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Liberty High Student Mario Navarro, Jr. (right) shows Ranchos Kiwanis member Ollia Ridge one of the three Flag Disposal Boxes he has created for placement around the community. At the end of a flag's life, it has to be disposed of, but with the utmost dignity. The Flag Disposal Boxes create a place where retired flags can be taken, collected and then disposed of respectfully.

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Nearly 150,000 California Mail Ballots Rejected in Primary

By Michael R. Flood

Almost 150,000 California voters had their mail-in ballots rejected for the state's June primary, a spike from recent elections even as the state attempts to make voting easier with the goal of boosting participation and counting every ballot.

California has become notorious for its ponderously slow vote counts that can drag on for weeks and sometimes longer, largely the result of multiple changes over the years that were intended to increase turnout but have done little to achieve that. Among the changes: Every voter receives a mail-in ballot that can arrive at an election office seven days late and still be counted, provided the envelope is postmarked by Election Day.

Yet even with that generous weeklong window, the primary driver of the higher rejection numbers is late-arriving ballots, according to data compiled by the secretary of state's office.

Voting experts suspect the main problem is postmarks on ballots that came after Election Day, making them ineligible to be counted. The culprit could be U.S. Postal Service changes that might affect the timing of when postmarks are applied.

According to state data, 148,241 mail ballots were rejected in the June election, or a rate of 1.73 percent of all mail ballots.

Lateness accounted for 93,479 rejected ballots in June, by far the largest category for disqualifying a ballot. That was up from about 70,000 in the 2022 primary and about 76,000 in the 2024 primary, though turnout in those elections was smaller compared to last June.

Kim Alexander, president of the nonpartisan California Voter Foundation, said the jump in rejected ballots because of lateness is a major concern that — along with postal procedures — might also be connected to a late surge in ballots in June. Many voters waited until the final days to make a decision in a wide-open and chaotic race for governor.

"Ballots rejected due to lateness are caused primarily from being postmarked too late to count, not because they arrived too late to count," Alexander wrote in an email.

Rejection rates have fluctuated over time, but the growing number of those set aside for lateness compared to recent elections "does really demand the question why this is happening," said Mindy Romero, director of the Center for Inclusive Democracy, a nonpartisan research group.

In January, a group of mostly Democratic U.S. senators sent a letter to the U.S. Postal Service, alarmed that mail-processing changes might affect postmark dates for mail-in ballots during an election year that will determine control of Congress.

Updated agency policy says postmarks might not indicate the first day the Postal Service received the mail, but rather the day it was handled in one of its processing centers. Those centers are increasingly likely to be further away from certain communities because of recent consolidations within the Postal Service, which could further delay postmarks.

On Thursday, July 23, two Wisconsin Democrats, U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin and Gov. Tony Evers, called on the Postal Service to address delays that caused hundreds of ballots to arrive after

Election Day in the state in April. In June, a federal judge halted President Donald Trump's executive order that sought to create a federal voter list and limit who can receive a mail ballot.

Earlier this year, California election officials urged voters to send their mail ballots early, warning that Postal Service changes could lead to slower mail service.

In California, the highest mail ballot rejection rate in June — 3.52 percent — was in Tulare County, in the agriculture-heavy Central Valley. It was followed by Alpine County, south of Lake Tahoe, and Merced County, also in the Central Valley, which both notched a 3.36 percent rejection rate.

Nearly 44,000 ballots were set aside because the voter's signature didn't match the one on record with county officials. Over 8,300 ballots were rejected because there was no signature on the returned ballot envelope.

In 743 cases, the voter had already cast a ballot, so the mail ballot was voided. Other reasons for rejection included a ballot missing from the return envelope, or multiple ballots were sent back in a single envelope.

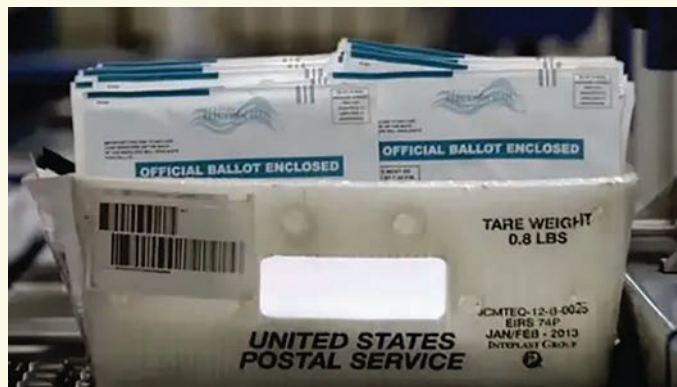
The data didn't break down the uncounted ballots by party registration.

Florida, Texas and other large population states quickly wrap up vote counting, while California is a national laggard.

After the June primary, President Donald Trump seized on California's reputation as the national slowpoke in vote counting to renew his long-standing criticism of the state's elections, while the Republican's Department of Justice launched an investigation into Los Angeles County's elections.

There is no indication of any widespread problems with mail voting, which has gained in popularity among Democrats and Republicans alike. A report by the Brookings Institution published in 2025 found that the number of cases of mail voting fraud was minuscule — about four cases per 10 million mail ballots.

Michael R. Flood is a political writer for The AP. This article originally appeared at www.apnews.com.



Newsom Called Out by Top Fed Prosecutor

By Ross O'Keefe

Los Angeles' top federal prosecutor, Bill Essayli, challenged Gov. Gavin Newsom to show proof that California isn't experiencing voter fraud after Newsom called President Trump's claim of widespread voter fraud "false and misleading" ahead of the commander-in-chief's prime-time speech on election fraud. Essayli shot back at the governor, saying, "Prove it," on social media platform X. "Open your voter rolls and let us conduct the audit ... What is there to hide?"

Essayli has previously said he is working with Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Harmeet Dhillon "to conduct a comprehensive audit of California's voter rolls."



Los Angeles' top federal prosecutor, Bill Essayli, challenged Gov. Gavin Newsom to show proof.

A source told *The California Post* that a Department of Homeland Security report will reveal that at least 278,000 noncitizens are registered to vote in US federal elections. It is the highest ever publicly reported in US history, but the source said it remains unclear how many of those registrants may have voted illegally and what the administration plans to do about it.

Newsom called Trump an "old man" who "rambled" about "an election he lost" after the speech.

Investigating voter fraud in California has been a priority for the Trump administration with FBI Director Kash Patel applauding the action.

"Securing our elections is of the upmost priority for this FBI!" he wrote on X. "If you mess with our elections we will find you!"

This article originally appeared in the *California Post* at nypost.com.

Click on "Local News" at

ON THE COVER — Is Mario Navarro, Jr. This junior at Liberty High is seeking an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy. He has created the Flag Disposal Box Initiative for the Ranchos and Southeast Madera County. When United States flags reach the end of their usable

lives, there is a protocol for respectfully disposing of them. Mario is servicing that protocol by building three flag disposal boxes. They are being installed at the Ranchos Library, Rolling Hills Fire Station #9 and Liberty High. After drop off, they will be collected and destroyed in accordance

with accepted methods for retiring U.S. flags. Mario raised all the funds for the project and wanted to thank the Madera Ranchos Veterans Group, the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Kiwanis Club of Madera Ranchos for their donations and support.

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Kiwanis Korner

Character Counts at Local Schools

By Sally Rowden

Our end of the 2026 school year Character Counts Awards were presented at all three of our Golden Valley Elementary Schools. The first student recipients were Adam Orosco and Auselia Tempas from Stone Creek Elementary School. This award validates students' character skills and positive school attitude. The six pillars of character are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. The school administration and teachers identify who will be the awarding recipients. Congratulations to Adam and Auselia of Stone Creek Elementary. Our next month's Ranchos Independent article will highlight the Sierra View and Webster student recipients.

project.

Moving into the summer months allows us the time to review, revise and enhance events for the coming



Kiwanis Character Counts award winner for Stone Creek Elementary School, Adam Orosco, left, receives his new bike under the watchful eye of Kiwanis Member Mona Diaz, Principal Mr. Beyer, and Adam's teacher, Ms. DiPinto.



Auselia Tempas, right, receives her Kiwanis Character Counts bicycle award for Stone Creek Elementary School from Principal Mr. Beyer and Kiwanis member Mona Diaz.

In both June and July, our guest speaker was Mario Navarro, Jr., an incoming junior at Liberty High School. Mario shared his United States Air Force Academy project, which is the American Flag Retirement Drop Boxes that you will find throughout our communities. In supporting Mario and his project, we engraved a beautiful Kiwanis dedication plaque to be displayed on top of the flag drop box that will be housed on the Liberty High School campus. Thank you, Mario, for your dedication and for the opportunity to be involved in this honoring

year of 2026-2027. As we follow the academic school calendar, one of our first community fundraising events is Elvis in the Ranchos, a dinner, entertainment and silent auction event happening locally on Thursday, Sept. 10 at Birdstone Winery at 9400 Road 36 in Madera. Contact Ollia Ridge at the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce at 559-645-4100 for tickets. Tickets have been selling fast so do not wait to call. Your support in our fundraising allows us to give back to our children and communities.

We had the opportunity this month to attend our California-Nevada-Hawaii District 5 Governor's Visitation. This involved meeting Governor Steve Geraci along with the First Lady, Eileen Geraci, sharing in a luncheon, and clubs honoring members and community individuals.

We honored Suzy Ruhe, a very long-time Madera Ranchos Kiwanis member, with the Distinguished Member Award. Her continued upbeat, eager, enthusiastic attitude is priceless. She deserves to be honored for her ongoing winning Kiwanian spirit.

Please see **KIWANIS** on P. 14

Letters

Dear Editor:

The British rag, er, newspaper, The Guardian has spent years proving that no subject is too absurd to connect to climate change. Here are some of their greatest hits:

- *OnlyFans?* Climate change.
- Illegal immigrant deportation flights? Climate change.
- Earth waving a “white flag of surrender” because of melting ice? Climate change.

If someone burns toast in London, you half expect a Guardian “journalist” to blame rising atmospheric carbon dioxide. That is why its latest complaint is so unintentionally hilarious.

The Guardian recently published an article lamenting that nearly three-quarters of British newspaper coverage of June’s heatwave failed to mention climate change. Researchers, er, Guardian lackeys, examined almost 2,500 stories and found that roughly 72 percent simply reported the weather without turning it into another lecture on the “climate crisis.” To the Guardian, this represents a serious failure of journalism.

Gosh, that’s terrible.

To most readers, (normal people) it probably sounds like journalism finally remembered what its job is. For nearly two decades, climate alarmism has steadily expanded until virtually every weather story became a climate story. Hurricanes were no longer hurricanes. They became climate hurricanes. Floods became climate floods. Wildfires became climate wildfires. Droughts became climate droughts. Heatwaves became perhaps the easiest vehicle of all because every stretch of hot weather could be presented as another warning that civilization was on borrowed time. *REPENT!*

Historical context of far bigger events disappeared. Natural variability became

verboden. And before the pavement even had time to cool, organizations like *World Weather Attribution* were releasing model-based analyses explaining how climate change supposedly made the event more likely. Of course, the media rarely stopped to ask the obvious question: What else would an organization named *World Weather Attribution* conclude? Duh!

Its entire purpose is to attribute weather events to climate change. That doesn’t automatically make every study wrong, (well maybe it does, we need a study) but it ought to encourage journalists to apply at least a little skepticism. Instead, too many news organizations simply treat these reports as the final word, reproducing them with little scrutiny and even less historical perspective. In other words, regurgitate it. Garbage in, vomit out.

Apparently, many British editors have begun seeing things differently.

Instead of automatically inserting the obligatory climate paragraph into every heatwave story, they simply reported the weather. Imagine that. The Guardian interprets this as evidence that journalists need better climate education. A more plausible explanation is that editors are finally paying attention to their readers.

After years of being told that every hurricane, every flood, every drought, every wildfire and every hot summer day is caused by climate change, people have grown weary of the message. They remember hot summers before climate became a political movement. They remember cold winters that inconveniently interrupted the warming narrative. They understand, instinctively, that weather has always varied, sometimes dramatically.

Editors are in the business of keeping readers. They know audiences eventually tune out repetitive messaging, especially

Please see **LETTERS** on P. 12

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Guest Editorial

Grizzly Bears Returning to Calif?

By Ryan Sabalow

They're on our flag, but do long-gone grizzly bears belong in modern California?

The grizzly bear on California's flag went extinct a century ago in the Golden State. Now, a group of tribes and environmentalists is urging the Legislature to study whether it's possible to bring them back.

Grizzlies once lived across most of California. As many as 10,000 may have roamed before the Gold Rush. They were so prevalent that when California settlers tried to form their own nation, they called it the Bear Flag Republic.

Settlers systematically exterminated the animals, and they were gone by the 1920s, leaving the smaller black bear as the only surviving bear species.

A century and 34.5 million more people later, Inglewood Democratic Sen. Laura Richardson's Senate Bill 1305 would task the California Department of Fish and Wildlife with creating a "roadmap that evaluates

whether, and under what conditions, reintroduction of the grizzly bear is feasible and advisable."

The measure provides no funding to carry out the study, which could be provided by a future Legislature or an outside group. And even if it were funded and its recommendations acted on, it would be several years and require help from a potentially adversarial federal government before a grizzly bear's claws ever cut tracks in California.

"There's nothing I would love more than to see grizzly bears on the beach at Santa Barbara chasing rich people."
 — Elizabeth Washoe, a descendant of multiple tribes, including Maidu, Modoc, Pit River and Washoe.

The proposal's hypothetical nature has done little to ease tensions over the prospect of someday returning the continent's second-largest land predator to the nation's most populous state.

On one side are organizations representing rural communities, hunting organizations and ranchers. They argue it's preposterous to consider reintroducing aggressive 800-pound bears to California's degraded, drought- and fire-prone landscapes. Rural areas, they say, are already overwhelmed with conflicts with mountain lions and growing black

bear and wolf populations.

"I just don't think that our California today is ready for a grizzly bear," Republican Assemblymember Heather Hadwick told the Assembly wildlife committee last month.

Hadwick's sprawling rural district in northeastern California has faced years of tensions over predators, especially wolves, killing livestock and frightening small towns.

At least 40 groups, including tribes, environmentalists and animal welfare organizations, support the bill, according to the CalMatters Digital Democracy database. They say bringing back the state's biggest apex land predator would improve the ecosystem and right an ecological wrong from California's past.

"I can see the ways in which my homeland has suffered from the loss

Please see **EDITORIAL** on P. 12

THE RAY GUN
 SHOOTING STRAIGHT TO THE HEART

"... PRESENT-DAY AMERICANS ARE NOT GIVEN TO LOOKING BACKWARD. IN THIS BLESSED LAND, THERE IS ALWAYS A BETTER TOMORROW."

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

Making Boredom Pay

I was in line at the pharmacy the other day with nothing to do. I'd managed to make it all the way into Walmart without my phone. I was just standing there, in public, "naked."

Metaphorically speaking, of course.

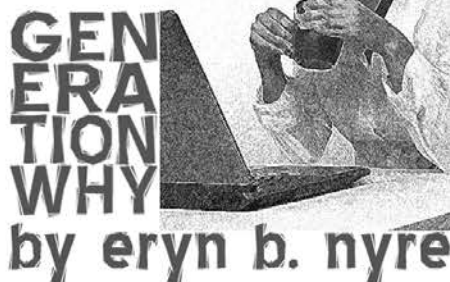
No music. No podcast. No audiobook. No social media. No phone to call or text someone to fill the space. It felt like the world was closing in because I didn't have a tiny screen to occupy my brain. I had to just stand there and look around and exist ... and think. Yikes.

Which is about when it occurred to me that I don't really do that much anymore. Not think; I do that all the time, even when I'm trying to sleep. I mean I don't often wait somewhere without my phone. I rarely just exist in a space, which is strange because I've always loved people watching. I don't seem to do it as much as I used to. No, lately I fill the silence like most people do, with the little electronic time suck that's always in my pocket.

When I was growing up, boredom wasn't a rare and uncomfortable condition that needed to be treated immediately. It was a regular part of life. You waited for things. In line. In the car. For your friends to show up. For summer vacation. For Christmas break. For your favorite show to come on. For the commercial to be over. Heck, you even waited for dinner. You waited for literally everything, and while you waited, you looked around, stared out windows, watched people, even made up stories.

Somewhere along the way, boredom became an emergency. The second we have even a moment of unoccupied time, we fill it with digital entertainment. When did we collectively decide that every moment of silence needed to be filled? Ironically, the only reason you're reading this article is because I spent eight minutes waiting for a prescription with absolutely nothing else to do but ponder and observe.

Maybe boredom isn't the enemy we think it is. Some pretty great childhood memories were born out of boredom. Think of the games that were invented on the spot with made-up rules that changed whenever someone



started losing. Nobody planned them or scheduled them, we just made our own entertainment from the resources available to us, whether it was a found object, equipment at the neighborhood park, or our own imaginations. We spent entire afternoons doing things that would sound completely ridiculous to modern children.

Somehow, we survived. More importantly, we learned something.

Boredom forced us to notice things. We watched clouds. We wondered what that abandoned house was like inside. We made up elaborate backstories for

strangers in the grocery store. We replayed conversations from school. We imagined what we'd do when we grew up. Our minds wandered because they had room to wander. Sometimes those thoughts led us to jump off the porch railing with an umbrella because we figured if Mary Poppins could do it from much higher, the raised porch with the railing should be doable. Only ankles were mildly damaged in the making of that stunt.

Sometimes the thoughts were creative, though, and led to spirited games of frisbee freeze tag on roller skates. Ankles may have also been mildly damaged, but legends were also made. Looking back, childhood boredom was apparently just unsupervised research and development.

Today we carry the world's largest distraction machine in our pocket. Don't get me wrong, I like my phone. I enjoy being able to find directions and text people random thoughts. I like that I can look up a completely random question, like ... do penguins have knees? (You thought I was going to an-

Please see **GEN WHY** on P. 13

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Organizing with A.I.

My mom is 92 and texts from her iPhone, skillfully using emojis. She also remembers going to Wednesday night church in a horse-drawn cart. The span and speed of technological progress during her lifetime is mind-boggling.

In our family, tech support is a generational thing. Our parents think we're wizards. When we're stuck, we go to our kids. Our grandkids are digital natives. But I'm

curious – with the advent of AI (artificial intelligence) will any of us need human assistance going forward?

My son, a software engineer, makes AI work harder than anyone I know. In his spare time, he likes to create phone apps. Or shall I say he likes to tell AI what type of phone app to create. When AI completes a task and gives him the next step, he orders AI to do it. (Here's a money-saving website he and

AI created for young families: www.littledealsapp.com.)

There are many jobs that seem destined to be replaced with AI. I never thought of mine being in that category until I asked ChatGPT, "How does AI help people get and stay more organized?"

There are many jobs that seem destined to be replaced with AI. I never thought of mine being in that category until I asked ChatGPT, "How does AI help people get and stay more organized?"

It readily admitted being unable to do the actual hands-on organizing but offered more options of assistance than I had thought of. Many of them focus on planning and strategy which is a common challenge.

Create organizing steps

— When overwhelmed with a room or area needing organizing, request AI to break it down for you. Ask, "How should I clean out the garage?" It may ask some questions to

help define the particulars, but you'll have a plan of action with specific steps to follow.

Create personalized routines

— Routines decrease stress and increase productivity. Give AI a list of tasks and expectations and ask it to break

it down into a routine. For young families, morning and evening routines are especially helpful. For older folks, it might be a routine for taking medications or exercising. Maybe your housekeeper needs a routine to stop overlooking areas of concern to you. Take it another step and ask AI to transform the routine into a printable check-off chart.

Organize information

— There are endless ways AI helps you gather and organize information. The one example that got me excited was when it suggested a question like, "We're retired, have 10 days in September, want to drive no more than six hours a day, enjoy scenic areas and historic towns, and have a budget of \$3,500." Based on that, AI can recommend several trip options, create an itinerary with a daily schedule, provide hotel and restaurant recommenda-

Please see **ORGANIZE** on P. 13

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Senior Report

August Activities, Summertime Fun at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center

By Melanie Williams

Summertime fun starts to wrap up with the last weeks of school vacation, as we head toward the fall season in Madera Ranchos. Soon, it will be time again for Golden Valley Unified students to begin their back-to-school activities as summer starts to wind down. Our seniors are also looking forward to watching grandchildren involved with school and sport activities in the coming months.

The Monthly Saturday Sale is back on Aug. 1 from 8 a.m. to noon. The Treasure House is continuing to receive many new donations and our volunteers have worked diligently to label and tag new items for the Boutique and Treasure House. We appreciate your willingness to donate all the wonderful items to support our work with seniors in the community. The donations from the Madera Ranchos community help so much to keep the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center operational.



Members are honored at the Annual Membership Appreciation Potluck on July 9, 2026 at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

There are still summer plants available in the Scout Garden for some last-minute summer planting. We have volunteers in the Scout Garden to answer questions about late summer or early fall planting.

The main building is also open for the Boutique and Bake Sale. Many unique goods are available to peruse in a nicely air-conditioned environment. Come and join us at the Monthly Saturday Sale on Aug. 1.

The Senior Center has many events on the calendar in August.

The August Potluck is on Thursday, Aug. 13 at 6 p.m. If you would like to participate in the August Senior Center Potluck, please call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 to sign up.

The Madera County Department of Social Services gave a presentation for the June Disability Awareness Month to the Madera Ranchos community at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. Attending seniors living in the community heard a wonderful presentation by the Madera Sheriff's Office about potential scams that target seniors. The Madera Adult Department of Social Services hosted the event. They provided lunch and sponsored a participation raffle to give out gift baskets and cards. This was a free community event, so if you are interested you can plan to attend future events at the Senior Center to learn about our local county services.

Supervise Jordan Wamhoff hosted a Coffee and Conversation Meeting in April, updating the Ranchos residents about current highway projects and new businesses in the Madera area. His guest speaker was a representative from the District Attorney's Office of Madera County.

We encourage seniors – as well as all community members – to attend these informational meetings about our local community and the surrounding area of Madera County. Seniors can contact the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 to be informed about when these meetings are scheduled and to learn more about available Madera County services.

Remember, Brown Bag Day is on Wednesday, Aug. 19 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The Madera Ranchos Basket Cases will meet together again to work on their pine needle basket weaving projects on Tuesday, Aug. 4 at 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Exercise Class is every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Card Table games are happening weekly at the Senior Center. They meet on Thursdays at 12:15 p.m., right after our Senior Lunch. And the Senior Lunch Program is every weekday at 11:30 a.m. Any senior can still sign up for the free Senior Lunch Program with Jaime or Meredith. The Senior Center welcomes Meredith, who is transitioning for Jaime as site coordinator for the Senior Hot Lunch program.

Odd Fellows Breakfast is on Sunday, Aug. 16. They serve a traditional Sunday breakfast from 7:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. and all proceeds go to local charities in Madera County.

We have a monthly newsletter with a calendar of activities and events for seniors. Members can check their email or any senior is welcome to come by and pick up a monthly calendar at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center. We are open every weekday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., except for holidays.

"The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice." – Brian Herbert

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No Melon-choly Here

(July 2016)

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.

As a child, I watched my dad plant seeds for our garden. When he'd get ready to plant the watermelon seeds, he'd go out to my grandparent's dairy and get a load of cow droppings (otherwise known as manure) and he'd come back home and dig holes for the seeds, put a couple shovels full of the manure in each hole and drop some seeds in and cover them up. It always amazed me that such wonderful tasting fruit can come from such an awful smelling beginning – but it worked!

Out at our grandparent's, in order to keep the watermelons cool they would let the melons, covered with wet gunny sacks, sit in the "tank house." Not really a house, but a large framed building that held a huge tank that was pumped full of water for the house use. Us kids loved it when grandma or grandpa didn't turn the main pump off in time and the tank would run over. We would run through the overflow until they got the pump turned off. I can still remember grandpa running (he was a big man, but he could sure run) to get the pump turned off and



yelling something about "wasting water" – even in the '40's they worried about wasting water.

We now have the choice of seeded or seedless watermelon. I realize the convenience of the seedless – no bother with the kids eating seeds by mistake or the seeds all over the patio or ground – but I really think the seeded melons are the sweetest, plus you get to eat the heart of the melon, the best part.

I have always thought of melons for dessert or maybe a salad, but I found some ways that may surprise you. The first one makes a refreshing summer snack and kids love it.

Spicy Watermelon

- ¼ tsp. ground cumin
 - ¼ tsp. ground coriander
 - ¼ tsp. chili powder
 - ¼ tsp. salt
 - 1/8 tsp. cayenne pepper
 - 2 C cubed seeded watermelon
 - ½ lime, juiced
- In a small bowl, mix together the

Whether your favorite melon is a Crenshaw, as was my Dad's; a honeydew, which was my sister Faye's; or mine, a watermelon or cantaloupe, they are in the markets now. They can be eaten at breakfast, lunch or dinner and a snack anytime in-between.

spices. Put the watermelon in a large serving bowl. Sprinkle with spice mixture and mix well to coat melon. Sprinkle juice over spiced melon and serve.

This bread is very moist and has the texture of pumpkin or zucchini bread. If you have extra cantaloupe it can be pureed and frozen for use later.

Cantaloupe Bread with Praline Glaze

- 3 eggs
- 1 C vegetable oil
- 2 C white sugar
- 1 T vanilla
- 2 C cantaloupe, peeled, seeded and pureed

- 1 C all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ¾ tsp. baking powder
- 2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp. ground ginger
- ½ C butter
- 1 2/3 C brown sugar
- ½ C. chopped pecans

Preheat oven to 325 degrees. Grease and flour two 9x5 loaf pans.

In a large bowl, beat together eggs, vegetable oil, sugar, vanilla and cantaloupe. In a separate bowl, sift together flour, salt, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon and ginger. Stir the flour mixture into the cantaloupe mixture, stir to combine. Pour batter into prepared pans. Bake in a preheated oven for 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of the loaf comes out clean. Meanwhile, combine butter and brown sugar. Microwave for 3 minutes, stirring every minute. Stir in pecans. Pour sauce over warm bread. Let it cool for one hour before serving.

I love Mexican food, but sometimes the salsa served is a little too warm for me. So how about a variation?

Watermelon Tomato Salsa

- 1 ½ C chopped red onion
- 1 C chopped cantaloupe

- 1 C chopped watermelon
- 1 tomato, seeded and chopped
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped

- ¼ C fresh lime juice
- ¼ C chopped fresh cilantro
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a large bowl, mix all ingredients together except salt and pepper. Add salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate at least 4 hours before serving. Be sure to seed the tomato; if you don't the dish will be too watery.

How about a Watermelon Margarita with your Mexican food?

Watermelon Margarita

- 2 tsp. sugar
- 1 lime wedge
- 3 ½ C cubed seeded watermelon
- ½ C tequila
- 2 T sugar
- 3 T fresh lime juice
- 1 T Triple Sec

Place 2 tsp. of sugar in a saucer. Rub the rims of six glasses with the lime wedge, spin the rim of each glass in the sugar to coat it. Set prepared glasses aside.

Combine watermelon, tequila, sugar, lime juice and triple sec in a blender; process until smooth. Fill each glass with ½ cup crushed ice. Add ½ cup margarita mix to each glass. Garnish with lime wedges or melon balls, if desired.

Whether your favorite melon is a Crenshaw, as was my Dad's; a honeydew, which was my sister Faye's; or mine, a watermelon or cantaloupe, they are in the markets now. They can be eaten at breakfast, lunch or dinner and a snack anytime in between.



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3. Because the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce requires financial support in order to perform its job of increasing the economic prosperity of Southeast Madera County.
4. Because the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce unifies the public spirit of Southeast Madera County, directing it into useful and constructive channels that are not limited to business.
5. Because I feel an obligation to improve the quality of life in Southeast Madera County.



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When is the NEXT Chamber of Commerce Meeting?

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, Wednesday, August 12 at 6 p.m., 37167 Ave. 12 Suite 5C in the Maywood Center. Come join us and be a part of what's going on in your community. Call us at 559-645-4001.

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EDITORIAL cont. from P. 5

of iconic species such as the grizzly, and that this loss lingers in our heart and in the attenuation of a millennia-old relationship,” Tiana Williams-Claussen, director of the Yurok Tribe’s wildlife department, told lawmakers last month. The Yurok and Tejon tribes are the bill’s cosponsors.

A 2025 study from a coalition of tribes, environmentalists and university researchers found that the southern Sierra Nevada, including Yosemite, Kings Canyon and Sequoia national parks, would make one of many ideal habitats. The study estimated these habitats could sustain between 424 to 1,713 grizzlies, starting with a recommended population of 25 bears.

Supporters of the proposal say grizzlies would help California’s ecosystem and would serve as a check on overpopulation of prey. Grizzlies could reduce California’s human conflicts with black bears since grizzlies also tend to kill and eat black bears.

“The loss of grizzlies might have been one of those contributing factors to that [black bear population] overgrowth,” Tiana Williams-Claussen, director of the Yurok Tribe’s wildlife department, said in an interview.

Supporters’ arguments have appealed to the Democrats who control the Legislature, lawmakers from Southern California representing predominantly urban districts. Only Republicans have voted against the bill.

Learning to coexist with grizzlies in modern California is, “... just part of living in a beautiful state filled with wildlife,” said Democratic Senator

Henry Stern from Sherman Oaks. “We want to live in a California where — that risk — there’s some beauty in it. To have that element in our lives, as opposed to just sterilizing our landscapes and our nature so that nothing else could ever be a risk ... I think it makes us more human to have wilderness in our lives.”

Elizabeth Washoe, a descendant of multiple tribes, including Maidu, Modoc, Pit River and Washoe, hears that kind of talk from urban residents and rolls her eyes.

“There’s nothing I would love more than to see grizzly bears on the beach at Santa Barbara chasing rich people,” she said.

But she said that would be cruel — to the bears.

There’s no indication that the California Department of Fish and Wildlife’s position on grizzlies has changed since a former spokesperson told a reporter in 2023 that wildlife officials can barely keep up with existing predator conflicts.

“Bringing another predator into the state that we would have to manage and come up with some program to figure out what happens when the grizzly attacks a human or kills livestock does not seem feasible for us,” then-spokesperson Jordan Traverso said. The department is chronically underfunded and understaffed. A legislative analysis for this year’s bill notes that Fish and Wildlife has enough cash and staff to complete just 38 percent of its existing duties.

Ryan Sabalow is a Digital Democracy reporter for CalMatters. This article originally appeared at www.calmatters.org.

LETTERS cont. from P. 4

when every weather story ends with the same predictable conclusion. Readers want to know how hot it will be, how long the heat will last, and whether they should check on elderly relatives. Many do not need another sermon about carbon emissions attached to the forecast.

The irony is rich. The Guardian intended its article as a warning that Britain’s newspapers are failing to spread the climate message aggressively enough. Instead, it inadvertently documents what may be one of the healthiest trends in journalism in years: Editors appear to be rediscovering an old-fashioned reporting principle — sometimes a heatwave is simply a heatwave.

That doesn’t mean climate never in-

fluences weather. It means not every weather event needs to be transformed into a morality play about fossil fuels. Journalism should begin with evidence, not predetermined conclusions, and weather should be reported as weather unless there is compelling observational evidence to justify something more.

Perhaps we’ve finally reached “Peak Climate Hype.” If the Guardian’s own analysis is any indication, many editors seem to have concluded that readers are tired of having climate change inserted into every forecast and every weather headline. Now if only The Guardian would follow the example of the newspapers it’s criticizing.

I won’t hold my breath ... I’d die waiting.
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GO FIGURE!

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.

	+		×		= 26			
+		-		+				
	-		+		= 14			
-		÷		+				
	-		÷		= 1			
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10		1		11				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

SEMCU speaks

The Ranchos Community really showed up this Fourth of July

By Summer Skov

On behalf of SEMCU, we want to say "Thank You" to everyone who came out to the Ranchos "Ride What You Have" 4th of July Parade. Whether you decorated a golf cart, side-by-side, motorcycle, classic car, bicycle, ATV, tractor, or just about anything with wheels, you helped make this year's parade one to remember. Seeing so many smiling faces, patriotic decorations and neighbors waving along the route was a wonderful reminder of what makes the Ranchos such a special place to call home.

This year was even more meaning-

ful as our nation celebrated 250 years of American independence. For two and a half centuries, our country has stood for freedom, opportunity and the belief that communities are strongest when neighbors come together. It was an honor to celebrate this historic milestone with all of you right here in our own hometown.



A huge thank you also goes out to our amazing local businesses that generously donated raffle prizes for our parade participants. Your support helped make the event even more exciting and we truly appreciate your willingness to give back to our community. Thank you to Love's Salon,

Popolo's Pizza, Pizza Factory, Tree Troupers, El Rinconcito, Ranchos Liberty Cafe, Jessica's Housekeeping and The Neighborhood Barbershop for helping make this event such a success.

Please remember to support the businesses that support our community whenever you can. Their generosity helps make

community together. Happy 250th Birthday, America, and thank you, Ranchos, for making this Fourth of July one to remember.

SEMCU is a nonprofit organization that represents the interests of the residents, property owners and businesses in Southeastern Madera County. Its concerns, among other issues, are our community, safety, water, traffic, schools, future parks and energy. We invite our community to join and help make a difference for our families and youngsters. We invite community members to join SEMCU as board members to help shape the Southeast Madera County area. Together we can build a stronger, more vibrant community.

SEMCU meets once per month. To join online, go to www.semcu.org for a link and simple instructions. Or if you prefer, you can call in on your cellphone at 669-900-6833 then enter the ID# 83632424343 followed with the access code 85422. Make your voice heard!

**SEMCU is "By the community,
for the community"**

GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

swer that, didn't you? You have your phone on you, enjoy the rabbit hole).

I do, however, wonder if we've lost something by making sure we're never bored. Because boredom has a purpose. It's where imagination lives. It's where reflection happens. And sometimes, if we're lucky, it's where our best ideas show up.

The funny thing is that standing in that pharmacy line, I eventually stopped thinking about being bored and started noticing things. I paid a little more attention to the people near me and the conversations happening around me. I was suddenly seeing all the little details that normally disappear behind a screen.

The world keeps moving whether we

are being entertained or not. Maybe that's the lesson. Me standing in line picking up a prescription, worried about my phone that's locked in my car 100 yards away, reminded me that we don't always need to be entertained. Every now and then we should put the phone away, leave the earbuds at home, and just be present in the world. We can look around and observe and just ... gasp ... be bored. Who knows what great ideas might rise out of the silence?

Maybe boredom isn't something we need to eliminate. Maybe it's where we finally have enough quiet to notice the world again. As it turns out, I didn't forget anything important in my car that day. What I'd forgotten was how to simply be for a few minutes, and thankfully, it wasn't too hard to remember.

ORGANIZE cont. from P. 7

tions, points of interest, packing checklists and even options for rainy days.

Project management — Here again is the benefit of reducing the overwhelm. Describe your project and ask for steps. I tried it out with our "have a neighborhood ice cream social" project. In addition to basic steps, it provided a list of helpful tips, supplies and creative ideas for décor and games. So helpful!

Coaching and accountability — Example from AI: "Today I want to organize my office." AI might respond with: Spend 15 minutes clearing the desk. Take a short break. File papers for 20 minutes. Tell me what you finished, and we'll plan the next step. Sometimes that's all

you need.

Even if you've never intentionally used an AI chatbot (ChatGPT, Claude, Grok, etc.), it's estimated that most people interact with AI 50-200 times a day without realizing it. Our phones, GPS, online shopping, social media and streaming TV are just a few examples.

If you're like me, you have reservations about where AI may lead us, but without completely going off grid, we're all using it. Setting boundaries for our intentional use is an important component to make it work for you. (For example: I didn't have AI write this article for me!)

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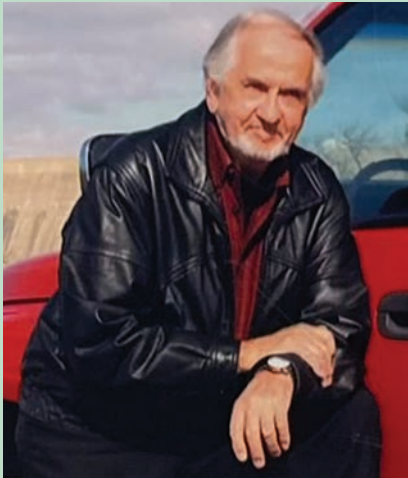
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In Memoriam



Thomas LeeRoy Kellner January 27, 1939 — June 12, 2026

Thomas LeeRoy Kellner, of the Madera Ranchos, was born on Jan. 27, 1939, in Yakima, Washington, and passed away peacefully on June 12, 2026, in Fresno, with the comfort of his wife, Jean, by his side.

Tom is survived by his wife, Jean, with whom he shared 45 years of love and devotion in marriage. He is also survived by his sons, Mark, David and Michael; daughters-in-law, Catherine and Aretha; his first wife, Delya, with whom he shared 20 years of marriage and welcomed their sons Mark and Kenneth; grandchildren, Mark, Katie, Peter, Stuart, Scott and Skylar; and great-grandchildren, Owen, Holden, Waverly, Harper and Miley. He was preceded in death by his son, Kenneth LeeRoy Kellner; his parents; and four siblings.

Throughout his life, Tom embraced a variety of careers that reflected his dedication to hard work and service. As a Real Estate Broker and owner of Kellner & Sons Properties, he was always most proud of the Agents that worked with him. As a teacher and school administrator, he became not just an educator, but a mentor. Still, he never forgot where he came from and would fondly recall his younger years working as a Sears & Roebuck associate or postal carrier.

Tom had a lifelong passion for horses and western art and was an avid fan of classic films featuring John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart. His favorite movie was "It's a Wonderful Life," which mirrored his own values of generosity and love for those around him. Known for his long lectures (and the expectation that you'd take notes!), Tom had an enduring love for scripture and treated his friends as family.

Tom's legacy is one of kindness, wisdom and unwavering devotion to those he held dear. His memory will live on in the hearts of all who knew him.

"What a beautiful, wonderful life it has been!" -Tom Kellner, 2026

A Celebration of Tom's Life was held Monday, July 27 at Northpark Community Church. The family is asking that you make a donation in Tom's remembrance to the charity of your choice.

KIWANIS cont. from P. 3

Our Service Community Award went to Mike Fursman, President of the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce. Mike is a leader that gives 100 percent, covering what I call the "four C's of leadership": Collaboration, Cooperation, Coordination and Commitment. Thank you, Mike, for sharing all these qualities with the Kiwanis of Madera Ranchos.

If you have an interest in being part of a group of folks who work to

fundraise for our children and our communities, come visit. We meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month at the Pizza Factory at 37184 Avenue 12 #101 in the Ranchos. Our General Meeting starts at 6 p.m. You can also email Sally Rowden at rowdensally2@gmail.com for more membership information.

Have you ever discovered the following in your summertime experiences? *"It's a sure sign of summer if the chair gets up when you do."* – Walter Winchell

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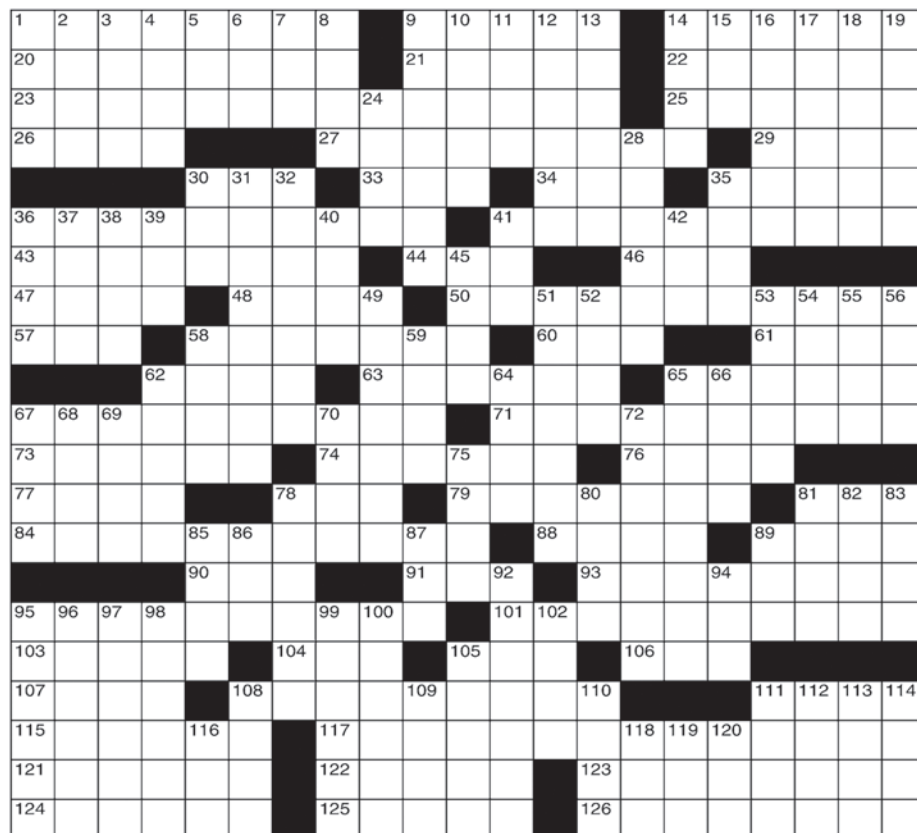


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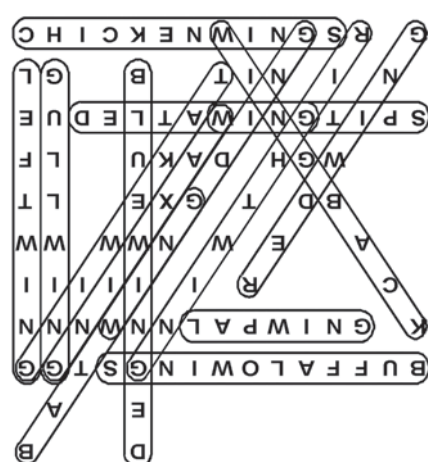
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ANSWERS

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



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



ACROSS

- 1 Off-guard way to be caught
- 9 Bread has a lot of them
- 14 Anchorage locale
- 20 Aspire to something specific
- 21 Love, in Lido
- 22 Hoped for
- 23 Founder of the Miracles
- 25 Lodged
- 26 Pulley part
- 27 With long suffering
- 29 Rajah's wife
- 30 Alternatives to Cokes or Pepsis
- 33 — mo
- 34 Twice LI
- 35 Raptor's claw
- 36 Record player
- 41 Ape in an arcade game
- 43 1307-27 king of England
- 44 Prefix with natal or con
- 46 Comic book shriek
- 47 Thick deli cut
- 48 This, in Baja
- 50 Olduvai Gorge pale-ontologist
- 57 Beer cask

- 58 Removes (oneself)
- 60 Veteran
- 61 Europe's "Eternal City"
- 62 French battle site of '44
- 63 Doesn't skip, as an event
- 65 Reagan appointee
- 67 Speak frankly
- 71 Jungle gym
- 73 Film director
- 74 1954-76 Dodgers manager
- 76 T-man Eliot
- 77 Outing ruin
- 78 "How was — know?"
- 79 Self-server
- 81 Some IRA contents
- 84 Master of the dog Pluto
- 88 Sundown's direction
- 89 Accepted
- 90 China's Long March leader
- 91 2012 Best Director Lee
- 93 Alternative to Match or OkCupid
- 95 It's pushed in an ice rink

- 101 Tart gin cocktail
- 103 Once-popular anesthetic
- 104 Certain pipe shape
- 105 Maple fluid
- 106 Tax return ID
- 107 Tiger's sound
- 108 Restricting freedom of thought
- 111 Work site welfare org.
- 115 Poppas' partners
- 117 "Arrow's Fall" novelist
- 121 Of high peaks
- 122 "Rapture" singer Baker
- 123 All aspects considered
- 124 Fitting one inside another
- 125 A-bomb trial
- 126 Index entries ... or what 10

- 7 It may get plugged up
- 8 Pig food
- 9 Jenner of reality TV
- 10 Prenatal exam
- 11 Suitor's flower
- 12 Rodeo horse
- 13 Submitted, as an entry
- 14 Out of whack
- 15 Taoism's — tzu
- 16 Inuit parka
- 17 Fr. resort port
- 18 Really into
- 19 Appending
- 24 Bottom
- 28 In this way
- 30 — Nabisco (old corp.)
- 31 World Champion Bull of 2009
- 32 Clip, as a coupon
- 35 Young kid
- 36 Study fixture
- 37 Not in use
- 38 Gala bagful
- 39 Hailed car
- 40 Thing flown in the wind
- 41 Scooby- —
- 42 Wiggling fish
- 45 Otherwise
- 49 "Still I Rise" poet Maya
- 51 Until this time

- 52 Element #26
- 53 Saudis, say
- 54 Nut with caffeine
- 55 Kuwaiti royal
- 56 Positive votes
- 58 Env. alert
- 59 Santa's bagful
- 62 Short-limbed lizard
- 64 Urban haze
- 65 Reel from a wallop
- 66 Certain skin bulge
- 67 Time in office
- 68 Jai —
- 69 Secular
- 70 Green
- 71 Hornet's valet
- 72 Fried stuffed dumplings
- 75 Many a new driver
- 78 "Pass the ball to me!"
- 80 Crawl (with)
- 81 Diner worker
- 82 Concluded
- 83 Vodka brand
- 85 Part of ER: Abbr.
- 86 "Huzzah!"
- 87 Cinch — (trash bag brand)
- 89 Sister station of Flix, in brief

- 92 Give the evil eye to
- 94 — Tin Tin
- 95 Politico Cain
- 96 "Troy" actor Peter
- 97 Bites, as a horse at the bit
- 98 Muppet frog
- 99 Tracey of "Mrs. America"
- 100 Patron
- 102 Apple debut of 2010
- 105 Splinter groups
- 108 Opposite of new
- 109 Spreadable cheese
- 110 It may get plugged up
- 111 Eight, in Baja
- 112 Alternative to Heath, candy-wise
- 113 Clutched
- 114 Positive votes
- 116 Netflix's "Anne With —"
- 118 Opposite of NNW
- 119 Install, as tile
- 120 "How cute!"

Say you saw it in the Independent

Click on "Local News" at

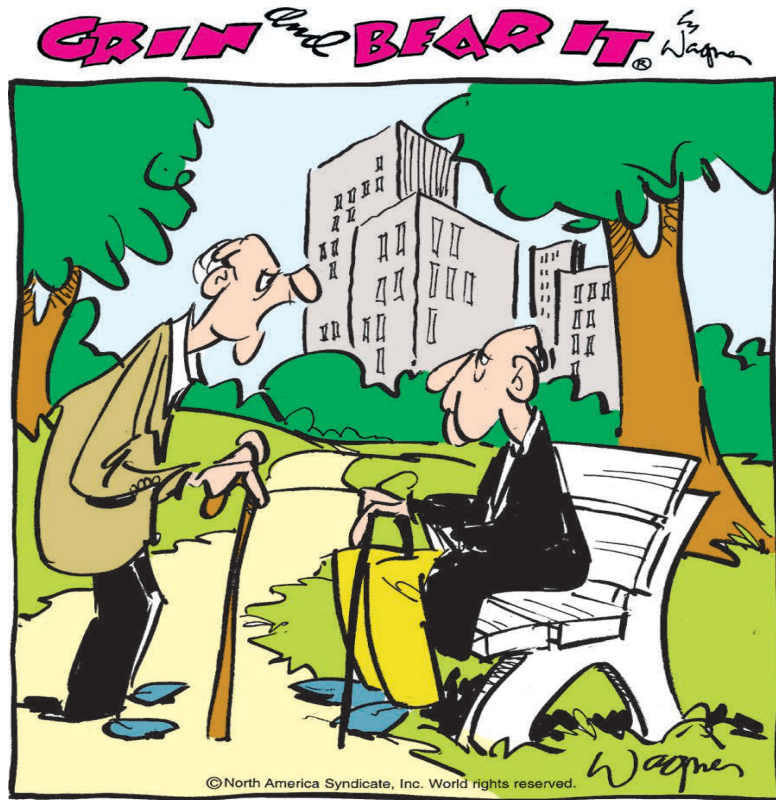
Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



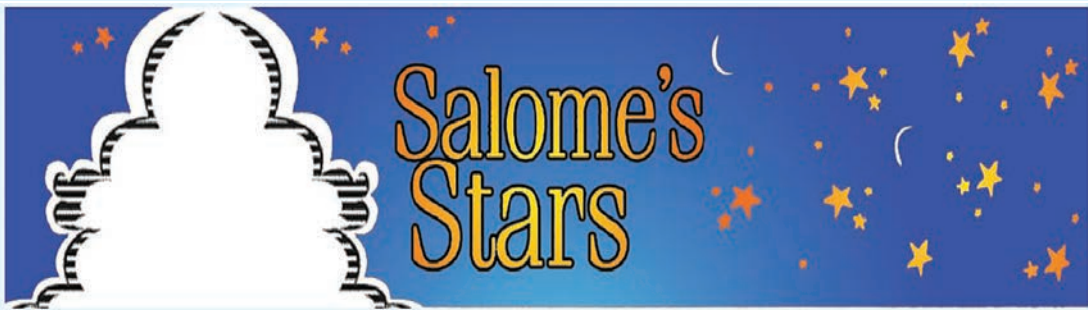
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ADS
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"I could have been a bigger success than you could have been!"



ARIES (March 21 to April 19) You face the possibility of raising your relationship to another level. However, your partner might demand that you make promises for which you're not sure you're ready.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) As changes continue, expect things to get a little more hectic at your workplace. An unexpected travel opportunity could open up new career prospects!

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Confront the person who caused your hurt feelings and demand a full explanation for their actions. You'll not only recover your self-esteem, but you'll also gain the respect of others.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) A personal problem in the workplace is compounded by someone's biased interference. Stand your ground, and you'll soon find allies gathering around you.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) You don't accept disapproval easily. But instead of hiding out in your den to lick your wounded pride, turn the criticism into a valuable lesson for future use.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) A former friend who you thought you'd cut out of your life is still affecting other relationships. Counter their lies with the truth. Your friends are ready to listen.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) What appears to be an unfair situation might simply be the result of a misunderstanding. If you feel that something is out of balance, by all means, correct it.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) A stalled relationship won't budge until you make the first move. Your partner offers a surprising explanation about what got it mired down in the first place.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) A co-worker shares some startling news, but before you use it to your advantage, make sure that it's true. Meanwhile, the weekend favors family matters.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Your usual conservative approach to family situations might not work at this time. Keep an open mind about developments, and you might be pleasantly surprised.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Plans might have to be put on hold because of a family member's problems. Don't hesitate to get involved. Your help could make all the difference.

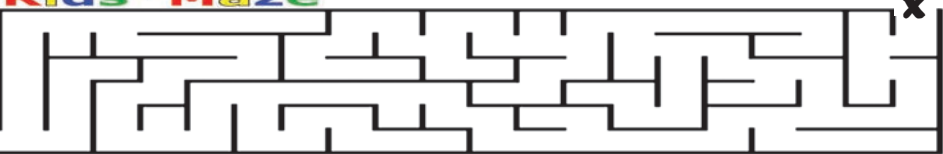
PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Relationships in the home and in the workplace need your careful attention during this period. Be careful not to allow misunderstandings to create problems.

Born this Week

You have a keen, insightful intellect and enjoy debating your views with others who disagree with you. You also love to solve puzzles -- the harder, the better.

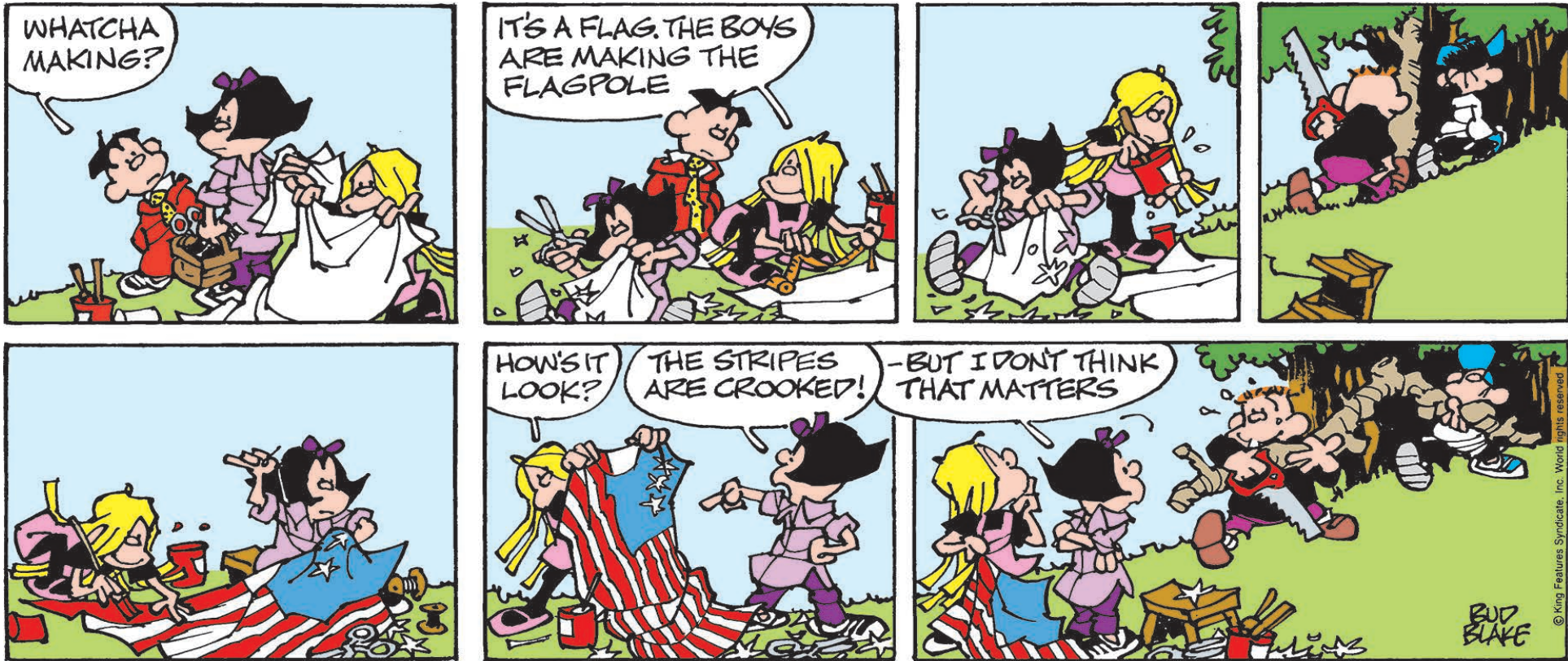
FUN PAGES

Kids' Maze



TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

1. **ANATOMY:** How many vertebrae are in the human spine? 2. **U.S. CITIES:** Which city is home to the Gateway Arch, known as the tallest arch in the world? 3. **TELEVISION:** Which 1970s sitcom introduced a neighbor named Phyllis Lindstrom? 4. **HISTORY:** When was the first heart transplant performed? 5. **GEOGRAPHY:** Where are the Cape Verde islands located? 6. **MOVIES:** Which 1991 film featured a villain named Max Cady? 7. **MUSIC:** When did Taylor Swift's second studio album ("Fearless") win the Country Music Association's Album of the Year award? 8. **SCIENCE:** What is nephology? 9. **MEASUREMENTS:** What instrument is used to measure the depth of oceans? 10. **ANIMAL KINGDOM:** What is a baby deer called?

- 1. 33.
- 2. St. Louis, Missouri.
- 3. "The Mary Tyler Moore Show."
- 4. 1967.
- 5. Off the west coast of Africa.
- 6. "Cape Fear."
- 7. 2009.
- 8. The scientific study of clouds.
- 9. An echo sounder or fathometer.
- 10. A fawn or calf.

Amber Waves

THESE FISH WON'T KNOW WHAT HIT 'EM. I'VE CREATED MY OWN SECRET WEAPON.

I TOOK CORN DOGS AND STUFFED THEM WITH CHUNKY PEANUT BUTTER AND SKITTLES.

OK, FISHIES, IT'S CHOW TIME!

GEEZ, I THINK THERE'S MORE NUTRITIONAL VALUE IN THOSE DUMB PLASTIC LURES.

The Spats

I NEED TO JOIN WEIGHT WATCHERS

...BEEN EATING WAY TOO MANY OF MY OWN WORDS LATELY.

Out on a Limb

ISN'T IT IRONIC, DON'T YOU THINK?

DANG IT!

A SHEPHERD HAS ZERO FOLLOWERS ON LINKED IN

HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Foot is missing. 2. Collar is missing. 3. Arm is not showing. 4. Lamp is larger. 5. Window is added to house. 6. Back of chair is smaller.

FUN PAGES

SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Challenging
★★★ HOO BOY!

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QOANLEJWINWWGWW
FDCBDATYGXEXWLT
VTSWGHRAKUPOLF
SPITGNIWATLEDUE
NNLIKNITJIBGFGL
GERSGNIWNEKCIHC

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
Unlisted clue hint: OFFICES OF THE POTUS

Batwing Delta wing Redwing Wing-tips
Blue-winged Gull wing Right wing Wingback
Buffalo wings Lapwing Take wing Wingding
Chicken wings Left wing Waxwing

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