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WHY ARE CALIFORNIA'S GAS PRICES SO HIGH?

BY KATY GRIMES



In This Issue

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When tensions flare in the Middle East, Californians feel it first and worst. While national crude prices set the floor, California's taxes, climate rules, unique fuel special blend and diminished refining systems raise the price per gallon.

Two Reasons

California gas is expensive for two overlapping reasons:

It is structurally more costly than in most other states even in normal times; and the 2026 global oil shock hit the state harder than the rest of the country.

As of mid-September 2026, regular gasoline in California averages about \$5.89 to \$5.97 a gallon, versus a U.S. average around \$4.27 to \$4.31. Diesel costs are even more extreme, with statewide averages over \$8 per gallon, even topping \$9 per gallon in some counties.

Oil is priced globally, and while the U.S. is "energy independent," it does not mean the U.S. sets its own gasoline price or that domestic crude automatically stays cheap at the pump. Oil trades as a global commodity, so U.S. gasoline prices follow international crude benchmarks, even when the country produces more oil than anyone else and is a net exporter of petroleum products. The U.S. is the world's largest oil producer and is a net exporter of petroleum products.

Crude oil trades as one interconnected commodity. A barrel of similar quality from Texas, the North Sea or the Middle East, is valued against the same worldwide supply-demand balance and the same set of risks. Refiners then pay that price or lose supply to exports.

WHY ARE CALIFORNIA'S GAS PRICES SO HIGH?

BY KATY GRIMES



U.S. consumption of petroleum products is still far larger than domestic crude output – approximately 20 million barrels per day of products vs. roughly 13.5–13.8 million barrels per day of crude in 2026. The country remains a net importer of crude oil even while exporting refined products.

Additional Facts

Forbes explains the two extra facts that sharpen the picture.

- U.S. production is mostly light, sweet crude. Many U.S. refineries were built for heavier, sour grades, so the country simultaneously exports light barrels and imports heavier ones. That two-way trade further locks domestic prices to the global market.

- Quality, location and transport still create modest differentials (a few dollars per barrel, occasionally more). They do not break the overall linkage. The result is a structural swap: The U.S. exports most of its light crude and imports heavy crude mostly from Canada, so refineries can run efficiently. Those imported barrels are bought at world prices. Retrofitting plants is expensive and slow.

Please see **GAS** on P. 7

What's Happening On HWY 41?

With three months of the Madera County State Route 41 Expressway Project construction now complete, here's a look at the progress made during the project's first quarter and what's ahead.

During the first two months, much of the project's early work focused on preparing the corridor for major construction activities. Crews installed California Tiger Salamander exclusionary fencing and carried out environmental clearance and wildlife protection activities required for construction to advance. Clearing and grubbing, stormwater protection measures, wetland protection mats and permanent fencing along the state right-of-way were also completed or were underway throughout the project area. Nighttime lane closures between Avenue 12 and Avenue 14 supported portions of this early work while minimizing impacts to daytime traffic. As work progressed, construction transitioned into more visible roadway and earthwork activities. Crews began temporary lighting work and grading southeast of Avenue 12 and State Route 41 in preparation for future roadway and drainage improvements.

Wildlife protection and site preparation continued near the Avenue 11 Bridge embankment, while survey crews carried out construction staking and grade verification to support work throughout the corridor. During the third month, construction activity continued to expand as crews prepared for larger earthwork, bridge, drainage and roadway operations. Nearly 10 miles of exclusionary fencing reached substantial completion throughout the project limits, marking a major milestone in the environmental preparation needed for construction. Permanent fence relocation also continued, including installation of barbed-wire and chain-link fencing.

"I'm most pleased with the completion of the exclusionary fencing. With almost 10 miles of fencing to install, it went pretty fast, and we were able to complete the work without any environmental issues," said Bryan Kroeger, Project Manager/Resident Engineer CCME, Inc.



Earthwork also became more visible during the month. The contractor continued grading east of State Route 41, just south of Avenue 12, where the future roadway profile is beginning to take shape. Initial excavation also began at a large drainage basin in the same area. Crews then expanded to the west side of State Route 41, clearing and preparing the former maintenance and material stockpile area for future embankment construction associated with the new Avenue 11 Bridge. Preparations for the Avenue 11 Bridge also continued to advance. The contractor is working to establish the water supply needed to support major excavation and embankment placement, while foundation piles for the new bridge have been ordered and are expected to arrive on site soon. Their arrival will allow crews to begin foundation work for the new bridge. Other work continued throughout the corridor as additional subcontractors became active on the project. Electrical crews continued underground conduit installation for future lighting systems, including drilling beneath Avenue 12 and installing conduit along portions of the alignment now accessible for construction. The drainage subcontractor also began mobilizing, with drainage pipe and other materials arriving on site in preparation for increased drainage work in the coming months.

Quarter 1 marked an important milestone for the State Route 41 Expressway Project as construction moved from project startup and site preparation into active work throughout the corridor. Major milestones achieved during the quarter included advancement of environmental clearance,

So far, there has been substantial

Please see **HWY 41** on P. 4

Wanted: Attempted Murder & More

The Madera County Sheriff's Office is asking for the public's help locating Erik Von Richard Haumann, 33, who is wanted in connection with a violent attack that occurred on Sept. 17 in North Fork. The victim was a 75-year-old man who suffered multiple severe and permanent injuries.

Haumann is accused of stealing the victim's vehicle and is believed to be headed to Santa



Barbara. A warrant has been issued for Haumann's arrest for attempted murder, torture, mayhem and robbery.

Haumann is 33 years old, 5'11" tall and weighs approximately 200 pounds. He has brown hair and hazel eyes.

Do not approach or attempt to contact Haumann. If you see him or know where he may be, call 9-1-1.

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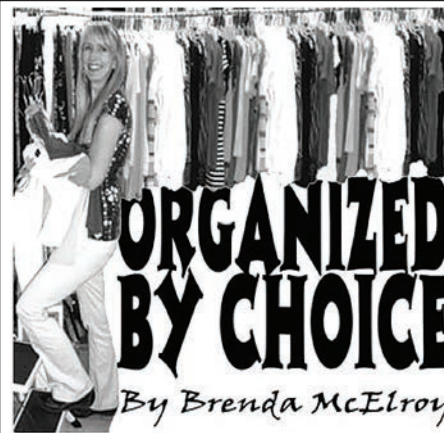


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Self Sabotage

Sabotage is an intentional act of blocking or damaging success. While we may be tempted at times to sabotage someone else's success, why would we sabotage our own?

When it comes to getting organized, we aren't intentional about failing, but that doesn't mean we don't block or damage our own success. Here are six common pitfalls and how to combat them.

All or nothing mindset — I start with this because if you struggle with it, you're already thinking "I can't do all of these, so I might as well give up now." None of us can do it all. Choose one of these to focus on at a time. When organizing don't have in mind the whole house, or even a whole room. Narrow your focus to one drawer, one bookshelf or one cabinet. Better to do all of one small area than nothing at all.

Disorganized identity — We set ourselves up for failure when we decide we're inherently messy and there's no possibility of change. The process of getting organized takes many of my clients out

of their comfort zone. They might not be organized by nature, but doing it reveals what they are capable of learning. Whenever my granddaughters tell my son-in-law they can't do something, he adds the word "yet." Tell yourself, "I'm not organized — yet."

Waiting for motivation — You might be naturally motivated to sew, or tinker with things in the garage, but you never wake up thinking, "I can't wait to get out there and purge and organize my tools." Don't wait until you're in the middle of a project, frustrated because you can't find your supplies or the right tool. Schedule a time to work on the area that

matters most to you. Then reap the benefits when you're doing what you enjoy.

Productive procrastination — The term, coined by researcher and psychologist Piers Steel, is the act of doing something productive while avoiding some-

thing else. For me that might look like organizing my travel supplies when I should be packing for a trip.

I often come across organizing books and bins adding to the clutter in clients' homes, accumulated through productive procrastination. We avoid the most pressing, difficult and often most important tasks, and unintentionally block success. Ask yourself — is what I'm doing what I want now, or what I need most? Reward yourself with the want, after the need is com-

HWY 41 cont. from P. 2

completion of nearly 6.7 miles of exclusionary fencing (the orange fencing seen along Highway 41 which is for wildlife protection), preparation of key work areas throughout the corridor, approximately 50 percent completion of permanent fence relocation along the state right-of-way, and the transition into grading and earthwork operations for future roadway improvements.

"It's great to see the project team has worked hard to complete the tedious and rigorous environmental mitigation work to prepare the project site and I'm excited to see the new corridor start to really take shape as earthwork and bridge structure work gets underway," said Jared Carter, Director of Public Works for Madera County Public Works.

What's coming next is construction activity, expected to increase substantially during the project's second quarter as crews move into major earthwork, bridge construction, drainage improvements and additional roadway work. A major focus will be the new Avenue 11 Bridge, where crews are preparing to begin constructing the embankment and foundation work west of State Route 41. Significant excavation will also take place at large drainage basins east of State Route 41, both north and south of Avenue 12, with excavated material supporting ongoing earthwork and embankment construction. Crews will begin installing major drainage crossings south of Avenue 12, while grading continues throughout the corridor as portions of the future roadway begin to take shape. As construction moves closer to the existing highway, the project's progress will become increasingly visible to motorists. Drivers will begin seeing K-rail, that strong concrete-made road barrier that is used to guide traffic and stops vehicles from going into cross lanes or away from the road. Also,

there will be additional construction equipment and activity within or near the existing median as crews prepare for upcoming roadway work and traffic shifts.

By the end of the second quarter, the Avenue 11 Bridge embankment is expected to be one of the most noticeable signs of progress, along with deeper basin excavation, new drainage infrastructure and more visible roadway construction throughout the corridor.

Nighttime lane closures were implemented between Avenue 12 and Avenue 14 to allow crews to safely complete construction activities while limiting impacts to daytime traffic.

"The biggest changes drivers and the surrounding community will notice are the start of construction for the avenue 11 bridge and traffic pattern shifts as construction moves into its next phase," said James Menefee, Superintendent at Yarbs Grading & Paving. As construction advances, commuters should expect to see additional traffic control throughout the project corridor, including cones, K-rail and changing traffic patterns as work moves closer to the existing roadway. During daytime hours, two lanes of traffic in each direction are expected to remain open along the existing four-lane portion of State Route 41. Temporary lane closures may be necessary during nighttime construction operations. Drivers may also begin to notice new traffic configurations as construction progresses, including changes to where northbound and southbound traffic transition between the existing two-lane and four-lane portions of State Route 41. Commuters are encouraged to allow additional travel time, use caution when traveling through the construction zone, slow through areas with active traffic control and remain alert for changing conditions and construction personnel.

For the latest information on upcoming lane closures, traffic impacts and construction activities, visit 41expressway.com.

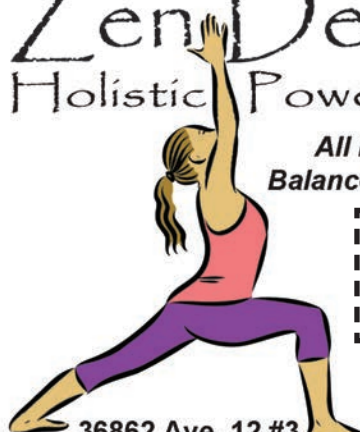
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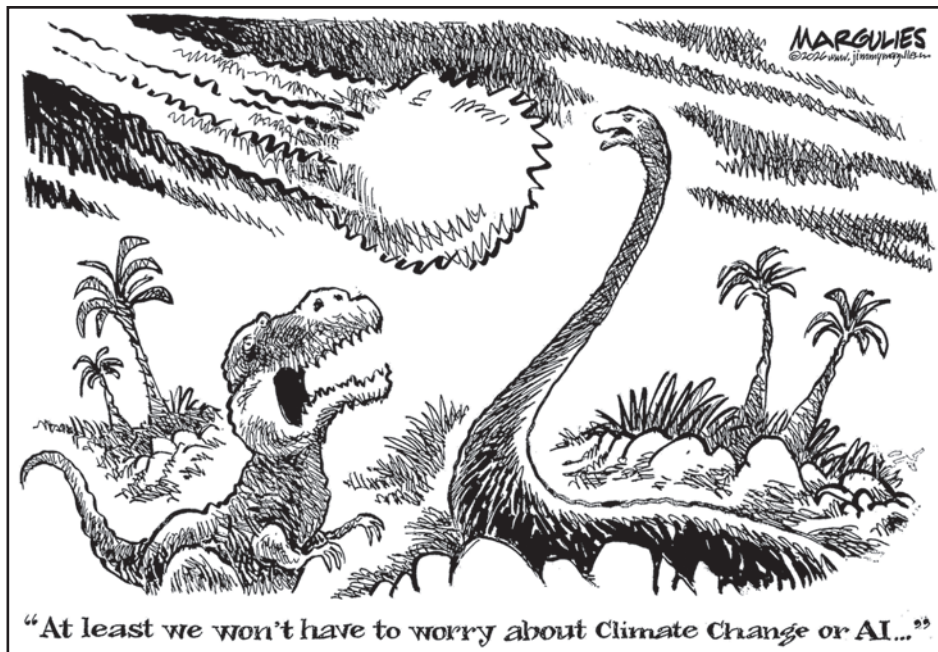
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Guest Editorial

Toxic ... Femininity?

By Jonathan Alpert

Hundreds of women looked at Lindsay Clancy, a mother who killed her three young children, and thought "That could have been me."

As a psychotherapist, that identification concerns me. Not because these women were supporting murder. They weren't. Many recognized their own experiences with postpartum depression, anxiety, exhaustion or feeling failed by doctors in Clancy's story. But recognizing something familiar in another person's suffering is very different from concluding that you could have become her.

We've spent years talking about "toxic masculinity." The response to Clancy raises a less comfortable question: Is there such a thing as "toxic femininity?" I think there is. Not because femininity itself is toxic, any more than masculinity is, but because traditionally feminine virtues can become unhealthy when pushed beyond reason. Empathy can become over-identification; compassion can crowd out judgment and loyalty can become an expectation that women defend other women simply because they're women.

That dynamic was evident during Clancy's trial. Women gathered outside the courthouse dressed in pink,

carried signs saying "Believe," and talked about their own struggles after childbirth. Many believe Clancy was profoundly ill, failed by the medical system and shouldn't be held criminally responsible if she was psychotic at the time. That's a legitimate argument, and it's essentially the question the jury couldn't resolve when her trial ended in a mistrial. But believing Clancy was psychotic is very different from believing that what happened to her could have happened to you.

Postpartum depression affects roughly one in seven mothers. Postpartum psychosis is far rarer, occurring in only one or two per 1,000 births. Depression doesn't simply become psychosis because it gets severe. Psychosis involves a loss of contact with reality, sometimes including delusions or hallucinations. Even then, most people who experience psychosis don't become homicidal.

Those distinctions are important. Blurring them can leave mothers with postpartum depression fearing that their illness is the beginning of something far more dangerous when, for nearly all of them, it isn't. In trying to reduce the stigma around postpartum mental illness, we may inadvertently create more of it.

Empathy doesn't require erasing distinctions. We can recognize something familiar in another person's suffering while acknowledging that her experience and actions may be profoundly different from our own. But once someone else's story becomes our story, judgment gets harder. Questioning her can begin to feel like questioning ourselves.

We've turned "women supporting women" into a cultural virtue. Often it is one. Women have stood together against discrimination, abuse and exclusion, sometimes when nobody else would stand with them. But solidarity loses its meaning when it becomes an obligation rather than a choice. Solidarity can also become an expectation: *Believe her. Defend her. Identify with her.* Questioning another woman can start to look like betrayal.

This solidarity isn't extended

Please see **EDITORIAL** on P. 9

The Independent

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Randy Bailey.....Publisher/Editor

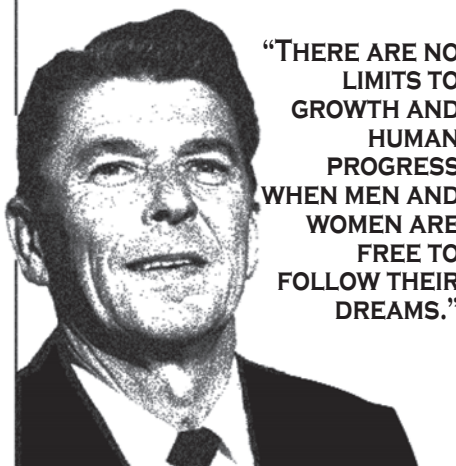
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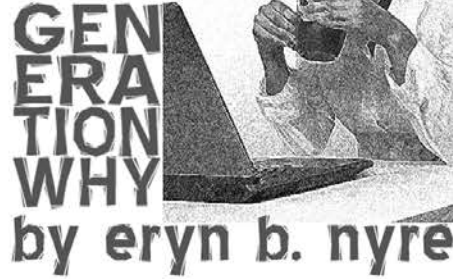
I have been hoodwinked. Bam-boozled. Dare I say ... hornswoggled.

It happens to me every single September. I know it's still summer. I know I still have nearly a full month of 80-plus-degree days ahead of me. And yet, inevitably, I fall for it. One morning I leave for work and there's that telltale chill in the air. The one that teases relief from the heat and an end to that mid-year oppressor that is summer. It just takes one 65-degree morning and suddenly I've rushed back inside and thrown on a sweater and trotted off to work knowing darn good and well I'm going to be miserable in T-minus 87 minutes.

Never mind that I have been alive long enough to know better. Never mind that by three o'clock that afternoon I will be questioning every decision I made that morning while my steering wheel attempts to remove my fingerprints. At 7 a.m., none of that matters. I have felt the chill. I am ready. Bring me all the sweaters. Bring me the boots. Bring me the soup. I want blankets and candles and leaves changing colors. I want to drink something warm while looking thoughtfully out a window, as though I am the kind of woman who regularly sits quietly and contemplates autumn. I am not. But "Fall Eryn" could be.

The problem is that September has no interest in cooperating with this fantasy. Getting dressed in the morning requires the kind of strategic planning normally reserved for military operations. It is cool enough for a sweater when you leave the house and hot enough to regret it by afternoon. So, you dress in layers. You bring a jacket. You wear shoes appropriate for the morning and regret them by lunch. Your car contains sunglasses, a sweater, and enough miscellaneous clothing to survive an unexpected change in latitude.

This is not a season. It is a negotiation. Fortunately, retailers are here to assure us that the thermometer is irrelevant. The weather may



not know it's fall yet, but the stores certainly do. Walk into almost any store in September and summer has been forcibly removed from the premises. There are pumpkins everywhere. Decorative leaves. Plaid blankets. Signs reminding us to be thankful. Candles with names like Crisp Autumn Morning and Harvest Orchard, despite the fact that outside the asphalt is approximately the tem-

perature of molten lava. And don't think I didn't see that Christmas tree peeking out from behind the garden section, Walmart. I see what you're doing. You're part of the conspiracy!

And, of course, there is pumpkin spice.

I'm more of a salted caramel kind of girl, but I can appreciate pumpkin spice in coffee. Certainly a baked good. Obviously a candle. But pumpkin spice protein bars? We have completely lost the plot as a civilized society. At some point pumpkin spice stopped being a flavor and became a hostage situation. I recently discovered pumpkin spice dog treats exist. Even the dogs have been drafted.

And we participate willingly because we are trying to make fall happen. We are trying to will it into existence through fabricated scents and an assigned flavor that has apparently found its way into Spam. I saw a picture. I had no interest in diving far enough down that rabbit hole to determine whether it was real.

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



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GAS cont. from P. 2

The Price at the Pump

What you actually pay at the pump is broken down like this: The U.S. Energy Information Administration, EIA, standard four-part breakdown of U.S. retail regular gasoline prices treats crude oil as the largest component, and longer-run averages sit right in the 50–52 percent range. The EIA explains:

- 1. Gasoline types – Gasoline is sold based on octane levels in three primary grades of gasoline:
 - a. Regular
 - b. Midgrade
 - c. Premium

The octane level indicates gasoline’s resistance to combustion. Gasoline with a higher octane is less prone to pre-ignition and detonation, also known as engine knocking. Refiners charge more for higher-octane fuel and premium-grade gasoline is the most expensive. From 1995 through 2006, the price difference among grades of gasoline was typically about 10 cents per gallon. Since 2006, the price difference among gasoline grades has generally increased. In 2025, the national annual average price of midgrade gasoline was about 57 cents per gallon more than regular-grade gasoline, and the average price for pre-

mium-grade gasoline was about 93 cents per gallon more than regular-grade gasoline.

Why California is Always More Expensive

Even before the Iran war, California’s highest-in-the-nation gas prices were already up 80 cents per gallon prior to the war with Iran, while the rest of the country was enjoying some of the lowest priced gas in years. The EIA reports annual averages were about \$2.14 in 2016, \$2.17 in 2020, \$3.95 in 2022, \$3.30 in 2024 and \$3.10 in 2025; the latest months of 2026 are back above \$4.00.

Robert Rapier of *Shale Magazine*, a chemical engineer in the energy industry, the Chief Energy Analyst for Energy Network Media Group and Editor-in-Chief of *Shale Magazine*, published USC Professor Michael Mische’s 2025 report, *A Study of California Gasoline Prices*, which clearly explains why California’s fuel costs are so high — and why they’re likely to remain that way:

Seven Reasons Your California Gas Tank Costs More to Fill

1. **Special Blends, Special Costs** — California’s mandated gasoline “blend-stock” is called CARBOB, which stands for California Reformulated Gasoline Blend-stock for “Oxygenate Blending.” It is

specifically formulated to be mixed with oxygenates, such as ethanol, to produce California Reformulated Gasoline that meets state emissions standards. It serves as the base fuel before ethanol is added, allowing refiners to create gasoline that complies with the Phase II or Phase III California Reformulated Gasoline that meets state emissions standards.

CARBOB gasoline blend might be cleaner, but it comes with a hefty price tag. Between this specialty formula, seasonal reformulations and Cap-and-Trade compliance, we’re talking an extra \$0.47 to \$1.15 tacked onto every gallon before it even leaves the refinery. Refinery operators have described the compliance process as “... jumping through flaming hoops while carrying water buckets.” The engineering challenges alone are massive.

2. **The Tax Man Cometh ... and Cometh Again** — While politicians point fingers at oil companies, Sacramento quietly collects about \$1.64 per gallon in taxes and fees — by far the highest in America. Next time you wince at a \$100 fill-up, remember that roughly \$30 went straight to government coffers. The irony? Those refiners being vilified often make mere pennies per gallon in profit during normal operations.

“Some quarters we actually lose

money on each gallon of California gas we produce,” one industry veteran said.

3. **Dependency by Design** — Remember when California was an oil powerhouse? Those days are fading fast. The state now produces just 23 percent of its crude needs, importing over 60 percent from places like Ecuador, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Every tanker that docks in Long Beach represents both transportation costs and vulnerability to global markets. When tensions flare in the Middle East, Californians feel it first and worst.

4. **Refinery Exodus** — You can’t sell what you can’t make. California’s refining capacity has been shrinking for years, with Phillips 66 and others closing facilities. Valero’s Benicia refinery closed in April, 2026. Another 8.6 percent of capacity is expected to disappear soon.

“We’re constantly weighing whether the investment to keep this place running is worth it, given the regulatory landscape,” a refiner manager said.

5. **Pipeline? What Pipeline?** — Unlike states east of the Rockies, California has no crude oil pipelines crossing its borders. We’re essentially an energy island, forced to rely on ships and limited rail capacity to bring in fuel. This isolation isn’t just ex-

Please see GAS on P. 14

- When women run, their breasts don't just move up and down; they move in a complex figure-eight pattern, with about six inches of motion with each stride.
- Snakes had back legs for 70 million years before losing them.
- Early sodas were marketed as cure-alls for impotence, stomach pain, scurvy, alcoholism, opium addictions, nervousness and more.
- During WWII, Japan launched 9,000 paper and rubberized-silk balloons carrying incendiary and anti-personnel bombs to the U.S., reaching as far as Michigan.
- If the U.S. Army were a city, it would be the 10th largest in the U.S.
- Before the Civil War, disbelief in the in Bible or profaning the Sabbath were campus crimes at Yale.
- The United States American Nurses Association ended their policy of racially segregating nurses in response to the urgent need for nurses during WWII.
- Original Celtic bonfires were more aptly named bone fires, as the Celts threw animal bones into the flames to ward off evil spirits.
- The word "Nintendo" roughly translates to "leave luck to heaven."
- Police officers in Hawaii were once allowed to have sex with prostitutes during undercover sting operations.
- The term "Indian" originated with Christopher Columbus, who thought he had landed in the East Indies.
- According to the Giant Impact theory, a Mars-size planet struck a blow to Earth and splashed off rocks and debris into space, creating a huge ring that later formed the moon.

Thought for the Day: "Make failure your teacher, not your undertaker." -- Zig Ziglar

Strange BUT TRUE

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Senior Report

October Craft Fair at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center is Here!

By Melanie Williams

Autumn is here, bringing a landscape of bright vibrant fall colors and the anticipation of delicious morsels with warm crisp apples, pumpkin and spice. Fall is also the time for the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center Craft Fair.

On Saturday, Oct. 3, the Senior Center is hosting the 8th Annual Holiday Craft Fair from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Treasure House will be open at the Holiday Craft Fair this year and plants will be available in the Scout Garden, along with great ideas for fall planting.



We have new vendors, with some of our favorite vendors returning to participate this year. The Rios Taco Truck will be here for you to purchase a variety of Mexican-style breakfast and lunch plates at the Craft Fair. Vendors include many specialty items like leather goods, purses, horseshoe art, handcrafted antique silver jewelry, olives, olive oils and Christmas decorations. There will be NO parking available at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center at 37330 Berkshire Drive. Parking is available along Berkshire Drive and Fernwood Drive in Madera Ranchos. When parking in the neighborhood, please respect the neighbors and their property and please do not block driveways when parking vehicles. If you need additional information about the Fall Craft Fair, please call 559-645-4864 between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., Monday through Friday. Everyone is welcome to come by the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center for the 8th Annual Holiday Craft Fair on Oct. 3 to see local vendors and their products.

Our monthly potluck is on Thursday, Oct. 8 at 6 p.m. The "Trick or Treat, Always Something Good to Eat" Potluck is our theme for October. You may want to celebrate Halloween by wearing some spooky accessories for the festivities. We have a fun group activity and game night planned and any senior is welcome at our monthly potluck events. All seniors need to bring a main dish or side dish to share for eight to 10 people and their own place settings for the potluck. Homemade desserts are always welcome. If you plan to come, please call the Senior Center, so we can have enough tables set up for everyone.

There is a new activity coming to the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center for Art enthusiasts. We are offering a new Beginning Watercolor and Drawing Class with Becki Malti, an award-winning local artist. An Orientation Class is scheduled for Tuesday, Sept. 29 at 1 p.m. This is an informational meeting only and will explain what to expect, materials you will need and the goals of the art experience. The Beginning Watercolor and Drawing Class will be limited to 10 students but if more people are interested in the class, a waiting list will be added. Classes for current participants will be held every other Tuesday at 1 p.m. starting October 13 until the end of the year, adjusting for the holiday season. Community members who are interested may sign up at the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center at 37330 Berkshire Drive in Madera Ranchos or call the Senior Center at 559-645-4864 between 9 a.m. and

1 p.m.

The Senior Center has weekly activities every month for seniors to gather and meet other seniors in the community. Weekly activities include the senior exercise classes every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 10 a.m. and card and table games are scheduled every Thursday at 12:15 p.m.

The Senior Hot Lunch Program is available Monday through Friday at 11 a.m. and Brown Bag Day is on Wednesday, Oct. 21 from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The Indian Basket Weaving Class members sit and visit as they learn how to weave beautiful baskets with pine needles. The Ranchos "Basket Cases" meet on the first and last Tuesday of each month at 9 a.m.

The members of the Senior Center thank all the local residents and businesses for supporting us to provide a senior community center in the Madera Ranchos. Happy Halloween and enjoy the family festivities from the members of the Ranchos/Hills Senior Center.

Quote for October: "There are three things I've learned never to discuss with people: Religion, politics and the Great Pumpkin." – Linus, from It's The Great Pumpkin Charlie Brown.

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Kiwanis Korner

Students Prove Character Counts with Local Kiwanis Awards

By Sally Rowden

Before we get into our events for this new academic year, we want to finish up a couple of events that took



Webster Elementary School Character Counts Award winners. From left is Silvana Gutierrez' mother and Silvana Gutierrez. Next are Kiwanis members Andrea Pille, Sally Rowden and Mona Diaz. Finally is award winner Yair Tinoco and his mother.

place at the end of the 2025-2026 academic year. Our recipients for the Kiwanis Character Counts Awards at Sierra View Elementary were Lucas Carion and Faith Mayes with Silvana Gutierrez and Yair Tinoco from

Webster Elementary. The Kiwanis' six pillars of character are trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Congratulations to Lucas, Faith, Silvana and Yair.

Moving into this academic school year, our sold out "Elvis in the Ranchos" event took place on Thursday, Sept. 10. We had a tasty dinner catered by Mike and Diane Mazzone and the silent auction items were eagerly claimed, just as the "silent dessert" auction was gobbled up. Jeremy "Elvis" Pearce created a rock'n and roll'n showtime event that included insights into the stories behind Elvis' songs. All this took place at Birdstone Winery. To all our guests and our sponsors, Chad and Katie Harr from Chad's Trucking along with Camarena Health, "Thank You ... Thank You Very Much."

We're planning other entertaining events in the coming months, and all

will be posted in the Ranchos Independent and on the What's Up in the Ranchos? Website. Flyers will be posted throughout our communities with our Venmo QR Code included. These events give us the opportunity to raise funds for the projects and activities that we provide for the children in our communities. Thank you for your continued community support.

We will be at the Ranchos/Hills Seniors Craft Fair on Saturday, Oct. 3 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., featuring a Holiday Christmas Wreath on display, complete with tickets available to purchase a chance to win it. The drawing will be at our Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce Christmas Tree Lighting on Dec. 4.

Key Club is a high school service leadership program and our Liberty High School Key Club Officers for 2026-2027 are Tyler Nguyen – President; Miya Prado – Vice-President; Jayden Nguyen – Secretary; and Treasurer is Suneha Sambi. Their advisor is Kiwanis Member Sally Rowden. These officers and the club members build their service leadership skills by the service opportunities they



Sierra View Elementary School Character Counts award winners, from left — front row, Lucas Carion and Faith Mayes. Behind them, from left, are Kiwanis Members Andrea Pille, Sally Rowden and Mona Diaz, and Principal Rebecca Hart.

take part in throughout the year. The Ranchos Kiwanis meet at the Pizza Factory on Avenue 12 every second and fourth Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. You are welcome to join us. "The best gift you could give someone is your time because you're giving them something you'll never get back." – Unknown

EDITORIAL cont. from P. 5

equally to all women. Consider Riley Gaines, the former University of Kentucky swimmer who became an advocate for sex-based eligibility in women's sports after competing against transgender swimmer Lia Thomas. Gaines says she is defending fairness and opportunities for female athletes. For doing so, she has faced intense criticism and accusations of intolerance. The very women we're told should be heard and believed can quickly find that principle withdrawn when their views become "inconvenient."

You can disagree with Gaines, but it's difficult to miss the contradiction in a culture that celebrates women for finding their voices, then condemns some of them for what they say. "Women supporting women" can end up meaning women supporting the "right" women. At that point, solidarity starts looking a lot more like conformity.

None of this settles what should happen to Clancy. Her mental state

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matters in determining criminal responsibility, and postpartum psychosis is a serious psychiatric emergency. Compassion for her doesn't mean approving of what she did. But feeling for someone doesn't require believing you could have been her, and sharing her sex doesn't require taking her side.

Maybe the mistake is telling women they should "support women" in the first place. Women aren't a team. They're individuals. They can disagree, make bad decisions, hold unpopular opinions and be wrong. Taking women seriously means allowing them to judge other women and to be judged themselves. Blind support isn't respect; it's the refusal to make distinctions.

Jonathan Alpert is a psychotherapist in New York City and Washington, D.C. He is the author of "Therapy Nation: How America Got Hooked on Therapy and Why It's Left Us More Anxious and Divided." This editorial originally appeared on www.washingtonexaminer.com.

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When is the NEXT Chamber of Commerce Meeting?

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce would love to see you at our next meeting, Wednesday, October 14, at 6 p.m., 37167 Ave. 12 Suite 5C in the Maywood Center. Come join us and be a part of what's going on in your community. Call us at 559-645-4001.

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-		+		-				
	+		÷		= 7			
+		+		×				
	-		×		= 8			
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Say you saw it in the Independent

SEMCU speaks

A Park? Is a Community Park Possible?

By Igal Treibatch

There have always been whispers about the need for a park within the Bonadelle and Madera Ranchos communities. When the area was developed in the 1960s by some Hollywood entertainment personalities, they did not give much thought about building a park to help to create a recreational centerpiece. Well, times have changed, and although there were attempts to build a park in the past, it did not happen.

Today, as I understand, there are over 4,000 homes and approximately 14,000 inhabitants in the areas surrounding these communities. The idea for a park has resurfaced recently and SEMCU has been working on the possibility of building a community park. During the research, we also found that our area's Supervisor, Jordan Wamhoff, is working on the same idea. After meeting with Jordan and County staff, we concluded that a survey should be taken to find out what

our community envisions a park should include. So, during the next month, we will be working with the County and conducting a survey with the goal of understanding what the community envisions a five-acre park should include.



A survey is being prepared by the County and will be conducted among our community. It would help greatly to understand what people feel is necessary and what may be advisable to include in a potential five-acre park while remembering that it takes money to run a park after it is constructed.

Please look at the survey and fill in what you think is needed while keeping in mind what may be necessary, what is important to include and what may be sec-

ondary for now. For now, we may assume that the park will cover about 3-5 acres.

We invite the public to join us at our next SEMCU meeting when we will be discussing the park and our ongoing efforts. Participation is very simple with your

phone or computer. See below for instructions.

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

members to help shape the Southeast Madera County area. Together we can build a stronger, more vibrant community.

SEMCU meets once per month online for about an hour and you may 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 is on Tuesday, Oct. 20 at 6 p.m. Make your voice heard!

SEMCU is "By the Community, For the Community"

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SCAN THE
QR CODE BELOW
WITH YOUR PHONE.**



GEN WHY cont. from P. 6

By September, summer has overstayed its welcome. Ok, well, who am I kidding? By July fifth I'm threatening to hibernate until Halloween, but mid-September is simply too long for this heat to hang around. Labor Day has passed. The pool party is over. You've overstayed your welcome. Kindly exit stage left. By this point, nobody is enchanted by getting into a car that has been sitting in a parking lot for six hours. We are tired of sweating. We are tired of running the air conditioner. We have reached the point where opening the front door and being hit in the face by heat feels personal.

Then one cool morning arrives

and reminds us that something different is coming. And suddenly I understand why I'm such an easy mark. Fall has become more than a temperature on a thermometer. It is a feeling. Football games and soup simmering in the crockpot. Holidays coming. Pulling out blankets you haven't seen since spring and discovering sweaters you completely forgot you owned. And the leggings. Oh, my, the leggings.

Maybe that is part of what seasons give us. They mark change in a way our ordinary days don't. One day looks mostly like the one before it, until suddenly the mornings are cooler. The light changes. The leaves turn. We pull out a sweater and realize another summer has passed. There is

something comforting about that rhythm, even when we're impatient enough to get several weeks ahead of it.

Eventually, the weather will catch up with the calendar. One morning I'll walk outside and the chill will stay. The sweater won't be abandoned in the passenger seat by noon. The trees will finally get the memo, and drinking pumpkin spice coffee won't feel like an act of climate denial. Until then,

I'm willing to play along. I'll light the candle. I'll admire the decorative pumpkins. I'll keep a sweater in the car that I have absolutely no intention of wearing after 10 a.m. And if consuming cinnamon and nutmeg can somehow intimidate the temperature into dropping another 20 degrees, I guess I'll head to the nearest Starbucks and do my part. After all, in September, fall is really more of a state of mind.

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GAS cont. from P. 7

pensive — it's precarious. When a refinery goes offline for maintenance (or worse, an unplanned outage), there's no quick way to bring in replacement fuel from neighboring states.

6. Business Climate Colder Than San Francisco Fog — Since 2018, over 360 energy related companies have packed up and left California. That exodus takes with it jobs, tax revenue and most critically, investment in energy infrastructure.

"It wasn't just the regulations themselves — it was the constant moving of goalposts and the openly hostile rhetoric from officials," a former California oil executive who relocated his company to Texas said. "Eventually, you go where you're welcome."

7. The 2035 ICE Ban Shadow — Finally, the state's aggressive push to ban the sale of internal combustion engine vehicles

by 2035 creates a chilling effect on long-term investment in fuel infrastructure. Why would companies invest billions in refining, storage and distribution assets in a state that has openly stated its goal of making those assets obsolete?

Shale Magazine says, "The Bottom Line is that California's painful gas prices aren't accidents or the result of corporate villainy — they're the predictable outcome of policy choices made over decades. Multiple investigations by federal and state agencies have repeatedly found no evidence of price gouging, which has been Gov. Gavin Newsom's accusation.

"What they have found is a perfect storm of regulations, taxes, import dependency and shrinking infrastructure that guarantees Californians will continue paying premium prices for their mobility."

Katy Grimes is the Editor in Chief of the California Globe. This article originally appeared at www.CaliforniaGlobe.com.

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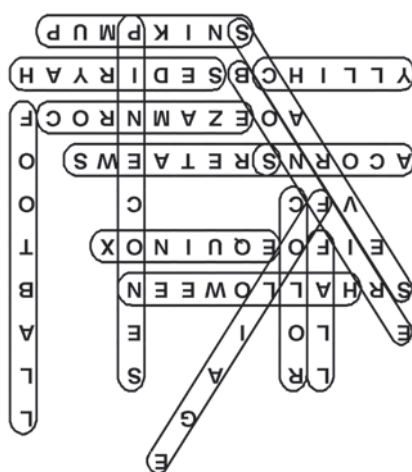
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2	7	4	9	5	8	3	6	1
1	9	5	3	7	6	2	4	8

[illegible]

Say you saw it in the Independent

1 Italian resort isle	56 African nation since 1993	94 Knock noises	visored head-	talk TV	culpable
6 Infantry weapons	58 Geologic time units	95 Kazakhstan border lake	7 Disturb	39 Authorizing	78 X-ray units
13 Villainous sorts	60 Little cut	96 Stream resulting from a high-energy	8 "Family" actress	42 Onion relative	79 Sword variety
20 Disney's "Little Mermaid"	62 Test run of a new policy	101 Make warped	9 Actor Russell	43 Emu relatives	80 Marsh- dwelling rail
21 Shoulder ornament	64 Stars and Stripes' home	102 Colorful ring of anatomy	10 "Do Ya" rock gp.	45 GI tract bacterium	83 Foot back
22 Not in favor of	68 Coin tosses, e.g.	103 Some lawn moisture	11 Muscle-bone connector	46 Central Georgia city	85 Choose by picking slips of paper, say
23 Parasitic loafer	69 Damaged by erosion	104 Transports in a big rig	12 Courtroom typist	47 "— the Sheriff"	88 Hammer users, often
25 Examine by touch, as for a physical	70 Pompous reactionary, in Britspeak	106 Apple tablet	13 Brief slumber	48 Frank formerly of CNN	90 Fri. follower
26 Former Swedish car	72 Giant-screen film format	110 Translates	14 Christie of mystery	51 Caught in a lie, e.g.	91 Mill fodder
27 Gluten source	73 Family on "Dallas"	112 Starts travel- ing like seven	15 Western bars	52 Pound on, as a door	93 Vicinity of the U.S. Capitol
28 Genetic ID	74 Flax plant grown for its oil	116 Knickknack	16 Tilt skyward	55 Least vicious	94 Apply more heat to
30 Man's wig	76 Striped jungle cats, in French	117 Digression	17 Like extras purchased via the program	57 Pares down	96 Law firm aides, briefly
31 Build	81 Pilot	118 Occupies, as a hotel	18 Lauder of cosmetics	59 Big name in acrylic plastic sheets	97 "— we all?"
33 Alternative to a blender	82 Entity	119 Gathers	19 Pilot	61 Ore. neighbor	98 Designer Oscar de la —
35 Gold-medal alpine skier	84 Scott in an 1857 court decision	120 Sipping aid	24 "The Seven Year Itch" actor Tom	63 "Kapow!"	99 In current times
38 Lowly laborer	86 Handsome, in Spanish	DOWN	29 Navy bigwig	64 Fast Amtrak train	100 Volkswagen compact
40 Ghost sound	87 Fiery felony	1 Zooming requirements, for short	32 Thinking logically	65 Grass-cutting machine	101 Private pupil
41 Supposed realm of existence in the celestial spheres	89 Approx. amount	2 Song from 108-Down, e.g.	33 Rival	66 "The Baker" actor Koteas	104 Egg sources
43 Top of a cup	90 Small possum sometimes kept as a pet	3 — colada	34 Singer Perry	67 Sonata section	105 Queries
44 Big rigs		4 Growths on gingers' chins	35 "Voices Carry" singer Aimee	68 Lighter igniter	107 Twosome
49 Requires		5 Not well	36 "Oh, gotcha"	71 Became ecstatic, with "out"	108 Verdi opera
50 Throne, e.g.			37 "Hooked on ..." record company	69 Lighter igniter	109 Actress Barrymore
51 Pulsate				72 Notion	111 Old JFK flier
53 Crate				75 Units of work	113 Rio carmaker
					114 Includes

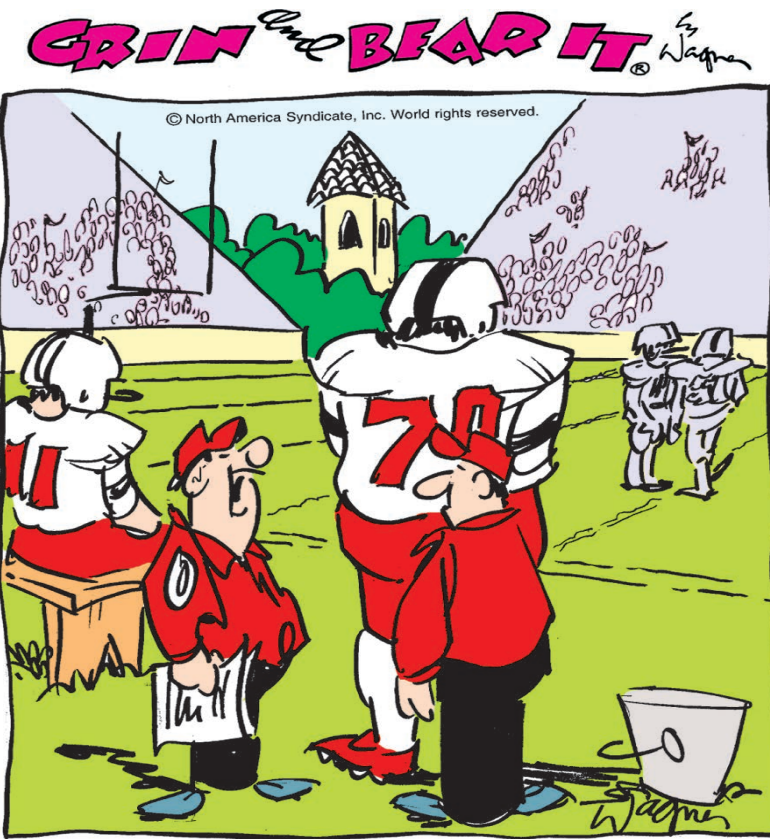
Click on “Local News” at

Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps

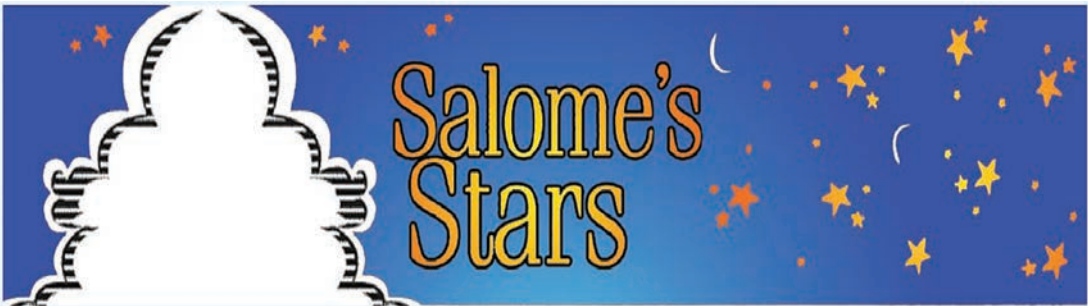


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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) After much traveling this year, you're due for some settled time with family and friends. Use this period to check out situations that will soon require a lot of serious decision making.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Keep your keen Bovine mind focused on your financial situation, as it begins to undergo some changes. Consider your money moves carefully. Avoid impulsive investments.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You'll need to adjust some of your financial plans now that things are changing more quickly than you expected. All the facts you need haven't yet emerged, so move cautiously.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Personal and professional relationships dominate this period. Try to keep things uncomplicated to avoid misunderstandings that can cause problems down the line.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) An elusive goal that you'd been hoping to claim is still just out of reach. But something else has come along that could prove to be just as desirable, if only you'd take the time to check it out.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) This is a good time to get away for some much-needed rest and relaxation. You'll return refreshed and ready to take on a workplace challenge that awaits you!

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Confidence grows as you work your way through some knotty situations. Watch out for distractions from well-meaning supporters that could slow things down.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Consider spending more time contemplating the possibilities of an offer before opting to accept or reject it. But once you do make a decision, act on it.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) You're in a very strong position this week to tie up loose ends in as many areas as possible. Someone close to you has advice you might want to heed.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Congratulations! This is the week that you've been waiting for: After a period of sudden stops and fitful starts, your plans can now move ahead without significant disruptions.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) You're in an exceptionally strong position this week to make decisions on many still-unresolved matters, especially those involving close personal relationships.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) This week starts off with some positive movement in several areas! A special person becomes a partner in at least one of the major plans that you'll be working on.

Born this Week

You work hard and get things done. You also inspire others to do their best. You would do well heading up a major corporation.

FUN PAGES

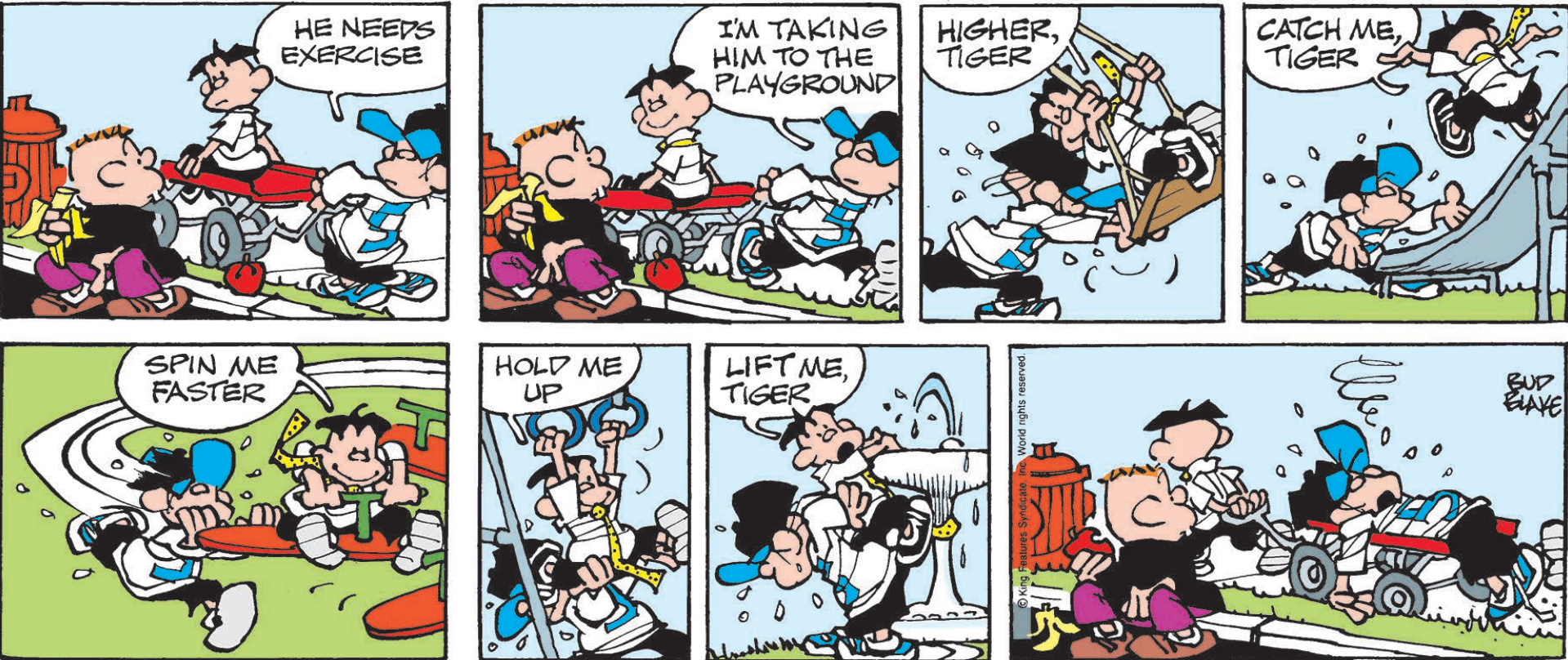
Kids' Maze



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TIGER

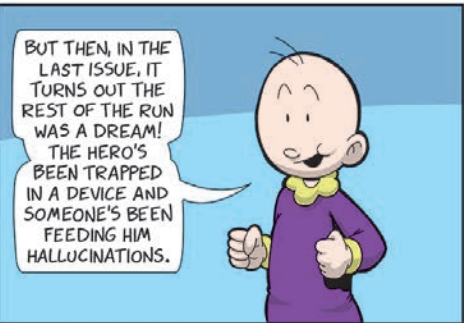
by BUD BLAKE



TRIVIA TEST

By Fifi Rodriguez

1. **GEOGRAPHY:** Which South American country has two capitals? 2. **AD SLOGANS:** Which car company uses the ad slogan "Let's go places"? 3. **FOOD & DRINK:** What is a johnny cake primarily made of? 4. **LITERATURE:** In which Harry Potter novel is the portkey (a method of magical transportation) first mentioned? 5. **GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** What is the most popular animal used on national flags? 6. **MOVIES:** What object is Wilson in the movie "Cast Away"? 7. **U.S. STATES:** Which U.S. state is the only one that has parishes instead of counties? 8. **MUSIC:** Which 1980s band released the album titled "Synchronicity"? 9. **TELEVISION:** What is James Kirk's middle name in the "Star Trek" series? 10. **MYTHOLOGY:** Who is the Greek goddess of wisdom?



1. Bolivia, Sucre and La Paz.
2. Toyota.
3. Cornmeal.
4. "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire."
5. The Lion.
6. A Wilson-brand volleyball.
7. Louisiana.
8. The Police.
9. Tiberius.
10. Athena.

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Amber Waves

GERALD, HONEY, IT'S GRANDMA'S BIRTHDAY THIS WEEKEND AND WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A PARTY.

OOH, LIKE GOING TO ROCKET PIZZA WITH LASER TAG, A BIG CAKE WITH A MAGICIAN AND BALLOONS?

NO, DEAR, JUST A SMALL GET-TOGETHER, A NICE DINNER AND MAYBE HER FAVORITE PIE.

GEEZ, THIS IS WHY OLDER PEOPLE NEVER GET EXCITED ABOUT THEIR BIRTHDAY!!

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by Dave T. Phipps

The Spats

WHAT HAS FOUR LEGS AND ONE ARM?

I GIVE UP... WHAT HAS FOUR LEGS & ONE ARM?

OUR NEIGHBORS' PIT BULL!!

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by Jeff Pickering

Out on a Limb

IT'S PRETTY COMMON IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. IT'S A POD OF ORCADELICS.

FAR OUT, MAN

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by Gary Kopervas

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Menu is shorter. 2. Pad is longer. 3. Finger is longer. 4. Curtain is not as wide. 5. Apron strap is moved. 6. Tie is missing.

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SUDOKU

by Linda Thistle

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ★

★ Moderate ★★ Challenging
★★★ HOO BOY!

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The Independent
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MAGIC MAZE • FALL

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

Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions forward, backward, up, down and diagonally
Unlisted clue hint: THE YIELD FROM CROPS

Acorns Corn maze Football Pumpkins
Bonfire Equinox Halloween Scarves
Chilly Fall Hayrides Sweaters
Color Foliage Pine cones

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FUN PAGES

SEMCU

south east madera county united

A non-profit organization dedicated to improving life in Southeast Madera County

Community PARK Survey

Do we want a park ? What should be in it ?

Please look at the survey provided by the county and fill in what you think is needed while keeping in mind what may be necessary, what is important to include, and what may be secondary for now in a park of about 3-5 acres.

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Our next meeting is on Tuesday, October 20th at 6 p.m.

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

By phone: 669-900-6833 - & enter ID#: 836 3242 4343, then code 854 221

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