

The Ranchos Independent



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



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



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



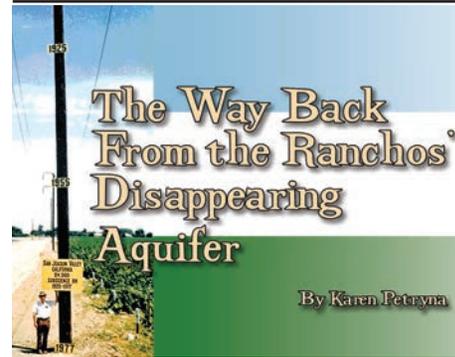
In This Issue Editorial • Page 5 / Aunt Jean's Ranchos Recipes • Page 8
Classifieds • Page 18 / Fun Pages • Pages 22 & 23



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



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



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

**Looking Back:
Taking a look back
at the top stories
in the Ranchos
for 2017**



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



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



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



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

In This Issue

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

The Tragic Circumstance of a Ranchos Family

By Randy Bailey

For the third time in less than a decade, another member of the Ranchos' Moncada family has been killed, and this time it was an 11-year-old child asleep in his bed. With this tragedy, death has claimed three generations of one family in eight years.

Luis "Tito" Valdez, 11

On Saturday, Nov. 25 at 9:20 in the morning, the family living in the modest house on the corner of Road 37 and Cloverleaf were abruptly awakened by a tremendous shudder and noise. A full-size pickup had left the roadway at approximately 40 m.p.h. travelling southbound on Road 37, hitting a propane tank that launched the truck into the air like a missile. That missile came to rest in the north wall of the family's garage.

But the building was no longer a garage.

Where the truck had bored through the wall had been converted into a bedroom where two brothers aged 11 and 9 slept peacefully in their bunkbeds. The older brother had just turned 11 the day before.

According to witnesses, Thomas Canton, 36, was driving the pickup when he appeared to have a seizure-like "medical emergency," incapacitating him immediately and making him incapable of controlling the truck. As the vehicle struck the garage, on the other side of the wall lay 11-year-old Luis "Tito" Valdez and his little brother, 9-year-old Matthew "Bro" Lopez. The driver, Canton, and the older brother, Tito, both died at the scene from their injuries. The younger brother was taken to Valley Children's Hospital with major injuries.

As horrific as the scenario is and brings dread to parents everywhere when examining the chain of events that not only led to the death of a child but are so random that there is nothing a parent could have done to stop a fate-filled morning, is the uneasy realization that with the death of Tito this is the third member of the Moncada family to have died, all horribly, within an eight-

year period. Each one a different generation of the family.

Sgt. Raul Moncada, 29

On April 13, 2009, Tito's uncle, Sgt. Raul Moncada, 29, was killed near Baghdad in Iraq when a roadside bomb, or improvised explosive device, exploded near his vehicle. Originally a Marine, he took a year off from the military and then re-entered for a second tour in Iraq as part of an Army military police program where he was training Iraqi policemen. Nearing his tenth year in the military, he was preparing to call it quits and return to the Ranchos in July of that year to his waiting girlfriend who was expecting their first child. There were plans of buying a house and settling down in the community where he was raised.

When Raul didn't make it home, the Ranchos looked for some way to honor one of its own. In November of 2011, the Madera County Board of Supervisors selected the section of Road 37 from Avenue 12 to Avenue 13. It was dedicated to his memory as the Sgt. Raul Moncada Memorial Segment, the first time that Madera County had designated a roadway that was not a state or federal highway. Road 37 was selected because it was the street Moncada grew up on and his family still lives there.

Raul Ruben Perez Moncada, 66

Yet a mere three years later, tragedy struck the Moncadas again. On the first of June in 2014, Sgt. Moncada's father, Raul Ruben Perez Moncada, or Raul Sr., 66, was going to church on this warm Sunday morning. He was heading westbound on Avenue 12 in the family SUV at 9:30 in the morning to get to church in Madera. At the same time, an Amtrak passenger train was heading northbound on the Burlington Northern Santa Fe tracks from Bakersfield to Sacramento with 73 passengers on board. There is still controversy as to whether the crossing arms were operating properly that day, but there is no controversy about what ultimately happened. Travelling at approximately 80 miles per hour, the train had just crossed over Avenue 12 and the first

Please see **TRAGIC** on P. 15



Road 37 between Avenues 12 and 13 commemorates the first of three Moncadas to perish.

2017 • Top Ranchos Stories

from the pages of the Ranchos Independent

1 Moncada Family Death /December • This was a story of unbelievable sadness. For the third time in a decade, another member of the Ranchos' Moncada family was killed, and this time it was an 11-year-old child asleep in his bed. With this tragedy, death has claimed three generations of one family.

2 Tesoro Viejo/October • Just nine months after The McCaffrey Group cut the ribbon on the Riverstone development at Avenue 12 and Highway 41, they had a grand opening for their next project, Tesoro Viejo. THIS project northeast of the Ranchos is on 1,600 acres and is planning for 5,190 homes.

3 Groundwater Recharge/ May, June, July • In a three-part series, Karen Petryna looked into the need for groundwater recharge if the Ranchos' aquifer is ever going to recover. She also looked at the sad absence of recharge awareness and lack of aggressive recharge basin construction by Madera County.

4 Measure L/February • A special election was held to create a one cent tax to pay for emergency fire and police personnel ... and was soundly defeated. The Monday morning quarterbacks were convinced that the promoters of the tax presented it incorrectly and the results spoke for themselves.

5 Riverstone Opens/January • After decades of delays and several changes in ownership, the property on the corner of Avenue 12 and Highway 41 was finally being developed and was open for business. Reaction from the Ranchos was mixed, leaning more toward fear about water usage and traffic.

6 Drought Over/January • For more than five years a drought gripped California with the Ranchos right in the middle of it. Then the heavens opened and biblical amounts of rain fell all over California, by some measures nearly double what an "average" year would produce. For now, it was over.

7 Flag Barn Sold/February • The Flag Barn, located at Avenue 12 and Highway 41, was sold by the McCaffrey group to Community Medical Center for a future hospital. What will become of it?

Madera County Offers Solutions For Not Paying Child Support

Do you have a bench warrant for not paying your child support?

Come to Court on Jan. 4, 2018 to take care of it and you will *not* be arrested.

The Madera County Department of Child Support Service is hosting this event at the Madera Superior Court, 200 S G St., Madera, starting at 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

A child support representative will be available to discuss your current sit-

uation and evaluate if the bench warrant can be dismissed. We want to work with you and help you get back on track with payments, a driver's license, and possibly a job. The Madera County Workforce Assistance Center will be onsite to assist with job placement and training.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact your local child support agency at 866-901-3212 for more information.

Tips for Having a Safe New Year's

On New Year's Eve, have a good time BUT be safe. There's probably a million tips out there but these are the basics that should get you through it safely.

1. **Don't drink and drive.**
2. **Don't leave your drink unattended.**
3. **Be aware of your surroundings and how others are acting.**
4. **Celebrate with friends, stay together and look out for one another.**

COMPLETE CAR CARE

Merry Christmas from our family to yours



remembering the reason for the season

Our 93636 family has suffered a great loss. While driving his vehicle, a young man suffered a major medical emergency causing him to lose control of his vehicle, strike a propane tank and propel himself and the vehicle into the bedroom of an 11-year-old child who was asleep in his bed. Both perished.

The driver attended Madera High School with my oldest daughter Renée. On several occasions we took this young man to church youth group with our family. I also have an 11-year-old grandson. This loss hurts me to my soul.

In order to support these families in their time of need, for the next 30 days Complete Car Care will donate 10% of the gross revenue received from our 93636 customers. I am grieved by this loss. *Warren Parr*

"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed spirit." Psalm 34:18 • "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." Galations 6:2

12/17

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Letters

Dear Editor:

During many years of people watching, I have discovered at least two types of public servants. One type serves for selfish reasons and strives to serve only in a capacity that comes with power and authority which can be used to aggrandize the selfish public servant. Everyone under this person's authority has to constantly prove to the authority figure that he/she is the boss by submitting to various abuse, such as vulgarity, intimidation, racial slurs, threats, etc.

The second type seeks to become a public servant as a way to express generosity; like a tree which bears fruit. This person discovers within him/herself intelligence, bravery, ability to work and a strong appetite for problem solving and getting good things done.

I have known Brett Frazier since his age was a single digit. It gives me hope that he is a public servant because I believe he serves from a good and courageous heart.

I applaud the Board of Supervisors for having the courage to do what they can to make the workplace climate better for employees of Madera County. It is their duty.

Sincerely,
Marcella Andrews
Madera Ranchos

Dear Editor:

This letter is a response to a letter to the editor in the November 2017 issue by "Disrespected and violated" (Dianne Reimer of Madera Ranchos).

I fully respect your complaint about "Our developer/rancher neighbor adjacent to Ave. 12, having the audacity to ignite a huge bonfire in the middle of the night ...". However, although I surmise you meant me, Igal Treibatch, I would like to pose to you the following: I/we did not have that fire at our ranch, nor did we initiate any such fire.

In the course of our farming, we do prune throughout the year. We collect all our pruning wood during the year in one area and, at a great expense, we contract with a company that has a grinding machine and chip all our pruning (you can see the mountains of chips at our ranch). I'm aware of the pruning fire you refer to since it was next door to our ranch.

I also would like to invite you to visit with me at our ranch, so you may see for yourself the conscientious way we farm and operate our orchards. I understand your frustrations and I would

like to set your mind at ease with respect to "your neighbor" (myself that is).

Please contact Randy Bailey at the Ranchos Independent so he may arrange for us to meet and tour our ranch. I truly am a good neighbor who cares about this community, its people and its future.

I hope that you will take me up on my offer and build a worthy relationship.

Your respectful neighbor,
Igal Treibatch
Madera Ranchos

Dear Editor:

Congressman Doug Lamborn (R-Colo.) recently introduced a bill that would break our promise to veterans. H.R. 4457, the Veterans Empowerment Act, would dismantle the VA health care system, charge veterans for service-connected health care and reduce VA to an insurance program for veterans. Congressman Lamborn and bill cosponsors, Congressmen Mark Meadows (R-N.C.) and Trent Franks (R-Ariz.) must not be allowed to advance this dangerous proposal.

Take action. Urge your member of Congress to oppose H.R. 4457 and let Congress know if they cannot take care of America's veterans then Congress should quit creating them. After taking action, please consider posting about this on social media. For example, on Facebook please paste: "I stand with @VFWHQ and oppose H.R. 4457, the Veterans Empowerment Act. If Congress cannot afford to take care of America's veterans, then we should stop creating them. #VFWAActionAlert."

Ray Krause
O'Neals

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

Send your letters to:
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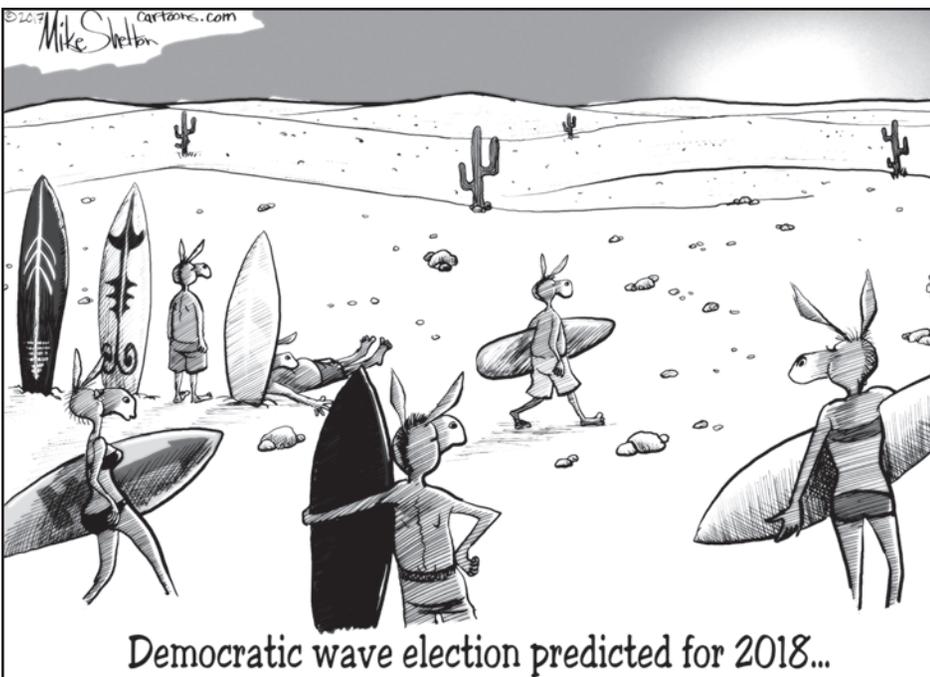
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Editorial

The Ranchos Independent Empire

By Randy Bailey

Empire? Yeah, *right*.

If being around for a while makes you an empire then I've got that going for me.

This paper you hold in your hands marks the beginning of the fourteenth year that I have owned the Ranchos Independent. It was on Dec. 1, 2004 that my former business partner Kim Allison and I bought the Ranchos Independent from previous owner Bill Bell. He had owned the paper since 1996 after acquiring it from original owner Len Wilcox who started the "Madera County Independent" sometime in the late 1980s-early 1990s. By my calculation, I have owned our little community newspaper longer than any of its previous owners. I guess that's something.

Probably not a week goes by that I don't engage in conversation with somebody and eventually the talk turns to, "So, what do you do?" After proudly confessing that I publish a community newspaper, that admission is almost ALWAYS followed by, "I heard newspapers are all going out of business. Nobody reads papers anymore."

Well, no, that's not exactly true.

The major newspapers *are* hurting. There are days that my paper seems like it's larger than the Fresno Bee. The reason, in my opinion, that they're hurting is that they're trying to compete in an area

they can't win: Up-to-the-minute, right now, absolutely latest news. A newspaper simply can't compete with the internet for news as it's happening.

Twenty years ago you would get your morning paper and read about everything that happened yesterday, then you would watch the local evening news to find out what happened today. You'd wrap up your news thirst with the national news where you'd get the major national and international stories of the day, all delivered in small, edible 1-3 minute bites. Of course, if you do the math you quickly realize that 3-minute stories supplied in a 30-minute format works out to about 10 stories. For the whole day. For the whole world. And what you were getting was selected and chopped and clipped and shaped and formed until often there was little resemblance to the original story.

No more.

Thanks to the internet, the 24-hour news cycle has become the 24-second (or less) news cycle. Now you can get one side, the other side, and sometimes, the truth. Of course, this puts an awesome responsibility on you, the news consumer. Now you have to read opposing views and wade through the "he said, she said" that makes up a lot of the news. Someone used to do that for you but now you're the master of your domain.

Heady stuff.

So why is this little paper in the Ranchos still here under my watch 14 years later? Because we do things a little bit differently.

We try to have current news but the reality is by the time the paper comes out it can be more like a history lesson. So, we try to get a little more *detail* on our stories. Who, what, where when, how, but mostly, why? I have always focused on the Ranchos. I look at the stories and try to find a Ranchos connection or I don't use it. Ranchos people. Ranchos businesses. Ranchos events. Legislative decisions that impact the Ranchos. We also don't have big-name, high-priced writers writing for us. I'm sure they would probably get bored.

Most importantly, the Ranchos Independent goes to every home in the Ranchos. No other area newspaper can make that claim. One hundred percent distribution means ALL of the people of the Ranchos get to keep up with what's going on in their hometown.

My hometown.

Thanks for 14 years. Let's see how many more we can do together.

The Ranchos Independent

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Randy Bailey.....Publisher/Editor

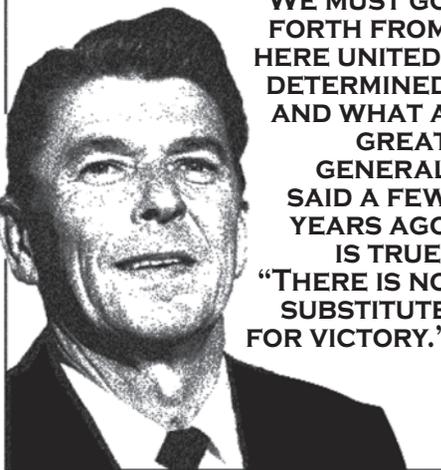
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Christmas, Mom and Me

Christmas has always been my favorite time of year, largely because of my Mom who always went way overboard during this season. And it's clearly in my blood because I'm one of those people who starts the countdown to Christmas on December 26th. I would probably leave my Christmas tree up all year long if I didn't mind the snotty looks from my neighbors and those judgey Jehovah's Witnesses. But my feelings have become bittersweet since Mom passed away last year. It's interesting how different it all looks through eyes filled with loss. I still love this time of year, but it

**GEN
ERA
TION
WHY**
by **eryn b. nyre**



them down with the persistence of a tenacious badger. She told me that not only did they relent but she managed to get them to knock off a big chunk since it was missing a couple of pieces. I had resigned myself to picking another piece that year but here

I know I can't expect Christmas to ever be the same now that she's gone but I will keep that same spirit alive as best as I can in her honor. So, remember: cherish every moment you have with your family, at Christmas and always, because you never know how it might change.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

will forever be missing something. I was watching one of our favorite Christmas movies as I was setting up my Christmas village and I was overcome with a complicated mixture of extreme sadness over her absence and yet a sense of joy as I felt her spirit with me.

But I don't want this to be a sad story. I want to focus on all the wonderful ways my Mom managed to make Christmas even more magical for me. Like the time she surprised me with an ice skating rink for my Christmas village. I had been searching all over town for this ice skating rink. I knew it would be the perfect addition and nothing else would do. Grumpy and defeated, I had given up when my mother strutted into my apartment holding a rather beat up box with a look of triumph on her face. It was the ice skating rink that was on display at Michael's. At first, they didn't want to sell it to her because they thought they might get more in and didn't want to give the display up, but she wore

comes my Mom to save the day as usual. To this day it's one my favorite pieces in my collection. I love how the ice skaters twirling around bring my beautiful Christmas village to life.

I often think of the time when she ignored the advice of both my dad and me and decided to make Snow Angels in the freshly fallen snow. She could barely walk and was having some balance issues, but she would not be deterred; she was going to make a snow angel. Despite our protests we looked away for a Moment and looked back to find Mom, lying on her back in the snow giggling like a school girl and having the time of her life. Of course, by the time we managed to help her up the snow angel looked more like a drunk did a few donuts in our driveway, but I will always have that memory. And the video.

One year when I was out for Christmas there was a very heavy snow in their area. We decided to go for a drive to visit

Please see **GEN WHY** on P. 7

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GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

an old ghost town. There was a small graveyard with a couple of famous names from the Old West, so we decided to meander through to see if we could find them. The thing about snow is that you don't always know where the ground ends and the snow begins. About halfway into the cemetery I took a step and suddenly the floor seemed to just disappear and I was up to my chest in a snow bank. My Mom thought it was so funny she laughed until she nearly fell over. Then she took out her phone and started videoing. I can't really blame her because I would have done the same thing. Of course, I would have at least asked if she was alright first, but that's me. Okay, so I was cracking up laughing so I'm sure she knew I was fine, but still Mom. Still.

Her very presence always made Christmas more special no matter what we were doing. Whether it was sitting in front of the Christmas tree drinking homemade hot chocolate or rocking on the back porch in the

freezing cold in front of the fire pit drinking homemade hot chocolate, or wrapping presents and watching White Christmas while drinking homemade hot chocolate. I have the recipe for the homemade hot chocolate, but it's just not the same without her.

You know what else I miss? I miss baking with her. Despite the fact that she sniped at me for making a mess and she would never let me help her with the fudge for fear it wouldn't be perfect, just being in the kitchen with her while she made all of her delicious Christmas creations while we (you guessed it) drank homemade hot chocolate was wonderful. I wish I had paid more attention to her fudge recipe. My Mom made the best fudge.

I know I can't expect Christmas to ever be the same now that she's gone but I will keep that same spirit alive as best as I can in her honor. So, remember: cherish every moment you have with your family, at Christmas and always, because you never know how it might change.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

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Time for Christmas Treats

Here we are just a week away from Christmas. Are your cards addressed and ready to be mailed, gifts bought and wrapped and you've started baking?

Do you have people around you that you would like to give a little "thank you" gift, but don't know what to do for that person? The boy down the street that comes and helps you with your lawn, the shut-in from your church, the senior couple that live next door and look after your home when you are away, or even the paper boy (or girl in my case)? How

about giving them a tray of home-baked goodies: a few cookies in a pretty little Christmas gift bag, a loaf of date, zucchini, or pumpkin bread, or even a half dozen muffins. Having come from you and knowing they are homemade might mean more than anything you could buy.

Here we are at the end of another year. Even though it seems time goes faster as we get older, I am looking forward to 2018. January I will start my ninth year writing this article. Yes, January 2009 was my first article. Sure doesn't seem that long ago. I've met a lot of nice people coming into the office, calling, or even writing. I want to thank each of you for your loyalty in reading my column each month.

Banana Raisin Muffins

- 2 C Cheerios cereal
- 1 ¼ C all-purpose flour
- 1/3 C packed brown sugar
- 2 ½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 C mashed ripe bananas (2 or 3 medium)
- 1 C raisins
- 2/3 C milk
- 3 T vegetable oil
- 1 egg- beaten

Heat oven to 400. Grease just the bottom of 12 regular size muffin cups with shortening, or spray with cooking spray.

Place cereal in resealable storage plastic bag. Seal bag and coarsely crush with rolling pin. In large bowl, mix cereal, flour, brown sugar and baking powder. Stir in remaining ingredients just until moistened – do not beat



until smooth. Divide batter evenly among the muffin cups. Bake 18-20 minutes or until golden brown.

Makes 12 muffins.

Chocolate Chip Zucchini Cake

- 1 ¼ C sugar
- 1/3 C butter or margarine – softened
- 1/3 C vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 eggs

- 2 ½ C flour
- ¼ unsweetened baking cocoa

- 1 tsp. baking soda
- ½ C buttermilk

- 2 C shredded zucchini
- 1/3 to ½ C semisweet chocolate chips
- ½ C chopped nuts (optional)

Heat oven to 350. Grease 13 x 9 pan with shortening or cooking spray, lightly flour.

In large bowl, beat sugar, butter, oil, vanilla and eggs with spoon until well blended. Stir in flour, cocoa, baking soda and buttermilk until well combined. Fold in zucchini, chocolate chips and the nuts. Spread batter evenly in pan.

Bake 35 to 45 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely, about 1 hour. Cut into 20 pieces. If you don't have any buttermilk for this recipe, use 1 ½ tsp., vinegar or lemon juice to milk to make ½ cup.

Chewy Peanut Bars

- 4 C Wheaties cereal

Please see **RECIPE** on P. 9

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RECIPE cont. from P. 8

- 1/3 C lightly salted dry-roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 C light corn syrup
- 1/3 C packed brown sugar
- 1/4 C peanut butter
- 3 T semisweet chocolate chips

Spray 9 inch square pan with cooking spray. In large bowl, mix cereal and peanuts. In a 2 quart saucepan, heat corn syrup, brown sugar and peanut butter to boiling over medium heat, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute. Pour over cereal mixture, stirring to coat entire mixture. Press in pan, using your fingers. If mix is too sticky, dampen your fingers with water.

In a small microwaveable bowl, microwave chocolate chips uncovered on high 30 seconds, stir. Continue microwaving 10 seconds at a time, stirring after each time, until smooth. Drizzle over bars. Refrigerate about 30 minutes or until chocolate has hardened. Makes 16 bars.

Fruit and Nut Snack Bars

Snack Mix

- 4 C Honey Nut Cheerios cereal
- 1 C dried tropical three-fruit mix ***
- 1/2 C sunflower nuts***
- 1/2 C dry roasted peanuts

Syrup

- 3/4 C packed brown sugar
- 1/2 C corn syrup
- 1/4 C peanut butter
- 1 tsp. vanilla

Spray 13x9 inch pan with cooking spray. In large bowl, mix snack mix ingredients, set aside.

In 2 quart saucepan, mix all syrup ingredients except vanilla. Heat to boiling over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Boil 1 minute. Remove from heat, stir in vanilla. Pour syrup over snack mix, stirring until evenly coated. Press mixture firmly in pan. Cool completely at least 30 minutes. Cut into 9 rows by 4 rows, making 36 bars. Store lightly covered.

*** If you can't find the dried tropical fruit, use whatever dried fruit you like - apricots, dates, pineapple, but be sure to chop them to bite size. Same for the sunflower nuts - if you don't like them, use chopped toasted almonds, pistachios, or even cashews.

Here we are at the end of another year. Even though it seems time goes faster as we get older, I am looking forward to 2018. January I will start my ninth year writing this article. Yes, January 2009 was my first article. Sure doesn't seem that long ago. I've met a lot of nice people coming into the office, calling, or even writing. I want to thank each of you for your loyalty in reading my column each month. I sometimes don't even know what I'm going to write about until I sit down in front of my computer. If you have something you would like me to write about, please call me. If I'm not in the office, we have an answering machine or you can send me an e-mail, or write your info on paper and put it in the mail slot in the door. I would love to hear from you!

Hope you all have a blessed Christmas and the happiest, and best of New Year's.

Talk to you next year.

The original version of this article appeared in the December 2012 issue of the Ranchos Independent.

Editor

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12/17



Past, Present and Future

“A triumph, my dear!” Anyone recognize that movie line? My husband quotes it when I have success with a new recipe. There are few movies I watch more than once, and even fewer that I watch every year. A Christmas Carol with George C. Scott is one of those. In the movie, Bob Cratchit is lovingly praising his wife’s Christmas Pudding — a recipe I don’t plan on trying.

A visit to a school for London’s most destitute children inspired Charles Dickens to write A Christmas Carol which was released on Dec. 19, 1843 and sold out by Christmas Eve. In it, he tells

the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, Bob Cratchit’s boss, a selfish, miserly man who has a miraculous transformation after the visit from the ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Future.

In the end Scrooge declares, “I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the past, the present, and the future. The spirits of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach.”

Like Scrooge, I believe it does us good to look intentionally at Christmas past, present and future. The lessons they teach may not be as life altering as they were for him, but they might just make our holidays a little more joyful and a little less stressful.

Christmas Past— Ask yourself some questions. What contributed to your favorite holiday memories as a child? It might have been something as simple as reading a favorite Christmas story, driving down Christmas Tree Lane, or decorating Christmas cookies. Maybe it was what you didn’t do. Having less on the calendar can build good memories too.

What are some of your best Christmas memories as an adult? Last year our family did a trip together instead of buying gifts. That reduced the shopping frenzy. The year before we had Christmas dinner at PF Chang’s — no prep or clean up — just fun. One year we cut back on gifts for each other and instead bought a goat for a family in a developing country.

Family traditions are valuable and can bind a family together. Celebrating Advent with the candles, Christmas story and family activities was one of those for us. Some traditions don’t last as long as others. Playing the card game “Donkey” where you grab spoons from the center of the table lasted only two years. With an engraved trophy at stake, I discovered our family is a little too competitive for that tradition when Band-Aids became necessary.

After your personal review, make notes of what has been special to you and your family in the past and think about how to incorporate those activities or ideas in the present.

Christmas Present— Prioritize! None of us can do it all. Wherever you are in your holiday plans and preparation, take a moment to record what’s still waiting to be done — cards, gifts, baking, decorating, parties, volunteering, watching your favorite Christmas movies, Christmas Tree Lane, visiting Santa, etc.

Consider if any of those things could wait until after the Christmas rush. For instance, I like the new trend of people sending New Year’s photo cards. So many arrive in the month of December that they don’t get the attention the ones coming later do.

Put a hold on any that can wait. Then, number the remaining items in order of importance. Schedule your top five, with adequate time, on your calendar. If there are still days left before Christmas, add a couple more. If not, be glad that you’re intentionally doing the things that matter most to you.

Christmas Future— After Christmas, while the holidays are still fresh in your mind, sit down and write a review. What was the best experience? What’s something that needs to be done differently next year? We think we’ll remember, but a year is a long time.

Was there something you really wanted to do, but missed out on it, or ran out of time? That happened to me last year, so after Christmas I made a list of everything I wanted/needed to do and wrote it into the notes section on this year’s December calendar. Then, when December rolled around, I scheduled them onto a specific day/time.

The movie closes with Scrooge full of the spirit of Christmas — caring for those less fortunate and showing kindness and generosity to all. May we do the same and in the words of Tiny Tim, “God bless us, every one!”

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

The movie closes with Scrooge full of the spirit of Christmas — caring for those less fortunate and showing kindness and generosity to all. May we do the same and in the words of Tiny Tim, “God bless us, every one!”

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The Bookshelf

By Jerrica Edmundson

The Ranchos Library is well into the holiday season and we have been eagerly anticipating the new year which is quickly approaching. Soon we'll be in 2018 and it's happened so fast. We've got our holiday decorations up and it's looking mighty festive among the stacks. The library would like to thank the Friends of the Ranchos Library for its help in getting us properly into the spirit and assisting us in spreading holiday cheer to all of our wonderful patrons.

This month there will be a new entry into the Star Wars saga and we have made sure to have a wide variety of books to reach all ages with its enduring story. The movie came out on Dec. 15 so come check out our collection and enjoy it on a whole new level with your little ones. We've got a section highlighting those books to make them easy to find for anyone looking.

Another new section we'll be highlighting in the library will be dedicated to books that have been turned into movies, TV shows or mini-series. The books add a new depth to the story that the silver screen simply can't truly capture, and the

books are definitely something you won't want to miss, if you love the stories you are watching.

We've made a Facebook page for our local library, and we will be posting new books coming into the collection as well as events that we are hosting. Be sure to follow us at www.facebook.com/RanchosLibrary so that you can stay up to date with any events and the details surrounding them.

As a friendly reminder, we do still have our weekly preschool story time with Mrs. Maxfield where she shares wonderful lessons based around a theme (this month it's all related to the holidays) along with a treat and great times are had all around. The weekly themes will be outlined on our Facebook page as they approach.

We love our regular patrons and are expanding to hopefully reach even more people in our community, so even if you don't usually come — take a chance. Spencer or I will gladly help you navigate the stacks and are more than willing to take on the challenge of finding a book that just about everyone will enjoy. Put us to the test. Reading truly can take you anywhere and we are glad to help you find the direction of your choice.

SEMCU speaks

By Jeff McGrath

SEMCU (South East Madera County United) has been actively pursuing grants to help improve the quality of life in our community.

SEMCU has two grant writers currently working with us. When we identify a project that would be beneficial to the community, we search for a grant that may help in funding the project. We then apply for the grant and, working with the granting agency, fine tune it to meet the requirements.

I know that individuals have been asking Virginia Vick at the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce and Verlaine Elinberg from SEMCU, "When can I expect to get my money?" It's not all that simple. Grants work on the "Pay up front plan," that is you must spend the money first and then get reimbursed by the state. We submit our invoices to the state once a quarter.

SEMCU's first grant was for low-flow devices to restrict the use of water in our homes and therefore saving a valuable resource. This was a straight forward grant in that SEMCU purchased the low-flow devices and then distributed them to the community. There was no out of pocket money for you, the consumer. SEMCU started with some

seed money and then requested reimbursement from the state as we progressed and as more devices were needed. We are in the process of trying to rewrite this grant to allow us to reimburse qualified individuals that have had water meters installed as required by the county; this changes the existing grant and must be approved by the state before we can proceed. I know some of our residents have applied for this reimbursement and we will keep you informed as it is a slow process, but hopefully we will be successful.

The next grant SEMCU was able to obtain was to reimburse those in the modified 93636 zone \$350 for the purchase of new energy efficient washing machines. This is where it gets confusing. Again, SEMCU loaned the grant "starting money" as money cannot be moved between accounts. With that money, we were able to pay bills for consulting and grant writing and also reimburse the first nine applicants. We submit bills to the state quarterly for reimbursement and are waiting for those funds to arrive. We currently have 14 households waiting for their money. Again, as soon as those monies appear those households will be reimbursed on a first come, first paid basis until funds run out and then we will apply for additional money.

I hope this helps explain how the funding is obtained and how it is dispersed. We appreciate your understanding.

Please join us the third Monday of every month at 6 p.m. at the Pizza Factory and help shape our community.

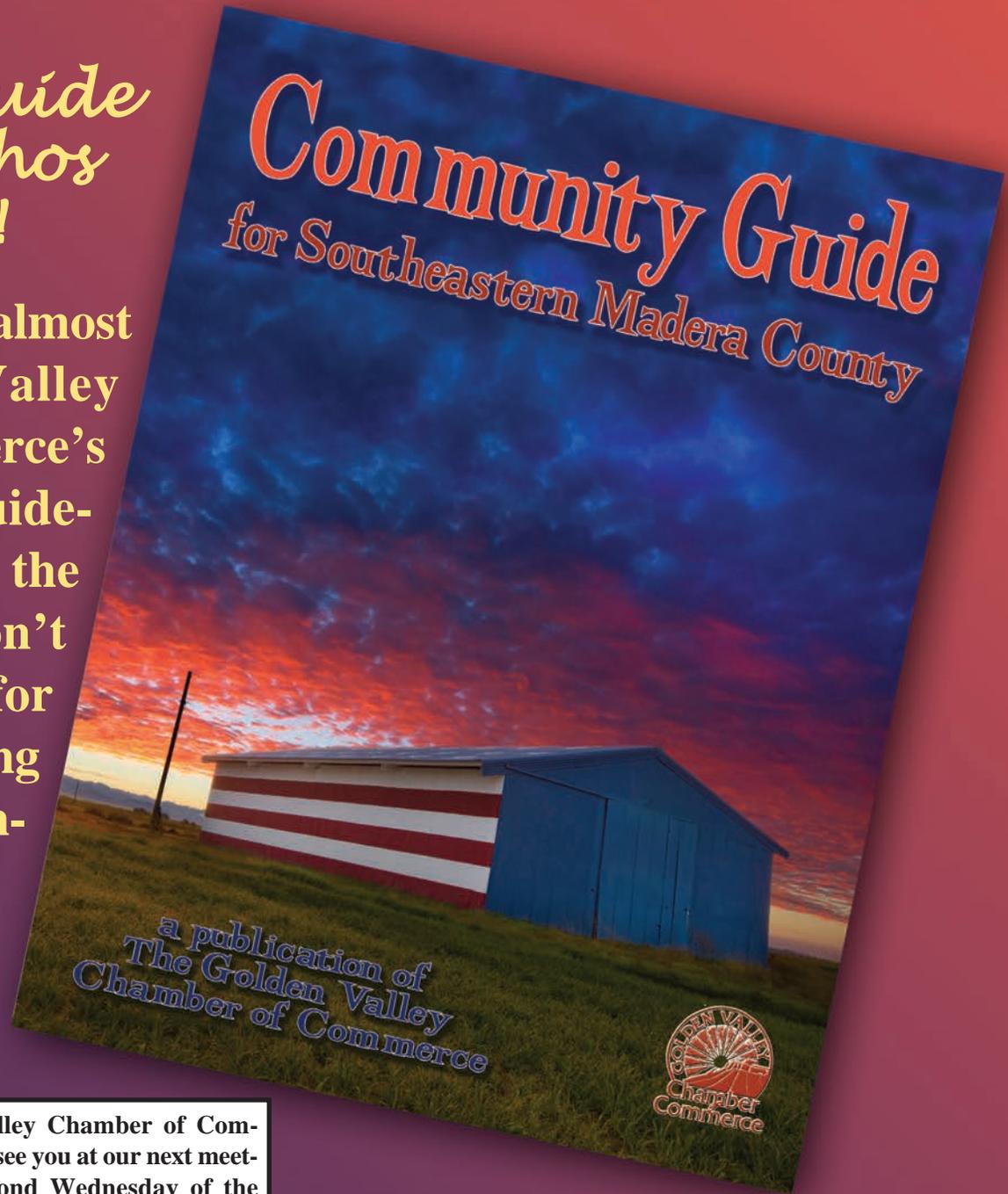
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Liberty High School

Liberty High School honored six individuals during its Community Service Awards Assembly on Dec. 14. Liberty Hawks football player Kaleb Roth presented Valley Children's Hospital representative Jessica Duarte and mascot George with a check for \$6,100 as a result of Roth's Beyond the Game initiative. Roth has raised more than \$10,000 in the two years of Beyond the Game.

Kaleigh Hunt, along with the Liberty High School Link Crew sent two vans full of school supplies to fire victims in Sonoma County. In addition, FFA members Dani Hutchinson and Brittany Anderson helped gather pet food and pet supplies to also help the fire victims in Sonoma County. Additionally, Liberty High School Community Service Commissioner Dustin Thompson was awarded for the school's canned food drive. The winner of the school's food drive was the library.

Finally, Key Club member and ASB President Sarah Folsom was given a certificate for her contributions for organizing a sock drive, called Socktober.

Sierra View

Madera County Probation is working with Cristi Lee's fifth grade class over the next eight weeks educating students through the RadKids program, a child safety program that address multiple issues that might be faced by students, including bullying prevention and child predator prevention. Students receive training by Madera County Probation officers in physical resistance strategies against abduction, internet safety, personal space safety, home and school safety, and safety in public places like parks, fairs, playgrounds, beaches, stores and malls, all through the eyes of the child. Erin Dahlem's fifth grade class will have the opportunity to go through this training in January. Parents will receive additional information, including a waiver before their child participates in the program. You

can visit www.radkids.org for additional information.

Flag Ceremony

Sierra View hosted its monthly flag ceremony and saluted the Madera County Sheriff's Department by recognizing their service to the community and commitment to keeping it safe. Sheriff Jay Varney was present along with detectives, and deputies. The students then presented Sheriff Varney with a banner to hang in the Madera County Sheriff Department's office.

Honor Wall

Sierra View will be dedicating new names to the U.S. Armed Forces Honor Wall on Feb. 21 as part of the school's first grade Patriotic Day. The honor wall has the names of former Sierra View students and staff who have served in the U.S. military. The school is soliciting new names for the wall. If anyone needs to be added to the wall, please contact Crissy Winslow

at cwinslow@gvusd.org.

Parent club

"I would like to give a big thank you to the Sierra View Parent Club (SVPC) for hosting our annual Santa's Workshop," principal Chris Imperatrice said. Students were able to buy gifts for their family and friends at discounted prices. The SVPC does not make money on the event and actually loses a few dollars each year, but the meaningful experience of giving is worth every penny.

"We would like to give a special thanks to all the parents who came out and devoted countless hours," Imperatrice said. Those parents are: Kristen Laurenti, Patty Groh, Michelle Zapata, Megan Barklow, Jessica Shepard, Emily Cree, Tiffany Tharp, Cara Christopherson, Melissa Horner, Aimee Hall, Melinda Tickel, Carrie Gill, Kelly Peirsol, Karri Hight, and Larissa Sobieralski.

"It was a huge success," Imperatrice said.



Piezo Cake

Hello 93636,

2017 has been a very busy and exciting year for the Parr family. All 13 children and grandchildren are doing well. Max started school, Kevin joined the Marines, Lori and I celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary and for the first time in two years our family members stationed in Okinawa, Japan came home for a visit. We are truly blessed.

The Parrs would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to our 93636 family for your generous support in 2017. We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous 2018.

I do understand that most readers of this article will not immediately rush into the garage to implement the principles and techniques discussed. My intention is to create awareness and deliver useful information in the event you may need automotive services. My hope is that you

will be a discriminating buyer asking informed and probing questions. Your answers should not be ambiguous and should include test results and the specifications for the failed component. If not, don't hesitate to get a second and third opinion if necessary. Remember, the trial and error method of diagnostic is the least efficient and most expensive method.

During last night's DuraMax diesel class, I noticed one of the pickup trucks had bright ORANGE COVERS over some of the electrical harnesses in the engine compartment. For the past six weeks I have been so occupied with hybrid vehicles and high voltages, the first thought that flashed into my mind was this is a diesel hybrid vehicle. Hey, the first diesel hybrids are not due until next year. After a little investigation I discovered these orange covers indicate high voltage circuits for the fuel injectors. Just to review, in the automotive world black and red cables identify 12-volt direct current (DC) circuits. Blue cables, like the ones connected to your electric steering box or the fuel injectors in your Direct Injection gasoline engine, identify 36 - 60-volt AC (alternating current) and DC circuits. Better be careful with the blue cables. If you see bright ORANGE cables or covers, they in-

dicating high voltage circuits, AC or DC. High voltage circuits require testing equipment that meets a Category III/1,000-volt rating and rubber gloves that meet Category 0 with a 1,000-volt rating. WARNING: don't mess with the bright orange cables or components. If you get shocked, you're going to be hurt or worse for a very long time. In the case of the DuraMax engine, the orange cables carry up to 240 volts DC to the fuel injectors. After more than 100 years of mechanical and low-voltage diesel fuel injection, why do we now find it necessary to use lethal voltages to operate the system?

Well, I'm glad you asked. As we all know, old school diesel engines were loud, knocked a lot and their exhaust smell was objectionable. Those engines also created higher levels of NOx emissions and particulate matter. To the average U.S. buyer those vehicles were much less desirable. In addition, U.S. Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards are increasing and emissions level standards decreasing so light duty diesel engines manufacturers needed a solution. That solution is the piezoelectric fuel injector. They reduce engine vibration and knock, increase fuel efficiency and performance while reducing tailpipe emissions. The

word "piezo" is the Greek word for pressure. The piezoelectric effect was discovered by Jacques and Pierre Curie in 1880. When quartz crystals are compressed, a voltage is produced. When voltage is applied, they extend or flex. Piezoelectric fuel injectors have approximately 500 thinly sliced crystal wafers internally stacked one on top of another. When high voltage is applied, the wafers flex essentially pushing open the injector. When the high voltage is suspended, the wafers contract and create a voltage that is captured and used to assist with the next injector opening event in the sequence. Nothing wasted here unlike an old school solenoid fuel injector. Although each individual wafer flexes very, very little, the accumulative amount opens the injector. A fuel injector is essentially a gate. When the injector is open, fuel may pass. When it's closed, fuel may not pass.

The Robert Bosch Company pioneered piezo fuel injector technology for use in the automotive industry. According to Bosch, piezo injectors react up to five times quicker than standard solenoid injectors. This translates into more precise fuel injection events and facilitates multi-

Please see **HANDS** on P. 15

Senior Report

Holiday Events Complete Seniors' Year

By Margaret Tynan

When I joined the Ranchos/Hills Seniors this past June, I had no idea that I'd be writing the Senior Report for the monthly Ranchos Independent, but here I am. I look forward to the opportunity to share all the exciting, interesting and enjoyable activities taking place at the Center in the coming year.

It's hard to believe that another year has flown by. In just a few days Old Father Time will usher out 2017 and Baby New Year will arrive on Jan. 1, 2018. As we move into the new year, it is well to reflect on a little history of the Ranchos/Hills Seniors, highlights of this past year and some of the Center's future plans.

In 1973, when I moved to the Madera Ranchos area with my family, the Rancho/Hills Seniors didn't exist. But beginning in January 1989, through the cooperative efforts and creative skills of a small group of community members, the Ranchos/Hills Seniors idea began to become a reality. On January 9, 1990 the non-profit organization was incorporated as the Ranchos/Hills Seniors, Inc. In 1997 the current location of the Center was purchased and in just six years, through the consistent hard work of fund raising and community support, the Center was paid in full. What a feat. The mortgage burning party was held in November 2004.

2017 saw many engaging and exciting events at the Center. The annual April Ranchos/Hills Seniors Home and Garden Festival was a real success made possible through the efforts of members with the help of Boy Scout Troop 118. This year seniors had fun learning different crafts. Eva McAtee led several paper crafting sessions. Participants came away with lovely unique greeting cards and gift boxes. Marta Morgan led a class on making 4th of July

stylized flag decorations. The improvisation acting classes and the painting class were inspiring and very well attended. There is a lot of interest in offering these again this coming year so keep an eye out for future dates.

Most recently a drawing for the lovely handmade quilt, generously donated by Ranchos/Hills Seniors member Dorthea Husted, was held on Dec. 9 during the Holiday Boutique sale. Congratulations to winner Richard Trimble, a Ranchos resident and Ranchos/Hills Seniors member. Thanks to him, Dorthea and to all who supported the raffle campaign.

Members enjoyed several holiday themed dinners, one of which just took place Dec. 12.

Over 40 members and their guests enjoyed a delicious holiday ham dinner with all the trimmings. All joined in singing Christmas carols and sharing the mirth of the season. Seniors will ring in the New Year with a potluck and card games on Sunday, Dec. 31 at 6 pm.

The Ranchos/Hills Seniors offers many activities on a regular basis. A few examples are the nutrition program meals served Monday through Friday at 11:30 a.m. (pre-registration required);

exercise class held MWF from 10 to 11 a.m.; the Thursday evening social potluck and card games held weekly; the Bake and Boutique Sale and the Treasure House and Garden Sale held the first Saturday of each month from 8 am to noon. Other events for 2018 are in the planning phase. Some suggested possibilities are a peer writing group, various outings, guest speakers, discussion groups, knitting/crochet group, etc. We want your input, ideas and participation. Join the Ranchos/Hills Seniors and enjoy good friends and fun events. Stay engaged! For more information contact the Center at 645-4852.

Have a grand, healthy and happy 2018!



Winner of the quilt drawing is Richard Trimble, right, along with his granddaughter Emily Trimble and the quilt's creator, Dorthea Husted.



One of the holiday themed dinners took place Dec. 12 where over 40 members and their guests enjoyed a ham dinner with all the trimmings.



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TRAGIC cont. from P. 2

passenger car was squarely in the middle of the Avenue 12 crossing when Moncada Sr.'s SUV plowed into the train. The impact killed Moncada and the impact was enough to injure a passenger on the train.

The crossing sees an average of approximately 42 BNSF freight trains and Amtrak passenger trains daily, according to the Federal Railroad Administration. Moncada's collision was the tenth at that crossing and the fifth death.

According to website GriefandSympathy.com, the impact of multiple losses can take its toll on remaining loved ones. It stresses, "The one certainty is that when you have lost your loved ones you have no choice but to cope as best as you can for the children or family who are left, and for your

own sake too."

Pointing out the obvious that no one is expected to simply forget a loved one who is gone, the site suggests multiple coping mechanisms which are different for everyone. While some often start working long hours at their job to ease the hurt, others cope by giving more time to their hobbies, such as golfing or fishing. The main point is that no one can grieve 24 hours a day.

The site also states that getting support is key when dealing with multiple losses. Whether it's local professional help, your church or even online support groups, don't grieve alone. As the site stresses, "There is no doubt that life will never be the same again. But we will learn to live with the new reality, and gradually find some small pleasures again."

HANDS cont. from P. 13

ple events per injection cycle. Now instead of the one large, violent, noisy fuel injection event, fuel is delivered in a series of smaller events with a maximum total of five main, pre-and post injection events. Old school solenoid injector-pulsed events last about 1/1,000 of a second. Piezo injectors react so quickly all five injector events occur in that same span of time. Can you imagine that? Five separate and distinct injection events in 1/1,000 of a second. The main injection event is the longest and the post injection event the shortest. Gradually injecting fuel, instead of dumping it all in at once, results in a less violent, more even complete burn. The gradual rise in cylinder pressure reduces noise, vibrations and emissions.

The fuel pressure inside a DuraMax fuel injector can be as high as 29,000 pounds per square inch (PSI). WARNING: this extremely high fuel pressure can be lethal. In order to overcome the fuel force acting on the injector, an even stronger force is needed to flex the wafers and open the injector. That force is electromotive force, or voltage. Boost capacitors inside the Engine Control Module (ECM) are used to step up low voltage to high voltage. The higher the voltage the stronger the reaction of the wafers. At 29,000 psi, it takes lots of voltage to flex the piezo's wafers enough to lift open the fuel injector plunger. Hence the need for high voltage.

Piezo injector nozzles have six openings so small I cannot visually see them. At high pressure, fuel is forced through the openings creating a very fine, high velocity mist that is evenly and uniformly spread throughout the combustion chamber. The nozzle openings are arranged so the fuel mist pattern looks like an upside-down cone or funnel.

OK, we are close, but there is one more very important ingredient missing. Not only do we need the ECM to deliver high voltage, we also need it delivered at a very high frequency or hertz (cycles per second represented as Hz). We need to cycle the wafers on and off five times in 1/1,000 of a second. I expect to see a frequency in excess of 5,000 Hz. For comparison, the light bulb in your house operates/flashes at 60 Hz. To me the high frequency is the key to the efficiency of this system.

To diagnosis this system, I set my Lab Scope sampling rate to 1 million samples per division, my time base to micro seconds (1/1,000,000 per/sec.) and connected a high voltage attenuator. This allows me to capture every fuel injection event or 1,500 per minute at idle. I can build a math channel that will isolate the injection events outside normal operational ranges to help me quickly and accurately focus my diagnostic. Lab Scopes may have once been considered a luxury, now they are essential.

WOW! This stuff is way cool. Automotive engineers and manufacturers are always looking for new and innovative ways to apply science. Case in point, piezoelectric science was discovered more than 130 years ago. It's just math and science and that's how it should be diagnosed and repaired.

OK guys, that's about all for now. If you have any questions concerning the automotive industry, suggestions for topics and/or questions concerning a vehicle (gas, diesel or electric), I can be reached at complete_car_care@hotmail.com, Facebook or fax 559-907-7661.

God Bless America and God Bless 93636

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In Memoriam



Donald R. Dahlstrom

September 10, 1932 – November 28, 2017

Dad was born to loving parents, Glen and Hazel Dahlstrom in Kingsburg, Calif., but lived the majority of his life in Fresno. He proudly served in the United States Navy during the Korean Conflict as a first loader on the USS Carmick from 1951 to 1954.

He met and married our mother, Barbara (Fisher) in 1955 and they celebrated 25 years together until her passing in 1981. He retired from Pacific Telephone & Telegraph and Southwestern Bell Corp. after 39 years of service in installation and repair and made many memorable friends there. After retiring, Dad enjoyed yearly summer trips to Trinidad, Calif. which were spent with his parents and time spent fishing with his dad, canning tuna and smoking salmon. He continued these trips with his son, Michael until Michael's passing in 2013. His sister, Lois Satterberg also preceded him in death.

Those left to cherish his memories are long-time girlfriend and companion of 25 plus years, Maxine Briner; his sister, Evelyn Taylor of Sacramento; his daughters, Laurie Nemanick and husband Martin; Tammy Duque and husband Louie; and Susan Dahlstrom; six grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, one great-great grandson, nieces, nephews and cousins.

A special thanks to Maxine for "putting up" with Dad all these years and whose hidden nursing skills emerged with loving care; grandson Joseph "Joe" – without you Grandpa wouldn't have been able to come home. Your willingness, strength and gentle care you gave were a godsend and I love you more than words can say. To his niece, Linn Williams, whose intelligence and expertise guided me through all the paper work. And a special thank you to Hinds Hospice and VA/Senior Helpers and the caring employees they have.

"Dad, remembering all the love and support, good times, trips to Trinidad and easy conversations, you were the best father anyone could ask for," love, Laurie, Tammy and Susan.



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SUDOKU
by Linda Thistle

	1		2	9				
		6		3	1			
3			1					2
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	3		8	6				1

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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		x				
	x		+		20			
x		-		-				
	+		+		20			
27		19		22				
2	3	4	5	6	7	7	8	9

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Repeal the Gas and Vehicle Tax Increases

By Betty Van Valkenburg

Merry Christmas!

A December 2015 headline in the Orange County Register screamed "Gas tax in California ranks among highest in country; but its roads are among the worst in America."

Where has all the tax money gone? Certainly not entirely to roads.

Last month Jerry Brown and California Democrats gave us lumps of coal for our Christmas stockings in the form of increased gas and vehicle taxes estimated to cost the average Californian an extra \$800 a year – above and beyond the existing taxes already paid. Brown's SB 1, the so-called "Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017," states that it will "address deferred [deferred why?] maintenance on the state highway system and the local, street and road system."

Where Will the Money Go?

Where will all that additional tax money go? Partly to roads, but at least 30 percent is al-

ready earmarked for purposes unrelated to road upkeep.

Why should we repeal SB 1? After all, we want our roads and streets repaired. According to State Assemblywoman Melissa Menendez, SB 1's spending proposals "are clearly not programs intended to fix our crumbling roads" and include over \$818 million on "rail, transit, active transportation such as bikeways and pedestrian paths, parks and recreation, food and agriculture, university research and workforce development programs."

And we can be sure that more will be diverted from the stated purpose as politicians get their hands on more of our money. But more importantly, there is now a requirement to emphasize "sustainable development" and environmentalism in every public policy – promoting lifestyle changes designed to get us out of our cars rather than prudent road maintenance decisions.

SB 1 "advances greenhouse gas reduction objectives and other environmental goals and supports SB 375 and transportation plans."

"Sustainable" Communities?

SB 375 is the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 which coordinates transportation and land-use planning with the goal of more "sustainable" communities. Under it, goals are set for greenhouse gas emissions reductions from passenger vehicle use in regions covered by one of the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations. Each MPO

must (must!) prepare a "sustainable communities strategy in its regional transportation plan which contains land use, housing and transportation strategies. Then the Sustainable Communities Act establishes incentives to encourage local governments and developers to implement that strategy. It is even more complicated than that, but you get the picture: Controlling our lives.

As another example, Fresno County's Measure "C" sales tax increase was passed in 1986 to "improve the overall quality of Fresno County's transportation system." Voters approved it because they wanted the potholes filled. In 2006 they extended Measure "C" for another 20 years for the same purpose. However, this time it included a stipulation having nothing to do with improving roads: "New Bicycle Facilities: Every highway, expressway, super-arterial, arterial or collector within the County constructed or reconstructed in whole or in part with Measure "C" funds shall include accommodations for bicycle travel either by a shared roadway or by bike lane."

According to its literature, Measure "C" also creates Transit Oriented Development projects and supports "high-density housing and mixed uses near transit ... it also strives to support livable, viable and sustainable transit-oriented healthy communities that promote walking, biking and the use of public transit and reduce private vehicle dependence. Such TOD communities promote health and reduce risks

for chronic diseases."

Lofty goals to be sure, but just fix the darn potholes and stop playing Big Brother!

And just so you know, California passed a Bicycle Transportation Act in 2006 to establish a "bicycle transportation system." Woo hoo! Now we've gone from failed high-speed rail (200 m.p.h. from Merced to nowhere) to a futile bicycle system (Ranchos to Madera in a huff and a puff).

Repealing the Taxes

So how do we repeal the tax increases?

Reform California has a petition on its website www.ReformCalifornia.org that you can print, sign and mail. If the required number of valid signatures are submitted, a constitutional amendment will be placed on the 2018 ballot to repeal SB 1 and to require that voters must approve any new specified taxes or fees on gas, diesel fuel or vehicles. It is important that you follow all the instructions for signing and mailing the petitions. Each one has room for two signatures, but you can print as many as you need. Please obtain as many signatures as you can and mail the petitions as quickly as possible, preferably by January 4. Let's repeal the taxes and return to sane policies.

Meanwhile, may you have a very Merry Christmas and a happy and safe New Year!

Visit the Central Valley Tea Party website at www.centralvalleyteaparty.com for more information.

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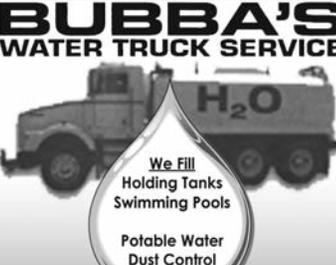
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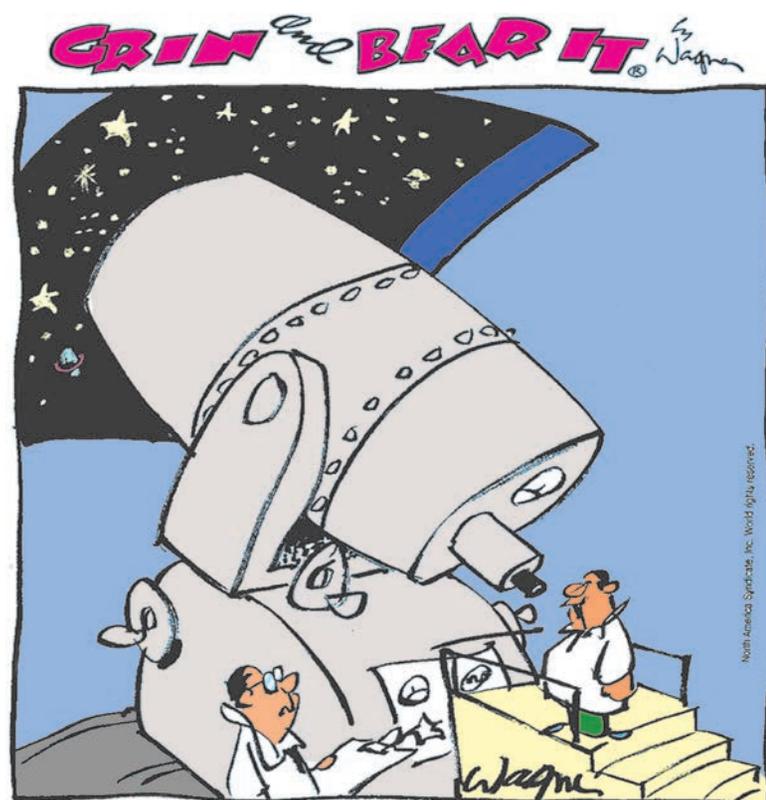
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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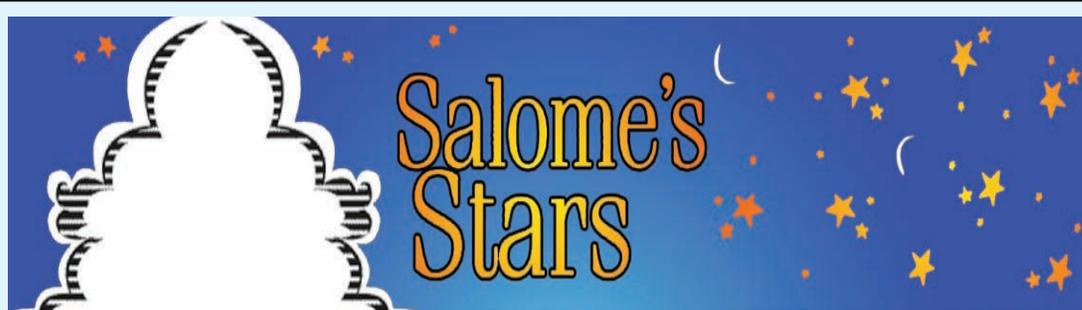
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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Start preparing now to make sure you get the credit you're due for all that effort you put in to get that project off the ground. A new challenge emerges after the 15th.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) You're still charging full steam ahead on the job -- and that's fine. But take time to share the joy of preparing for the upcoming holidays with folks you love.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) A former detractor resists joining your ranks just yet. Give him or her time to learn more about what you're doing. Meanwhile, devote more time to friends and family.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Be careful not to be goaded into a tiff by someone who might be looking for a fight. Remain cool as you make your exit. Be assured that others will rally to your support.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) Kudos on getting the well-deserved Lion's share of the rewards for a job well-done. Now you can take a breather from your workaday duties and spend time with your family.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) You enjoy a quick spurt of renewed energy just in time to meet that upcoming deadline. A potentially romantic situation looms. How it develops will be up to you.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Watch out for distractions that could cause delays and leave you running twice as fast to finish your work by the 15th. Then go ahead and have fun.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) You might prefer to work on current tasks on your own. But be open to a potentially useful suggestion from someone who admires you and wants to help.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Avoid rushing full gallop into that volunteer project without knowing what's expected of you. Take things a step at a time as you begin to find your way.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Good news: You should begin to feel more comfortable expressing your emotions. This will go a long way in helping you with that personal situation.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) An old friend gives confusing signals. Best advice: Don't assume that things will necessarily work themselves out. Ask questions and demand straight answers.

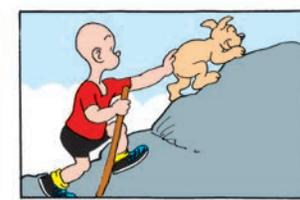
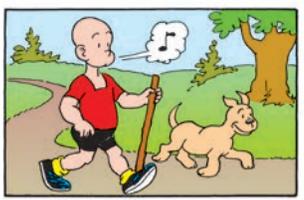
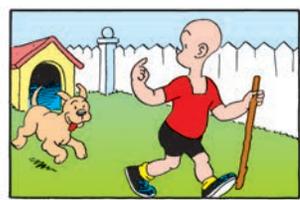
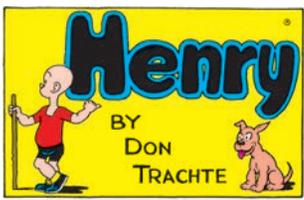
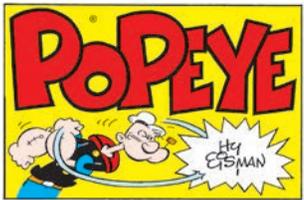
PISCES (February 19 to March 20) A new relationship needs time to develop. Be careful not to let your emotions flood your natural sense of caution. Meanwhile, check out that new job offer.

Born this Week

Your sense of right and wrong sometimes causes you to come into conflict with others. But you invariably come out ahead.

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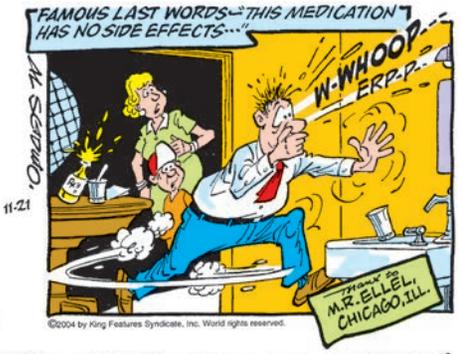
FUN PAGES



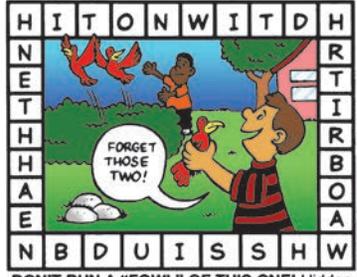
THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME



BY AL SCADUTO



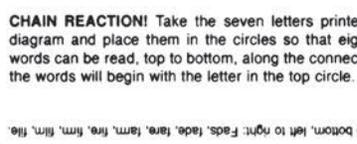
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A SHORT MATH TEST! See if you can arrange the digits 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 so that when two of the digits are multiplied by one of the digits, the product will contain the remaining two digits.

CHAIN REACTION! Take the seven letters printed below our diagram and place them in the circles so that eight four-letter words can be read, top to bottom, along the connecting lines. All the words will begin with the letter in the top circle.



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3	6	3	7	5	7	8	4	8	3	7	3	7
C	E	H	S	A	I	O	A	T	I	Z	L	E
6	2	4	8	7	4	8	3	6	7	4	7	2
R	A	N	H	G	T	S	D	T	O	N	A	C
7	3	6	4	8	5	7	2	5	2	3	5	8
L	H	H	O	A	T	S	E	T	F	A	I	I
3	5	6	4	6	2	6	3	8	4	5	6	5
P	T	O	M	U	U	G	P	L	O	U	H	D
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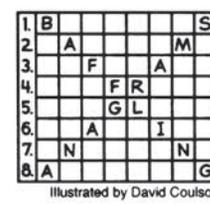
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- Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
- A pea
 - A tack
 - Ant
 - BB shot
 - Corn kernel
 - Crumb
 - Diamond
 - Fingertip
 - Grains of rice
 - Grains of sand
 - Ladybug
 - M&M
 - Staple
 - Teardrop
 - Tic Tac

Junior Whirl

FIND THE BIG WORDS!



Using the definitions in the anagrams below, you must find the eight eight-letter words that fit into the framework pictured on the left. For each definition, the letters in the two anagram words must be unscrambled and used to form the work asked for.

- DEFINITION:**
- Where outlaws hide out.
 - Famous Carnegie Deli sandwich.
 - Invented by Ben Franklin.
 - Where bats hang out.
 - Night criminals.
 - What waiters expect.
 - Ancient mythical horses.
 - What young actors are.
- ANAGRAM:**
- sand + bald
 - aims + trap
 - fail + coob
 - ribs + flee
 - slag + burr
 - yurt + gait
 - coin + runs
 - pigs + rain

TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

- LITERATURE:** What 20th-century author wrote a short story titled "Gimpel the Fool"?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** Sometimes called "the second most visited home in America," what Memphis, Tennessee, estate was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2006?
- GEOGRAPHY:** What is the only mountain in North America that exceeds 20,000 feet?
- FIRSTS:** Who became the first woman in the British Parliament in 1919?
- HISTORY:** The International Committee of the Red Cross won what prize in 1944?
- SCIENCE:** In forensic science, what is dermatoglyphics?
- MOVIES:** In one of the movie's classic songs, how much sugar does Mary Poppins say is necessary to make the medicine go down?
- MUSIC:** What is the classification for an album that sells 10 million copies?
- EXPLORERS:** What European explorer was the first to reach the Mississippi River in 1541?
- MEDICAL TERMS:** What is a more common name for the malady called pityriasis capitis?

Answers

- Isaac Bashevis Singer
- Graceland
- Denali (Mount McKinley)
- Lady Nancy Astor
- The Nobel Peace Prize
- The study of fingerprints
- A spoonful
- Diamond
- Hernando de Soto
- Dandruff

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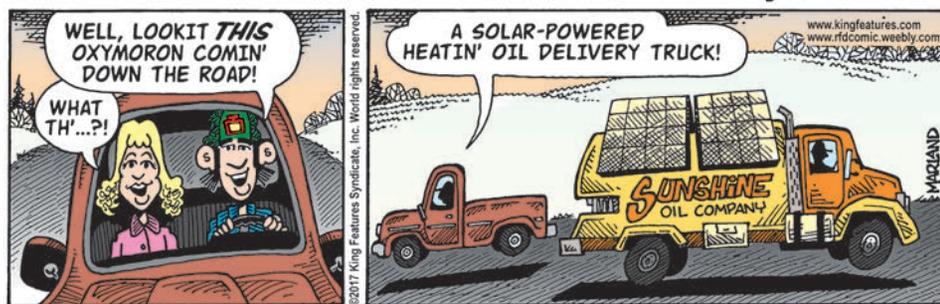
Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



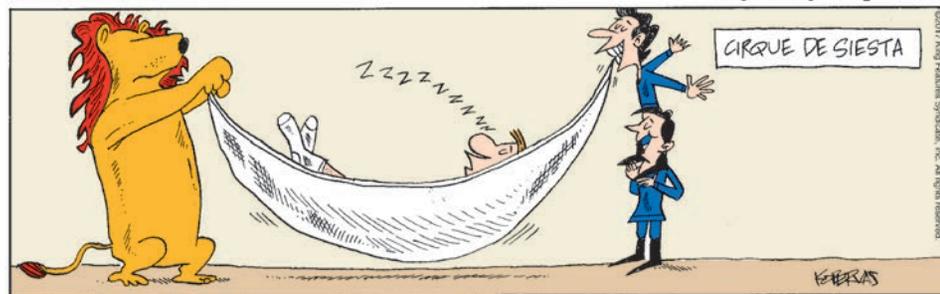
R.F.D.

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

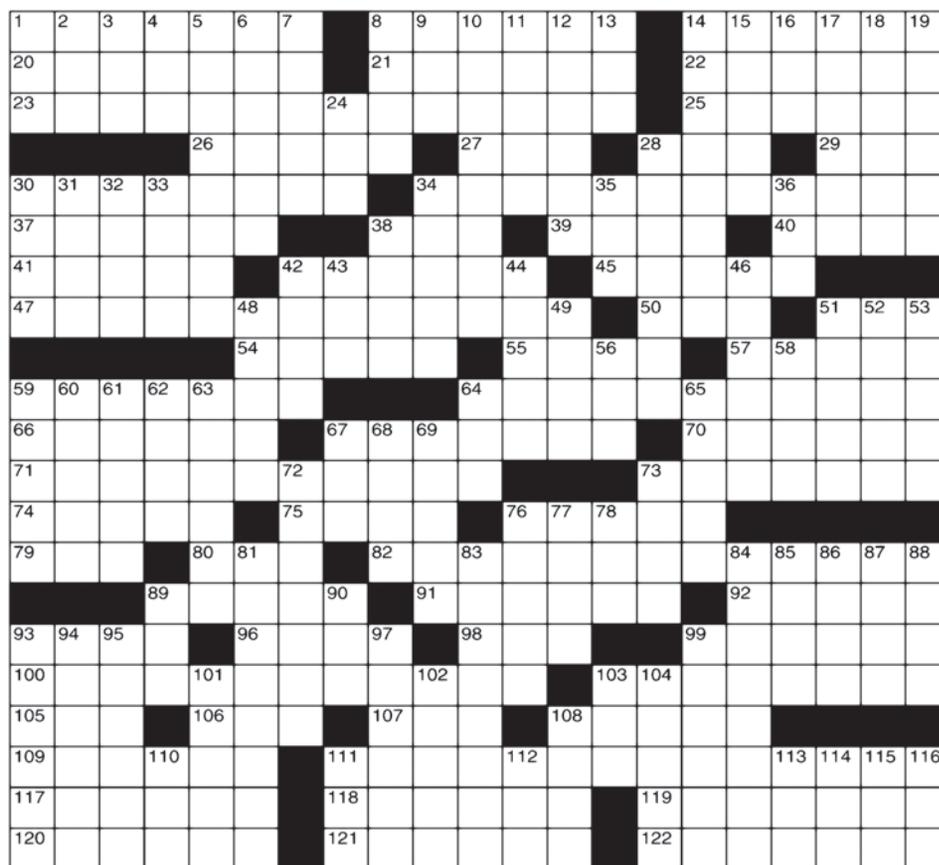
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Find at least six differences in details between panels.

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Super Crossword



- ACROSS**
- 1 Tussle (with)
 - 8 Hindu chant
 - 14 Robotic floor vacuum
 - 20 Predicted
 - 21 Daisy types
 - 22 Relatives of 21-Across
 - 23 Pounding one's shawl?
 - 25 Like sacred statues
 - 26 Step up or down
 - 27 Instant, for short
 - 28 Santa — College
 - 29 In history
 - 30 Book parts
 - 34 What aviator Orville or Wilbur was called?
 - 37 Found on these pages
 - 38 Kitty treat
 - 39 Fill up fully
 - 40 Celtics rival
 - 41 "What the Butler Saw" dramatist Joe
 - 42 Does penance
 - 45 Sprinter Bolt
 - 47 Small songbird with a cartoon cat?
 - 50 60-min. units
 - 51 "Rockaria!" band, in brief
 - 54 Singer Clay
 - 55 San — (Italian resort)
 - 57 Poet W.H. — your valise forcefully?
 - 59 Fusion
 - 64 Old laundry machine that's totally on the friz?
 - 66 Raving sort
 - 67 People debating
 - 70 Bistro, e.g.
 - 71 "Goodbye, Columbus" author when he's very angry?
 - 73 Throw from a steed
 - 74 Tea garnish of 1998
 - 76 Mini-serving
 - 79 Prior to
 - 80 Flan need
 - 82 Damage done to a periodical?
 - 89 Pub buys
 - 91 Find a new place for, as a pet
 - 92 Islamic equivalent of kosher
 - 93 Trial attire
 - 96 Siestas
 - 98 "Mazel —!"
 - 99 Hereditary sequence
 - 100 Declaration upon pulling
 - 103 Many a handcuffed person
 - 105 — -Jo ('80s track star)
 - 106 That guy's
 - 107 Certain Wall St. trader
 - 108 Paradigm
 - 109 Hereditary
 - 111 Actress Fay who was always cheerful?
 - 117 Get free of
 - 118 Silky goat or rabbit
 - 119 Helm handler
 - 120 Beaches
 - 121 Observed in the vicinity of
 - 122 Actor Erik
 - DOWN**
 - 1 Yackety-yak
 - 2 Lament
 - 3 — Khan
 - 4 Impose
 - 5 Capital of Kosovo
 - 6 Like the pre-Easter period
 - 7 — Allan Poe
 - 8 Comic Jay
 - 9 Bunyan's tool
 - 10 Story for an anchor
 - 11 Radials for a Rolls, say
 - 12 Fails to stay poker-faced
 - 13 Viper variety
 - 14 Slickers and galoshes
 - 15 Wilde with wit
 - 16 Bison-hunting tribe
 - 17 Household
 - 18 Intelligent
 - 19 Fancy ties
 - 24 "— the season!"
 - 28 Gallery gala
 - 30 Grub
 - 31 Berlin man
 - 32 Funnyman Johnson
 - 33 Hireling
 - 34 "... three — a tub"
 - 35 Océan liquid
 - 36 Hotel relative
 - 38 Cast a ballot
 - 42 Take — view of
 - 43 "Bad!" sound
 - 44 Shopping jag
 - 46 Old Testament book
 - 48 Racial equality gp.
 - 49 Part of YTD
 - 51 Lawn gadget
 - 52 Dirty looks
 - 53 Ham — (deli classic)
 - 56 Rx signers
 - 58 Golden rule's second word
 - 59 Plenteous
 - 60 Bill of "Real Time"
 - 61 Japanese film genre
 - 62 Stitch's cartoon pal
 - 63 Dive variety
 - 64 "Yeah, no kidding!"
 - 65 Taylor of "The Nanny"
 - 67 Chair part
 - 68 Traipse
 - 69 Sporty auto
 - 72 Tepees' kin
 - 73 — Reader (alternative digest)
 - 76 Sierra Nevada lake
 - 77 Sea of — (waters off Ukraine)
 - 78 Gaming "City" dweller
 - 81 Non-Jews
 - 83 Somehow manages with
 - 84 Pair attached to an axle
 - 85 Also- — (losers)
 - 86 Scores
 - 87 Arose (from)
 - 88 Painter Paul
 - 89 Nectar lover
 - 90 CIA worker
 - 93 Searches and robs
 - 94 Wise-looking
 - 95 Bucking one
 - 97 Card game expert John
 - 99 Bestows
 - 101 Triangle, e.g.
 - 102 Fly into — (get furious)
 - 103 Madison Ave. output
 - 104 Find a new purpose for
 - 108 "— first you don't succeed ..."
 - 110 Corn spike
 - 111 Once existed
 - 112 — pro nobis
 - 113 That gal's
 - 114 Levin or Glass
 - 115 TV neighbor of Homer
 - 116 Time of note

FUN PAGES



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