

The Ranchos Independent



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Madera County D.A. Alleges ALL Supervisors Dirty

By Kelly Rausch and Brian Wilkinson

Madera County District Attorney David Linn is ramping up his battle with the Board of Supervisors, accusing all five of wrongdoing. But one supervisor calls Linn's charges a "smokescreen" to take the attention off the board censuring him for workplace harassment, discrimination and abuse. Additionally, Linn says he fears for his safety and that of his family because he's blowing the whistle. In turn, District 1 Supervisor Brett Frazier says his family feels bullied because of Linn's statements.

In a recent exclusive interview with the Sierra Star, Linn said his office has an ongoing investigation into inappropriate campaign contributions to supervisors David Rogers, Robert L. Poythress, Brett Frazier, Max Rodriguez and Tom Wheeler from developers who are making deals with the County that could be worth "millions to billions of dollars."

"Part of our research on the case involving the proposed development of the land in Madera County involves contributions obtained by Madera County supervisors for their political campaigns," Linn said, "and I find it interesting most of my accusers were in some way related to real estate development."

Linn says he will announce within two to three weeks whether charges involving illegal activities will be filed against the supervisors. His charges come after supervisors on Nov. 27 voted unanimously to censure Linn, citing results of an investigation by a Fresno law firm hired by the County that backed up allegations of the district attorney engaging in offensive and abusive workplace misconduct.

Rogers says Linn's charges are unfounded: "The DA is using taxpayer dollars to exact political revenge and to keep us from bringing his poor behavior to light. It is abhorrent."

And Frazier said, "A good prosecutor is one who seeks to remove doubt. Mr. Linn is doing what he did best as a defense attorney, which is casting doubt to get his client out of trouble ... this time he's doing it for his favorite client, himself." Frazier was one of the first supervisors to publicly face criminal allegations by Linn and after investigation, Linn later deemed the allegations to have



Madera County District Attorney David Linn says he is prepared in the next few weeks to produce evidence that all five Madera County Supervisors have received "inappropriate campaign contributions" which could be worth "millions to billions of dollars" to the County.

"no merit." Frazier is now facing a new set of allegations by the DA.

Both Rogers and Frazier point out that Linn has also taken contributions from developers, which campaign reports back up.

Reviewing campaign books

A review of fundraising reports reveals that both supervisors and Linn received money from real estate-related donors during their 2012 to 2017 campaigns. Rogers, Frazier, Poythress, Wheeler and Linn received \$1,000 to \$3,500 from Richard Spencer, owner and operator of Harris Construction, a longtime player in Valley school and law enforcement building projects.

All supervisors and Linn have accepted donations of \$1,000 to \$2,500 from Tim Jones, principle owner and developer of Riverstone, a subdivision development of 6,600 homes on 2,000 acres in the Rio Mesa Area (the vast swath of land devoted to Madera's future subdivision growth).

The largest contributors in Madera County campaigns have been Bob and Karen McCaffrey. The Fresno couple owns McCaffrey Homes, a major builder and developer of projects planned for southeastern Madera County. Since 2012 the McCaffreys have donated a total of \$25,500 to the

board as a whole. The supervisors have individually received between \$2,500 and \$5,000 from the McCaffreys for election or reelection since 2012.

Linn did not receive contributions from the McCaffreys in his successful 2014 bid for district attorney. Bob McCaffrey said he was approached multiple times to donate to Linn's campaign, but was not interested in supporting him as a candidate.

"To my best recollection he reached out a couple times via phone calls and once with a flyer, but I wasn't responsive," said McCaffrey.

Linn's campaign received \$5,000 from Larry Freels, listed under River Ranch. Freels is a large land owner who has adjacent developments to McCaffrey in the Rio Mesa area.

Rogers says that while he received two significant donations from developers, "the majority of my donations came from citizens

Please see **DIRTY** on P. 13

LHS Key Club At Rose Parade



LHS Key Clubbers arrive in Pasadena bright and early for float duty.

On Dec. 30, 2017 a group of Key Club members and chaperones traveled to Pasadena to assist with the float building for the 129th Tournament of Roses Parade. These people included students Katie Glover, Stacey Folsom, Sarah Folsom, Trinity Cervantes, Rosario Duran and Josh Bailey; activities director Rebecca Harp-Sligh; English teacher Alyssa Hudson; Kiwanis member Jolien Mason; and chaperone Candi Glover. At 2 a.m. the group met at Liberty High School and boarded a charter bus heading for Pasadena.

Key Club members, the high school arm of Kiwanis International, are given the opportunity to attend this event and experience – hands on – how much work goes into all the beautiful floats that are seen on TV every year. Students were given the opportunity to work in several different capacities, including flower preparation and gluing. Students also gain community service hours that go toward the 25 needed to graduate Liberty High School.

Kiwanis International provides about 7,000 volunteers from all over North America, contributing more than 56,000 volunteer hours.

At 4 p.m. the Liberty group reloaded the buses, arriving back in the Ranchos at approximately 10 p.m.



Millions of flower petals greeted the group, along with buckets of glue and water.

Property Taxes Collected, Ex-Businesses must Contact

"Over \$86 million in property tax payments were collected and posted from the December 10th property tax deadline," reported Tracy Kennedy, Madera County Treasurer-Tax Collector.

Around 69 percent (over 38,000 parcels) were mailed, another 20 percent were paid through mortgage companies and the balance paid with credit cards, E-checks, online bank checks or in office counter transactions. Kennedy

encouraged taxpayers to pay by E-checks due to no added convenience fee. The next tax deadline is April 10th. All payments must be postmarked by April 10, 2018 to avoid penalties.

Taxpayers can verify that their payments were posted to their account on the treasurer's website at www.madera-county.com/treasurer.

Additionally, Madera County is giving every current and former business owner the opportunity and time to provide necessary infor-

mation to ensure a fair assessment. If you are no longer in business as of Jan. 1, 2018, please contact the Madera County Assessor's Office at 559-675-7710 to provide necessary information to update your assessment. By filing a "Sold/Moved Personal Property" form, the Assessor's office can take off any equipment used to run your business. Failure to contact the Assessor's Office may result in a tax bill for 2018 plus a 10 percent penalty.

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Actions for Keeping Speech Free

By Ruth Verrinder

The founding fathers established the ambiguity of the First Amendment upon the understanding that in order for democracy to prosper, government and legislation must be excluded from all matters of personal conscience. It is no accident that free speech is included in this amendment and not set forth as a legally or circumstantially defined right. That limitations should be placed upon what we, as American citizens, ought to say to one another is undeniable, but the founding fathers did not deem it necessary to define these limitations in a formal political context.

The leading question in the free speech debate today seems to be whether free speech is a protection of all forms of verbal expression or whether “offensive” speech ought to be banned. The difficulty lies in that freedom of speech is not definable but is largely subjective. Hence the necessity of freedom — freedom to define, on a personal level, what is acceptable and what is not. When government attempts to define this acceptability — which they undoubtedly will if the people do not — the people’s freedom is compromised. Freedom of speech must be regulated first by the conscience, common sense and discretion of the individual, and when that fails, it must be regulated in a broader sense by the American people and the people’s democracy. The essential limit to free speech is the people as a whole — and when individuals fail to submit to the moral constraints of speech in general, society must enforce these constraints.

History has proven that in matters vulnerable to human passion (of which speech is the chief outlet) certain restraints are necessary to maintain relative peace — not oppressive restraint, but at least a tacit understanding of the importance of bridling passion. Moreover, ethics has always demanded, first and foremost, that the consideration of others ought to be placed above the consideration of oneself. Freedom of speech, then, to a moral and educated people should not imply unrestrained self-expression, for an educated people is aware that human nature will manifest itself in its ugliest forms if it is not restrained, and a moral people is aware that before self-expression must come self-restraint. As long as this is clearly understood, free speech will not need to be defined, save as the right of the people to present differing perspectives and engage in civil debate under the banner of truth and justice, without being silenced by a corrupt and dictatorial government. Unfortunately, the current “hate speech” controversy is testament to

the fact that modern American society no longer understands the tacit moral restraints of free speech. Therefore, in a general sense, we might assert the importance of reasonable limitations on free speech that might be nationally recognized as morally and practically necessary.

To begin with, limits should be placed on speech that violates the constitutional rights of other citizens. Any competent communicator is aware that peaceful and meaningful communication demands a balance in each individual between speaking and listening. The Constitution, in demanding that each American citizen be allowed to speak, necessarily demands the aforesaid balance, since for one American citizen to be the sole speaker in a debate is to violate the opponent’s equal constitutional right to speak.

Infringing on Privacy Rights

In hiding behind the right of free speech, individuals as well as the government itself commonly infringe other citizens’ privacy rights by releasing information, without sufficient grounds, that ought to be withheld. This is particularly applicable with respect to journalistic researching methods. Ethics stipulates that personal information must not be disclosed without the permission of whomever it concerns. The Fourth Amendment of the Constitution stipulates that not only must personal information not be disclosed but must not even be obtained without warranted legal cause. The government violates both of these when it, for example, whimsically demands that journalists disclose the names of anonymous sources or explain the particulars of the reporting process. Confidential sources may permit journalists to share certain information relevant to their work, but the personal information of these sources is not to be disclosed without warranted legal cause.

The question remains: how are we to limit free speech to a constitutionally acceptable standard? Consider the Constitution as a complete document, with every portion of it necessarily reconciling to one another to form a cohesive whole. One amendment, such as that which commands freedom of speech, must coincide with every other, and is thereby limited to its context. Anything taken out of context can be twisted to mean whatever one wishes, and consequently becomes meaningless. The limit to free speech, then, necessary to ensure the security of all other constitutional rights, is, quite simply, the “other constitutional rights” themselves.

Secondly, limits on free speech should

Please see **SPEECH** on P. 13

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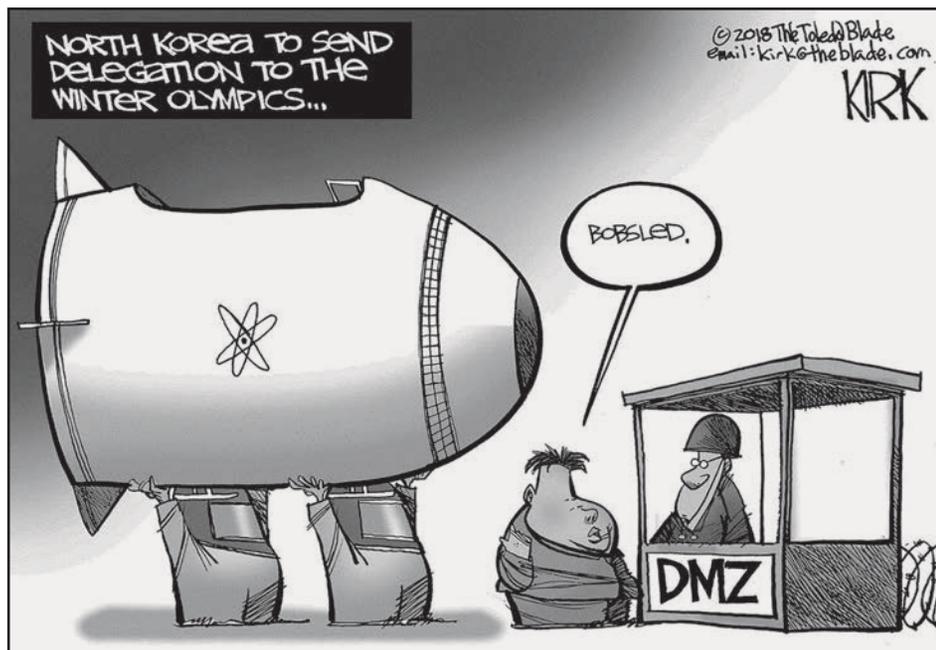
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Guest Editorial

Trump's S***storm

By Rich Lowry

The world fell on Donald Trump's head -- yet again -- when he said in a White House meeting that we should be trying to get immigrants from Norway rather than s***hole countries in the Third World.

The media has treated Trump's remarks, made in a heated exchange with senators over a proposed immigration deal, as an explicit confession of racism. Why else would he scorn immigrants from places like Haiti and Somalia, while yearning for those from lily-white Scandinavia?

He was almost surely trying to say that we should pick immigrants for skills (he reportedly mentioned Asia as well as Norway), but typically stated his position in the crudest terms possible.

The ensuing controversy has created a cottage industry of TV and newspaper commentators declaring proudly that they came from s***hole countries, and implying that as long as we are welcoming enough people from distressed countries, our immigration policy is on track.

This discussion is largely informed by a romantic view of the experience of the early 20th century, which is, unsurprisingly, not applicable 100 years later. The economy has changed. We no longer can toss low-skilled immigrants into the maw of an insatiable manufac-

turing sector. The fact is that immigrants from rich countries tend to do better here than immigrants from poor countries, and level of education is a key factor.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, nearly half of Asian immigrants are employed in management, business, science or the arts, higher than the proportion of the native born. The median income of households headed by Asian immigrants is \$70,000, higher than that of the native born.

The median income of a household headed by an Indian immigrant is an astonishing \$105,000. This is largely because their level of education is off the charts. Three-quarters of Indian immigrants have a college degree or more. The Indian immigrants don't reflect the norm back home, where the average person has less than six years of schooling, but we are skimming off a more skilled element of the population.

Critics of Trump's comments rightly point out that immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, reportedly part of the s***hole argument, are doing pretty well here. But it depends on the country. About 60 percent of Nigerian immigrants have a college degree, and more than 50 percent work in management positions. In contrast, only 11 percent of Somalis have a college degree, and half are in poverty.

The numbers for immigrants from El Salvador, to pick a country also reportedly part of the White House discussion, are less encouraging. According to the Center for Immigration Studies, more than half of Salvadoran immigrants don't have a high-school degree, and half are living in poverty or near it. This doesn't mean they don't work hard, or deserve to be insulted, but they are struggling.

We are blessed to live in a country that many millions around the world want to move to. This affords us the luxury to be more selective in our immigration policy and, like Canada or Australia, establish a system emphasizing skills suited to a 21st-century economy. Some might be from Norway, some might be from s***holes -- all should be prepared to thrive.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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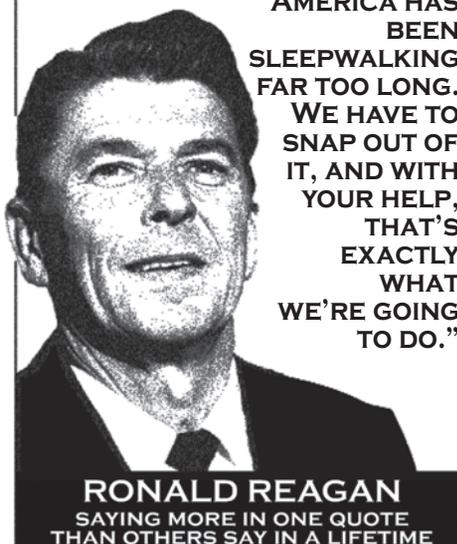
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Camera Camera Everywhere

I find it hard to believe that in this day and age, someone would actually risk committing petty little crimes like hit and runs, taking packages from front porches, or breaking into cars to steal the backpack in the back seat. It just doesn't seem worth the risk what with a camera plastered on nearly every building and cell phones equipped with near Vegas-quality video capabilities. Is someone else's Amazon package worth having a criminal record? Is that cell phone or that tablet lying on someone's seat worth jail time? Some people's capacity for stupid never ceases to amaze me.

My office is located in a business park. Every single structure is peppered with surveillance cameras covering just about every angle you can imagine. Heck, one of the companies actually has an armed guard

with a surly expression and an itchy trigger finger who patrols the grounds. I have no idea what that company is protecting but they are very serious about it. The point is, there is always someone watching. I would think everyone just assumes they are on candid camera every time they leave their house, but evidently not. Some people still think they're slick. Even in the middle of the day in a heavily populated area. Some people are probably on drugs.

Just the other day I was sitting in my office contemplating how to respond to a particularly snarky email from one of the supervisors from another division when a company-wide email hit my inbox. It was alerting everyone that there was a car in the parking

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



lot with its back window busted out and that the police had already been called. It's not a particularly safe area, but that was still pretty gutsy given all of the other factors involved. Some people ignored the email when they realized it

wasn't their car. I, on the other hand, joined the growing line of lookie-loos heading out to survey the scene. It was one of those rare slow moments and I needed a little entertainment.

The owner of the car, one of the schedulers in my department, was already on her cell phone taking pictures and calling her insurance company. Apparently, she had left her laptop bag, with her laptop in it, in the backseat. I guess the guy happened to see the bag and just had to have it, so he broke her window and absconded with her computer. I'm not going to go into how dumb it was of her to leave her valuables in her car ... but it was really dumb of her to leave her valuables in her car.

Most people had started to file back inside when the police car eased to a stop next to the busted car, but I lagged behind. I'm not proud of it but I'm not really ashamed of it either. Who can resist a little real-life reality TV? One of the

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

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GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

cops took her statement while another started asking everyone left if they saw anything. I was amusing myself by counting surveillance cameras. One ... two ... three ... four ... yeah, this creep didn't stand a chance. I was already beginning to feel a little better about the situation when a young man walked up to one of the officers and handed him a cell phone.

Curiosity is not foreign to me, so I moved closer and turned my eavesdropping ears on. He had apparently given a caregiver a ride and was waiting for her in his car when he actually saw the whole thing happen. So, he did what any millennial would do. No, it wasn't call the cops. Nope, it wasn't yell out the window to try and stop the thief. Don't be silly. He whipped out his phone and got it all on video. I suppose that's better than a swift kick in the ear with a steel-toed boot. My colleague was certainly grateful. She practically threw herself at

him in an attempt to thank him with an abundance of hugs. I think she's actually commissioning a statue to be erected in his honor.

I was, unfortunately, not close enough to see the video myself but my co-worker told me later that there was a clear shot of the license plate as the moron pulled up, smashed the car, took her laptop bag and then sped away. So, they already had their man. They had his car, his address, his identity, his record, his credit report, his high school transcripts, his worst fears, and what he had for breakfast last Thursday all before the ink was dry on the police report. Ah, the wonders of modern technology, you can't hide from big brother. Idiot.

I wish I could be there when the cops show up at his door with the cuffs. Maybe he will try and run and the police will get to use the taser. I hope he gets convicted. I hope he serves jail time. I hope that the guy who recorded everything puts the video up on YouTube.

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Super Bowl? Maybe not ...

You've got the Christmas tree down and out to the trash or stored in the attic for another year. The Christmas cards, gift wrap and mantel decorations are all boxed and in the closet out of sight until next year and you think it is smooth sailing for a while – but SURPRISE – it's Super Bowl time! But with the noise that is going on with the NFL players, are you still rooting for your favorite team, going to boycott them, or just don't give a hoot?

Super Bowl LII (52) will be played on Sunday, Feb. 4 in the new U.S. Bank stadium in Minneapolis, Minn. The seating capacity is 66,200. Super Bowl 50 had the highest-priced tickets so far. A pair of tickets on the 50-yard line went for \$20,500. EACH!

If you are going to boycott the game, what are you going to do with a Sunday afternoon after you get home from church? No lawn to mow, it will probably be too cold to go outside and wash the cars – so? How about inviting some like-minded friends to come over and watch some of your favorite old movies? Or how long has it been since you sat with family and friends and played table games or a good game of cards? My folks loved the card game pinochle. My mom's sister, Aunt Alma, and her husband, Uncle Clyde, and our neighbors across the street, the Ralls', would sit up until 2 or 3 in the morning playing cards. Or daddy's brother, Uncle Jess, when he and Aunt Gladys would come up from Hanford to visit or we would go down there, daddy and Uncle Jess would play cribbage for hours. That is one game I could never understand, but they loved it. After the last Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners were over and the tables cleaned off, the kids (I call anyone under 40 a kid) set up a folding table and played games in the family room. Sure, they were noisy, but they were home, and the Bailey Boys were in the living room. You get the Bailey Boys together and there is usually a game of dominoes or something going on. And if the kids are planning on playing games, that is one sure-fired way to get them to help clean off the tables faster.

So, there are things to do with or without the Super Bowl and still have a good time. But now you have people coming over, so you have to have food and drink. That doesn't have to be hard. You can either do it all yourself or make it pot luck.



My first suggestion for your get-together would be popcorn. Simple to make, just about everyone likes it and you can flavor it lots of different ways. You can microwave it, pop it yourself OR buy it already popped in the chip aisle at the grocery store. And while you are in the store shopping, purchase a package or two of brown lunch bags. With a black sharpie, have your guests that are eating popcorn write their names on the bags so it will be easier for them to keep track of their own bag.

Caramel Corn

- 2 (3.5 oz. each) Bags Popped corn
- 1 Cup butter (do not substitute)
- 1 Cup light brown sugar
- ½ Cup light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. baking soda

Preheat oven to 250. Spray a large roasting pan with non-stick cooking spray. Pour corn evenly in roasting pan and set aside.

Using a 3- to 4-quart saucepan, mix butter, brown sugar and corn syrup and bring to a boil over medium to medium high heat, stirring constantly. Once it begins to boil, boil for 2 minutes then add baking soda (be careful as the mixture will foam up when the baking soda is added). Stir well and remove from heat. Pour evenly over popped corn and mix well, being sure to coat the corn evenly. Bake on middle rack of oven for 45 minutes. Stirring every 15 minutes. When ready, remove from roasting pan and spread corn on wax paper and allow to cool. Once cooled, break any large pieces into smaller bite size pieces.

Store up to 5 days in an air tight container.

And what's a get together without chicken? Unless you really can't have chicken without gnawing on a chicken bone, use chicken tenders. Either buy a package of tenders or buy two or three chicken breasts and cut up your own. Instead of messing up your stove top with frying them, how about cooking them in the oven. Besides, cooking them in the oven you don't have all that oil to store, your stove is cleaner and it is healthier.

Oven Fried Chicken Tenders

- ¼ C all-purpose flour
- 1 egg

Please see **RECIPE** on P. 9

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RECIPE cont. from P. 8

- 1 T water
- 1 C panko bread crumbs
- 1 pkg. (about 1-1 ¼ lbs.) chicken breast tenders
- Salt and pepper
- Favorite dipping sauce

Heat oven to 425. Line rimmed cookie sheet with foil, spray with nonstick spray.

In shallow dish, place the flour; in another shallow dish, beat egg and water; in third shallow dish place the bread crumbs. Salt and pepper the chicken pieces. Coat chicken with flour, dip into egg mixture, shaking off excess, then coat with the bread crumbs. Place on cookie sheet. Bake 15-20 minutes until no longer pink in the center and coating is golden brown. Serve with your favorite dipping sauce. Your favorite bottled "Buffalo" hot sauce, favorite BBQ sauce, or make this simple sweet 'n sour sauce.

Sweet and Sour Sauce

- 1 T Cornstarch
- 1 T Water
- 2/3 C pineapple juice
- 1/3 C rice vinegar
- 1/3 C light brown sugar
- 3 T Ketchup
- 1 T soy sauce
- Wisk together the cornstarch and

water in a small bowl. Set aside. In a medium saucepan mix together the remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Stir in cornstarch slurry and cook until thickened – about 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat and use immediately or store in air tight container in refrigerator for up to two weeks.

While you have the oven on, why not make some onion rings?

Oven Baked Onion Rings

- 2 peeled onions
- ¾ C all-purpose flour
- 2-3 egg whites
- ¾ C bread crumbs
- 2 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1 ½ tsp. garlic powder
- 1 ½ tsp. onion powder
- ½ tsp salt

Preheat oven to 400. Spray a baking sheet with non-stick spray. Slice the onions cross way and then break into rings.

Put the flour in a shallow dish, the egg whites in another and mix the bread crumbs and seasonings in another. Dip each onion ring in the flour, then the egg whites and then the breadcrumbs placing them on the baking sheet as you go. Bake for about 20 minutes or until golden.

If you don't want to cook, there are still good dips to make without even turning on the stove or oven. One of my favorite is:

Knorr Spinach Dip

- 1 (10 oz.) box frozen spinach; cooked, cooled and squeezed dry
- 1 (16 oz.) container sour cream
- 1 C mayonnaise
- 1 pkg. Knorr Vegetable recipe mix
- 1 (8 oz.) can water chestnuts, drained and chopped (optional)**
- 3 Green onions (optional)
- 1 loaf soft French bread, cut into bite size squares

Mix all ingredients (except bread) and chill for about 2 hours before serving with the bread as the dippers.

**No water chestnuts; use one stalk of celery that has been chopped finely.

Another easy dip is:

Queso Dip

- 1 lb. Velveeta, cut into ½ inch cubes
- 1 can (10 oz.) Ro*tel diced tomatoes and green chilies – Do not drain.

Combine ingredients in microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high for 5 minutes, stirring after 3 minutes. Careful the bowl will be hot. Serve with your favorite vegetables or your favorite corn chips.

Whether you try some of these recipes or not – KEEP IT SIMPLE! And don't forget – paper plates, napkins, disposable cups, cutlery and serving pieces.

To all my readers and your families, I pray you have a happy, blessed and prosperous 2018.

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ORGANIZED BY CHOICE

By Brenda McElroy

Making Your Great Room Greater

If your house was built in the early 80s like ours, you may have a great room. That was the trend. As a young married couple with no kids we thought sure, what do we need two rooms for? We discovered the answer to that ... three kids later.

The other night we watched old home videos. I noticed almost all were filmed in our great room, or what we call our family room. Babies learning how to walk, birthday parties, kids performing to Disney music. So many great memories.

I also noticed how the room's furnishings and function transitioned over the years. The piano moved a couple times, a large desk came and went, and even though I won the "no recliner" battle for years, I succumbed to a sectional with three recliners last year. At the end of the day it's a warm, cozy place to enjoy times with family, friends, or Netflix and popcorn.

Because a family room is one of the most-used rooms, it's likely to need some time and attention to ensure it remains inviting and functional. Here are some tips to help you do just that.

Start with a general declutter. Remove trash, old newspapers and everything that doesn't have a purpose or home in the family room. Then, be realistic about the fact that it's not going to stay uncluttered. Place a large decorative basket in the corner of the room to collect items that family members leave behind. Set a time of the day or week when everyone's responsible to take their belongings from the basket and put them away. If candy wrappers, tissues, or other trash is found, place a decorative wastebasket in the room as well.

Tired of searching for remote controls? Assign them a home using a remote-control organizer or caddy, or place them in the drawer of your coffee or end table. And while you're in the TV/entertainment area, untangle the cords and organize them with cable clips or sleeves. Be sure to label what each one belongs to.

Use plastic bins to organize gaming gear — headsets, controllers, DVDs, etc. Divide

things into categories and label bins for easy retrieval. If you don't have closed cabinets available, use decorative baskets on open shelving.

We've completed the cycle and now have toys in our family room again. Our grandchildren's little table and toy box are situated in a cozy corner behind the sofa so that they can be playing without the adults' conversation distracting them. Rolling storage carts also serve well for toys and can be easily relocated, if needed.

Free yourself from the burden of hours and hours of magazine/newspaper reading that's waiting to be done. Purchase a magazine rack and fill it with your most recent issues. Whatever doesn't fit, donate or recycle. Choose to make the container your boundary and purge as soon as it's full. If it fills up too quickly, chances are you're subscribed to too many publications. Drop the ones least read.

If you receive a hobby publication that you want to keep for reference, decide how much space you want to allot it and purchase magazine/file holders to keep the issues containerized and in order on a shelf.

Because a family room is one of the most-used rooms, it's likely to need some time and attention to ensure it remains inviting and functional.

Next, tackle your movie and music collection. Some of my clients say they still listen to cassettes and want to keep them all, but I have yet to walk into a house and hear one playing. If your

cassettes and VHS tapes are classics, consider purchasing them in an up to date format like a download for your computer, or at least a CD or DVD.

If you have home movies on VHS, transfer them to digital as soon as possible. Use Costco, or an online service like www.imemories.com. If need be, use a company that improves the quality like Digital Memory Media (www.dmmem.com). Since DVDs are not going to be around forever, be sure to have them transferred to a flash drive as well.

If the CDs and DVDs you keep are taking a lot of space, purge the ones you no longer use, remove the rest from their jewel cases, and place them in a disc binder.

Place decorative baskets under the coffee table or use ottomans with storage for throws, crafts, games, bill-paying supplies or other activities you regularly do in the family room. If a cookie sheet can be discreetly stored under the sofa, put your stationary or craft supplies there so you can easily pull it out to work and hide it when you're done.

May your great room provide great moments for many great memories!

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.



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2018

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Save the 2018 dates below and join us Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. for a casual family worship experience at Golden Valley Baptist Church!

Great family events!

February 17 ----- Family Day at Magic Mountain
March 24 ----- Spring Festival 9am-2pm
April 1 ----- "Sunrise" Service 7am and Pancake Breakfast
May 13 ----- Mother's Day Celebration
June 11-15 ----- Vacation Bible School
June 17 ----- Father's Day Celebration
June 25-29 ----- Youth, Green Days of Summer
July -- Independence Day Family BBQ & Fireworks
July 9-14 ----- Centrifuge Youth Camp
July 6&27 ----- Family Movie Night
August 10 ----- Family Movie Night
September 16 ----- National "Back to Church" Sunday - Friend Day
October 27 ----- Harvest Festival 11am - 3pm

November 11 ----- Veterans' Day - Honoring those who served
November 17 ----- Thanksgiving Dinner 5pm
December 8 ----- Christmas Party
December 24 ----- Candlelight Service 6:30pm

Weekly Ministries

Sunday School - 9 a.m.
Sunday Worship - 10:30 a.m.
Tuesday - Dorcas Sewing Circle 9 a.m.
Wednesday - Life Apps - 6:30 p.m. for all ages (No School, No Mid-Week)
Wednesday - Ladies Bible Study 6:30 p.m. (No School, No Mid-Week)
Men's Breakfast - The 1st Saturday of every month at 9 a.m.

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The Bookshelf

“Read” Movies Before They’re Made

By Jerrica Edmundson

This month at the Ranchos Library, we are starting the year off with a fresh view on the future. We have been keeping up with the best-sellers lists on our books available and making sure we have the books you want to read before they become movies this year. This is planned to be a highlighted and easy to find section within our shelves so that you can have complete knowledge of the up and coming stories being brought to the silver screen in the near future.

We have started accepting applications for booths for the Flatlander’s Day Parade which is Saturday, May 12 this year, so come on in to the Library for an application if you’re interested in getting set up with a booth for merchandise or a food booth. Stalls are first come, first serve and spaces are limited so we do urge you to get started as soon as possible on the application process.

Valentine’s Day is coming up and I know reading is more of a solo adventure — but there’s something to be said about the calming nature of just reading a good book while your loved one does the same in your direct area. We are more than happy to find a book that you and your loved ones will love.

I have really enjoyed getting to know you all and really do appreciate the warm welcome I’ve been receiving within the community. I

hope that I am able to put a fresh spin on the library’s collection and help get it organized and become even more user friendly to inspire a whole new wave of love for the library and all that it adds to the community as a whole. We do our best to ensure there are current and popular books, while at the same time catering to the unique preferences of the Ranchos in particular and hope that we make this branch of the library accessible to not only our regular patrons, but also to a brand-new audience that may have overlooked the library altogether. If there is something in particular that you are interested in, please let us know and we will do our best to find ways to bring it into the library for you specifically. I love sharing and spreading my love of books with those around me and am so ecstatic that I have the opportunity to do just that with my actual job.

The Madera Ranchos Library

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SEMUCU speaks

By Matt Maringer

The New Year is off and running and we hope everyone had a great and healthy holiday. SEMCU (South East Madera County United) is looking forward to another great year and making a positive impact in our community for 2018.

SEMUCU continues to operate the Low-Flow Water Energy Grant and the Washing Machine Rebate Grant. We still have low-flow shower heads and faucet aerators available at no charge and invite residents in the 93636 area to continue to apply for the \$350 washing machine rebate (see our ad on the back page). In addition, SEMCU still has money available to reimburse Southeast Madera homeowners for well water meters. These meters are awarded based on a first come and qualified basis. For more info and to sign up for the grants and water meters, please

call Verlaine at 559-363-9095 or stop at the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce.

SEMUCU will also continue with our dry well project this year. For those that aren’t familiar, dry wells use subsurface infiltration to manage surface water runoff. Local qualifying landowners can receive a FREE dry well in an effort to help direct recharge into our aquifers. We have received donations for this upcoming year and would like to thank all the residents and supporters of this project.

As part of our goals for 2018, we would like to add more board members. We would also like to see more involvement from members of the community at our meetings. Our meetings are only once a month for about an hour and we discuss topics surrounding the community and possible projects. The meetings are open to everyone and we encourage people to share their ideas and comments.

Please join us the third Monday of every month at 6 p.m. PM at the Pizza Factory and help shape the community. SEMCU is dedicated to representing the interest of the residents, property owners and businesses in the SEMCU area for a sustainable future.

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



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Call the Chamber for more information. 645-4001

Be a Crab Feed Sponsor

Is your business going to the Crab Feed? For \$550 you get a table for 10, get to put your company banner up at the event, have your name listed at every table, have your table introduced at the event and be listed in the Ranchos Independent. Call 645-4001.

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, always the second Wednesday of the month. Join us on February 14 at 6:30 p.m. at 37167 Ave. 12, Suite 5C. Come give your input on the future of the Ranchos. Call us at 645-4001.

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DIRTY cont. from P. 2

and farmers.”

The Star’s review of County campaign contributions shows that real estate interests are frequent donors to County races. Sizable donations are also made by farmers, agricultural processors, private citizens and County services providers, including trash haulers. Madera County Clerk/Recorder/Registrar of Voters Rebecca Martinez says the County has no campaign-contribution limits.

After he was censured, Linn targeted Rogers, alleging a County trash services provider gave improper contributions to Rogers’ campaign before he voted to amend their contract. But now Linn says the investigation has expanded to include Wheeler, Rodriguez and Poythress.

A closer look at trash services providers, campaign donations and contract amendment votes points to Redrock Environmental Group as the alleged contractor. Redrock is the company that provides garbage and recycling services at the Fairmead Landfill north of Madera and the North Fork Transfer Station. It has donated substantially to the supervisors’ campaigns

over the years.

In regard to County service providers donating to campaigns, Martinez, said there are no local limitations on who can contribute.

On Dec 6, 2016, the board voted to amend Redrock’s contract to increase rates for contracted haulers from \$22.80 to \$40 per ton. The increases were expected to generate about \$887,000 in additional revenue a year and would bring the County out of financial red ink due to growing operation costs and legal fees from a lawsuit with a former hauler.

Linn notes there are no minutes to the meeting where supervisors voted to amend Redrock’s contract, but a video recording of the meeting including the hearing and the vote is archived online at the board’s website.

Linn stands by his belief the allegations of misconduct brought against him by members of his staff – including his making derogatory sexist and racial comments – are untrue, and says supervisors are using the investigation as retaliation toward him after the supervisors became aware that he was investigating them for improprieties. Linn says he was not allowed to bring evidence

to a Nov. 21 hearing on his case.

Linn singles out attorney Kimberly Horiuchi of the Fresno employment and labor relations law firm Liebert Cassidy Whitmore, who outlined to supervisors the results of a two-month investigation that focused on 10 to 12 staff members in the district attorney’s office reporting “harassing, discriminatory and abusive conduct” by Linn.

Supervisors “merely said what their attorney/investigator told them,” Linn says. He notes that Horiuchi is a former ACLU attorney. “The ACLU currently has a case against the County. I think it’s a perfect storm coming together.”

Linn has been seen at different County courtrooms with deputy escorts by his side. In his interview with the Star, he says he fears for his life. He says that on several occasions, unmarked white vehicles have closely trailed him while he was driving. He worries about the toll the controversy is taking on his family.

Frazier says he, too, is frustrated by what’s happening: “My son was visibly upset when he saw DA Linn on the news saying his father was under criminal investigation.” In an attempt to explain to his son what was going on, Frazier says he told him,

“Son, you know when a bully on a playground gets caught doing something he shouldn’t, and instead of taking responsibility for it they start blaming others? ... That’s what the DA is doing now, and he should know better.”

Linn has filed his intent to run for re-election in the June primary and will be proceeding “as of now.” Linn said that to run for re-election and continue investigating the board’s conduct, he will “bring in an independent prosecutor to investigate the supervisors, in order to allow adequate time to actively run.”

Madera County Administrative Officer Eric Fleming said in response: “If the DA hires a special prosecutor to continue this political nonsense, it would be a complete waste of taxpayer dollars.”

Linn kicked off his first campaign fundraiser on Jan. 19 for the June primary at the Branch and Vine in the Madera Ranchos. The flier for the event read “Help D.A. Linn clean up Madera County and Drain the Supervisor Swamp.”

This article originally appeared in the Jan. 25, 2018 Sierra Star and is used with permission.

SPEECH cont. from P. 4

be implemented in order to draw the line between civil debate and petty verbal assault. Our democracy is built upon the system of civil debate — that is, the government and the people interact as balanced forces, a certain degree both of power and of restraint being ascribed to each. When these forces become unbalanced, more power is ascribed to one, and this one, since it is no longer restrained or held accountable by the other, pursues a selfish, and inevitably ruinous, path. Civil debate — the peaceful exchange of differing viewpoints — must be confined to the interaction of balanced forces. If it is not thus confined, human passions will override higher values and reduce the debate to a petty exchange of verbal abuse. The question is, how do we maintain this balance in a legal sense without compromising constitutional values (i.e. personal freedom)? Quite simply, it cannot be maintained absolutely; it can only be respected. Because of the First Amendment, every American citizen is allowed to publicly speak his or her mind. Nevertheless, if one such citizen determines to so speak, he or she must first acknowledge that the audience has the freedom to repeat what they hear and twist it however they please. In other words, the speaker is held accountable by the American public for everything he or she speaks. If the speaker says something that is per-

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ceived as socially unacceptable, society will rise up against him or her with the force of the majority and ensure that that person pays for the misstep. This is the driving principle behind the idea that the American public itself must ultimately limit free speech.

More Evidence

The negative results of imbalance in free speech are becoming increasingly evident, for instance, in the conflict between the government and the news media. There is an assumption, however subtle, of greater authority on the part of the government and a consequent ability to silence the people. Similarly, however, the people may also assume greater authority and deny the government a warranted search of journalistic material, thus producing a corrupt and unreliable media. The overall result is a paralyzed system of civil debate and a greater propensity for verbal assault. But, unfortunately, the popular approach of enacting speech codes and the like is entirely ineffective. If the government adheres to the constitutional provision of free speech to all citizens and the citizens themselves take into consideration their consequent accountability, no “speech code” or legal procedure other than the First Amendment itself will be necessary. The limit to free speech, then, to ensure that civil debate does not spiral into verbal assault, is the American public itself, armed with the freedoms of the First Amendment. Attempting to enact an additional set of rules is a futile

grasp at a nonexistent utopia and an unrealistic assumption of the American public’s compliancy. Indeed, verbal abuse may well become an act of defiance comparable to the early Americans’ dumping British tea into the bay.

Finally, limits to free speech should be enacted in order to support the ideals of basic civility. The broad, primarily political connotations of free speech have been discussed, with repeated reference to the verbal violence which inevitably takes place if free speech is absolutely unrestrained. The question now is how ought we to address persistent verbal violence? What limit to free speech must be enacted in order to maintain the ideals of basic civility in the U.S.? Unfortunately, verbal violence cannot be prevented altogether, and it is certainly not in the constitutional power of the government to attempt to do so. Nor, on a smaller scale, has it proven effective for officials in the U.S. institutes of higher education to enforce definitions of moral acceptability in speech. Rather, in many such cases, officials have promoted specific ideals of morality to such a degree that any opposition, however subtle, is viewed as unacceptable and vigorously shut down, thereby nullifying the most basic meaning of free speech. The responsibility, then, of preserving moral values in free speech lies entirely on the shoulders of the people. It is not a legal or political limitation which must be enacted, but a personal limitation.

The ambiguity of the First Amendment assumes that the people will stand up for themselves and for each other against “offensive speech” without demanding government assistance. If the people have the freedom to define, on a personal level, the difference between offensive and inoffensive speech, they also have the freedom to react to this speech. They have the freedom to recognize personal insult, to confront the perpetrator, and to resolve the issue as individuals, not as warring clans. At this point, the issue ceases to be political and becomes personal; if it is, in the strictest sense, no longer political, then it is no longer tied into the Constitution, the First Amendment, or, quite frankly, the free speech debate. If we are to maintain basic civility in the overall debate, we must separate the personal from the political. Free speech, by its very context, is a political matter; this is its chief limitation, and it is this limitation which preserves moral values as the responsibility of the individual and the foundation upon which effective debate can be built. Any more specific limitations should not be legally or politically defined but be defined and enacted by moral and educated individuals who place the needs of others above their own while simultaneously acknowledging the fallen nature of mankind. The American people, therefore, as a whole, are the strongest possible limit to and protection of free speech.

IN GOOD HANDS

with Warren Parr



The Digital Shop

Hello 93636,

I had the very good fortune to attend an automotive software conference in Santa Barbara earlier this month. I was very impressed with the new technologies. It was what I learned there that motivated me to write this article. This article will deviate from my normal course of topics, but I think you will find it most interesting, informative and beneficial.

There is a powerful new technology for the automotive industry that puts the consumer in the proverbial driver's seat when considering or purchasing automotive diagnostic, repair and/or service. Now the consumer can see what the technician sees and read what the technician writes. It brings transparency to an often stressful and difficult process and builds confidence and trust with the consumer. Timely communication is vital for a healthy business/consumer relationship. Well-trained, well-equipped, competent shops absolutely love this technology. It is revolutionizing the consumer decision-making process by digitally communicating important, timely information, including pictures and/or videos to the consumer's mobile device or PC. You can now make decisions from the comfort of your home, workplace or wherever. This technology is not futuristic. My shop's conversion to a "Digital Shop" will be completed by Feb. 1. Without further ado, I would like to introduce you to the automotive Digital Shop.

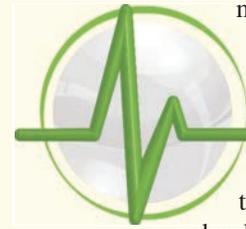
The Digital Shop is a tablet-based system. During a vehicle inspection, repair or service, the technician will take pictures and/or video of areas of concern or interest and make notations in the technician comment box. The technician will use highlights and arrows to quickly direct the customer's attention to the exact point of concern.

Please allow me to use some examples to better illustrate how the Digital Shop platform works: Let's say the technician discovers an Anti-Lock Brake System (ABS) warning lamp is on during a vehicle inspection. The technician will use the tablet to take a picture of the vehicle's instrument cluster, including the illuminated ABS lamp to document the discovery. Throughout the diagnostic routine, the technician will take pictures and/or video of testing data and process and enter com-

ments into the comment box. Automotive is no longer a mystery. Like I said, now you can see what the technician sees and read what the technician writes.

With some failures a video is the more effective communication tool. A video of a defective component in motion is more understandable than a verbal explanation. After all, a picture/video is worth a thousand words.

Let's say a customer's complaint is an overheating engine. When the vehicle's cooling system is pressurized, a slow leak is discovered. Take it from me, it is impossi-



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ble to snap a picture of a coolant droplet as it just starts to fall away from a defective water pump, for example. Digital images are an effective communication tool for mitigating miscommunications.

Another key feature of the Digital Shop platform is vehicle tracking. As the technician completes a task, it is marked as complete and that information is available on the customer's digital device. This information is valuable when attempting to balance a busy schedule.

Other very important features for the technician are manufacturer's Technical Service Bulletins (TSBs), recall and warranty information and manufacturer Service Recommendations, which will be included for every vehicle work order. In addition, the vehicle service and repair history will also be available. This is important for a thorough and complete inspection, repair or service. It may be the customer's complaint is addressed in one of the TSBs. Wouldn't that be the obvious place to begin? Having all this information in one place at the same time increases efficiency which is important for a proper and complete process.

In addition, having the vehicle service history present will allow the technician to compare previous test results to current testing results. The technician can easily find severe degradation of a component or system and proactively intervene prior to the failure. The primary function of an engine oil service and vehicle inspection is to prevent and eliminate breakdowns and costly repairs.

Let's say the technician recommends a repair or service that is unfamiliar. With the Digital Shop platform, a link will be provided to a brief informative video animation that will demon-

strate and explain the recommendation. The video will answer many of the most commonly asked questions. This will prepare the customer for their soon-to-follow phone call from the service adviser.

After a Digital Vehicle Inspection has been completed, it will be emailed or texted to the customer's PC or mobile device. Customers will then have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the information and view the video animations. About 30 minutes after, the customer will receive a phone call from the service advisor. With each looking at their own digital copy, the service advisor and customer will review

and discuss the vehicle inspection report point by point, image by image. Any lingering questions or concerns such as priorities, financing, time and cost will be addressed then. The customer will be given an estimate for each recommendation.

In my opinion, there is never too much information when making a decision concerning the health and safety of a vehicle. Some customers want to see it all, and some want to see little or none. With the Digital

Platform you can "have it your way". It's my recommendation to create a digital file. A good, solid, complete vehicle history adds value to the vehicle, especially when sold.

That's all for now. Hope this helps. As always, I'm looking for interesting and informative automotive topics to write about. If you have any suggestions, recommendations, or general or specific questions about a vehicle, I can be reached at complete_car_care@hotmail.com or text me at 559-907-7661.

FYI: There will be two Madera and three Fresno "Tune In - Tune Up" events in 2018. Madera dates are Feb. 10 and Nov. 10. Fresno events are March 17, June 16 and Sept. 8. If you have any concerns your vehicle may fail or has already failed a Smog Inspection due to high tailpipe emissions, there is financial help available. Income is not a disqualifier and there is no cost. Some 93636 residents have already taken advantage of this program. It works well and I can help. Send me a text at the cell number above and I will explain the program.

God Bless America and God Bless 93636

Warren Parr, ASE Master-Certified, Advanced-Level Specialist (L1) Hybrid Specialist (L3)

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Senior Report

Getting "Artsy" Again at Senior Center

By Margaret Tynan

2018 is off to a very good start. It appears that many members of the Ranchos/Hills Seniors Center are determined to engage in a healthy and fit new year. The number of participants in the morning exercise program is up and there is still room for you. Join us as Josie Turner, with the assistance of Ruth Baker and Judy Hagler, leads the hour-long stretching and strength-building routine that begins at 10 a.m. each Monday-Wednesday-Friday.

As we enter the month of February, love is in the air at Ranchos/Hills Seniors Center. Decorations are being readied for the members' Valentine's Day party and potluck to be held at the Center on Thursday, Feb. 15 at 6 p.m. Games, 50/50 and a Door Prize are planned. Bring your favorite dish to share, your own table service and your smile. Enjoy delicious food and stimulating conversation.

Among the several events being offered the month of February are two that will bring out your creative side. On Thursday, Feb. 1, a paper crafting class will be held from 9:15 to 11 a.m. at the Center. The craft will have a Valentine's Day theme so expect to come away with lovely completed projects. Member Eva McAtee conducts the session and generously provides the materials. Of course, donations toward the cost are always appreciated.

Last year's painting class was a great success. Participants gave very positive feedback on the class and on Bobby von Martin's step-by-step instruction. Participants, experienced or not, had such a great time and their paintings turned out so well, that we are bringing Bobby back to teach another session on

Saturday, Feb. 17 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Center. Bobby is a local artist from Fresno where he resides with his wife and three children. He works and displays his art at his Bloodline Studio located inside the M Street Arts Complex in downtown Fresno. He has sold his art worldwide and his art is featured in some publications, one of which is "Native Hoop Magazine." As an enrolled member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Bobby is always trying to inspire Native youth in his community. Bobby has taught many paint

classes with the youth in North Fork, Owens Valley and Fresno American Indian Health Project located in the Central Valley, as well as classes with other community groups.

We invite you to join us for the paint session and to let your inner "Picasso" emerge. The class is open to adults. The cost is \$35 which includes the instruction and all the supplies needed to complete the lovely waterlilies painting within the two-hour session. Registration and cash payment are due no later than Feb. 7 at the Ranchos/Hills Seniors Center, 37330 Berkshire Dr. We hope to see you there.

We will be holding our monthly Boutique and Bake Sale and the Treas-

ure House sale on Saturday, Feb. 3 from 8 a.m. to noon at the Center. There are lots of good buys so do stop and shop

A reminder: It's time for current members of Ranchos Hills Seniors to renew their membership. Renewal is due by Feb. 10. As always, new members are encouraged and welcome to join. Stop by or call the Center for more information at 559-645-4864.

Thought for February: "If you have only one smile in you, give it to the people you love."

-- Maya Angelou



Fresno artist Bobby von Martin stands amidst his voluminous works at Bloodline Studio at M Street Arts Complex in downtown Fresno.



Artist Bobby von Martin prepares for his next teaching class at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center by reflecting on his artwork at Bloodline Studio.

In Memoriam



Harlan Merle Bailey
 May 31, 1937 - January 2, 2018

Harlan Merle Bailey, 80, of Fresno, passed away after a brief illness at home with his family by his side, Jan. 2, 2018.

Harlan was born in Wolfe City, Texas near Greenville on May 31, 1937. One of nine children, his family moved to Chowchilla, Calif. when he was young, ultimately graduating from Chowchilla High School. After high school, he served in the United States Air Force from 1955 to 1959. While serving in the Air Force, he met and married Lavada Irene Wilson on April 5, 1958, in Sherman, Texas. They were married for 59 years.

Harlan owned and operated his own business for many years. After selling his business, he went on to work at Decker Ford and most recently "retired" from Enterprise Car Rental. He was a 32nd Degree Mason and was actively involved in the Sciots and Shriners in Fresno.

Harlan was a loving husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather and friend to many. He and Lavada loved to travel and enjoyed spending time with family.

Harlan is survived by his wife Lavada; daughters Roselynn Muzzy of San Ramon, Calif. and Becky Nunes of Fresno; and son Michael Bailey of Fresno. He leaves behind seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. He will be missed by his brother, Jim Bailey; sister, Eva Bailey; and many nieces and nephews and friends and family.

Harlan is preceded in death by his beloved daughter, Sheila Bailey Gordon in 2004.

The family of Harlan Bailey wishes to thank Optimal Hospice Care for their professional care and compassion shown toward Harlan and our family. In addition, we are so grateful to all the many friends and family that came to our home and the hospital; the love and support we received over the last few weeks of his life was so wonderful, our heartfelt thanks to you all.

A memorial service was held on Friday, Jan. 26 at Peoples Church in Fresno at the G.L. Johnson Chapel, followed by a reception at the Jackie Johnson annex on campus.

In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting that a donation be made to your favorite charity in honor of Harlan Bailey.



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by Linda Thistle

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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

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

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1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 9

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Bass-Ackwards in the Golden State

By Betty Van Valkenburg

Is California's gas tax increase "bass-ackwards?"

Where I grew up in Arkansas, the scholarly adjective "bass-ackwards" was used a lot. It meant that something made no sense or was utterly idiotic.

That term may be used in some California homes even now, as in this conversation that could have recently occurred between a Ranchos couple we'll call Harry and Millie:

Harry: Hey, Millie, the [expletive deleted] politicians are just plain bass-ackwards on this gas tax increase law!

Millie: So, what's new?

Harry: Well, because of the increased gas taxes they imposed, we're paying more to fill up the family car. That's what's new! And next July the law says we'll start paying even more. And in 2020, the tax is scheduled to go up for inflation! And besides that, we're paying more to register the car. And, dear, that's besides the sales

tax we already pay. And the price of everything else we buy will go up because businesses will just pass along the extra cost of transporting their goods to the customers. That's us.

Millie: Well, Harry dear, remember your blood pressure, and watch your language. I'm sure the state needs the money to fix the crumbling roads. Isn't that what they said?

Harry: Heck yes, that's what they "said." Politicians lie, don't you know? They've already squandered previous taxes meant for roads and highways. That's why the roads are so bad.

Heck, they're already stealing \$19 ½ billion from the State Highway Account to pay debt on the so-called High-Speed Rail. Assemblyman Patterson proposed a bill to stop the theft, but the Democrats killed it. He said these highway funds are paid by drivers to repair our crumbling roads and highways, and a train is not a highway. He's so right.

Millie: Well, honey, that was quite a speech, but maybe things will be different this time. The roads are a mess, after all. Maybe this time the tax money will be used for its intended

purpose.

Harry: I wish that were true. But billions from the increased taxes are designated by the new law for such things as bicycle lanes, parks, local planning grants and more. That's taxpayer money diverted from actual road work. And I read that Caltrans is wasting money with excessive requirements for road pavement which might make the roads unsafe when wet. Go figure.

Millie: Yeah, and meanwhile traffic is getting worse and worse. Highway 99 is a nightmare.



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decreasing traffic is to get us out of our cars by using high speed rail (duh), buses, bicycles and walking. They call it "reducing miles traveled," or VMT.

Millie: Well, that just can't happen. I hear there's a chance to repeal the tax increase with a state constitutional amendment being qualified for the November election. And it will also re-

quire a vote of the people before certain gas and vehicle fees can be enacted in the future. Have you signed the petition to get it on the ballot yet?

Harry: Well no, not yet. I've heard that the Reform California's Gas Tax Repeal Initiative has over 400,000 signatures out of the 584,000 they need to qualify for the ballot. That's encouraging, but maybe we'd better sign a petition to help put it over the top.

Millie: Yeah, especially since I heard Brown say he'll use his huge campaign war chest to fight the repeal. We can't let Brown win this one! Let's repeal that law. It's misnamed the Road Repair and Accountability Act of 2017. What a joke. California's taxes are already among the highest in the nation and our roads are among the worst. Why keep throwing good money after bad?

Harry: OK. Let's hop in the car and go see if there's a table outside Walmart where we can sign the petition. Or better yet, let's save the gas money and go online to print a petition that we and others can sign. I hear it's available at GiveVotersAVoice.com. Then we can ask our friends to sign it too. Just yesterday I heard the neighbors complaining about the extra cost of gas.

You go, guys! And may you travel happily ever after on life's beautifully paved roads ... unless things go bass-ackwards.

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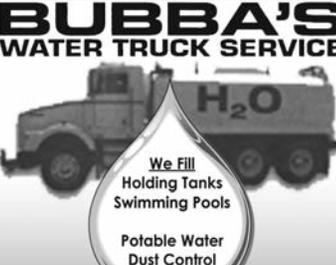
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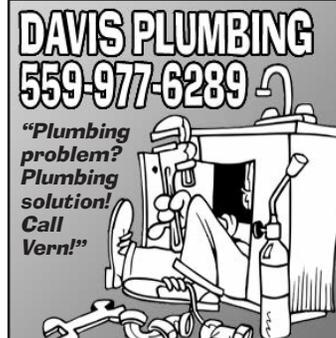
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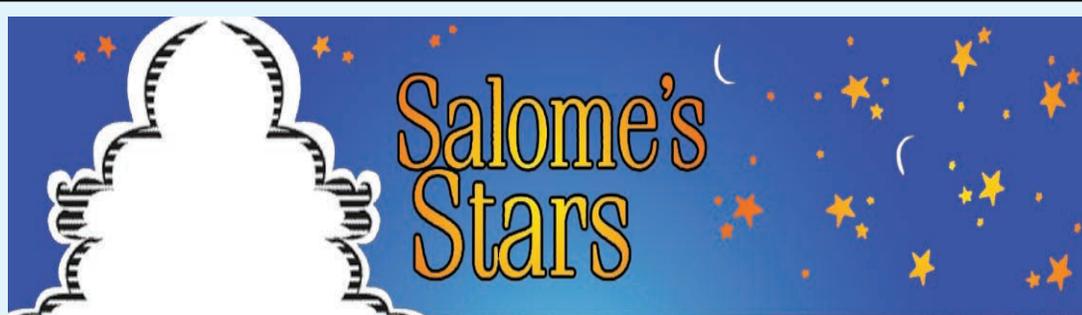


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“Here’s the key to the bike rack.”



ARIES (March 21 to April 19) You might feel bolder as each new success falls into place. But caution is still advised through the end of the week. Until then, a step-by-step approach is best.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) That cooperation you request could come at too high a price. Since few can beat the Bovine at being clever and resourceful, why not see what you can do on your own?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Aspects favor a quieter time spent getting closer to the people who are especially important to you. There's always much more to learn and appreciate about each other.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) The concerned Crab will act to resolve workplace misunderstandings before they get out of hand and cause more-serious problems. Co-workers rally to support your efforts.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) What the Big Cat might see as a disturbing act of disloyalty might just be a failure of communication on both sides. Take time for mediation rather than confrontation.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Be more patient with those who seem unwilling to accept your version of what's right. The fact is, there's a lot more to learn on all sides of this issue.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) It should be easier to assess the facts you'll need to make an important decision. But don't commit if you still have doubts. There could be more you need to know.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Your excitement level remains high as you continue working on that new project. Expect some setbacks. But on the whole, all will move pretty much on schedule.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) It might be wise to be more prudent with expenses right now. But your financial situation should soon clear up, and you could be back shopping, happily as ever.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) You might prefer sticking with your current schedule. But some newly emerging information could persuade you to consider a change. Keep an open mind.

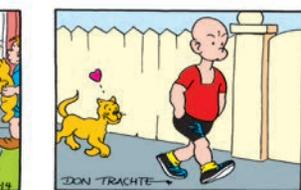
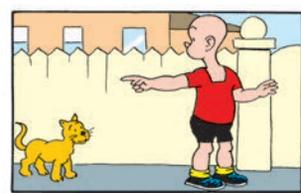
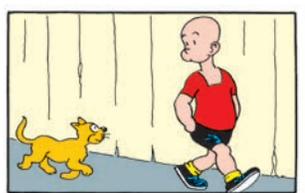
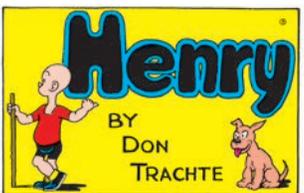
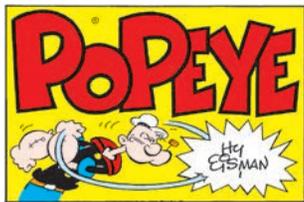
AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) You might want to reject a suggested change. But it could be wise to go with the flow, at least for a while. You can always return to your first plan if you like.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) You're bolstered by both the practical and poetic sides of your nature as you maneuver through some unsettled emotional situations. Things ease up by week's end.

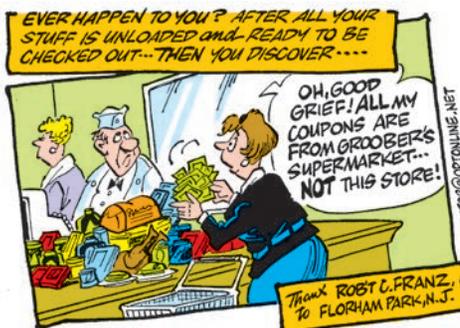
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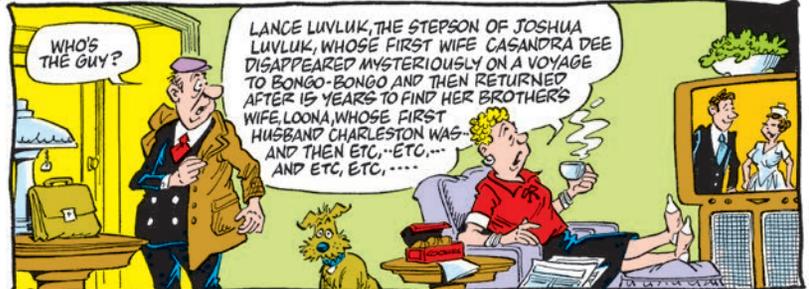


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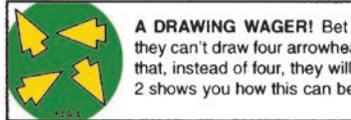
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A REBUS is a pictorial representation of a word or phrase. You have five minutes to solve the one above.

ANSWER: "A misunderstanding between friends" (STANDING is the tough part — ST AND IN G.)



IT'S MAGIC! Use the numbers 11 through 20 to fill in our Magic Square. The numbers in each horizontal row and vertical column should total 75. We've filled in six of the squares. The rest is up to you.

ANSWERS: First row: 18, 21, 25, 11. Second row: 24, 12, 17, 22. Third row: 13, 27, 19, 16. Fourth row: 20, 15, 14, 26.

Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend



THE PYRAMID OF WORD POWER!

Don't get "dizzy" looking for these words. Starting with the given word MAELSTROM, try dropping one letter at a time as you work your way up so that the remaining letters at each level spell out a new word. The following helpful hints are in ascending order, beginning with MAELSTROM.

1. A violent whirlpool.
2. A small South American monkey.
3. A great composer.
4. A performer of great skill.
5. An intent gaze.
6. To demolish.
7. Body of water.
8. In the same manner.
9. Your grade for this test?

	21	25	
24			22
	27		
			26
[75]			

ANSWERS: (From the bottom up): Maelstrom, mar, mosel, maestro, master, stare, raise, sea, as, A.

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

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

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MAGIC MAZE • CALL IT QUITS

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

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

- | | | | |
|----------|---------|------------|----------|
| Abandon | Fold | Relinquish | Vacate |
| Abdicate | Give in | Renounce | Withdraw |
| Abjure | Give up | Resign | Yield |
| Cave in | Leave | Stand down | |

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TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

1. MYTHOLOGY: What was the name of the chariot-driving Greek sun god?
2. MOVIES: What was the first movie that Elvis Presley appeared in?
3. LITERATURE: Which Russian author wrote the novella "Notes from Underground" in the 19th century?
4. GEOGRAPHY: In what mountain range is Mount Everest located?
5. HISTORY: When was the Woman's Peace Party organized in the United States?
6. MUSIC: What famous singer/songwriter won the Pulitzer Prize for Literature in 2016?
7. U.S. PRESIDENT: Who was the only president to serve two nonconsecutive terms?
8. ANATOMY: What is the largest internal organ in the human body?
9. GOVERNMENT: What was the first capital city of the United States?
10. AD SLOGANS: What popular drink was advertised as "pure as sunlight" in 1927?

Answers

1. Helios
2. "Love Me Tender"
3. Fyodor Dostoyevsky
4. Himalayas
5. 1915, in response to World War I
6. Bob Dylan
7. Grover Cleveland, 22nd and 24th president
8. Liver
9. Philadelphia
10. Coca-Cola

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Click on "Local News" at

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



Intelligent Life

by David Reddick



HOCUS-FOCUS

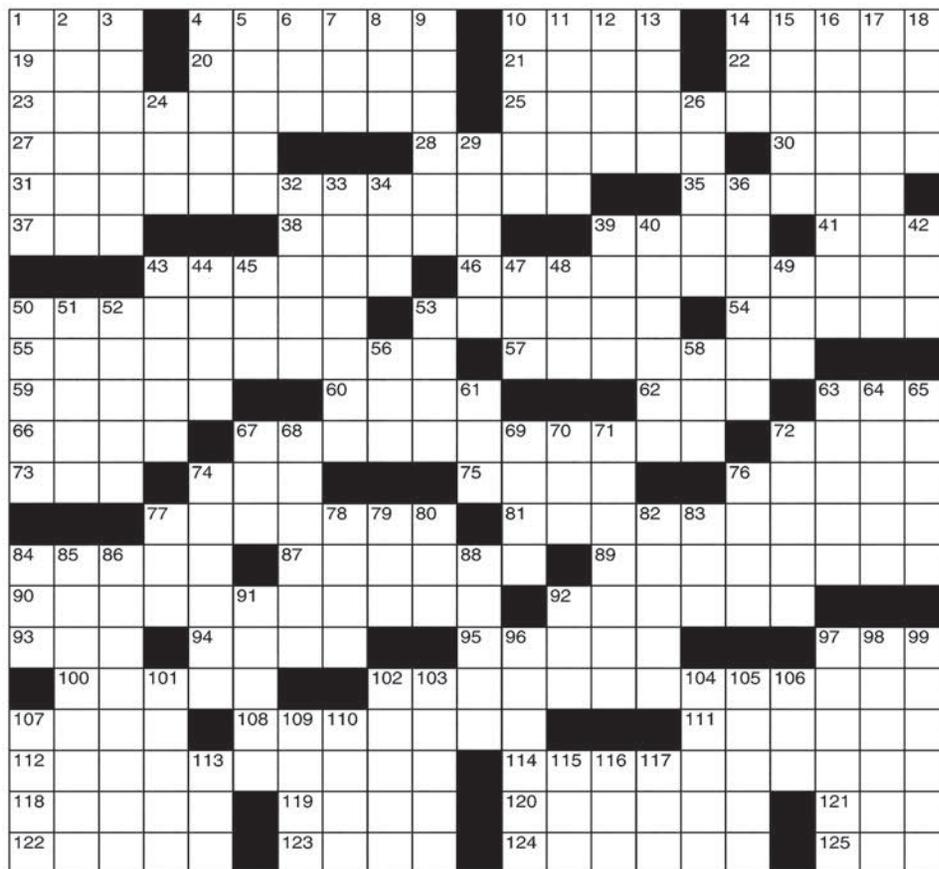
BY HENRY BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Hat is moved. 2. Hat is missing. 3. Cloud is missing. 4. Cuffs are missing. 5. Arm is moved. 6. Skates are missing.

www.TheRanchos.com

Super Crossword



- | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ACROSS | 53 Soap format | 92 Hobbled along | DOWN | 40 With | 80 Took the gold |
| 1 Faux — (social slip) | 54 Baseball's Pee Wee | 93 — -Cat | 1 Druggist's crushing tool | 56-Down, pre-talkies time | 82 Llama cousin |
| 4 Tangos, e.g. | 55 Place for actor | 94 Go higher | 2 Houston team | 42 — Bo | 83 Laotian currency unit |
| 10 Singer Anka | Baldwin's lawn? | 95 Set — (decide when to wed) | 3 Blemishes | 43 — a wet hen | 84 Conan's network |
| 14 May greeting card | 57 Party food provider | 97 Egg: Prefix | 4 UCSD part | 44 One-named R&B singer | 85 Eighth U.S. president |
| salutation | 59 González in 2000 headlines | 100 Pickling liquid | 5 Fluttery tree | 45 Arena arbiter | 86 Disdainful people |
| 19 "C" — la vie ("That's life") | 60 Lovers' god | 102 Yeast used to treat illness? | 6 3 R's gp. | 47 Inferior dog | 88 Good to go |
| 20 Tristan's love | 62 "No" vote | 107 Dad's sister | 7 Moose kin | 8 Korean car | 91 Portion |
| 21 Up to the job | 63 That miss | 108 — Bessette-Kennedy | 9 Arises | 49 — Lingus | 92 Fond du — |
| 22 Bayer brand | 66 Agents, in brief | 111 Dress | 10 GI's chaplain | 51 Leering types | 96 Iraqi currency units |
| 23 Anorak, for Alaska? | 67 Tyke sitting on a fireplace floor? | 112 Activity held between work hours? | 11 Call off, as a launch | 52 Baloney | 97 City in Spain |
| 25 Set no spending limits? | 72 Tibia locale | 114 Apt word spelled out by the letters added to 10 answers in this puzzle | 12 Forearm part | 53 Bluebonnet | 98 Lillian — (gift retailer) |
| 27 Injury-sorting process | 73 Fresno-to-L.A. dir. | 74 Iniquity | 13 Riga native | 56 See | 99 Ring combo |
| 28 Tell a story | 74 Iniquity | 75 "... for — know" | 14 Socrates' T | 40-Down | 101 Author — Calvino |
| 30 Drum set? | 76 Empathetic comment | 76 Empathetic comment | 15 Bygone | 58 Cheering cry | 102 Three-card street scam |
| 31 Brit Jones played by Renée Zellweger? | 77 Suffer humiliation | 77 Suffer humiliation | 16 Huge vitamin intake, e.g. | 61 — Na Na | 103 John of rock |
| 35 "Barbarella" star Jane | 81 Furnish supplies to Oregon's capital? | 81 Furnish supplies to Oregon's capital? | 17 Hams it up | 63 Slate source | 104 Milk: Prefix |
| 37 Suffix similar to -ette | 84 Box in a den | 84 Box in a den | 18 New York team | 64 Employing person | 105 Bygone anesthetic |
| 38 Baseball's Tony La — | 87 — borealis | 87 — borealis | 19 Hams it up | 65 Hostile party | 106 \$\$\$ dispenser |
| 39 Frat letters | 89 Friendly teasing | 89 Friendly teasing | 20 New York team | 67 Assembly aid | 107 "Chiquitita" quartet |
| 41 Tenth mo. | 90 Jet kept in reserve? | 90 Jet kept in reserve? | 21 New York team | 68 Using uppercase of old films | 109 Alamo rival |
| 43 Actress Tomei | | | 22 Tiny bit | 70 Flying stat effort, informally | 110 Russo of film |
| 46 Decide to order ravioli? | | | 23 Suit | 71 Abbott & Costello musical | 111 Boy toy? |
| 50 Old comics girl | | | 24 Best competitive effort, informally | 72 Parboil | 113 Brewed quaff |
| | | | 25 Best competitive effort, informally | 73 Titan's planet | 116 Oversharing initialism |
| | | | 26 Suit | 74 Stole cattle | 117 Co. owned by Verizon |
| | | | 27 Best competitive effort, informally | 75 Atoll unit | |
| | | | 28 Best competitive effort, informally | 76 Comics cry | |
| | | | 29 Best competitive effort, informally | 77 Ordinance | |
| | | | 30 Best competitive effort, informally | 78 "... cup — cone?" | |
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FUN PAGES



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