order N-19-19.”

The three projects proposed for deletion within the Draft 2020 ITIP include work on the Antelope Grade on Highway 46, Highway 99 widening through Tulare County and Highway 99 widening from four to six lanes from Avenue 7 to Av-

enue 12 in Madera County.

Although the current Highway 99 widening project from Avenue 12 to Avenue 17 is on target for completion in 2020, Madera County staff suggested that the deletion of the scheduled widening from Avenue 7 to Avenue 12 will sustain current bottlenecks. Staff also explained, “Not only will this project substantially reduce the number and rate of transportation accidents, serious injuries, and fatalities, but it will also reduce the cost of doing business by making it more efficient and cost-effective to move goods and people throughout the central valley, not to mention the yielding of a negative effect towards tailpipe emissions.”

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Tables of 10 are available for your Business or Group. Business Sponsorships are also available. Call for info.

Proceeds go to the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce. The Annual Crab Feed always sells out so get your tickets early! You can get your tickets at the Chamber office, the Ranchos Independent, Ranchos Pizza Factory or the Ranchos Café.



12/19

Call the Chamber for more information. 645-4001

Be a Crab Feed Sponsor

Is your business going to the Crab Feed? For \$700 (*\$600 if bought by Feb. 21*) 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. Join us on January 8 at 6:30 p.m. at 37167 Ave. 12, Suite 5C. Come give your input on the future of the Ranchos. Call us at 645-4001.

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The Bookshelf

Librarian Gives Sneak Peak of New Library Before Dec. 19 Grand Opening

By Jerrica Edmundson

We are hard at work here at the new Ranchos Branch library, getting the new building ready for its grand opening on Dec. 19. We are officially opening in the new space, the former Hurst Hardware at 37368 Berkshire Dr., in a space that will have a larger computer area, more seating and tables for patrons to use, and a meeting room that will be available for after-hours usage by the community as needed. We do apologize for the temporary closure we have had to go through in order to get the location moved, but we assure you that it is totally worth it in the long run. You are going to love the new location and we can't wait to show it off.

We are ecstatic that Supervisor

Brett Frazier has decided to christen the meeting room that will be named after two of the most influential people out here in the Ranchos: Mervyn and Virginia Vick. I'm hard-pressed to think of any persons more deserving of the honor and am so glad to be here to see it come to fruition.

I'll keep some of the mystery alive so the grand opening is as awesome as possible, but here is a progress picture of the move to give you a little hint at what's in store.

Again, the official opening for the new library branch is going to be on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 11 a.m., complete with a ribbon cutting ceremony provided by the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce. Everyone is invited to attend.



The interior of the former Hurst Hardware at 37368 Berkshire Dr. is being transformed into a state-of-the-art library for the Ranchos and is going to be unveiled on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 11 am, complete with a ribbon cutting ceremony.



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Strange BUT TRUE

By Samantha Weaver

- It was Polish chess grandmaster Savielly Tartakower who made the following sage observation: "Victory goes to the player who makes the next-to-last mistake."
- Worldwide, herbivores kill more people than carnivores.
- Japanese scientists have discovered that the human body emits a very slight, yet perceptible, glow. After using a special camera to study a sample of men in their 20s, they found that intensity of the glow varies, with the lowest point at around 10 a.m. and the brightest at 4 a.m.
- Due to a quirk in the transition from one kind of calendar system to another, nobody was born between Oct. 4 and

Oct. 15 in continental Europe in the year 1582.

- If you're like me, social situations can be a nightmare of trying -- and usually failing -- to remember the names of all your new acquaintances. The next time you find yourself struggling to name the person you're conversing with, you can always segue into this interesting tidbit: The inability to remember names is technically known as anomia.
- In ancient Japan, towns would have public contests to see who could break wind the loudest and the longest. Prizes were awarded.
- It is possible for a fetus in the womb to get hiccups.
- Thought for the Day: "Doctors are the same as lawyers; the only difference is that lawyers merely rob you, whereas doctors rob you and kill you too." -- Anton Chekhov

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Senior Report

Senior Center Benefits from Vince Guthrie “Honorary Mayor” Election

By Margaret Tynan

Who'd believe that “Old Father Time” could move so quickly? “Baby New Year” is already at the threshold. Members of Ranchos/Hills Seniors Center wish each and every one good health, happiness, peace and harmony in 2020.

Last year members and the broader community enjoyed many Center-sponsored events, including several health-related workshops, a socialization program, a writers group, craft classes and various holiday parties and dinners.

The Annual Spring Home and Garden Festival and Fall Art and Craft Fair were both successful events and members also participated in the Ranchos Flatlanders Day activities with member Joliene Mason serving as Grand Marshal.

Our most recent event was the Honorary Mayor campaign. The Center thanks the community for their support and all the candidates who worked so hard on behalf of their favorite non-profit organizations. They were James Brannon — Golden Valley Schools/Special Education; Marcos De Ochoa — Lifetree Church; Vince Guthrie — Ranchos/Hills Seniors; Nicole O'Reilly — Best Buddies Program; Richard Sylver — Ranchos/Hills Seniors; and David Wagner — Cub Scout Pack 119. Congratulations to Vince Guthrie who raised the most funds.

The Ranchos/Hills Seniors, through Cruise Experts Travel and owner Wes Rowland, annually sponsor a travel tour to support the Center. In November more than 40 members and friends toured Zion, Bryce, Arches and Grand Canyon National Parkswere in all their fall season

glory. A great trip with lovely accommodations.

Cruise Experts has announced two trips to benefit the Center in 2020. First is a nine-day tour of Mackinac Island, Michigan and the Great Lakes, Aug. 22-30. The second is an eight-day Mississippi cruise from St. Louis to St. Paul/Minneapolis, Aug. 30-Sept. 6. Stop by the Center at 37330 Berkshire Dr. to pick up more details on the trips or call Jen Brisco at Cruise Experts at 559-625-51-39, Ext. 106. Sign up soon as space is limited.

Wear your holiday sweater and bring a dish to share at our New Year's Eve potluck on Tuesday, Dec. 31 at 6 p.m.

Let's ring in 2020 with good friends and good food. We hope to see you there. Also, on Saturday, Jan. 11 at 6 p.m. the Center is having a Western Night gathering. Chili, soups, cornbread and dessert will be served. We're excited to have Ed Bell of the Baloney Creek Band provide entertainment for the evening. Door Prize and 50-50 are planned, so put on your western jeans, hat and boots and mosey over to the Center for a fun evening. Tickets are \$10 at the Center.

It's time to sign up for the Madera County Food Bank Senior Brown Bag Program. The Food Bank distributes food at the Ranchos/Hills Seniors Center once a month. It costs \$24 for the year to participate. You may stop by the Center to sign up and drop off your check made out to Madera County Food Bank by January 16.

Get your New Year off to a healthy start. Join the exercise group every Monday-Wednesday-Friday at 10 a.m. You may also want to enjoy the lunch program Monday through Friday at 11:30 a.m. See Debbie at the

Center to register. Don't forget to come to the Bake, Boutique, Garden and Treasure House Sale on Saturday, Jan. 4 from 8 a.m. to noon.

Note: It's time to renew Ranchos/Hills Seniors membership. Deadline is Feb. 10. Also, congratulations to Madera Ranchos resident

Connie Amaya, this year's Fall Raffle winner.

Thought for January: “For last year's words belong to last year's language. And next year's words await another voice. And to make an end is to make a beginning.” — T.S. Eliot (Little Gidding)



The winning candidate for Honorary Ranchos Mayor is Vince Guthrie, here with his daughter, Joybeth. He raised the most money for local non-profit groups.

Christmas Stocking Stuffers!



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Kiwanis Korner

Improving Ranchos is Kiwanis Goal

By Nancy Wayne

"Kiwanis International is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to changing the world one child, one community at a time."

In November at the Kiwanis meeting held on Thursday evening at 6:30 p.m. at the Pizza Factory, Verlaine Elinburg received the Kiwanis Distinguished Service Award.

For more than 25 years, Kiwanis clubs have awarded the Distinguished Service Award to recognize, at the District level, Kiwanians who go above and beyond in their service and dedication to their club and community. Thank you, Verlaine, for all of your work to make



Verlaine Elinburg, left, receives the Kiwanis Distinguished Service Award from President Richard Wayne.

this community a better place.

Guest speakers come and present information for our community at the weekly meetings. In December, Superintendent of Golden Valley Unified School District, Rod Wallace, shared with us what has and will be happening in the schools.

After the Annual Fundraiser held at Riverstone this fall, Kiwanis members presented over 60 teddy bears

to Valley Children's Hospital and Rod Wallace, Bev Walsh and Chris Parks

will be installed as new members in the Ranchos Kiwanis. Welcome and congratulations to all.

Kiwanis meets the second, third and fourth Thursdays of the month at the Pizza Factory Banquet Room at 37184 Ave. 12 in the Madera Ranchos at 6 p.m. for dinner with the meeting following.

www.RanchosKiwanis.com



At every Kiwanis meeting, interesting speakers inform members of current events in the Ranchos.

ORGANIZE cont. from P. 10

your home with joy. You will also have a plan in place to tackle the clutter after the holidays!

As my daughter was tucking in her four-year-old twins, Abby said, "I want to pray for Mary and Joseph ... God, remember Mary and Joseph? They were your parents!" I'm sure that first Christmas didn't go exactly the way Mary and Joseph envisioned. They celebrated Jesus' birth with stinky animals and uninvited

shepherds. And yet, Mary "treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart." May we too find ways to focus on and treasure that which is most meaningful this Christmas and always.

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 pay a visit online to www.organizedbychoice.com.



Put to the Test

Hello 93636,

Well, it's that time again. In fact, it's that time again for the seventh time for me. As an ASE (National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence) certified technician, I'm required to recertify every five years to maintain my ASE certifications. For me that's 10 recertification tests each time.

It takes me two days, about six hours per day, to complete my ASE certification. The A1-A8 tests have 45 questions with a 45-minute time limit per test. The L1 (Advanced Engine Performance Specialist) and L3 (Light Duty Hybrid/Electric Vehicle Specialist) tests also contain 45 questions but the time limit is increased to 120 minutes because of the increased difficulty. There are no easy tests these days due to the complexity of the modern vehicle. The A6, A8 and L1 certifications are a prerequisite for obtaining a California Smog Inspector License.

ASE was organized in the late 60s and early 70s as an alternative to government regulation of the automotive repair industry. We set our own high standards and monitor ourselves. ASE officially began in 1972 as an independent, non-profit organization designed to improve the quality of vehicle repair and service in the U.S. ASE does not certify shops. Since its inception, nearly 2 million individuals have registered for ASE certification. Currently there are nearly 300,000 ASE-certified automotive repair technicians and service professionals working in the U.S. automotive repair industry.

ASE certification tests are written in workshops by a national panel of seasoned automotive industry professionals and executives, including working technicians, automobile manufacturers, aftermarket manufacturers and educators. Roughly one third of testers fail their first attempt.

To certify as an ASE technician, the individual must pass an ASE certification test, must have two years of on-the-job training, or one year of on-the-job training and a two-year degree in automotive repair. In order to qualify as an ASE Master Level Technician, the individual must take and pass all eight ASE

certification tests: A1 (Engine Repair); A2 (Automatic Transmission and Transaxle); A3 (Manual Drivetrain and Axles); A4 (Suspension and Steering); A5 (Brakes); A6 (Electrical Systems); A7 (Heating/Air Conditioning); and A8 (Engine Performance), with a score of 70 percent or higher. Currently there are 67,962 ASE-Certified Master Technicians in the U.S.

The two most difficult certifications for

ASE officially began in 1972 as an independent, non-profit organization designed to improve the quality of vehicle repair and service in the U.S.

me are the (L1) Advanced Engine Performance Specialist and (L3) Light Duty Hybrid/Electrical Vehicle Specialists tests. The L1 test is focused on engine, transmission and differential diagnostic and their computerized control systems, including ignition, fuel injection, air induction and emission control systems. The L1 test requires us to diagnosis a fictional composite

car developed by ASE. It's a mosaic of many cars. None of its components or systems are common to any single car or any single automotive manufacturer. This fictional car comes with a 36-page study booklet in which 32 pages are specifications for the composite car. Here are the specifications for the engine and transmission:

ENGINE: Generic, four-stroke, V6 design equipped with four chain-driven overhead camshafts, 24 valves, hydraulic valve lifters, variable intake camshaft timing, and variable intake valve lift.

TRANSMISSION: Six-speed, automatic transaxle with overdrive, controlled by a separate transmission control module. The transmission has three planetary gear sets, five clutch packs, a single one-way clutch, six forward gears and one reverse gear. The torque converter is capable of lock-up in third, fourth, fifth and sixth gears. The transmission contains an electronic pressure control solenoid, five shift solenoids and a torque converter clutch solenoid.

This is only half of one page of the 32 pages of vehicle specifications. It takes many days of study just to familiarize myself with this one-of-a-kind unique car. Currently there are 32,566 ASE L1 Certified Technicians in the U.S. Although I've spent many dollars and

attended many hours of hybrid training, the Light Duty Hybrid/Electric Vehicle Specialist (L3) Certification is the most challenging certification for me. The L3 test requires a technician to possess the knowledge and skill sets needed to diagnose drivability problems for hybrid/electric automobiles. Lots of Ohm's Law and Kirchhoff's Laws of current and voltage. The test focuses on high voltage, low voltage and electronic management systems.

It takes me two days, about six hours per day, to complete my ASE certification ... there are no easy tests these days due to the complexity of the modern vehicle.

Currently, there are 1,602 ASE L3 certified technicians in the U.S.

WOW! I wonder why.

Testing is strictly controlled. The testing facility provides a locker for my belt, sweater, watch, cell phone, hat, wallet, change and whatever. We are only allowed to wear the

Please see **HANDS** on P. 17

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12/19

SEMCU speaks

Terrifically Terrifying and, at Times, Tragic Traffic on Avenue 12

By Igal Treibatch

Can accidents – even death and human suffering – be improved? Absolutely, but it takes time, money and effort.

Madera is not a wealthy county and road-related grants are very specific and require time and expensive studies in order to allow funding to take place.

“Traffic on Avenue 12” is one of those topics that many in the community would like to address expeditiously. We understand the frustration local residents are feeling as there have been speeding cars, several accidents and getting in or out of a driveway can often be a challenge at certain times during the day. With that said, the County has done a good job in slowing traffic through the Ranchos by reducing speed from 55 m.p.h. on Avenue 12 to 40 m.p.h., providing a center turning lane and sidewalks to help matters, as well as Highway Patrol becoming more visi-

ble even though they are limited with manpower.

We all would like to do more. Madera is not a wealthy county and road-related grants are very specific and require time and expensive studies in order to allow funding to take place. I believe that the one important thing we can do as a community is educate the public on alternatives to Avenue 12.

For potential further relief, let’s talk about Avenue 9 interchange connections on both 41 and 99, providing a mostly uninterrupted 55 m.p.h. short cut between Fresno and Madera. Avenue 9 can be providing relief, but many people just don’t know about it. In the past few years, the County has been working on improving Avenue 9 between 41 and 99. By now, 64 percent of the improvements have been made in the western stretch and the rest is slated to be completed in the near future. Not everyone knows about the shorter, faster and pleasant drive throughout the orchards on Avenue 9. We should educate the public it exists.

We at SEMCU are asking you, the residents, to suggest your ideas as to what should be done about advertising and educating the public about an alternative to Avenue 12. You may write to www.SEMCU.org or come to a once a month meeting on the third Monday of every month and make your suggestion and bring ideas to help our community.

One other outlet we suggest is to attend the coffee and conversation meetings Supervisor Brett Frazier holds once a month for about an hour at the Ranchos Café at 8 a.m. This is a great opportunity to not only hear what he says about the plans for the future, but also have a chance to dis-

cuss issues with others in attendance.

On another subject, keep in mind the washing machine and dishwasher grant is coming to an end. We will be accepting the last batch of applications through Dec. 31, 2019. A new washer can make a great Christmas gift and, on top of that, you have the potential of getting \$700 back if you purchase both a new Energy Star washing machine and dishwasher.

SEMCU meets on the third Monday of the month at 6 p.m. at the Pizza Factory at 37184 Ave 12 in the Madera Ranchos. Free pizza and soft drinks are provided. You have the opportunity to learn about issues relevant to you and have a say in how issues facing our area can be addressed in order to promote the betterment of our

I believe that the one important thing we can do as a community is educate the public on alternatives to Avenue 12.

community through topics such as safety, parks and water. These are just some of the issues SEMCU is working on. We have seen a tremendous jump in participation from the community this year and have more than doubled our board members. We want to thank everyone and hope you have a safe and fantastic Christmas and New Year. See you in 2020.

Southeast Madera County United (SEMCU) is a non-profit benefit organization promoting local interests and topics in the SEMCU area. Call 559-363-9095 for information or email SEMCU at info@semcu.org.

HANDS cont. from P. 16

minimum basic clothing. Before entering the testing room, they confiscate my driver’s license, inspect my reading glasses, “wand” me and assign me to a specific test booth. All materials including a scratch pad and pencil are provided. Normally I use my cell phone when doing math calculations and conversions, so doing it old school is definitely a challenge. I’m a little rusty. The only time I am not being monitored on closed circuit TV is when I am in the bathroom.

I spent 15 years as a voluntary Chaplain at the Madera County Juvenile Hall Detention Facility and one and a half years as a voluntary Chaplain at the Clairmonte Mens’ Facility in Coalinga. Never did I receive the scrutiny at either of these facilities as I receive when taking my ASE certification and Smog License Tests. Welcome to my world. Don’t you wish other things were scrutinized and monitored as closely as an ASE Certification Test?

The mission of ASE is to protect the automotive service consumer, shop owner and automotive technician. ASE certification insures a higher standard of competency and expertise for the consumer. ASE certification means trust and peace of mind. Don’t forget to look for the ASE Blue Seal when selecting an automotive repair facility. ASE certification definitely makes a difference.

OK guys and gals, that’s all for this one. Wish me luck! As always, I’m looking for current and interesting automotive repair industry topics to write about. If you have any recommendations, suggestions, ideas and/or general or specific questions about a vehicle, I can be emailed at complete_car_care@hotmail.com or texted at 559-907-7661.

God Bless America and God Bless 93636

Warren Parr, ASE Master, Advanced Level & Hybrid Certified

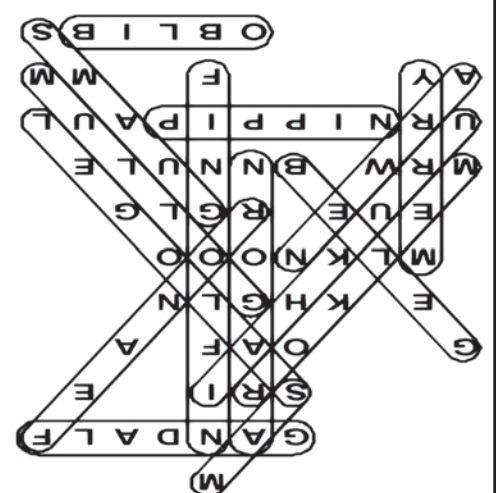
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3	4	1	2	9	5	7	8	6
9	2	7	6	4	8	3	1	5
8	1	5	3	2	9	6	7	4
7	6	3	8	1	4	9	5	2
4	9	2	5	6	7	8	3	1
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x			x		÷
9	÷	3	+	6	9
+			-	x	
1	x	8	+	7	15



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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.

	x		+		15			
+		-		x				
	÷		+		9			
x		x		÷				
	+		x		14			
20		25		21				
1	2	2	3	5	6	7	8	9

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SUDOKU by Linda Thistle

	8			2		9	3
		4		5		1	
5			1				7
	9	2		6		8	
7				4		5	
		5	3				4
	2				8		1
		1		9			6
6			7	3		4	

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Now here's a tip! by Jo Ann Derson

- Be sure to eat a hearty breakfast before heading out to the airport. Pack a piece or two of whole fruit or a portion of nuts for snacking, and bring an empty water bottle so that you can make it through airport security and fill the bottle when you are at the gate. Being hydrated and having healthy snacks will make your travel experience more pleasant.
- "Print a physical copy of your travel

- itinerary, including flight numbers. Stow a copy inside a secure spot in your luggage so that if it gets lost, you'll be easy to find. I like to put mine inside the zippered net bag that's attached to my suitcase." -- E.L. in Ohio
- Pack a hanging luggage scale. This is especially helpful at the holidays, when you may be both taking gifts to give and returning with gifts given to you.

- "For large gatherings, borrow what you need from local friends and family. That includes chairs, servingware, place settings, silverware and linens! Most people are happy to help." -- R.R. in Alabama
- Send your tips to *Now Here's a Tip*, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.
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How 'For Sale By Owners' Can Get Top Dollar for Their Madera Ranchos Home

Madera Ranchos - If you've tried to sell your home yourself, you know that the minute you put the "For Sale by Owner" sign up, the phone will start to ring off the hook. Unfortunately, most calls aren't from prospective buyers, but rather from every real estate agent in town who will start to hound you for your listing.

Like other "For Sale by Owners", you'll be subjected to a hundred sales pitches from agents who will tell you how great they are and how you can't possibly sell your home by yourself. After all, without the proper information, selling a home isn't easy. Perhaps you've had your home on the market for several months with no offers from qualified buyers. This can be a very frustrating time, and many homeowners have given up their dreams of selling their homes themselves. But don't give up until

you've read a new report entitled "Sell Your Own Home" which has been prepared especially for homesellers like you. You'll find that selling your home by yourself is entirely possible once you understand the process.

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12/19

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By Betty Van Valkenburg

20/20 Perspective for the Year 2020

On Friday the 13th, the House of Representatives' Judiciary Committee voted – on a straight party line with one lonely Democrat abstention – to approve Articles of Impeachment against President Donald J. Trump on two counts: Obstruction of Congress and abuse of power.

This follows years of rancor, name calling, finger pointing, mind reading, spying and moving-target accusations ranging from bribery to quid pro quo to treason to Russian collusion and the kitchen sink. Amazingly, some called for impeachment even before Trump was elected and before he could have performed a single presidential act, impeachable or not. The Mueller report on the "Investigation Into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election" did not go the Democrats' way. Inspector General Horowitz's written report and oral testimony on the "Review of Four FISA Applications and Other Aspects of the FBI's Crossfire Hurricane Investigation" revealed serious misdeeds by the FBI's upper echelon, most notably spying on Trump's campaign and administration based on a discredited "dossier" financed by the Democratic National Committee and candidate Hillary Clinton's election campaign – and lying to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) court about the pivotal dossier's dishonesty.

The lone Democrat who abstained from voting "aye" on the Articles of Impeachment was elected in a district that went for Trump in 2016. When asked whether her abstention was about reelection rather than conscience, she assured the TV camera that she was merely doing due diligence. Really? This writer is not a mind reader but would say that, if forced to judge the congresswoman's motives, they are totally political. She wants to win reelection.

Similarly, it's said that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the consummate politician, approved impeachment proceedings not because she "soberly" and "prayerfully" deemed it necessary to save the world from Donald J. Trump, but to placate her party's powerful uber-left crowd and retain her exalted leadership position. She is, after all, the speaker who rammed through Obamacare in the dead

of night using an obscure House rule and then admitted that no one knew what the bill contained. Would this two-time Speaker of the House who said, "... we have to pass the bill so that you can find out what is in it," *not* use impeachment for political benefit?

And that gets us to the real point, which isn't about the current impeachment lunacy but what it represents. Partisan lust for power is tearing this country apart. Reason and civility do not fit with the Democrats' impeach-at-any-cost mentality.

With a few exceptions, politicians will bend logic into pretzels to gain and keep power. And as is glaringly apparent, this impeachment is not about any high crimes and misdemeanors, but about removing a Republican president. Trump's real offenses, apparently, are having won an election and then governing from the right.

Sadly, and again with notable exceptions, elected "public servants" - whose sworn duty is to protect and defend the Constitution and whose power includes enacting laws affecting our lives and livelihoods, allow party leadership and non-elected staff to craft bills which they don't bother to read, such as the 3,000-page Obamacare debacle. For example, the Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2019 just passed in the House and is bound for the Senate's consideration. Did your representative read it before voting on it? Do you know what provisions it contains or how your representative voted? According to Govtrack.us, the bill is 230 pages long and even lawyers don't want to read it.

And therein lies a big problem. Lawmakers can cobble together complicated bills from various sources and perhaps special interests. Individual legislators can insert pet provisions. The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing (pun intended). Lawyers add the "whereas-es" and "wherefores" and thousands of words. And perhaps no senator or representative knows the totality of what he or she is voting for or against. And if *they* don't know "what's in the bill," how can *we*, right? Well, with the marvels of the internet *we* can do what the elected legislators too often *do not*: We – can – read – the – bills. Every proposed bill and law are easily searchable online.

Also, we – can – have – our – say. Every senator and congressperson have a website with phone numbers and email access. Each has an accessible district office and a mailing address. We can take off our blinders, shake off our disgust with rabid politics and welcome 2020 with a new perspective of citizen participation and educated voting decisions.

May you have a blessed Christmas and a very happy 2020.

Visit the Central Valley Tea Party website at www.teapartypatriots.org for more information.

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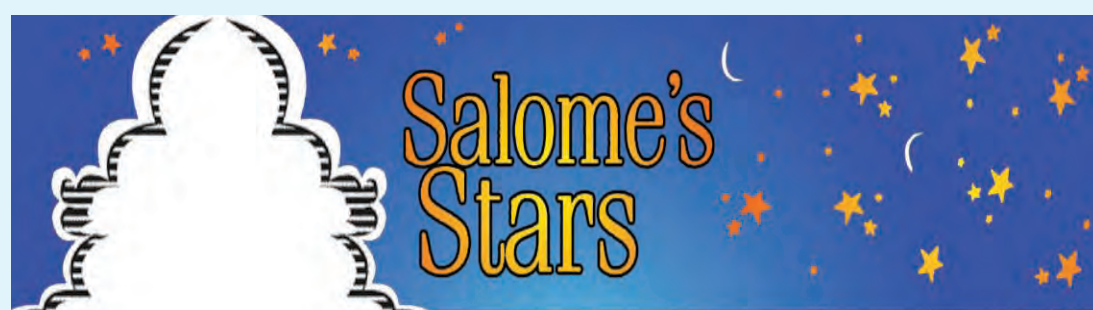
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Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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.

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GRIN and BEAR ITSM Wagner

"Aren't you going to look for a Christmas tree?"

www.TheRanchos.com

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

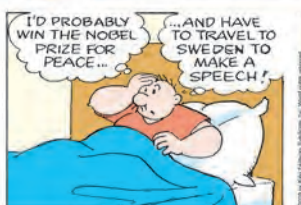
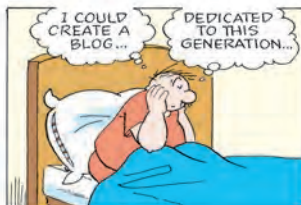
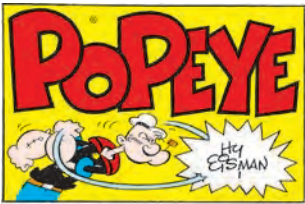
Kids' Maze



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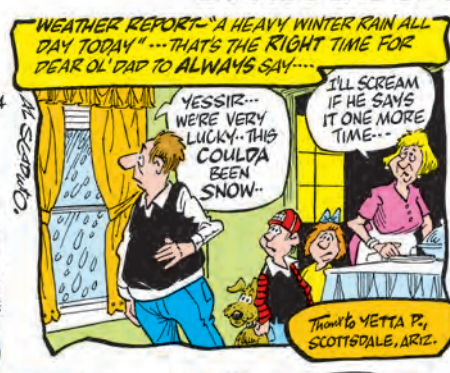
TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

BY AL SCADUTO



RIDDLE CARD

- Why is a rooster sitting on a fence like a penny?
- When is a pie like a poet?
- Why is a goose like an icicle?
- When is a man like a pony?
- What gets wetter and wetter the more it dries?

Answers: 1. Because its head is on one side and its tail is on the other. 2. When it is brown. 3. Because they both grow down. 4. When he is a little horse (horse). 5. A towel.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend



CALLING DR. WHIRL!

In this type of puzzle you are given a word that must be changed into another word in a series of moves. During each move, you must change one letter in the previous word so as to form a new word. In our example, we changed PAIN to WELL in four moves. See if you can change the following five words in four moves.

- HAVE to LEND
- PAID to FULL
- PEAT to WARM
- SALT to DOME
- CREW to TEAM

ELECTROCARDIOGRAPHICALLY is the longest word we could find in our English Language Dictionary! We also found one word that can actually be made shorter by adding one syllable to it. Can you guess what this word is?



Answer: The word is SHORT. It becomes SHORTER when you add one syllable to it.

FIND THE SEVEN WORDS PUZZLE! In the word square at the right, we've removed six of the letters to spell out the word "TRADE." See if you can replace these letters in the squares so that you'll have four three-letter words across and three four-letter words down. The time limit is 60 seconds.



Answers: (Across) (Across) Dam, era, all, rat (Down) Dear, ana, mall.

Wishing Well

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

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

- Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
- | | | | |
|---------|-----------|---------|----------|
| Aragorn | Féanor | Legolas | Sam |
| Arwen | Fingolfin | Melkor | Smaug |
| Beleg | Gandalf | Merry | Uruk-hai |
| Bilbo | Gollum | Pippin | |

TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

- THEATER: "West Side Story" was inspired by which earlier play?
- MUSIC: What is the real name of songwriter/rapper Lizzo?
- SCIENCE: How many people total have walked on the moon?
- U.S. PRESIDENTS: Under whose administration did Spiro T. Agnew serve as vice president?
- GEOGRAPHY: What is the capital of Chile?
- ARCHITECTURE: In what decade was the Empire State Building completed?
- ADVERTISING: What was the name of Honey Nut Cheerios' mascot?
- U.S. STATES: What is the least populous state in America?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What was the name of Dick and Jane's dog in reading books used in schools in the mid-20th century?
- INVENTIONS: Who is credited for inventing the modern lockstitch sewing machine?

Answers

- "Romeo and Juliet"
- Melissa Viviane Jefferson
- Richard Nixon
5. Santiago
6. 1930s
- Buzzbee
8. Wyoming
9. Spot
10. Elias Howe

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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

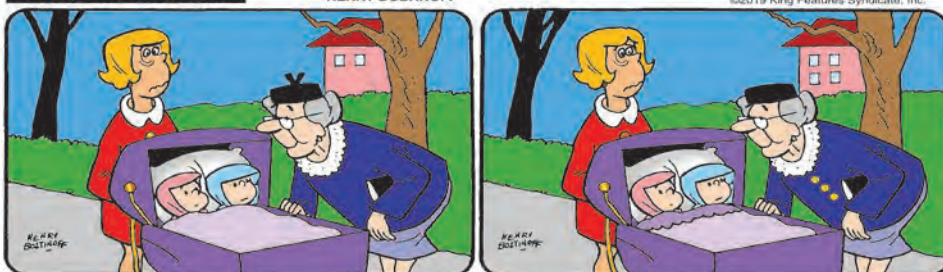
by David Reddick



HOCUS-FOCUS

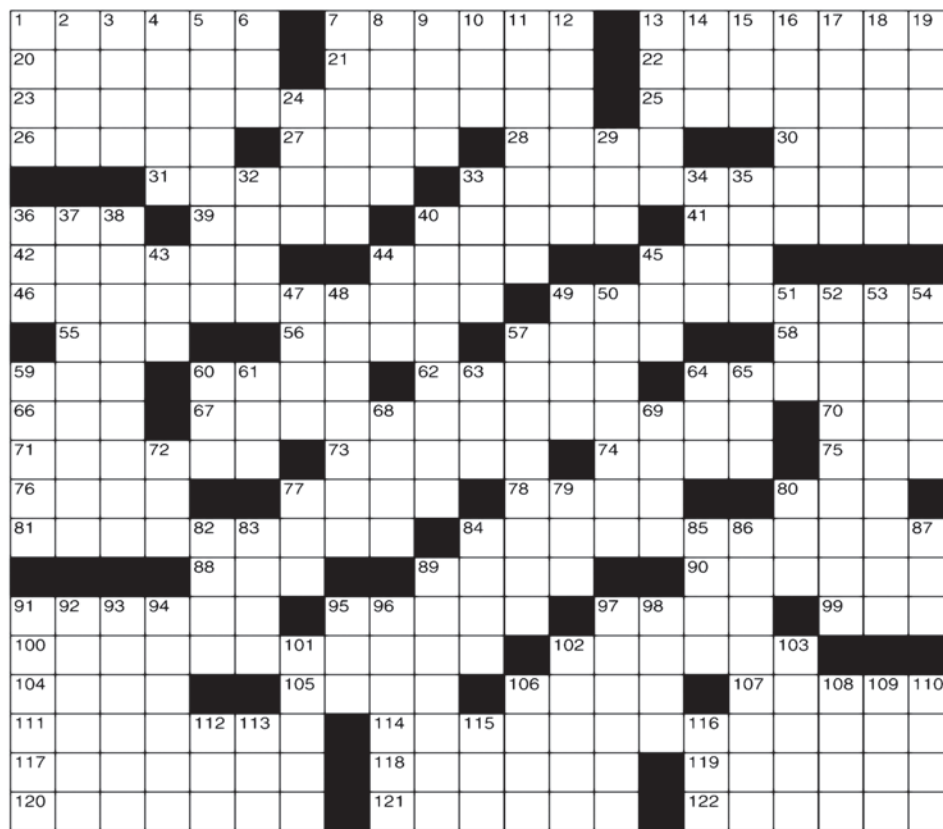
BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

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Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Woman's hat is different; 2. Blanket has a ruffle; 3. House has more windows; 4. Woman's coat has buttons; 5. Tree has extra limb; 6. Mom's bangs are different.

Super Crossword



- ACROSS**
- 1 Withdraw
 - 7 Second-rate
 - 13 Mexican meat dishes
 - 20 Pro speaker
 - 21 Start of a pirate chant
 - 22 Minimal cash
 - 23 Actor Kevin from Quebec?
 - 25 Marsh gas, mainly
 - 26 William who created Shrek
 - 27 Lettuce type
 - 28 Fierce wind
 - 30 At any point
 - 31 Willed gift
 - 33 Astronaut Alan clearing hurdles?
 - 36 It's scanned in a store, for short
 - 39 "Blasted!"
 - 40 Discontinued iPods
 - 41 Restitution
 - 42 "The Taking of — One Two Three" (1974 film)
 - 44 Tie-ons for messy food
 - 45 See 64-Across
 - 46 Irate novelist Anne?
 - 49 Lull comedian
 - 55 Vast span
 - 56 Per piece
 - 57 City on Interstate 80
 - 58 Original "Star Trek" captain
 - 59 French artist Jean
 - 60 Rye husk
 - 62 Kagan on the Supreme Court
 - 64 With 45-Across, the 1980s, politically
 - 66 Gene stuff
 - 67 Bewilder justice Warren?
 - 70 Med. service
 - 71 Sniff out
 - 73 French artist Dufy
 - 74 Healing balm
 - 75 Fancy shooting marble
 - 76 Slips a cog
 - 77 Outfielder Ty
 - 78 Author Sarah — Jewett
 - 80 Key on a PC
 - 81 Honor essayist Charles with jesting insults?
 - 84 Singer Fiona behaving very badly?
 - 88 Pilfer from
 - 89 Fruit such as a pear
 - 90 Enthusiastic French assent
 - 91 Long, thin cigar
 - 95 Even trades
 - 97 Blast noise
 - 99 Aired of "Conan"
 - 100 Newswoman Ann being a coward?
 - 102 Special Arctic light
 - 104 One-named "Smooth Operator" singer
 - 105 Met highlight
 - 106 "It's —!" ("That's evil!")
 - 107 Take on the role of
 - 111 Thick-skinned fruits
 - 114 Baseballer Mike with chicken pox?
 - 117 Turned-up facial feature
 - 118 United, with "up"
 - 119 South Dakota city
 - 120 Form-fitting swimwear
 - 121 Litters about
 - 122 Pants part
- DOWN**
- 1 Birds of fable
 - 2 Part of QED
 - 3 Support stick
 - 4 Virtual sales
 - 5 Longtime pickup model
 - 6 "— tu" (Verdi 105-Across)
 - 7 Jaded sorts
 - 8 Foyer
 - 9 Moby Dick's hunter
 - 10 Pt. of SPCA
 - 11 Japanese chiefs of old
 - 12 Longtime cleanser brand
 - 13 Actress Marisa
 - 14 Hex ender?
 - 15 Ran into
 - 16 "Arrow of God" novelist Chinua —
 - 17 Yeast, e.g.
 - 18 Set of nine
 - 19 Boat backs
 - 24 Blind as —
 - 29 Old hi-fi buys
 - 32 Tennis unit
 - 33 Be in sync
 - 34 Stoolie, to Brits
 - 35 Former car-financing co.
 - 36 Happy times
 - 37 Grammy-winning jazz/pop pianist
 - 38 Nile queen
 - 40 Heineken alternative
 - 43 Solo in sci-fi
 - 44 Paper Mate alternative
 - 45 Prefix with chic
 - 47 Heedless
 - 48 Fled
 - 49 Contact lens care brand
 - 50 Sounding off
 - 51 Alias letters
 - 52 Disco, e.g.
 - 53 School theater group
 - 54 "Catch my drift?"
 - 57 Flowers again
 - 59 Deadly viper
 - 60 U.K. media giant
 - 61 Tire catcher
 - 63 "— Grant"
 - 64 Classic auto
 - 65 Fore
 - 68 Common rhyme scheme
 - 69 Exultant joy
 - 72 -ette relative
 - 77 Hack's auto
 - 79 Blvd., e.g.
 - 80 Prefix with dermis
 - 82 Small band
 - 83 MGM mogul Marcus
 - 84 Long, strong and fibrous
 - 85 Taboo
 - 86 Baked with a cheese topping
 - 87 "— for Evidence" (Sue Grafton book)
 - 89 Rampart part
 - 91 PC admin people
 - 92 Get misty-eyed
 - 93 "Ripe" period
 - 94 Actress Headly
 - 95 South, in Lima
 - 96 Bracelet holders
 - 97 Assembles
 - 98 Composer Thomas
 - 101 Cartons
 - 102 Cockeyed
 - 103 Ranch units
 - 106 Tiptop
 - 108 Ripped
 - 109 Halo, for one
 - 110 Flower part
 - 112 Ares, for one
 - 113 That, in Lima
 - 115 Spike of corn
 - 116 Print quality abbr.

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