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**ICE stories
they don't
tell you**

By Kevin McCullough

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The comparison that no one wants to make is also the one that matters most.

By Kevin McCullough

Yesterday, federal authorities released mugshots of dozens of individuals taken into custody during a major ICE enforcement operation in Minneapolis. Rapists. Murderers. Sexual predators. Violent offenders. These were not traffic violators or people who simply overstayed a visa. These were hardened criminals with records that made them priorities for removal because their continued presence posed a clear danger to public safety.

And yet, that reality has been almost entirely buried beneath a single, emotionally charged narrative.

The national media has chosen to focus nearly exclusively on the fatal shooting of Renée Good during that same enforcement operation — portraying her as an innocent victim while largely ignoring the context of her actions and the purpose of the operation she interfered with.

Let's be clear about something that far too many commentators refuse to say out loud: Renée Good was not a passive bystander. She inserted herself directly into a live federal law-enforcement operation. She used her vehicle to obstruct officers who were actively attempting to detain criminal suspects. That intrusion matters. It is not incidental. It is central to understanding what unfolded.

Federal agents were not conducting a random sweep. They were executing targeted arrests of individuals with violent

criminal histories. When a civilian deliberately interferes with that kind of operation, the risk level changes instantly — for everyone involved.

But while the media loops the same footage and politicians rush to microphones, another part of the ICE story goes completely untold.

In recent weeks, ICE has conducted enforcement actions in New Jersey that look nothing like the caricature painted by activists. Several undocumented construction workers were encountered by federal agents. One individual — well known in his church community — was detained and deported after acknowledging his unlawful status. The process was orderly. Respectful. And notably, the federal government has already offered him a legal pathway to return to the United States.

Another worker from the same site was detained briefly, questioned, and then released back to his family.

Here's why.

He has no criminal record. Not a misdemeanor. Not a DUI. Not even a speeding ticket. He has paid taxes for every year he has lived in this country — and he has the receipts to prove it. He has multiple children. One of his sons currently serves in the United States armed forces. Two years ago, he began the process of applying for legal status.

And despite the fact that he is technically here unlawfully, ICE exercised discretion. He was not deported. He was not separated from his family. He was not treated as a threat — because he isn't one.

No protest marches were organized for him. No national headlines were writ-

Please see **ICE** on P. 4

New Bill Named After Charlie Kirk, Melissa Hortman, adds "Political Affiliation" to hate crimes

By Kristine Parks

Republican Assemblymember Laurie Davies introduces legislation following rise in political violence nationwide

Former FBI agent Jonathan Gilliam told Fox News Digital he thinks political violence is beginning to be considered acceptable by too many Americans.

A California bill introduced last week seeks to reduce political violence by adding political affiliation to the state's protected characteristics in order to classify it as a hate crime.

The bill, AB 1535, as first reported by the Orange County Register, is called the Hortman-Kirk Political Violence Prevention Act and is named after former Minnesota Democratic Rep. Melissa Hortman and Turning Point USA co-founder Charlie Kirk, who were both murdered last year.

Under existing California law, hate crimes are criminal acts committed because of a victim's actual or perceived characteristics such as race, religion, disability or sexual orientation. AB 1535 would expand that definition to include political affiliation, defined as "the state of belonging to a political party, the endorsement of a political party or a platform of a political party, or the endorsement of a politician or a platform of a politician."

State Assemblymember Laurie Davies, a Republican from Laguna Niguel, introduced the bill, saying it is intended to promote a culture in which free speech is valued and protected.

"Our nation was founded on political freedoms. However, political violence is detrimental to our democracy and shouldn't be tolerated," Davies said. "Leaders are required to cool the temperature, not fan the flames. AB 1535 isn't just about protecting Californians; it's about a cultural reset. It's a commitment to the idea that every Californian has the right to their political views without fear of being targeted by those who see them as an enemy rather than a neighbor."

Under current state law, political affiliation is already a protected category in civil contexts such as employment or housing, but not within criminal hate crime statutes, according to Davies. By

expanding the scope of an existing crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

"This measure ensures that our justice system recognizes

political violence for exactly what it is: a hate-motivated crime," she said.

Hortman and her husband were fatally shot in a targeted attack at their home in Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, on June 14, 2025 and Kirk was gunned down while speaking at Utah Valley University on Sept. 10, 2025, at a speaking event for Turning Point.

A similar bill adding political affiliation as a protected characteristic in hate crime law was introduced in Washington in December.

Some law enforcement experts have warned that political violence is on the rise, citing high-profile attacks, including the assassination of United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson and two assassination attempts against now-President Donald Trump in 2024.

This article originally appeared on Fox News Digital.

Click on "Local News" at



Former Minnesota House Speaker Melissa Hortman and Turning Point USA co-founder Charlie Kirk were both killed in 2025. (Glen Stubbe/The Minnesota Star Tribune via Getty Images/Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

Kiwanis Korner**Ranchos Kiwanis Bringing Royal Events for 2026 — Thank You Very MUCH!**

By Sally Rowden

Here we are into the chilly cold of January. With our beautiful eastern views of the snow-shrouded Sierra, a display all of us in eastern Madera County can enjoy.

Kiwanis will be involved in several community events in the upcoming months. I highlighted a few of these events in last month's news article but here are some updates:

Our John Minney Liberty High School Scholarship Fundraiser is just kicking off. Letters will go out to community businesses and individuals encouraging scholarship donations. These donations go to our Liberty High School scholarship awards fund. Student seniors are encouraged to apply for a Kiwanis scholarship through their academic counselor's office. Applications can be obtained starting Feb. 16. If you need further information please contact Andrea Pille, Kiwanis Scholarship Chair, at 883harleygrl@gmail.com.

The next event is the Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce Crab Feed. This

happens on Friday, March 6. Every year we team up with the Chamber by being the Crab Feed Servers serving salad, pasta, crab, bread and dessert. You can purchase individual tickets or a whole table. We keep the food flowing. A silent auction happens too. A great collaborative community event. Contact the Chamber Office for further information at 559-645-4001.

Our second event is the Storyland Theme Park Field Trips for Sierra View, Stone Creek and Webster Elementary Schools. We were able to apply for and awarded a Children's Fund Microgrant at Kiwanis International. This allowed us to team up with Storyland and to be able to cover the entrance fees for all three school's Kindergarten classrooms at no cost. The trips will take place in March and May. The children will have an enjoyable experience, especially since the huge new Paul's Pirate Ship play structure will be completed and ready for exploration.

Then the Flatlander's Parade on Saturday, May 16, takes place. Also, an event organized by our very busy Cham-

ber of Commerce. We will have a vendor booth with our Country Raffle Basket that will include a handmade outdoor chuckwagon dinner bell. Tickets will be six for \$5 or an Arm-to-Elbow length for \$20. You'll also see us in the parade. We always delight in handing out surprises to the children along the parade route.

After the summer months moving into September 2026, we will be presenting Elvis in the Ranchos. This will be a dinner, with a silent auction, and Jeremy Pearce, the ultimate Elvis impersonator and showman as highlighted on his website www.jeremyelvispearse.com. It will take place at Birdstone Winery on Thursday, Sept. 10. Tickets will be \$60 per person with one free drink ticket included. Doors will open at 6 p.m. A great opportunity to experience quality entertainment at your own front door. Contact our Event Chairs: Mona Diaz at monaldiaz@gmail.com or Ollia Ridge at olla.ridge@gmail.com for any further information.

Please note that our new meeting site is now the Pizza Factory at 37184 Ave. 12 Ste 101 in the Madera Ranchos. We

meet every second and fourth Thursday of the month. Our general meetings begin at 6 p.m. All are welcome to attend. If further information is needed contact Sally Rowden at rowdensally2@gmail.com.

A quote to share in closing: "To appreciate the beauty of a snowflake, it is necessary to stand out in the cold." — Aristotle.



In September, Kiwanis is bringing Elvis to the Ranchos. Jeremy Pearce, the ultimate Elvis impersonator, is being presented as Elvis — A Tribute to the King. It will be held at Riverstone Winery on Sept. 10 and will include dinner and a silent auction.



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ICE cont. from P. 2

ten. No elected officials held press conferences demanding ICE be dismantled because of his case.

Why? Because that story doesn't serve the outrage economy.

ICE is not a monolith. It is not a rogue agency roaming the streets indiscriminately. In Minneapolis, it was focused on removing dangerous criminals.

In New Jersey, it demonstrated judgment, restraint, and compassion toward individuals who posed no threat to public safety.

Both of those things can be true at the same time — even though the media refuses to acknowledge it.

What we are witnessing right now is not a serious debate over immigration policy. It is a selective presentation of facts designed to provoke emotion while suppressing context. One tragic death is being used to delegitimize an entire enforcement system — even as that system is actively removing rapists and murderers from American communities.

The comparison that no one wants to make is also the one that matters most.

On one side are violent criminals with records that justify removal. On the other side are non-violent individuals who work, pay taxes, raise families, and are often handled with discretion by ICE officers who understand the difference.

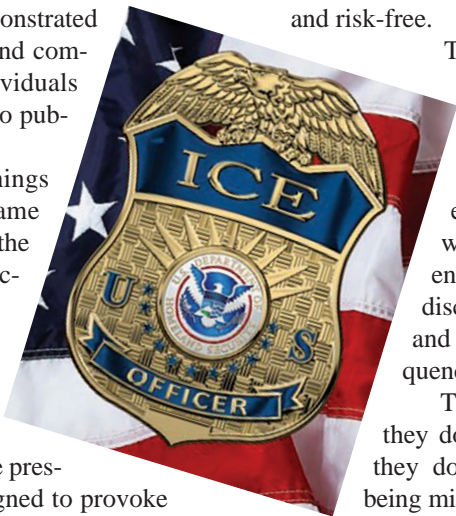
And then there is the third category — activists who intentionally insert themselves into enforcement operations, escalate confrontations, and then expect law enforcement outcomes to remain predictable and risk-free.

That is not how reality works.

If America wants honest immigration reform, it starts with honest storytelling. It starts with acknowledging that enforcement is not cruelty, discretion is not weakness, and interference has consequences.

These are the ICE stories they don't tell you. And until they do, the public will keep being misled — not by agents on the ground, but by those who profit politically from half the truth. Because in the end, America deserves enforcement that is just, effective, and humane — and a public that isn't misled by only half the truth.

This story originally appeared at www.frontpagemag.com.



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Guest Editorial

California Says No to Tax Cuts

By Katy Grimes

President Donald Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act exempted federal taxes on tipped wages and overtime pay ... except it won't happen in California. It appears Governor Gavin Newsom isn't interested in complying with the tax cuts for California's hourly employees.

At the same time California is proposing to tax billionaires an additional 5 percent tax, the state's Democrat Governor plans on denying hourly workers tax breaks on tips and overtime.

Tax refunds in 2026 are projected to be the largest ever, the White House recently reported: "Tax filers could expect an extra \$1,000 bump to their tax refund next year, in what could be a record-breaking tax refund season. In total, the working families tax cuts will give American taxpayers \$191 billion in net new tax relief. For the 2026 tax filing season, taxpayers are expected to take home an additional \$91 billion in refunds and keep an additional \$30 billion in their paychecks from reduced withholdings."

But, as the New York Post reported, "Democratic strongholds like New York, Illinois and California have so far declined to extend state-level tax breaks, Reuters first reported, citing billions of dollars in potential budget

shortfalls.

"Other blue and red states alike have yet to signal whether they will take up legislation in the new year to conform to the federal tax code by changing the definition of what qualifies as taxable income. States like New Jersey are open to some of the provisions like not taxing tipped workers."

Reuters reported that, "California's leadership, with a projected \$3.2 billion annual cost, signaled no intention to adopt the deductions, preferring to preserve funds for public programs."

Making Trump's 2017 tax cuts permanent protects the average taxpayer from a 22 percent tax hike. But it appears that California is taking a pass.

Because of grossly irresponsible spending and fraud resulting in California's gigantic budget deficit, hourly workers won't see the tax breaks.

It's not as if there was much support anyway among Democrats in California for the tax breaks. As the Globe reported, California's Democrat Members of Congress tried to unleash the largest tax increase in history by voting against making President Donald Trump's 2017 tax cuts permanent in the "One Big Beautiful Bill," also known as H.Con.Res.14:

"Every Congressional Democrat voted against the tax cuts." Economist Stephen Moore told the Globe. "If we don't pass this bill, it will be the biggest tax increase in history."

Moore, co-Founder of Unleash Prosperity Now, and the author of "Who's the Fairest of Them All?: The Truth about Opportunity, Taxes, and Wealth in America," warned in May that if Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill" is not passed, every family in America will pay \$2,000 to \$3,000 more per year in taxes – and that is just for starters.

It will be a 20 percent increase on small businesses. California Small businesses are already suffering and have been for many years under two very left-wing Democrat governors: former Governor Jerry Brown and Governor Gavin Newsom. Many businesses have fled California for low-tax, low regulatory states. Since 2020, over 500 companies have either left California completely or built and ex-

Please see **EDITORIAL** on P. 12

The Independent

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Randy Bailey.....Publisher/Editor

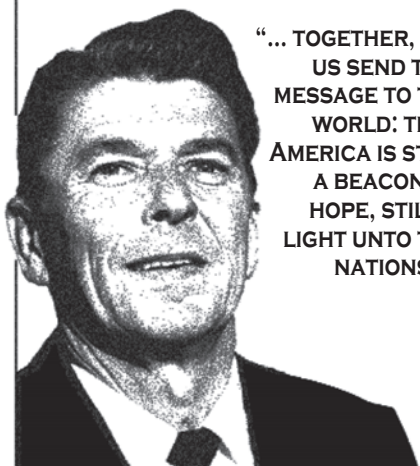
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The Most Interesting Month

January is an interesting month. It's a new beginning tucked into a cold and dark season. It arrives with fireworks, countdowns and a loud celebration, then suddenly everything goes quiet. The light, color and music that filled the streets, the shops and our homes for the entirety of December is gone from one breath to the next. And in that stillness, January asks a question none of the other months seem to: Now what? There is something both heavy and yet hopeful about that.

We walk into the new year carrying everything the year before left behind. The wins we're proud of, the losses we're grieving, the plans that worked, the dreams that didn't. We bring the lessons we didn't want but apparently signed up for anyway and the hearts that are broken and weary. We don't arrive polished. We arrive human, slightly exhausted and carrying at least one unresolved bad habit we swore we'd fix last year.

There's an unfortunate sense of urgency as the new year dawns. You have to change. You have to change now. You were supposed to do it last year and you failed, so now you had better right all those wrongs in the next 30 days. New goals. New body. New habits. New motivation. And so many of us buy into it.

Literally.

We buy a new planner that will definitely help us keep our resolutions this year. A new book on how to deal with a difficult boss that will finally mean real career growth. A new food scale that will make eating all the healthy meals we are planning in our heads a reality. The harsh truth is that real life doesn't just flip on January first. Habits are built through repetition and discipline, not a countdown to midnight and the turn of the calendar. The person you were at 11:59 on December 31 doesn't suddenly cease to exist because you made some resolutions and ate 12 grapes under the table. And if you don't know what that means, hats off to you for not being as addicted to Tik Tok as I am.

Some walk into January full of excitement and ambition. Others walk in drained, carrying the weight of a year that took more than it gave. I think Jan-




uary is your moment to gather yourself and take inventory. To decide what kind of year you want to build, not in sweeping declarations, but in daily choices. It's a time to reflect on what worked last year and what didn't. A time to figure out what you want your life to look like when the next new year rolls around, and how to build small, sustainable changes to get you there. I don't think it takes a list of lofty but vague resolutions; I think it takes deliberate change, courage, and grace.

It takes courage to keep moving forward even if last year didn't end the way you hoped it would. It takes courage to stay strong on the path to growth and change that you started six months prior. There is a special kind of bravery in choosing to keep going even if you still have a long road ahead of you, or to finally start that journey when you don't feel ready. We like to imagine fresh starts as clean and shiny and full of excitement, but most fresh starts come dressed in fear, insecurity, uncertainty and grief. They come with memories of every crash, every mistake and every failure you've experienced. And that's where the grace comes in. Grace from God that our failures no longer define us. Grace for ourselves because we are human and if our growth depended on our discipline alone, we would never get anywhere.

Grace reminds us that we are more than our failures, our unfinished goals, or the version of ourselves we think we should be by now. We are sons and daughters of God and what matters is our faith, our intent and trying each day to be a little better than yesterday. Remember, if you woke up this morning

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



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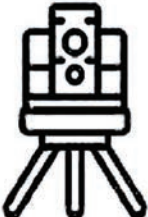
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GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

that means the Lord is still writing your story, even when the plot makes absolutely no sense to you. Often the hardest chapters are the ones that shape us most. And when you stumble, and you will, the grace of God will be there to hold you and guide you.

So, as we step into this new year, may we move forward with hope instead of fear, faith instead of doubt, and the knowledge that we do not have to walk this life alone. If we choose

Him, then Christ walks beside us offering His grace, His strength and His hope, something I personally know I couldn't get through a single day without. When the pressure feels heavy and the expectations feel loud, may we rest in the truth that we are already deeply loved, fully known and never beyond redemption. I pray this year will be shaped not by fear of falling short, but by faith in the One who makes all things new.

Happy New Year and may God bless you all!



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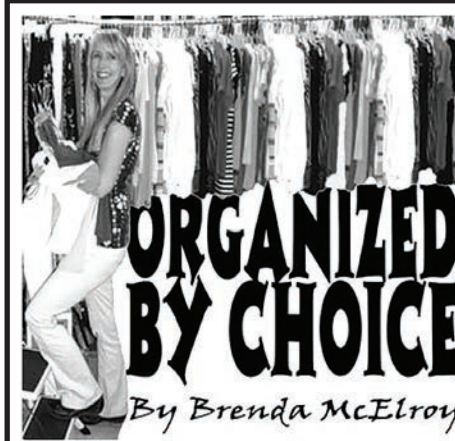
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*Ready or Not —
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“... It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.” — King Solomon

In the last five weeks, I attended four memorial services. I was touched to hear parents, children, grandchildren and friends share how their loved ones impacted their lives.

Their words caused me to ponder my own impact and contemplate how I'm using my time, talents and treasures. As Solomon wisely observed, “parties don't have the same effect.”

At the time of our passing, we don't want our loved ones' grief to be due to the mess we left them. One way to ensure that's not the case is to get our affairs in order. This idea of being ready isn't just for seniors as Deborah Dillan discovered. You can access her story and some very helpful tools on her website — LivingSmartGuides.com.

Prepare important documents — Your Advance Directive, Durable Power of Attorney (for healthcare and finances), and Living Trust are essential. These allow a

person of your choosing to handle your healthcare, finances, care of minor children, etc. if you are unable.

Compile important documents — Secure your vital documents in a safe place and let your appointed person(s) know where to locate them. Include documents such as certificates (birth, marriage, divorce, death), military records, property deeds/trusts, vehicle titles, Social Security information, current tax documents, etc.

Create a contact list — Include attorney, accountant, financial advisor, insurance agent, clergy, physician, employer, who to notify (family, friends, neighbors, coworkers), etc.

Construct a list of accounts — Policy numbers, and passwords. Include insurance policies (Life, Health, Dental, Disability/Long-Term, Homeowners, Auto), pensions, automatic deposit/withdrawal authoriza-

At the time of our passing, we don't want our loved ones' grief to be due to the mess we left them. One way to ensure that's not the case is to get our affairs in order.

tions, bank accounts, IRA/401Ks, investments, mortgage, credit cards, loans, service providers, medical records, electronics' access codes, email, social media, etc.

Record your wishes — People are bombarded with planning and decisions when a loved one passes away. You can lighten their load by listing some of your preferences for a service, music, photos, clergy, etc.

Record your legacy — What are some of the aspects of your life you'd like your family and friends to remember? Record some accomplishments, spiritual journeys, career highlights, community service, military experience and special memories about people, events and

Please see **ORGANIZE** on P. 12

Say you saw it in the Independent

Super Recipes for the Super Bowl

(January 2016)

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



there) is \$6.25; a 21 oz. Pepsi product drink is \$5.25; a slice of pizza is \$8; a bag of M & M's is \$6 and it's \$5.75 for a 20 oz. bottle of water.

I'm not going to lie to you, if I could walk better (there is lots of walking to get from your car to your seats) and had the money, I would love to go to one of these games. I love football. I guess you might say it is in my blood. My dad played for Chowchilla High graduating in 1928, both brothers played for Chowchilla, Randy and his brothers played at Montclair High School with youngest brother Adam going on to play college ball. Now the next generation coming up with my great nephew Josh playing on the JV team at Liberty High and my brother George's grandson,

my great nephew Colton Briner, playing at Clovis East. I'm not able to go to their games but I have followed them on the internet. I have watched every game of my favorite pro team yelling at the TV like they could hear me. Yes, they are in the playoffs. I'm not going to tell you which one – but here is a clue: I think Peyton

is better than Tom!

Are you going to a Super Bowl party, hosting one or just staying home alone? Either way, you need some food. You can go to the market and purchase a bag of chips and a couple containers of dip, or you can order a party tray from any of the restaurants in the Ranchos, or make a couple of your own.

Bean Dip

- 1 can refried beans
- 2 oz. sour cream
- 4 oz. cream cheese softened
- ½ jar salsa
- 1 pkg. taco seasoning
- 1 can Ortega chilies
- Green onion chopped
- ½ C shredded cheese (any kind – cheddar, Monterey jack, or pepper jack or a combination)

Mix all ingredients together and put

into a baking dish. Sprinkle 1 cup shredded cheese on top with some chopped onions and sliced olives. Bake at 400 for 40 minutes. Serve with tortilla chips.

Chicken Strips with Gravy

- 24 oz. frozen chicken strips
- 2 cans crescent rolls

Cook chicken strips according to package directions, but only cook for 8 minutes. Remove from oven and keep warm.

Place chilled crescent roll dough triangles on clean surface and add a chicken strip. Wrap the dough around the chicken and place on an ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 375 for 10 to 12 minutes or until the rolls are golden. Serve with your favorite BBQ sauce for dipping or make a quick gravy for dipping. Heat a can of Cream of Chicken soup, adding just enough milk to make a good consistency for gravy, adding salt and pepper to taste.

Want a recipe that will cook while you are at church that morning? Game doesn't start until 3:25 p.m. so you will have plenty of time.

Meatballs in Cranberry Sauce

- 1 14oz. can cranberry sauce
- 1 12 oz. bottle Chili Sauce
- 1 2lb. bag frozen pre-cooked cocktail

size meat balls.

Place meatballs in slow cooker. Combine sauces and pour over meatballs. Cover and cook 4 hours on HIGH.

At the Chamber of Commerce mixers members bring appetizers for the get together. After the last one Randy was telling me about one that he really enjoyed and wanted me to include it in this article. It comes courtesy of Patti Groh.

Bacon Wrapped Crackers

- Keebler Club Crackers
- Grated Parmesan Cheese
- Uncooked Bacon Strips

Place Club Crackers on a rack on a baking sheet. Top each cracker with grated parmesan cheese (about ½ tsp.) Wrap ½ slice thin bacon around cheese and cracker. Bake in 250 degree oven for 2 hours. Serve warm or cold. Can be frozen and reheated. Thank you Patti!

Whether your team wins or loses, have a good time.

QUESTION OF THE DAY FOR YOU L.A. RAMS FANS: Now that the Rams are returning to L.A., will you root for them again? I know a young man that had converted a spare bedroom to the L.A. Ram's Room – curtains, bedspread, lamps – you name it. After they moved to St. Louis, the room was empty.

Are you going to a Super Bowl party, hosting one or just staying home alone? Either way, you need some food. You can go to the market and purchase a bag of chips and a couple containers of dip, or you can order a party tray from any of the restaurants in the Ranchos, or make a couple of your own.

Here it is time for the Super Bowl again. Seems like only yesterday they were just beginning the 2015 season. This last weekend the playoffs determined who will be in the Super Bowl. The Denver Broncos will meet the Carolina Panthers and will play Super Bowl 50 on Feb. 7 in Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, home of the San Francisco 49ers. Levi's Stadium is known for being the most high-tech stadium in the world. It took over two years to build with construction beginning in April, 2012 and opening on July 17, 2014. It seats approximately 68,500 and can be expanded to 75,000 seats. For as high-tech as it is, it does not have a roof on the place. A statement on the site states, "The structure takes advantage of our Silicon Valley climate and is predominately open and airy, while environmentally friendly." I sure hope it doesn't rain on the 7th. It cost \$1.2 Billion to build. That's right, billion with a "B"!

The reason it is called Levi's Stadium? On May 8, 2013 the 49ers awarded Levi Straus & Co. naming rights to the stadium. The deal calls for Levi's to pay \$220.3 Million to the City of Santa Clara and the 49ers over 20 years.

I almost choked when I saw the price of tickets. They start at \$3,389.

Upper Corners (take a box of tissues for your nose bleed) are just over \$4,000. End Zones are just over \$5,000. Lower VIP 40-50 yard lines are \$30,385. That's each ticket.

There is no tailgating and you can't take food in with you. If you get hungry, you buy it there or tough it out until after the game. If you decide to buy a snack or drink there, it will be pretty pricy: a 20 oz. cheapest domestic beer will be \$10.25; a frankfurter (they don't call them hot dogs

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Senior Report

Valentine's Day Potluck at Center

By Melanie Williams

The 2026 New Year has begun. The Ranchos/Hills seniors have started another exciting year at the Senior Center and many activities are planned to make our Senior Center a place to connect with all seniors in our community.

Renewal Membership forms and Ranchos/Hills Senior Center Newsletters were sent to our current members through the mail or email on Dec. 31, 2025. We encourage current members to fill out the applications for renewal and submit their forms to the Senior Center. If you want to become a new member, we have forms

Birthday and Anniversary Luncheons. If you are interested in celebrating with our seniors, call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864.

Weekly activities at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center include the exercise class led by Jo Chase every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10 a.m. Players of card and table games also meet together every Thursday at 12:15 p.m. Many seniors just like to stop by to

work on our puzzles each month.

An Indian Basket Weaving Class is available to attend on Tuesday, Jan. 27 at 9 a.m. The Madera Basket Cases meet twice a month on Tuesday mornings to learn about



The Ranchos/Hills Senior Center is proud to present its 2026 — 2027 Board Members. From left is Cindy Lipinski, Connie Prince, Carol Wood, Diane Maxfield, Ellen Williams and Ethel Hansen.

available at the reception desk at the Senior Center. We invite all seniors in the community to come in and check out the activities that might interest you at your local Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

The first Monthly Sale of 2026 opens on Saturday, Feb. 7. The February Saturday Sale is open from 8 a.m. and closes at noon. The Boutique and other sweet treats are located in the main building of the Senior Center, and the Scout Garden has plants available for sale next to the Treasure House.

The Senior Center receives many donated items throughout the year from the Ranchos community, and we want to say thank you to all who help keep the Senior Center open through your membership dues and community donations.

We have a variety of activities for all seniors in the community, starting with our Annual Valentine's Day Potluck which is happening on Thursday, Feb. 12 at 5 p.m. Join us for a fun time celebrating the Valentine's Day holiday with a few surprises planned for the night. Make sure to call 559-645-4864 and sign up at the Senior Center to reserve your spot.

Seniors can join us at our monthly

basket weaving with pine needles. They are also meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 3 and 24 at 9 a.m. at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

The Senior Hot Lunch Program offers adults from 60 years and older a nutritionally balanced lunch every weekday the Senior Center is open. Some favorite meals include Orange Chicken with rice and Pork Chile Verde. Jaime does a great job with the hot meals and provides a welcoming luncheon experience for our seniors. We work with the Fresno-Madera Area Agency on Aging to provide this program to all the seniors in the community. Seniors don't need to be members to enjoy a wonderful hot meal during the week. If you would like to participate in the Senior Hot Lunch Program, come register at the Senior Center at 10 a.m. any weekday, Monday through Friday.

The Senior Center is always looking for ideas to include seniors in daily activities. Any senior can come to help plan or introduce a new activity for the Senior Center Calendar. We welcome new suggestions and volunteers to help

Please see SENIORS on P. 12

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The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, Wednesday, February 11 at 6 p.m., 37167 Ave. 12 Suite 5C in the Maywood Center. Come join us and see what's going on in your community. Call us at 645-4001.

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ORGANIZE cont. from P. 7

places you've experienced. Your family will treasure these and may draw from them to create your obituary.

Create a short list of your most precious belongings. You may designate them to individuals or families, if desired. Give your family permission to keep what's most precious to them and let go of the rest.

None of us come with an expiration date stamped on our packaging. My goal is to have my life span measured in the manner of King David – "... after David had done the will of God in his own generation, he died ..." Acts 13:36.

For more info, contact Organized By Choice at 559-871-3314 or email them at info@organizedbychoice.com.

SENIORS cont. from P. 9

us support our local seniors. The next Planning Meeting is on Monday, Feb. 24 at 1 p.m.

A volunteer senior at our reception desk can give you information on our weekly activities and upcoming events every weekday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. You are welcome to come into the Senior Center and pick up a Monthly Newsletter and Senior Hot Lunch Calendar. We are looking forward to a great New Year at the

Ranchos/Hill Senior Center.

The members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center are saddened by the passing of a founding member, Helen Lowell. Helen passed away in November of 2025. She will be greatly missed and created a wonderful legacy for the senior community in the Madera Ranchos.

Happy Valentine's Day on Feb. 14. Happy President's Day on Feb. 16. The Ranchos/Hills Senior Center will be closed on Feb. 16 in observance of President's Day.

EDITORIAL cont. from P. 5

panded operations in low-tax states, shrinking their California operations.

Without the bill being passed, we will revert back to the old tax system – standard deductions will be cut and high taxes will once again plague the country.

Notably, in 2023, Moore reported, "We now have incontrovertible evidence that after five years since they took effect, the Trump tax rate cuts of 2017 raised revenues over this time period.

"In other words, revenues were up 40 percent in five years. The evidence through the first three years of the tax cut finds that the share of taxes paid by the wealthiest 1 percent rose as well. So much for this being a tax giveaway for the rich."

The U.S. House Ways and Means Committee explains that the tax cuts need to be extended to continue to "pro-

vide tax relief for families, workers, small businesses, manufacturers, and farmers. The One, Big, Beautiful Bill, makes the successful 2017 Trump tax cuts permanent, provides additional tax relief for working families and small businesses, rewards investment and manufacturing in America, and holds woke elites accountable while ending tax giveaways to the wealthy, China and illegal immigrants."

"Instead of a \$1,700 tax hike, working families still recovering from Biden's inflation crisis will now receive on average a \$1,300 tax cut and workers will get \$3,300 more in real income back into their pockets. Permanence of the 2017 Trump tax cuts will save 6 million jobs, including 1.1 million manufacturing jobs."

But not in California.

Katy Grimes is the Editor in Chief of the California Globe. CaliforniaGlobe.com.

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GO FIGURE!

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

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**SAY YOU SAW IT ...
... IN THE INDEPENDENT**

SEMCU speaks

By Anthony Forestiere

California's 2026 Tax Changes: Federal and State Highlights for Residents and Businesses

California taxpayers face a dual layer of changes in 2026, blending federal reforms from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act with state-specific adjustments. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed July 4, 2025, permanently extends most individual provisions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act that were set to expire, while introducing new incentives and limits. California's Franchise Tax Board conforms to the Internal Revenue Code as of January 1, 2025, decoupling from later One Big Beautiful Bill Act elements to protect state deductions like those for wildfire victims and military retirees.

These updates apply to tax year 2026 income (filed in 2027). The IRS's October inflation adjustments (using chained Consumer Price Index averaging ~2.7 percent) interact with One Big Beautiful Bill Act boosts, providing broad relief but adding compliance steps for businesses and high earners.

Federal Tax Changes Impacting Californians

One Big Beautiful Bill Act locks in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act's lower rates and higher deductions permanently, averting hikes that would have affected 62 percent of filers.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act favors high earners (top 1 percent see ~5 percent-after-tax income boost) but raises taxes on bottom 40 percent vs. 2025 via un-extended health credits. Miscellaneous itemized deductions (e.g., unreimbursed expenses) remain eliminated, IRS Direct File ends.

California-Specific Tax Changes

State reforms emphasize incentives for film, finance, and disaster relief, while extending State And Local Tax workarounds. The Franchise Tax Board's conformity preserves California advantages like unlimited Social Security exclusion.

Corporate notes: Non Operating Loss suspensions through 2026 for

>\$1M income firms; \$5M annual credit limit holds (R&D, housing).

The Billionaire Tax Initiative (25-0024)

A November 2026 ballot measure proposes a one-time 5 percent excise on net worth >\$1B (worldwide, including trusts/stocks as of Dec. 31, 2026). Targets ~200 California residents; projected \$100B for Medi-Cal/education. Signatures due spring 2026.

Planning Considerations for 2026

- Individuals/Families: Max retirement/ super catch-ups; claim Child Tax Credit/Earned Income Tax Credit; accelerate gifts under \$15M exemption; bundle charity to beat floors.

- Businesses: Recalculate apportionment/film applications; leverage childcare credits; audit Pass Through Entity Tax by June 15.

- High-Net-Worth: Pre-ballot gifting/residency review; model Alternative Minimum Tax /State And Local Tax phaseouts.

- All: Quarterly estimates if owing \$500+; use Franchise Tax Board/IRS simulators. The One Big Beautiful Bill Act's temporary elements (e.g., State And Local Tax lift) signal future flux.

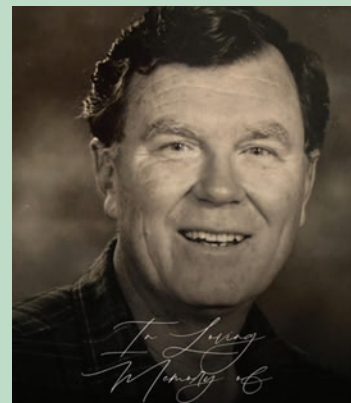
Federal permanence offers stability, but California's innovations and ballot risk demand proactive steps. Consult a tax advisor for tailored strategies.

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

SEMCU meets once per month for about an hour. You may join us online to virtually participate. To join online, go to www.semcu.org for a link and simple instructions. Or, if you prefer, you can call in on your cellphone at 669-900-6833 then enter the ID# 83632424343 followed with the access code 85422. Our next meeting: Tuesday, FEBRUARY 17th, 2026, at 6 p.m. "See you online" and make your voice heard!

SEMCU is "By the community, for the community"

In Memoriam



Harold "Hal" Parks

March 29, 1940 — December 14, 2025

Harold "Hal" Parks, 85, of Oakhurst, passed away peacefully on Dec. 14, 2025. He was born on March 29, 1940, in Fresno, Calif. to Frank and Betty Parks, longtime residents of Oakhurst.

Hal graduated from Sierra High School in 1958. After high school, he proudly served his country in the United States Coast Guard and was a military veteran. He later attended the California Highway Patrol Academy, graduating in 1968, and went on to serve 15 years as a CHP patrol officer — a role he truly loved. Hal deeply valued the friendships he made in law enforcement and remained closely connected, regularly attending retired CHP breakfasts and spending many years with friends from the Madera County Sheriff's Office. He was one of only three resident CHP officers in the 1970s to serve and assist the Madera county Sheriff's Office.

Throughout his life, Hal worked hard and pursued many endeavors. He worked in his mother's clothing store, The Men's Den, and later followed his daughter's passion for the restaurant business by opening a Pizza Factory, which led to the successful operation of multiple restaurants. Despite his many accomplishments, Hal's greatest passion and pride was always his family.

Hal is survived by his beloved wife, Maryann Parks; his son, Frank Parks; his daughters, Christine, Tracy, and Tricia; his older sister, Ida Mae Corwin; seven cherished grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. He was a constant and loving presence in the lives of his children and grandchildren, deeply involved and immensely proud of each of them. He will be profoundly missed.

Hal was laid to rest at Oakhill Cemetery in Oakhurst on Friday, Jan. 16, beside his parents.



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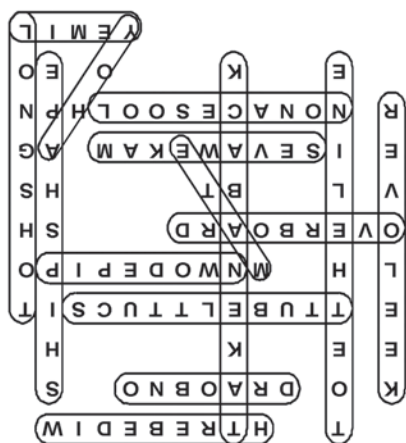
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... IN THE INDEPENDENT**

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co-star	competitor	132 Golf gadget	37 Indian bread	74 Avocado dip,	117 After taxes
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559-974-2268

Get Involved!

Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce

645-4001
2nd Wed. of the month • 6:30 p.m.
37167 Ave. 12 #5C, Madera Ranchos

FLIPSIDE join us
SUNDAYS 9 & 10:30 AM

559-481-6875
37193 Ave. 12 #3H
Madera Ranchos

LIVE ONLINE AT 10:30 AM
WWW.FLIPSIDE.CHURCH

info@acts176.com
SEE YOU SUNDAY!

"We've got your back"
D.O.T. Physicals • Drug Testing
Sports Physicals only \$35!

HANEY CHIROPRACTIC
& rehabilitation center

660-5262
36754 AVE. 12 • Madera Ranchos

Create a gift from the heart

Ranchos Crafters Studio
Arts & Crafts Studio • Bique • Wood Items
Ranchos Crafters' Studio & Gifts
559-824-6336
37164 Ave. 12 #102 (behind Subway)

for MORE sales tomorrow, call

RANDY BAILEY

Today!
(559) 645-0634
The Independent

Classified

Carpet/Aggregate Cleaning

Pinnacle Carpet Care and Upholstery - "Dries in hours, not days." BBB A+ rating. Epoxy/aggregate specialist too. **Call Bruce today for a free estimate. 559-676-0760.**

Firewood

Firewood for sale - Seasoned Almond firewood. Round or split. **Call 259-7122 or 645-5523.**

Gutter Services

The Gutter Doctor specializing in both continuous and standard rain gutters. General Contractor. Repair Maintenance. 26 years working in the area. **Call 559-908-0759.**

Housecleaning

One month FREE! with 6-month arrangement. 40 years of experience in the Ranchos. - References available - Lupe's House Cleaning, residential, one-time service, move-ins/move-outs, windows, construction clean up. **LupePrado25@yahoo .com.**

Call either of our **LOCAL numbers: 559-710-0692 or 650-771-2915.**

Property Clean Up

Property clean up, landscape maintenance and tree trimming - **FREE ESTIMATES.** Professional and reliable. **Call Eric at 559-903-3757.**

Recyclables Pick Up

KEEP IT LOCAL - FREE RECYCLING PICKUP - AmericanMade Direct/Kids4recycling offers free pickup of newspaper, shredded paper, all household plastic, glass, aluminum and tin cans (containers **DON'T** need to be CRV). Metal haul away and cleanups available also! 80% return back to community! **Call Dianna at 559-999-6832.**

Tractor/Trenching Services

BOBCAT WORK - DRILLING POSTHOLES - Trees - Trenching - Clean Up. **TRACTOR WORK** Discing - Rototilling - Mowing - Scraping - Stump Grinding. **Call John at 908-1066.**

• "For pastry cooking, try grating frozen butter into the flour. It cuts in better and will stay cool longer. This helps when I am making shortbread, as the flour and butter need to be combined. I don't end up having to put it in the fridge to cool it back down." -- C.S. in South Carolina

• Freshen stuffed animals by securing a few in a pillowcase and adding a fabric softener sheet. Put in the dryer on low heat for 20 minutes, then remove and brush out the fur if necessary while still warm.

• "Schedule important doctor's checkups, like your annual physical and dental cleanings, in the same month each year, so you will know when they are coming up. I use my birth month. My mom always has hers done in February." -- E.D. in Massachusetts

• Here is an ingenious way to store markers: Collect enough toilet paper rolls to fill a shoebox standing upright. Paint or decorate the outside of the shoebox with brightly colored paper or paints. Fill with the rolls. The markers stand upright in the toilet paper rolls and they are kept standing uniformly across the box. Much better than a messy bin, where you can't see the colors that are on the bottom.

• When you are finished pan frying something, add a bit of water to the pan and put it back on the still-warm burner while you eat. When you come back to clean up after dinner, the pan drippings will slide right off!

• If you've been de-cluttering as a part of your New Year's resolutions and you came across old pairs of eyeglasses, know that you can donate them to any Lions Club in your area. They redistribute the glasses to those who cannot afford them. You don't have to know the prescription, and they take reading glasses too!

*Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip,
628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803*

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TO ADVERTISE call 559-645-0634

STOP THE PAIN!

"We've got your back"

D.O.T. Physicals • Drug Testing
Sports Physicals only \$35!

HANEY CHIROPRACTIC
& rehabilitation center

36754 AVE. 12 • 660-5262

1/26

Specializing in
AUTO ACCIDENTS

THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; A time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; A time to break down, and a time to build up...

Ecclesiastes 3:1-3

Aztec Sun Stone Calendar

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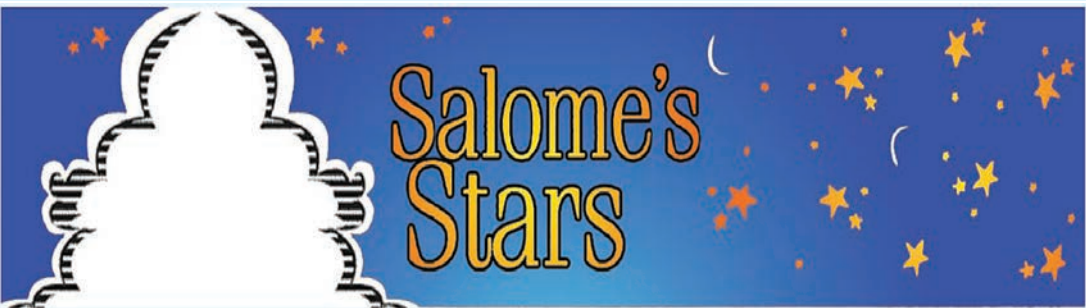
SAY YOU SAW IT IN
the Independent

Click on "Local News" at

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Although you're getting kudos and other positive reactions to your suggestions, don't let the cheers drown out some valid criticisms. It's better to deal with them now rather than later.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Following your keen Bovine intuition pays off as you not only reassess the suggestions that some people are putting in front of you but also their agendas for doing so.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You continue on a high-enthusiasm cycle as a new project that you've assumed takes shape. You're also buoyed by the anticipation of receiving some good news about a personal matter.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Your eagerness to immerse yourself in your new assignment is understandable. But be careful that you don't forget to take care of a pressing personal situation as well.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) This is a good time to learn a new skill that could give the clever Cat an edge in an upcoming competition for workplace opportunities. On another note, enjoy the arts this weekend with someone special.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) You could risk creating an impasse if you insist on expecting more from others than they're prepared to give. Showing flexibility in what you'll accept could prevent a stalemate.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Although you can weigh all the factors of a dispute to find an agreeable solution for others, you might need the skilled input of someone you trust to help you deal with an ongoing situation.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) The good news is that your brief period of self-doubt turns into a positive "I can do anything" attitude by midweek. The better news is that you'll soon be able to prove it.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) This is a good time for Sagittarians to start making travel plans while you can still select from a wide menu of choices and deals -- and not be forced to settle for leftovers.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Like your zodiac sign, the sure-footed Goat, you won't allow obstacles in your path to keep you from reaching your goal. Don't be surprised by who asks to tag along with you.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Let your head dominate over your heart as you consider the risks that might be involved in agreeing to be a friend's co-signer or otherwise acting as their backup in a financial matter.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Resolve to close the door and let your voicemail take your phone calls while you finish up a task before the end-of-week deadline. Then go out and enjoy a fun-filled weekend!



ADS
LOGOS
PR
MARKETING

645-0634



Born this Week

Your capacity for care and compassion helps bring comfort to others. You could serve as a reliable foundation to many.

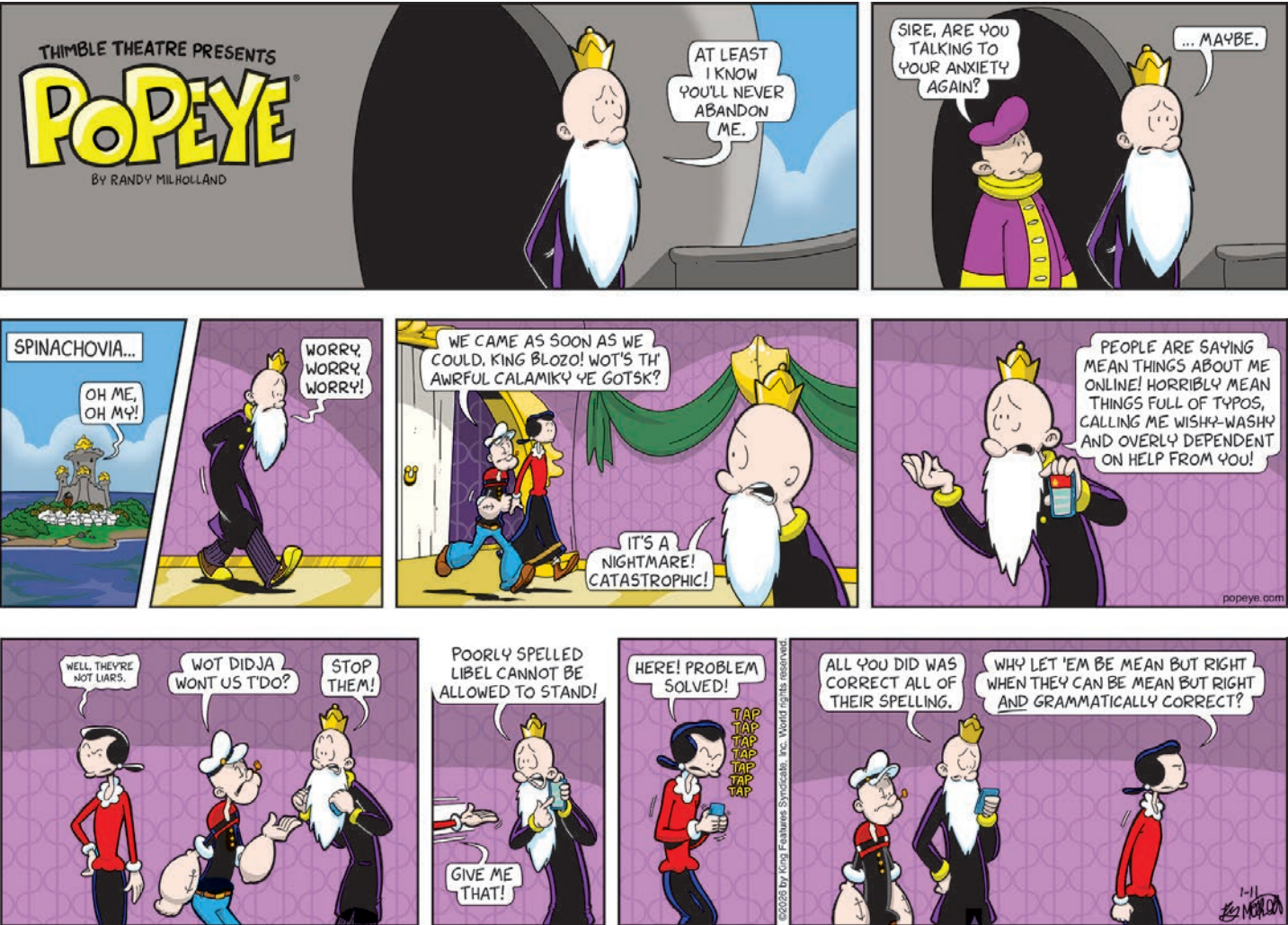
FUN PAGES

Kids' Maze



TIGER

by BUD BLAKE

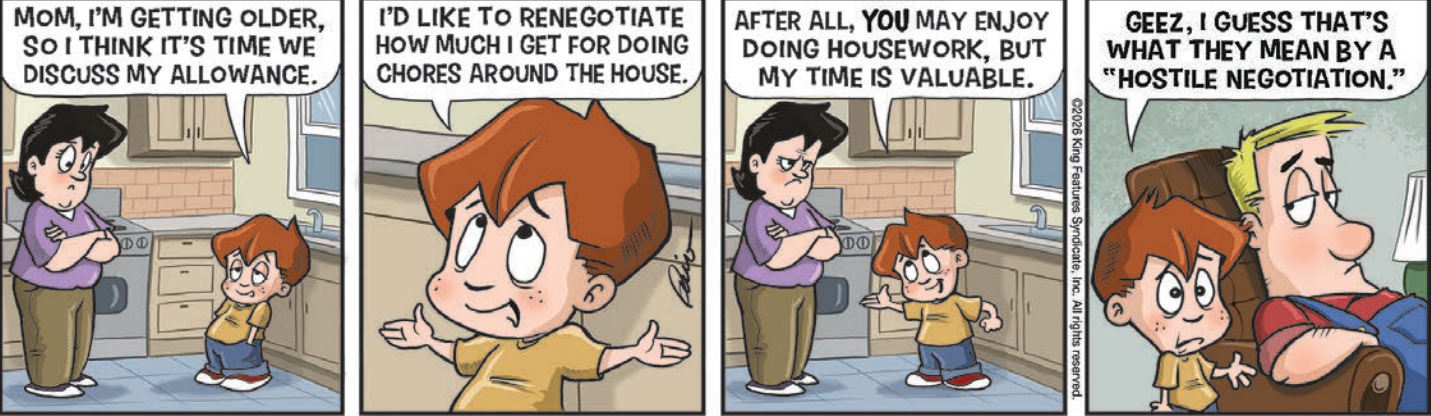


TRIVIA TEST

- By Fifi Rodriguez
1. **LITERATURE:** Who was the first Canadian to win the Nobel Prize in Literature?
 2. **MYTHOLOGY:** What is the home of the Greek gods?
 3. **LANGUAGE:** Which language is the second most spoken in Canada?
 4. **HISTORY:** Which explorer sailed around Africa to discover a trade route between Europe and India?
 5. **MOVIES:** What is the name of Elle Woods' Chihuahua in "Legally Blonde"?
 6. **GAMES:** In what year was the original Pac-Man video game released?
 7. **TELEVISION:** What is the name of the town where "Hart of Dixie" is set?
 8. **FOOD & DRINK:** Which popular fruit has seeds on the outside?
 9. **MEDICAL TERMS:** What is the common name for alopecia?
 10. **GEOGRAPHY:** In which country are the Cliffs of Moher located?

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering

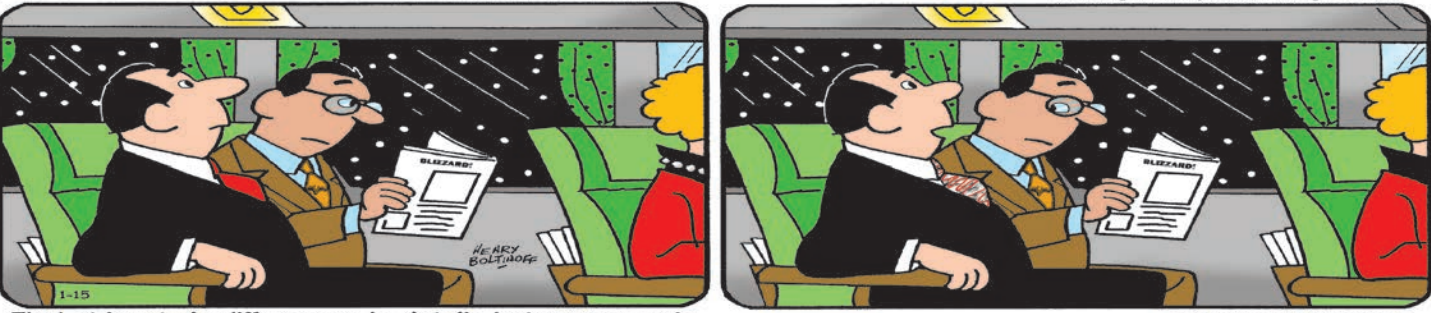


Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTIHOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Man is looking the other way. 2. Mouth is open. 3. Necktie is open. 4. Tie is different. 5. Nose is smaller. 6. Armrest is different.

SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

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The Independent
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MAGIC MAZE ● OLD SAILING TERMS STILL USED TODAY

TSTQOHTREBEDIWL
KJOHDRAOBNOECSA
EXEVTRKPNLJHFHD
EBTTUBELTTUCSIT
LYHXVMNWODEPIPO
OVERBOARDTRPOSH
VMLKIGBTESDNAHS
EDISEVAWEKAMBAG
RZNONACESOOLHPN
XWEUTRKQONLOJEO
IGFDCAWXVYEMIL

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally. Unlisted clue hint: ALL — ON DECK

- Ahoy
- Keel over
- Limey
- Long shot
- Loose canon
- Make waves
- Mate
- Onboard
- Overboard
- Pipe down
- Scuttlebutt
- Shipshape
- Taken aback
- Toe the line
- Wide berth

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FUN PAGES

SEM CU

south east madera county united

**A non-profit organization dedicated to
improving life in South East Madera County**

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL

**Got ideas on what SEMCU can do next that is important
for our South East Madera County community?**

**Schools, Seniors, Veterans, Traffic,
Water Supply, Safety, Health Care & More**

ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, March 17th at 6 p.m.

SEMCU meets on the 3rd Tuesday every month

Our next meeting is on Tuesday, February 17th at 6 p.m.

Online: go to: WWW.SEMCU.ORG for the link

By phone: 669-900-6833

& enter meeting ID#: 836 3242 4343, then access code 854 221

559-363-9095 • www.semcu.org • info@semcu.org

FOR THE COMMUNITY, BY THE COMMUNITY