

The Ranchos Independent



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The Official Publication of Southeastern Madera County

50¢

Santa Arrives in the Ranchos



Santa Claus is surrounded by Ranchos area Girl Scouts for the annual lighting of the Community Christmas Tree at Maywood Center.

Photo courtesy of Don Foster

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LHS Plays in Div. V Championship Corcoran High Squeaks By 31-28 in Heartbreaker

Congratulations to the Liberty High Varsity Football Team. On Dec. 11 they went toe-to-toe with Corcoran High for the Valley Division V Championship for the first time ever in one of the most exciting football games this editor has ever seen. The final score of 31-28 for Corcoran doesn't tell the whole story. It doesn't tell about Josh Garza's 220 yards for the night or his incredible 85-yard kickoff return. It doesn't tell about Justin Weldon's laser beam accuracy with field goals, extra points and then, just for good measure, a 39-yard touchdown reception that put us ahead with about 8 minutes left to play. It doesn't tell about Garrett Doss' playmaking ability at quarterback or Big Ben



Cowger's never-remitting defensive skills that drew double and triple blockers all night -- and he *still* got through. There was Mack truck Dylan Ferreira who just kept hitting them right up the middle, over and over. Liberty player after player stood up and did what they had to do to get the job done and the final score doesn't reflect that either. Coach Mike Nolte is to be commended for doing a truly awesome job with these great young men and with 20 seniors leaving the team his work is cut out for

him next year.

We are truly proud of you guys. You play for love of the game and there's nothing more noble than that. Thank you.

Ranchos Fire Shows Strain on System

A house fire on the morning of Dec. 7 at 35221 John Albert Drive in the Ranchos served to illustrate how thinly stretched fire services are for Southeastern Madera County.

Less than an hour earlier a house fire in Madera near Highway 99 and Avenue 17 was reported and was being fought when the call for the Ranchos fire came in. Although two Ranchos volunteers arrived on the scene within minutes of the call, since there was only one person manning each of

the fire engines they were unable to aggressively attack the fire. A valuable water tender that was being used at the first fire couldn't be released to go to the Ranchos fire until the first fire was under control and, as a result, firefighters had to wait for a water tender to arrive from Coarsegold. In addition, firefighters had to pump water from neighboring swimming pools to try to control the Ranchos fire.

Resident Carrie Der Garabedian was not hurt in the fire.

Fire Safety: What's Hot, What's Not

Cal Fire wishes you and your family a safe holiday season and to enjoy the holiday season during the winter months, Cal Fire Madera/Mariposa/Merced Unit Chief Dale Hutchinson would like to remind you to be cautious with trees, lights, candles, ornaments, fireplaces and wood stoves. During this hectic time of year remember fire knows no holiday.

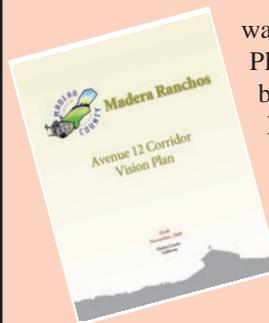
Do not dispose of fireplace and wood stove ashes until they are dead out. Heat can stay in ashes or coals for 3-7 days after your fire is out. Never place ashes or coals into paper bags or plastic containers. Always use a metal container to transport the ashes or coals to a safe place. Never place ashes or coals into a dumpster or trash can for disposal. They can and do start fires. If a dumpster stored under the eaves of your home or

near your apartment caught fire it could spell disaster for you and your family. The same could happen if your waste disposal truck caught fire in your neighborhood. Please use caution when disposing of hot ashes and coals.

Remember a dry Christmas tree will burn like a torch. Make sure your tree is fresh, re-cut the trunk at least one inch above the old cut as soon as you get it home. Keep the fresh cut end of the tree trunk in water. Never place your tree near a heat source. Check the water level in the Christmas tree stand daily. Never use old or frayed electrical cords on or near your tree. Never place candles on a Christmas tree. Promptly remove your tree after the holiday and dispose of properly.

For more safety tips visit: www.fire.ca.gov.

Avenue 12 Vision Plan Now Online



After all of the meetings and all of the talking and all of the waiting, the "Draft Madera Ranchos Avenue 12 Corridor Vision Plan" is now available. This is the codified result of meetings between Ranchos citizens and members of Madera County's Planning Department and Cal Poly San Luis Obispo's Department of City and Regional Planning. The 59 page document is quite impressive, showing every step of the process so far including pictures submitted by Ranchos residents, wish lists for what community members said they wanted for Avenue 12 and what they said they didn't want.

Included in the package are all recommendations, land use suggestions, road use suggestions, sidewalk suggestions, greenery and landscaping suggestions -- it is quite a complete volume.

The Vision Plan is available at the following locations:

- 1) The Ranchos Library (2 copies available)
- 2) The Madera County Resource Management Agency (Planning Department)
- 3) The internet at www.madera-county.com/rma/archives/uploads/1260212847_Document_upload_maderaranchosavenue12draftvisionplan12409.pdf.

Grinch Brings Gifts to Holiday Fair

Math Crazy Tutoring Also Relocates to Maywood Center

The Inaugural Maywood Center Christmas Fair started with an idea to promote the businesses in the Maywood Shopping Center and to increase Christmas sales. Jackie Soltero, owner of the Dog Gone Cute Store and some of her friends chose Saturday, Dec. 5 as the date with the idea that it's just before everyone gets too busy and before any big storms might arrive. She contacted the other businesses in the Maywood Center to encourage participation, but because it was short notice several businesses were unable to be as involved as they would have liked.

Amazingly though, it all came together with sidewalk vendors, funnel cakes and the Grinch. The Madera Animal Shelter brought several pets for adoption, four of which found homes for Christmas. The Friends of the Ranchos Library sold books and Snickers bars and the Beauty Club sold Christmas gifts and videos from their video store. The Dog Gone Cute Store had tables with Christmas sale items of all types for pets and pet owners. The Houstons of the Madera Ranchos sold delicious funnel cakes and lemonade in front of the Ranchos Library and Tom Filer, owner of Math Crazy now located in the Maywood Center, dressed up as the Grinch and posed for photographs with brave shoppers and business owners. The photos were taken by Ellen Mester of the Ranchos Library and were quickly printed by Hart's Photography and Gifts.



The Maywood Center had the Grinch on hand for its first Christmas Fair the first week in December, with the Grinch played by Maywood Center's newest business owner, Tom Filer of Math Crazy Tutoring, flanked here by his wife Pat (left) and daughter Lizzie.

More Info About Math Crazy

For the past four years, Math Crazy Tutoring has been offering help in both math and reading comprehension to Madera Ranchos residents from its location on Avenue 12. Tom and Pat Filer sold their building on Avenue 12 but will continue to provide tutoring in the Ranchos from their new location in the Maywood Shopping Center.

"There is still a great need for our services," said Tom Filer, who will stay and manage the Madera Tutoring Center. Math Crazy is now located to the west and next door to the Madera Ranchos Library in the Maywood Shopping Center. The Madera center will be co-managed by Whitney Crane.

Beginning in January, Math Crazy will also offer a Saturday Seminar in S.A.T. preparation. The Filers, who created the Math Crazy brand, operate additional tutoring centers in both Fresno and Clovis.



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12/09

THE D.O.G. HOUSE
DEMAND OPEN GOVERNMENT BY DALE DROZEN



I missed the Board meeting yesterday, Dec. 15, but popped in to watch a couple of issues on-line today. I saw Dan Francouer of Ahwahnee present the Board with a petition signed by 1,100 citizens asking the Board to replace the funding for Raymond and Ahwahnee winter fire protection.

I do not think it goes far enough.

All five Board members voted to cut the fire protection budget during the budget hearings. We should not simply be attempting to fund Raymond and Ahwahnee at the expense of another area. I believe Madera Ranchos was number two on the list of cuts, and with the current level of funding would see their staffing eliminated. It is time to end this B.S. of pitting citizens against citizens, fighting for their very lives. The problem was created when all five Board members voted to cut the Fire protection budget – that is where the solution must be found.

One of the issues on the agenda was a couple of Board members trying to block the rescinding of the vote to cut funding for Raymond and Ahwahnee winter fire protection.

This is typical of our Board's reaction to an issue.

A vote to rescind a previous vote requires a majority of the Board to vote for it. Rather than putting it on the agenda and allowing public scrutiny and comment the Board decided to change Robert's Rules of Order eliminating the Board's ability to correct a bad decision when a majority of the Board feels they made the wrong decision.

I received comments on a possible way to save money in our budget: Why not combine the Madera County Sheriff and the Madera County Corrections Departments? First some history.

Back in the 70's, when Ed Bates was Sheriff, he fought continually and publicly with the Board. As a result, in order to punish him, they took away the jail and created the Department of Corrections. This amounted to taking away more than 50 percent of the resources and budget of the Sheriff. They showed him!

I am told a statewide bill was passed soon after, preventing other than the existing Counties – Lake, Santa Clara and now Madera – from having this separation. It seems logical to have law enforcement and corrections under one roof and would surely eliminate some duplication in overhead and/or management services. It is well past time for the Board to get over their tantrum and put it back the way it should be. I hope this would include juvenile and the Probation Departments as well.

Unfortunately this would create two issues our Board would most likely object to. It would consolidate law enforcement under an elected official (the Sheriff) accountable to the citizens of Madera County rather than individual department heads serving at the pleasure of the Board. The other issue is that cuts would likely be in the area of management and overhead positions. To this point nearly all budget cuts implemented by the Board of Supervisors have targeted "boots on the ground" employees actually providing services to us taxpayers, sparing management and administrative functions.

Every now and then a DOG just needs to bark a bit.

This week [of Dec. 6] at the Board of Supervisors meeting the "Chair" decided, "We are not going to have public comment on this matter," just after the Board had appointed our new Auditor-Controller. California's open government laws require the public be given an opportunity to comment before or during the consideration of any issue.

I have dedicated a lot of time and money in my efforts to keep citizens informed and trying to get more citizens involved in our government. The effort has been at times rewarding but mostly frustrating.

Please see D.O.G. on P. 19

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12/09



Editorial

Five Years ... and Counting

By Randy Bailey

And they said it wouldn't last. More correctly, after a few of those first papers came out five years ago and certain readers from the left side of the aisle saw the direction of the editorials, they *hoped* it wouldn't last. But here we are.

It was a little over five years ago that I walked into the Ranchos Independent office for the first time because I had a complaint with Mr. Bill Bell. You see, I had written a letter to the editor (yeah, people actually *do* that) and Bill had made the mistake of including my name, address and phone number with the letter.

You can imagine my chagrin. After we talked for a little bit we were both pretty much laughing at the mistake and I was given assurances that it wouldn't happen again and I was confident that it wouldn't.

It was at about this time that my business partner and I were building up a little couponing book that we had started exclusively for the Madera market called the Super Clipper. We were calling upon Cobb Ranch to try and get some advertising for the christmas tree lot when Jim Cobb mentioned to me that the Ranchos Independent was for sale and that I should look into buying it.

Even though I had a degree in Journalism from Fresno State, I had never

considered owning a newspaper. That night, visions of William Randolph Hearst danced in my head. I saw myself running through Hearst Castle and wielding power untold if I just would make this humble commitment and begin with this one simple little newspaper. Of course I forgot to recall that William Randolph Hearst was the guy who, when he was in college *at the turn of the century*, had an annual allowance from daddy of a million dollars ... and that was when a million dollars was, well, a *real* million dollars.

I met with Bill, negotiated a few things and next thing you know I owned a newspaper. My business partner hung around for a little over a year and then we decided to part ways with me taking the Ranchos Independent and partner taking the Super Clipper. Here we are five years later and you're holding the Ranchos Independent in your hands ... where's your Super Clipper?

The biggest thanks go out to you, the people of the Ranchos who have supported this little paper over the last five years. I really cannot thank you enough nor could I have done it without you.

The biggest change in my life over the last five years has been the associations I've made and involvement with the community that I try to faithfully serve month in and month out. I was talking with someone in my office just the other day about those days when I didn't know what was going on in my community and how I used to feel "dumb and happy" sitting in my Bonadelle Ranchos home, oblivious to all this Madera County stuff going on (or more often *not* going on) around me.

I can't imagine that now. Socrates said that the unexamined life isn't worth living. Prior to owning the Ranchos Independent, I didn't examine the very community I called my home; the community my wife and I chose specifically to raise our three girls. I was just a cork bobbing along on the waters of life, ending up wherever I floated to that day without using much of a thought process to get there.

What I'm getting at is get involved in your community. For me the flash point was ownership of the Ranchos Independent. Whatever your "hot button" is, press it and help make a difference here in our home. You won't be sorry.

The Ranchos Independent

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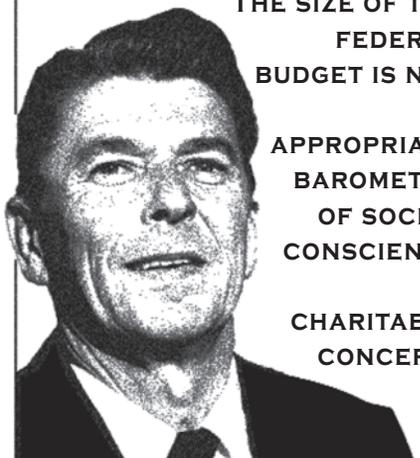
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THE RAY GUN SHOOTING STRAIGHT TO THE HEART



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RONALD REAGAN
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Letters

Dear Editor:

Native American tribes face many obstacles in overcoming centuries of poverty, political disenfranchisement, and loss of traditional lands. But perhaps the most unfair barrier we face comes from wealthy gaming tribes using their political and financial powers to crush the economic aspirations of tribes such as ours in order to protect their own narrow economic interests.

Why are some wealthy tribes doing this? They don't want competition. In a pattern repeated across the nation, wealthy tribes are lining up against newcomer tribes to stall or derail legitimate gaming projects. Their tactics include media attack ads, strong-arming community groups to oppose new projects, and, of course, back room lobbying and political payoffs.

Recent attacks by the Chukchansi Economic Development Authority against the proposed North Fork Rancheria destination hotel and casino resort continue this trend. These inaccurate attacks jeopardize desperately needed local jobs, business opportunity, and community investment and perpetuate misinformation about tribes and tribal projects.

Chukchansi ads and direct mailers have twisted the history of the North Fork project beyond recognition. For instance, Chukchansi claims that our developer bought land in Madera and then "recruited" our tribe. In fact, our Tribe selected our developer—not the other way around—and then authorized them to secure an option for our proposed site.

Chukchansi would have you think we're ignoring an opportunity to build a casino on our own land or elsewhere in North Fork. This ignores the fact that our reservation is small, remote and owned by individuals and not by our Tribe. The Governor, the County, and the local community all agree that the tiny town of North Fork is not suited for commercial development of a casino and we therefore cannot acquire new land for gaming there.

Chukchansi also claims that our Tribe is somehow skirting the law. We aren't. Instead, we are following the precise process that Congress established in 1988 to provide tribes without a land base, such as North Fork, the same opportunity to engage in tribal governmental gaming that Chukchansi was afforded. This process is the only way left to us to develop economically so that we, like Chukchansi, can take care of our citizens and community at large.

Chukchansi's claim that allowing our project to proceed will open the floodgates

to off-reservation gaming does not square with the facts. Over the past two decades, only four of the roughly 325 tribes who operate casinos nationwide have qualified under the same process that we are following. Ours is only one of two such projects pending nationwide where the Governor has allowed the project to move forward by entering into a compact with the Tribe.

As we near final approval, you will hear other attacks by special interests desperate to maintain their economic advantage at any cost. These attacks may come directly from tribes or through hired local proxies or "independent" advocates receiving financial or political benefits from gaming tribes.

Such tactics undermine the economic prospects for our Tribe, Madera County, and consumers who fare better with more competition. They also tend to drown out more legitimate issues that may exist and stain the image of tribal gaming that has brought many benefits to tribes and local communities. We're confident that the people of Madera County will understand the source and motive behind such self-serving and counter-productive attacks.

The North Fork tribe has been and will remain good neighbors and citizens of Madera County. Our project is a result of careful planning with the local community, the County, and the State and will result in a project that will benefit us all without serious harm to Chukchansi or any other tribe's economic interest. Our mitigation steps will address any significant potential impacts of the project or legitimate concerns of our neighbors. If you look at the facts and beyond the distortions, we think you will agree with us and continue the unprecedented support of our project.

Elaine Bethel-Fink
Tribal Chairperson
North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians

Dear Editor:

A few days ago I went to the market to get a loaf of bread. I noticed the avocados were two for \$1 so decided I would get four. I went to the checkout and found I had only one dollar and a little change in my purse so I left the avocados as I needed the bread.

As I went to get in my car, someone behind me said, "Here are your avocados, Ma'am." I was startled as this was a very young child. I told this little one that I did not

Please see **LETTERS** on P. 21

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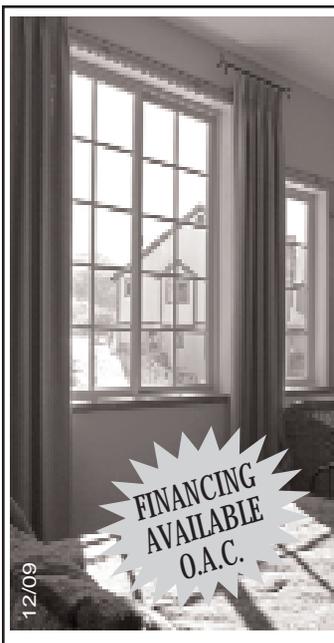
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The North Fork Rancheria is a sovereign tribal government of over 1,800 tribal citizens based in Madera County, California.

Letter to the Community

North Fork Rancheria Resort Project Update

December 2009

'Tis the Season for our Annual Progress Report

In the midst of one of the worst recessions in decades, some people are wondering: *Where is the casino that promised jobs, business opportunity and community investment for Madera and the San Joaquin Valley?*

Here's a quick update on the North Fork project: *its process, progress, and partnerships*

Process. The North Fork Tribe is following the letter and spirit of existing law to obtain the necessary federal and state approvals for our project to be built within our historic lands. While the process is long and rigorous, our Tribe has retained a positive and responsive approach: in fact, we've redoubled our efforts to meet with community groups and provide information (*see "Fact vs. Fiction" on our web site*) to highlight the truths and benefits of this community-backed endeavor.

Progress. A lengthy environmental review process, bureaucratic inaction, and meddling by competitors have slowed the approval process. Still, with help from our local partners we've pushed on, overcome numerous obstacles, and made significant progress in the past year. We are now hopeful that federal approval of our project will occur in the upcoming year, moving us closer to breaking ground and realizing the long-awaited benefits of the project.

Partnership. The North Fork project continues to enjoy extraordinary local backing and we are grateful to our supporters and business and community partners for their unflagging support. With the current economic conditions, Madera needs this project now more than ever—and we need your support now more than ever.

We are simply asking for the same rights and opportunities enjoyed by other tribes to use Indian gaming as a means to improve our community at large and the lives of our people. In return, we promise to continue the North Fork Mono tradition of constructive, collaborative, and transparent partnership!

As always, we welcome your questions, suggestions, and support to improve our project and community. Please go to www.NorthForkRancheria.com to complete a comment and/or support form or call us at (559) 877-2461.

May 2010 be the year when all our dreams are realized. Happy Holidays.

The Tribal Council of the North Fork Rancheria

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Aunt Jean's Ranchos Recipes

by Jean Briner

Have you ever heard "It's sandwich weather" or "It's dessert weather"? I haven't either, but you probably have heard, "It's soup weather." It got below freezing a couple of nights and it has been raining off and on now for the past week, so it is definitely "soup weather."

Soup can be made with or without meat and just about any kind of vegetables. It can be made with water, stock or milk. Putting all that together, the possibilities are limitless.

After Thanksgiving there is always turkey soup, but you don't have to wait until the turkey is devoured and only the ugly bones are left. I'm not fond of cooking the carcass for soup anyway – it is just too much work. I'm always afraid of those little bones getting into the broth so we take as much meat off the bones as possible, toss the carcass and freeze the meat until time to make soup. If I were to use the bones, I would definitely strain the broth before using it.

This is my favorite way to make turkey soup without using the stock from the turkey carcass.

Turkey Soup

- 2 cans chicken stock
- 1 can (14.5 oz) diced tomatoes
- 1 16 oz. pkg. frozen mixed vegetables
- Half medium onion – chopped
- 1 cup diced carrots
- Couple of potatoes peeled and diced
- ½ cup alphabet or star macaroni
- 1 can cream style corn
- Half small head of cabbage sliced & chopped
- Leftover turkey pulled into small pieces
- Salt and pepper to taste

Pour the stock into a large soup pot. Add the tomatoes and mixed vegetables and the chopped onion. Add enough water to cover vegetables well. Add salt and pepper to taste. Bring to a boil and turn burner down to simmer for about 25 minutes. Add the carrots and simmer another 10 minutes before adding the potatoes. Taste to see if more salt &

pepper is needed. Add more water (or another can of stock) as you go to cover the vegetables well. Let this simmer until the tomatoes have broken down and the frozen vegetables have softened – this should take about 45 minutes to an hour. Turn the heat up to a low boil and add the macaroni. You should stir this because the macaroni tends to stick to the bottom of the pot. As soon as the macaroni is done, turn the fire back down to a simmer and add the cream corn, and the cabbage. When all this is cooked, add the turkey and simmer until the meat is hot.

I know you could throw everything into the pot all at once, but I feel it just tastes better cooked in layers. And remember, this is my recipe so I want you to personalize it as you like. I love cooked carrots, that's why I add additional carrots. If you or your family doesn't like something I have listed, don't use it. If you like something else – put it in. Another thing, if you don't have any leftover turkey use a couple of boiled chicken breasts. If you boil chicken for the soup, be sure to use that liquid in your soup instead of water.

We also had a ham for Thanksgiving. When most of the meat was trimmed off, I got the bone to make split pea soup. One of the simplest soups to make except you have to watch it closer than most as the peas have a tendency to stick.

Split Pea Soup

- Ham Bone
- 1 lb. bag split peas
- Chopped Onion
- Chopped carrots
- Chopped, peeled potato
- Salt & Pepper

In a large pot boil the ham bone in plenty of water to cover. As it cooks, foam will form on the surface of the liquid; just spoon it off and discard. In another pot I put the peas that have been rinsed and picked through to take out any small rocks. I cover the peas with enough water to cover well and cook on a medium flame. Do not season at this point but be careful as they will stick if cooked too fast. When the ham bone has cooked for about 30 minutes take it out of the water and trim what meat may be left on the bone. Discard the bone and set aside the meat. In the

Please see **RECIPES** on P. 15

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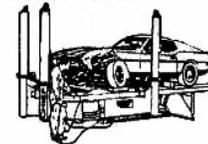
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Water Without Borders

Spoonful of Ranchos Water Reality

By Igal Treibatch

A thousand mile march begins with one step!

It is as true a statement as anyone can make. But, if you are not prepared for it, your last step will not be at the end of a thousand miles, it may be into an ambulance on the way there.

The march I'm talking about is the march we "must" embark on, a march toward a spring with crystal clear water, a spring that will not stop flowing and will keep on giving, and a march to self preservation. As of today, we in the Ranchos are using more ground water than we have available. The ground water cannot be replaced fast enough and the ground water table is dropping. The ground water aquifer is just not sustainable at the current rate we are using it.

We, all of us, in an area I will describe as "The Ranchos," that is: the Madera Ranchos, Bonadelle Ranchos, Rolling Hills and people occupying the general proximity of Southeast Madera west of highway 41.

We are allowing the march to begin without us. "We are not ready!" We are not prepared.

Yes, we have enough headaches with today's economy and you don't need my preaching a sermon about things going from bad to worse. I'm not here to spread doom and gloom, today I'm dishing just "a spoonful of reality."

Well, friends and neighbors, I do have some very good news. It is not too late.

With just a little bit of energy, together we can do something about it and improve the Ranchos. But we need to do it together and we need to do it now.

The Situation

Let me explain what I'm talking about and the situation as it is. No politics, just a spoonful of reality. All of Madera's supervisors are hard at work. Personally do not envy any of them at all. I respect each and every one of them for the commitment they have taken upon themselves, enduring hours poring over details, discussions, arguments and listening to our complaints, all the while knowing that sometimes it can be a thankless job because one can never do it all for

every person.

I'm talking about the IRWMP (Integrated Regional Water Management Plan). If you read my articles in the past, I promised you that you will hear that phrase over and over again because that is one of the doors to the preservation of the Ranchos – our preservation.

The program is run by the State as a carrot and a stick to try and help indirectly to create better water resources management. The carrot: Money, for improvement projects if you work toward regional water management integration and; The stick: No Money, if you don't! Leaving you in a worse state. The thought is to bring water management under more state control in my opinion, since you have to meet their criteria, but through the IRWMP we may be able to start correcting the folly of our water problems.

When I found out about the process that could provide the Ranchos with some state grant money and could help us with some of our problems I got excited and joined the IRWMP formation subcommittee. No one asked me, I just realized the need. That was the time when a spoonful of reality hit me between the eyes.

I was the only one in the room speaking on behalf of the Ranchos. The "Integrated Regional Water Management Plan" did not include, or Integrate, the "Ranchos Region." Why you might ask? Because we are not a part of a representing body that can qualify as a signatory to the agreement which would allow us to stand in line and submit a plan for the preservation of the Ranchos correcting some of our lingering problems. An individual is not able to represent a community; only through a community's representing body can that be achieved.

Yes, we are a part of Madera County and Madera County will be a signatory to the agreement, but there are other Madera communities which also need help and who do you help first? And where do you get the money to go through the needed process in a budget cutting environment?

Please see **WATER** on P. 12

Newly Elected Officers at Senior Center

By Eleanore Burchell

The Ranchos/Hills Seniors, Inc., located at 37330 Berkshire Drive, is celebrating the accomplishments we have made during 2009 and looking forward to more trips, dinners, etc. in 2010. You are graciously invited to join our fun. Just come by and visited us.

Our facility is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. We have trips, dinners, games, exercise classes, etc. Just drop by and find out how friendly we are. Hopefully, some have visited us during this Christmas Season to see and enjoy our beautifully decorated center. Our boutique has had many, many colorful handmade gifts for sale. The boutique has frequent new items and always tastefully displayed.

On Monday, Dec. 14 we held our Christmas Dinner along with the installation of the 2010 officers. They are Ethel Pronin, President; Ruth Baker, Vice President; Shirley Tickel, Treasurer; Carolyn Reeves, Assistant Treasurer; Nancy Koontz, Recording Secretary; and Eleanore Burchell,

Correspondence Secretary. New Directors are Kathryn Fike and Doyle Thompson. We are all very excited to start another year with our new officers.

Many of you may remember Jim Shaw. Sadly, we must tell you he passed away several weeks ago. He will be missed in the Ranchos community and by all of our members.

Our next sale will be held on Saturday, Jan. 2, 2010, at 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. Many of our members will be there to greet you. Now is the season to plant bare-root trees so plan to attend the sale and check out the trees available. The bake sale and treasure house will have many new items. The boutique has jewelry and novelty items and much more. Please remember the plant, produce and boutique sections are available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursday evenings between 6 and 9 p.m. We currently have jellies, persimmons, lemons and other citrus for sale. We also have plain and sugared walnuts in the produce section.

Our center is affiliated with FMAAA (Fresno/Madera Area Agency on Aging). We invite you to come in and check with Joann about programs which will help you.

Did you know two nurses from the Madera County Health Department Periodically come to the center to give FREE checkups? The screenings include personal health history reviews, blood pressure checks and blood sugar checks. Low-cost blood tests are available, nutrition and health education is available and referrals to medical providers and community services, if needed, can be made. Their health screenings of adults, age 50 and OVER, at the center result ONLY when they receive your calls. If you are in-

“... two nurses from the Madera County Health Department Periodically come to the center to give FREE checkups ... screenings include personal health history reviews, blood pressure checks and blood sugar checks ... health screenings of adults, age 50 and OVER, at the center result ONLY when they receive your calls.”

terested in taking advantage of their services, call Melody at 675-7893 to make an appointment.

Our members and friends go out for breakfast, lunch or dinner at a different place each month to celebrate birthdays and anniversaries. Our January plans have not been made until after the 2010 staff has been installed. If you want to join us

for any of our events call Joann at 645-4864. We enjoy eating and having fun and we urge you to come and join us.

If you are new to the area, lonely or have just lost a spouse, we welcome you to come in to see us. We are here for you at 37330 Berkshire Drive. Many of our members have surely experienced your same situation so please call us at 645-4864.

SENIOR THOUGHT OF THE DAY
“The hardest tumble a man can make is to fall over his own bluff.”

Ambrose Bierce

In the senior years, many need someone to laugh with, so come join our Thursday evening potlucks with games played afterward. There is a lot of fun here and remember, laughter is good for your body and soul and being happy does not mean everything is perfect – it means you have decided to see beyond the imperfections.

Please see **SENIORS** on P. 18



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12/09

The Bookshelf

Christmas at the Ranchos Library

'Tis the season to be thankful for all our blessings, and to look with hope for the coming year. On behalf of all of us at the Ranchos Library we want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and to thank each of you for your patronage and participation in all the wonderful library activities this past year.

The Library will be closed December 21-26 for the holidays and in compliance with the Madera County furlough program. No fines will be charged for materials due during that period. We apologize for the short notice and any inconvenience we may cause.

We hope you will think of the library if you receive new books or books on CD for Christmas. When you have finished with them, please consider donating them to the library because our book budget is and will be for some time, on the slim side. We also may be adjusting our hours again in this new year because of budget constraints so please be understanding that it is no one's desire to limit library services. It is simply collateral damage from the poor economy. In spite of the economic woes, we will continue to offer the free services of the library with our best effort and good will.

Holiday Scenes from the Library



Decorating the Christmas tree.



Reading to Katie, the dog.



Craft time at the library.



Story time with Mrs. Anderson.



Monday night knitting group.



The Grinch checks up on an overdue book.

WATER cont. from P. 9

One Solution

At school, when parents are involved, the students perform much better. We must adapt this intelligent philosophy and get more involved with our community, join our forces and our resolve to help ourselves our community, our child. One way of controlling our destiny is by beginning the process and creating an organization, representing the different parts of the Ranchos to carry on the torch of self preservation. It would not be a political body, yet it could carry the community's voice and act on behalf of the community common interest. This body would be able to become a signatory to the IRWMP agreement now ready to be signed by several water management districts, community representing bodies, City of Madera, City of Chowchilla and Madera County. Signing the agreement will mean that if we have a potential solution for a water related problem in our area, we could submit it for a review and apply for a grant to implement it. We would still have to get in line along the other projects submitted, but we will have an opportunity we do not have now.

The Non-Profit Organization

One of the ways to represent the Ranchos is through a non-profit organization. It is simple and can be put together fast. As a matter of fact, we already have the beginnings of it through a framework of such a structure. We are in the process of identifying individuals who live in the Ranchos that would be willing to become a part of the effort and help improve the future of our community. This is going to be an open process and everyone is welcome to join and help. We need to begin by finding interested individuals from within our community that would help set it all up. It is a process which must come out of and through our community. We have to elect a board of directors of people from our community. Everyone can be a member, help elect the board and shape the direction of this organization and our community.

A spoonful of reality: "There is no life without water" and without people there will not be a march. Get involved in your community's future.

Call 559-363-9095 or email ranchos.community@gmail.com.

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"This shall be a sign unto you; you will find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Luke 2:12

We invite you to join us in Worship to celebrate the gifts of Christmas:

Hope! Peace! Joy! Love!
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Merry Christmas

Christian Mission Center

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Jesus is the Gift!

12/09

Divine Opportunities Grow Out of a Divine Birth and a Divine Life

By Bob Crabb

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: "The virgin will be with

child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" --which means, "God with us." When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. -- Matthew 1:18-24 (NIV)

Taking advantage of the opportunities that God gives us to change the world can sometimes be challenging. In our Christmas story the bible reports that Joseph's fiancé, the Virgin Mary, was with child. It is not reported how Mary broke the news to Joseph. Can you imagine the difficulty Joseph was facing? Perhaps there are some who can understand the resistance that Joseph must have been experiencing. Joseph had a predicament on his hands and his first inclination is to send Mary away quietly. But Joseph's God had a different idea. In the middle of a difficult situation God gives

Joseph a chance to serve the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The angel tells Joseph in effect, "Go ahead and take this God-given opportunity to take Mary as your wife." I wonder how many people in ancient Israel or even in our times would be able to say "yes" to God over an issue as personal and difficult as this issue confronting Joseph.

My family and I have a very dear friend who is an ex-bank robber. Many years ago, our friend was arrested for robbing a bank. He robbed it the old fashioned way with a gun – not like today where banks seemed to be robbed by risky investments. Anyway, he was quickly arrested and then convicted and sentenced to a long incarceration. In his first days in prison he was struggling with self-centered fear and anger. Through a series of prison experiences he felt called to become part of a prison ministry at his institution. He reported that everything in him resisted that call and he fought the feeling to turn his life over to the care of God. He had lived a "self-willed run riot" way of life that did not include serving Jesus as Lord and Savior. God had given him an unwelcome opportunity through his prison sentence to say "yes" to God. His "yes" to God's opportunity changed his life and many other people's lives. Since his release from prison long ago, he has served God in powerful ways with his Christian ministry to at-risk youth and to adults suffering from alcoholism and drug addiction. His "yes" to God didn't feel good at first, but it was a divine opportunity that changed many lives.

The gospel says that Jesus was born in a manger because there was no place for his parents to stay. How many inns and how many places did Mary and Joseph go to before they ended up in the manger? Can you imagine missing an opportunity of giving the Son of God a place to be born? Every time we walk away from an opportunity that God gives us, we are holding not only ourselves back, but also we are resisting the Kingdom of God. Perhaps you can think back to the time when you said "no" to an opportunity God gave you. Was it with a ministry in the church? Were you afraid that God didn't give you enough skills to do the job? Was it with a relationship? Did you think that positive relationships in life weren't possible? Joseph was given a divine opportunity and he took advantage of it. Maybe Joseph was afraid, or angry or maybe he was tired, but he put that aside, and took advantage of the opportunity God gave him.

One of the lessons of this Gospel of Jesus Christ is that divine opportunities don't always feel good. But every time we say "yes" to opportunities that God gives us, the Kingdom of God advances. We live in a land of opportunities. But we also live in a universe of divine opportunities and we have a God of unlimited opportunities. Unlimited opportunities to serve the Gospel of Jesus, just like Joseph. For those who follow Christ or for those who are looking into the idea of Jesus Christ, there are at least three divine opportunities to take advantage of right now: 1.) Make a commitment to the community gathered around Jesus. Get involved with your faith community. Your faith community is one of the places where Jesus Christ is alive and has form. 2.) Take personal responsibility in the stewardship of life in the kingdom of death by honoring your baptism. If you are not baptized, seek baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As followers of Christ, we have an opportunity to carry a message of Hope. Share your blessings! 3.) Take advantage of every opportunity to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and to love your neighbor as yourself.

This Christmas season, I propose that all of us take advantage of the opportunities God gives us. We should learn from Joseph. It seemed counterintuitive to him at first, but taking advantage of the opportunity God gave him was his best move. Make your move this Christmas: say "yes" to God's opportunities in your life!

Pastor Bob Crabb is the Pastor of the Christian Mission Center meeting at 36875 Avenue 12 (Loren Way and Ave. 12). They worship Sundays at 10:30AM.



Get Away to Alaska

The Golden Valley Chamber of Commerce is coordinating TRAVEL TRIPS for Ranchos residents that range from a trip to Reno to a cruise to Alaska next June/July.

12/09

For more info call 559-474-0505 or email Sharry Rivas at srivas@prodigy.net.

You DO NOT HAVE TO LIVE WITH PAIN OF PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY

TENS OF MILLIONS SUFFER, AND OFTEN DON'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN...

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For the past couple of years, I've

studied this class of conditions, collectively known as "peripheral neuropathies." In fact, helping people with these problems has become a primary focus of mine.

It's not unusual for me to hear stories from patients who have suffered for years with terrible symptoms. For many, they are missing out on the things they love to do. They aren't enjoying life as they once did.

If that describes you, then perhaps I can help. I practice a multi-pronged attack to these problems. It's a unique program that only 100 doctors worldwide have studied.

That's why I've put together the "Peripheral Neuropathy Pain Treatment Program" for anyone suffering from the symptoms of peripheral neuropathy pain. And, the beautiful thing is that when these health situations are resolved, people have great improvements in the quality of their lives. In many cases, they finally can live pain free, with peace and joy in their lives again.

I'm a proud member of the Neuropathy Treatment Centers of America. This gives me a unique set of knowledge and tools that have been tested, researched, and found to be effective.

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P.S. Does your spouse, family member, or friend suffer from peripheral neuropathy? This offer is also available to them, too. You can even come in together. Their lack of health affects your life also. Maybe this will be your chance to really give them the help they need.

P.S.S. If you want more information, come in and fill out a preliminary Subjective Peripheral Neuropathy Screening Questionnaire, or come by for a FREE REPORT about the Peripheral Neuropathy Pain Treatment Program.

12/09

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(beginning with April 2006).
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12/09

www.theRanchos.com

RECIPES cont. from P. 8

broth from the ham, put the onion, carrots and potato and a little salt and pepper. Cook only until the vegetables are done. As soon as the peas are soft, drain any excess water and pour the peas into the pot with the vegetables and add the ham. Simmer until peas are completely softened and soup is thick. Check for seasoning. I've read that you shouldn't salt the peas when they are first cooking as it will make them tough. Don't know how true that is, but I've always waited until they are cooked to add salt – just in case it is true.

Don't Forget Dessert

What would a soup dinner be without dessert? I'm leaving you with one of our family's favorite. When my niece Eryn, who lives in southern California, is planning to come for a visit she will call my sister and in the conversation will say, "Grandma, will there be Republican Dessert?" Well of course there will be. We asked one time why they call it Republican Dessert – the answer was "It's so rich, the Democrats can't afford it."

Republican Dessert

1 C flour
1 stick margarine – softened
½ C Chopped nuts

Mix together like pie dough and press into bottom of 9x13 pan. Bake for 10 minutes in preheated 350 oven.

1 8 oz. pkg. cream cheese
1 C. Powdered sugar

1 large container Cool Whip
Cream together the cream cheese and powdered sugar. Fold in the container of cool whip. Put on top of cooled crust and freeze.

2 small pkgs. Instant chocolate pudding mix.
2½ C milk

Mix pudding mix and milk as directed on package but do not add any more milk. Spread over second layer and freeze.

1 small container Cool Whip

Spread this over the pudding layer and freeze. If desired, toasted coconut can be sprinkled over the top.

I hope you have a Blessed Merry Christmas and a very Happy and prosperous New Year.

Talk to you next year!



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CHRISTMAS

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12/09



As 2009 Comes to a Close, Golden Valley Hits Highs



Golden Valley Unified School District Superintendent, Sarah Koligian.

By Superintendent, Sarah Koligian

It is hard to believe that we are already at the half way point in our school year. It seems as though we just began the new school year, opened the new Ranchos Middle School and celebrated Golden Valley Unified's 10 Year Anniversary. In the first half of the 2009-2010 school year, we continue to focus on "growing a district of excellence." Since the school year began, our schools, students and staff continue to be recognized for special accolades, awards and special events.

Some of the highlights for 2009 were as follows:

- August, 2009 – new state-of-the-art Ranchos Middle School completed and opened its doors to Golden Valley's 7th

and 8th graders

- August, 2009 – Educational Options moves their program to the interim site, formerly the Ranchos Middle School campus

- August, 2009 – Celebration of Golden Valley Unified's Ten Year Anniversary as a school district

- September, 2009 – Cornerstone Dedication ceremony at new Ranchos Middle School and dedication of a 9-foot-tall bronze mustang statue

- September, 2009 – Liberty High School 9/11 tribute and ceremony

- October, 2009 Scott Tefft, Sierra View Elementary School principal named as the 2009 Madera County Administrator of the Year at the "Excellence in Education" awards

- October, 2009 – Educational Options teacher, Kim Cowger, is recognized as Madera County Teacher of the Year nominee and Webster Library Technician, Lisa Huddleston is recognized as Madera County Employee of the Year nominee

- October, 2009 – API Scores Soar! Webster Elementary, Sierra View Elementary, Ranchos Middle and Liberty High Schools register in the 800 range on the state API. Golden Valley Unified's API reaches 820 – the highest in Madera County for K-12 school districts.

- November, 2009 – Liberty High School Girl's Tennis player, Jamie Mathews, competes for Valley Championship title in Girl's Tennis

- November, 2009 – Webster Elementary receives \$25,000 Chukchansi Grant for new computer lab

- November, 2009 – District cre-

ates new "activity room" for Liberty High School – currently in use by the LHS Wrestling team

- November, 2009 – Webster Elementary and Liberty High School are recognized as California Business for Education Excellence Honor Roll schools for consistently high student academic achievement and closing achievement gaps among their students

- December, 2009 – Liberty High School student, Samantha Nielsen, is selected by California School Library Association for her winning poster artwork promoting the importance of reading

- December, 2009 – Liberty High School Varsity Football Team played for their first Valley Championship title against Corcoran High School.

- December, 2009 – Golden Valley Unified breaks ground on their next Measure S bond projects at Liberty High School – new science wing and completion of the athletic stadium, press box and concession building

It has been a very active and busy five months and I am sure this list does not capture all the accomplishments across the district. We know that these events do not occur in a vacuum or in isolation. They are the result of many hours of continued dedication and commitment demonstrated by our Governing Board of Trustees, staff, students, parents and our community. We thank each and every one of you for your partnership and continued support of our students and school district and look forward to welcoming the 2010 year with a continued focus on "growing our district of excellence."

GVUSD Bus Route Changes

By Dave Baughman

Due to the State of California budget crisis, public schools are sustaining drastic cuts in funding that should be allocated by the state. Golden Valley Unified School District has been assessing the impacts of reduced funding district wide and is making every effort to minimize the affects to the classroom. One of the areas directly affected is "Home-To-School" transportation. Historically, transportation costs have encroached on the "General Fund," meaning the allotment provided by the state does not cover the costs of



operation. In addition, transportation funding recently received an additional 20 percent reduction in state funding.

In an effort to provide the best service possible for our students, Golden Valley Unified is implementing the revised board policy regarding "Home-To-School" transportation effective Jan. 11, 2010. The new route design allows for more efficient routes and less ride-time for students. Bus stops will now be geographically located to accommodate new walking distances;

Grades K-6 ¾ of one mile

Grades 7-8 1½ miles

For additional information and new bus stop locations, please refer to our website at www.gvUSD.k12.ca.us or call the Golden Valley Unified Transportation Department at (559) 645-7521

Dave Baughman is the Manager for Maintenance, Operations and Transportation at Golden Valley USD.

Tree Decoration Contest at RMS

Ranchos Middle School Advisory classes competed in December in a tree decorating contest. Each tree was decorated according to their college advisory class. Our neighbor and supporting business, CM & N Nursery, provided the trees and support for this project. We appreciate all that CM & N Nursery contributes to our school community. We are happy to be their neighbor. CM & N Nursery representatives helped select the winning tree and provided a prize to the winning advisory classes. Ranchos Middle School is always on the move and seeks ways to connect to the community and that is why we say, "GO MUSTANGS!"



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12/09

The Stock Report

Looking Back: the Ranchos in 2009

By Audrey Stock

Hi neighbors,
 I am sending you warm wishes for a wonderful Christmas Season! The leaves are falling and the snow is predicted, maybe only in the mountains which are so beautiful when you can see them. I am baking cookies, addressing Christmas cards, and making lists. The kitchen sure smells good already as I start my Christmas baking. It seems that Christmas comes quicker each year.

At this time each year I look back over the events that stand out to me and that is what I will write about now. I started 2009 with a little more time to work at the Ranchos Hills Senior Center, since my term ended with the Golden Valley Unified School Board last December, 2008. Being on the board for a second term was a great experience. We accomplished

much during that four-year period. I am most proud of building a new comprehensive middle school built in time for 320 students to start school in August, 2009 at the new Ranchos Middle School. My dream for Golden Valley Unified 10 years ago was that the district would have a high school, middle school, opportunity school and elementary schools and we are finally there. No wonder I am tired!

I was one of the speech judges at the Madera Academic Decathlon for the Madera County high school students in February. When we built Liberty High I promised Madera County Superintendent Sally Frazier that Golden Valley high school students would participate. I am always amazed at how smart high school students are. The week after the Decathlon I had cataract surgery. I am glad that is behind me.

May was the time for the Annual Ranchos Flatlander's Parade. Our local Chamber of Commerce chose me to be the Grand Marshall of the 2009 parade. I had a Grand Marshall banner across my chest and I rode in a gold convertible at the front of the

parade. What an honor! I really felt like a queen for the day.

June was time for Golden Valley Unified graduations and my grandson Nick Morin was one of Liberty High's 2009 graduating class. Nick is now attending Fresno City College. I also have a great grandson, Jonathan Stock who graduated from Visalia high school and Jacob Morrison another great grandson who graduated from the eighth grade in Hanford. So you can see I was busy with graduations.

August is my family's birthday month of which I am one. I can't believe that I am 79 years old. I told

My dream for Golden Valley Unified 10 years ago was that the district would have a high school, middle school, opportunity school and elementary schools and we are finally there. No wonder I am tired!

grandson Nick I won't be old until next year when I am 80. I have slowed down some and my legs don't always want to work but basically I am in good health. It was a joy to be included in the Golden Valley Unified 10th year celebration and ribbon cutting

ceremony for our new Ranchos Middle School. I spent about eight months researching and putting together a scrap book of Golden Valley Unified District pictures. The Digital Photography class at Liberty is putting the scrap book on a disk for the district.

It seems like since I started leading the exercise class over at the senior center three days a week I have time for little else. I still stay involved at Golden Valley Unified by going to the school board meetings and I am on the Bond Oversight Committee and the Foundation for Golden Valley Schools. This has been a busy year. As 2009 comes to a close, think of all of the good things that have happened this year and forget the bad ones.

School board meetings will start up again in January on the 12th and the 26th at Liberty library at 6 p.m. Come out and support your school board.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to each and every one of you. WOW – can you believe that we are going into 2010?

SENIORS cont. from P. 10

More Facts and Fun

A nutritionally balanced lunch program Monday through Friday at 11:30 a.m. Suggested price for 60 years and older is \$1.75. Reservations are needed a day in advance so remember to call Joann at 645-4864. We have a growing exercise program being held on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:15 to 11:30 a.m. The participants are getting more than just exercise by attending. They have fun, share laughs and meet new friends. There is room for you and you may attend all three days or just one or two of them.

After lunch on Tuesdays there is an opening for a pinochle player. If you enjoy playing pinochle yourself or know of someone else who would like to fill this vacancy, please call Joann at 645-4864.

We have started a new craft session on Thursdays at 12:30 p.m. Next project will be sweatshirts. If you would like to learn to knit or crochet, here is your opportunity to learn while having fun!

Card BINGO meets on Fridays, noon to 1 p.m. We have a large group but there is always room for one more: you! Fill your car with your friends or neighbors as they will enjoy finding new friends here, too. Come in and check these classes out.

Up and Coming Events

January 2, Saturday monthly sale 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

February 23-25. Snow Train trip to Reno

Weekly Events

Monday through Friday Lunch Program, 11:30 a.m. (Reservations needed, call Joann at 645-4864)

Monday, Exercise Class, 10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, Pinochle, noon until?

Wednesday, Exercise Class, 10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

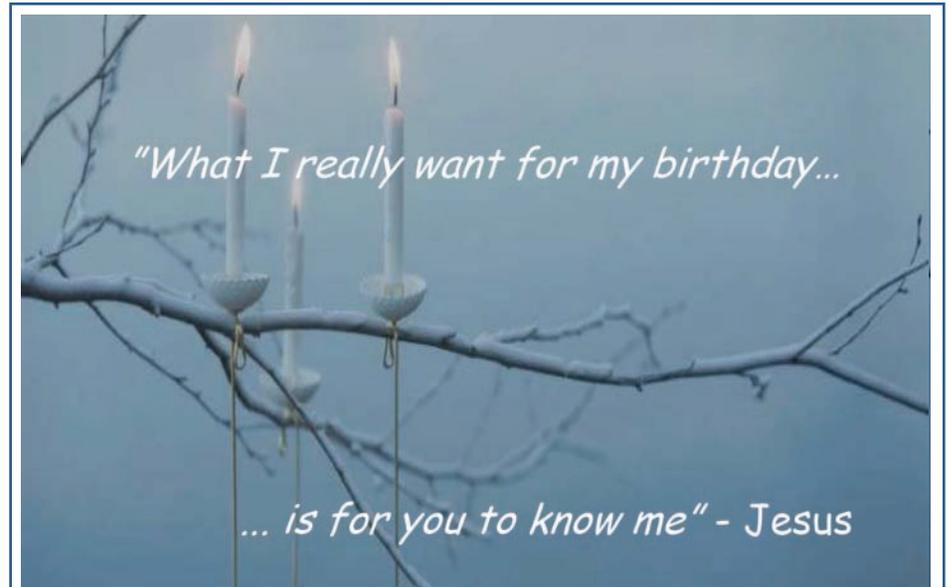
Thursday, 12:30 p.m. Crafts and lots of fun

Thursday, 6 to 9 p.m. Potluck then Hand & Foot, Pinochle or other games (Please bring your own plate and silverware)

Friday, Exercise Class, 10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Friday, Card BINGO, noon – 1 p.m.

Please feel free to come in and visit our Senior Center and get acquainted with our members. We welcome you to come and be one of us as our organization offers and promotes social, educational and civic activities in order to provide a better quality of life for all senior citizens. You have received an invitation. Hope to see you soon?



“...and I will give you rest” -Matthew 11:28

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Bettina G. Villanueva
Certified Senior Advisor

12/09

D.O.G. cont. from P. 4

On a few occasions issues pop up, beating back the apathy and bring citizens to the Board chambers. Each time I am filled with hope and pride in our system to see seats in the gallery being filled. Then a few get up to speak, either at the time for open public comment or during the Board's deliberation on an agenda item, but more often than not they decide to just listen. As citizens leave I try to thank them for coming down to participate, and ask them to come back to future meetings, unfortunately their response is often:

"Why?"

"It's a waste of time."

"What we say doesn't matter."

"They are not even listening to us."

I wish the camera would show the Board instead of the speakers during comments. There is seldom a time when at least one of the Board members are not reading something or shuffling papers as the citizens comment. Frequently a majority of the Board are reading, shuffling papers, texting, answering emails, or searching the internet as a debate is in progress, while testimony or comments are being presented. Occasionally supervisors will even leave the room in the middle of comment or testimony, then return and vote on issues based on only the portion of the testimony they were actually listening to.

Each supervisor has a "button" on their computer screen they push when they want to be called on or be recognized by the chair. I can't remember a meeting where at least once a supervisor wasn't recognized by the chair because he had pushed the button on his commuter

screen, only to respond with, "I am prepared to make the motion when you are ready." This statement usually comes in the middle of debate or even before "PUBLIC COMMENT" has even begun. He might as well have stood up and thumbed his nose at the citizens gathered to speak.

Imagine if a juror was to stand up in the middle of a trial and announce they were ready to vote before all testimony was heard or while witnesses were speaking.

The proceedings would end. A mistrial would be declared instantly. What message is sent when a supervisor says he is not only ready to vote but is prepared to make the motion before citizens have had an opportunity to even be heard on the matter?

The most recent issue to compel citizens to exercise their constitutional rights to participate in their government has been the de-staffing of the Raymond and Ahwahnee Fire Stations this winter. These people are pleading to have their lives and property protected. Many of the speakers had driven for over an hour to get to the meeting, only to be insulted by the indifference and inattention of some of the Board members in response to their concerns.

This is not simply a matter of poor manners or hurt feelings; the issue has already been heard by the courts and decided. Rulings by governing bodies have been set aside because they were not truly listening to testimony. It has been decided by the courts that the intent of open government laws are in fact not only so we have the right to speak but also that we have the right to actually be listened to; we have the right to actually have the attention of the Board as we exercise our right to comment.

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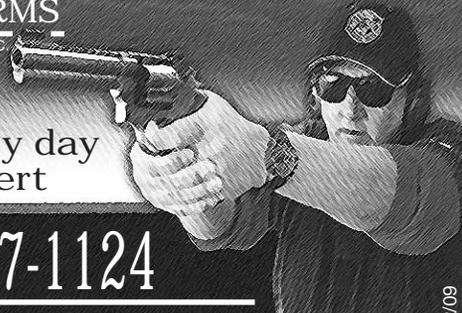
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LETTERS cont. from P. 6

buy them, but he said, "I bought them for you." I was overwhelmed and stammered many "thank yous."

What a thrill and a blessing it is to hear and know that there is still love and kindness in our young folks in this turbulent world. Thank you again young friend.

Name Withheld Upon Request
Madera Ranchos

Dear Editor:

To the members of the Ranchos community: **THANK YOU – THANK YOU – THANK YOU!**

Please join Liberty Ranchos Softball League Board Members, parents, coaches and players in thanking our recreational softball sponsors for their generous contribution to our league. Because of these sponsors, approximately 180 young ladies were able to play recreational softball in 2009. Of those 180 young ladies, 37 were chosen to play on three All-Star travel teams (10U, 12U, 14U) representing our community. The 10U team made it all the way to the Western Nationals in Oregon. Although the 12U team didn't qualify, two players were picked up to play with the Central Grizzlies in Oregon and were written up in the Fresno Bee.

Without our sponsors, our league could not thrive as it has. So, please keep them in mind and support them as they support our league. Visit www.libertyranchossoftball.org for more details.

For 2009 we'd like to thank A.L.S. Concrete, Action Equipment Rentals, Ahart Benefit Insurance Services, Awesome Blossoms, Aztlan Restaurant, Bandy & Associates Accountancy Corp., Bass & Sons, Castech Pest Services, Clark's Performance, Continental Custom Homes, Continental Realty, Genesis Services Plumbing Co., Good Year Tire Supply, Inc. – Madera, HayesCo Inc., Lucky Bail Bonds, M&M Screen Printing & Embroidery, Inc., Madera Ranchos Pizza Factory, Pearson's Berenda Creek Ranch, Ranchos Café, SERVPRO of Fresno SE, Smoking Coal Bar & Grill.

In addition to the above, we would also like to thank the sponsors who wish to remain

anonymous. **THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!!!**

Staci Duke
Madera Ranchos

Dear Editor:

Budget crisis: is it fact or fiction? Well that depends on who and where you are. If you are in a state prison the budget crisis is fiction; however if you are doing the right thing like going to college then the budget crisis is indeed fact.

Let me give you an example: I am in the master's degree program at Fresno State, on Friday the collage was issued a furlough day so students could not conduct everyday business at Fresno State. In the prison all of the inmates received three square meals, health care if needed and on some occasions a trip to the dentist. There was no furlough days issued to the prisoners because this is a violation of their "rights."

Let me give you yet another example: Fresno City College has been hit so hard by the budget crisis that it is at risk of closing down or reducing certain programs. The women's water polo team issued a letter requesting donations so the program could continue to function at full capacity. All players needed to raise "x" amount of dollars to cover the reduction of funding for travel and equipment. How much money did the prisoners need to raise in order to pump iron, get library books and law degrees free of charge? Did you know that you can commit a major crime in this state and you automatically are entitled to a free education via the prison system? Now I ask you my fellow Americans, where is the justice in that? I work two jobs, raise two kids and I pay for my education. Where did I go wrong?

I think as a solution we should look at Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Maricopa County in Arizona. He established a new way of life for inmates. His ways of life consists of pink long johns, bologna sandwiches and yes, even a little labor. Maybe the reduction in food costs and fluffy stuff like library books and free law degrees would solve the budget crisis and redirect the funds to positive things such as educational programs for law abiding citizens. With the reduction of amenities you might even detour crime all together, yet another positive on the budget. You tell me folks – what is your solution to the budget crisis?

Lisa Bailey
Clovis



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SUDOKU
by Linda Thistle

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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.
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GO FIGURE! by Linda Thistle

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

	x		+		20
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	x			-	29
÷		x			x
	+			+	13
10		15			14

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 7 8

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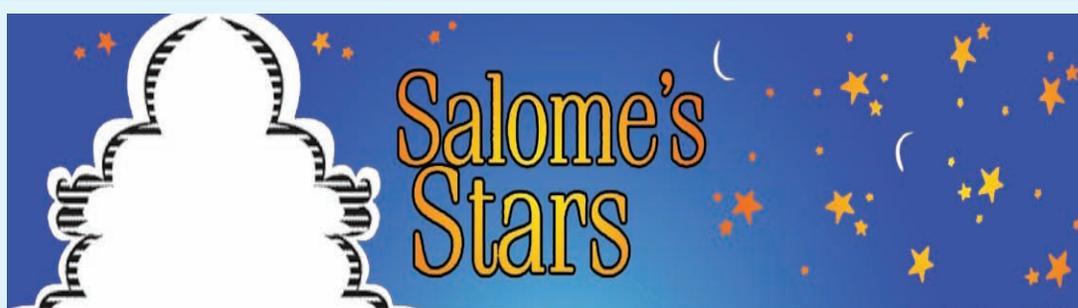
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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Your love of the holidays creates a special bond between you and the people in your life. Use this as a way of building stronger relationships that will carry over well beyond this time.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) A new approach could go a long way toward resolving a painful estrangement, especially at this holiday time. And since your aspects favor friendship this week, why not go ahead and try it?

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Your positives continue to dominate, and any negative factors that squeeze in can be dealt with easily. The secret is to tackle them at once and not allow them to benefit by your neglect.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Good news: A colleague's remarks could help you move toward ultimately resolving that persistent workplace situation. Meanwhile, enjoy the holidays with loved ones.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) No one reflects the bright holiday more than all you Leos and Leonas who love the shimmer and glimmer of the season. P.S.: There just might be a very special something from Santa.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Celebrate the holidays by being more receptive to new experiences. Overriding the Virgo reluctance to try new things could be the best gift you've given yourself in a long while.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Good news about a loved one makes the holidays even more festive. Expect some unexpected gifts, so be prepared with a few nicely wrapped packages of goodies to offer in return.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) The holiday season provides an opportunity to meet new people, some of whom you might even consider "worthy" enough to join the Scorpio's select group of friends.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) You always bring your own wonderful sparkle and light to the holidays, and don't be surprised if this year someone special reaches out to respond to your warmth in kind.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Togetherness is the dominant theme for the Goat's holiday celebrations this year. That means reaching out to bring everyone you care for into your very own special circle of light.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) A reminder of a very special moment from the past makes the holidays more memorable for the romantic Aquarian. New friendships hold the promise of a romantic future as well.

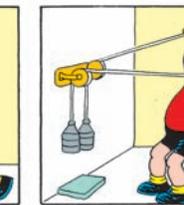
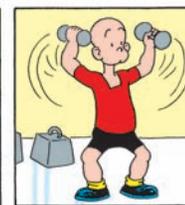
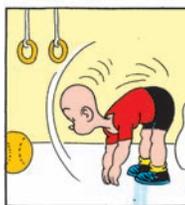
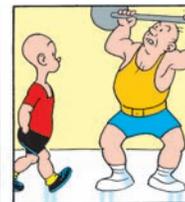
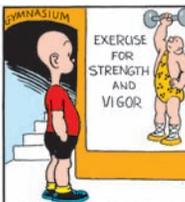
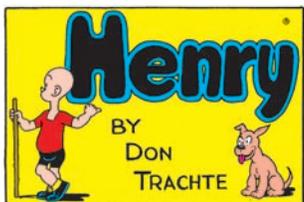
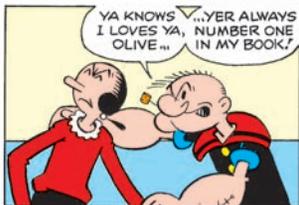
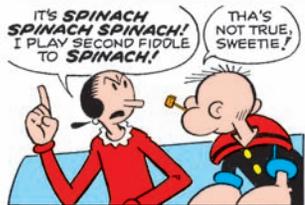
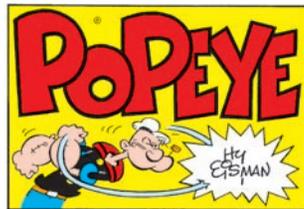
PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Getting into the swim of things for all you party-loving Pisceans is easy enough this holiday season. And, of course, you can expect to impress people wherever you go.

Born this Week

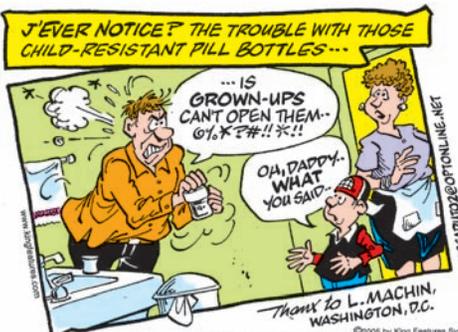
Your dedication brings you the success you strive for, and your generosity impels you to reach out and help others on their way up.

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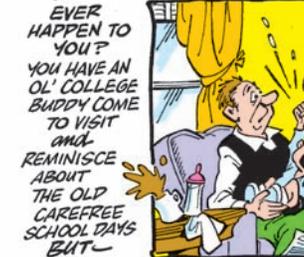
FUN PAGES



THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

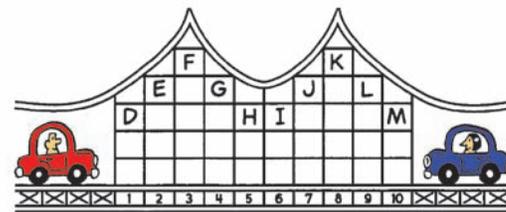


BY AL SCADUTO



WHO GETS THE CANDY CANE? Santa's about to toss his last candy cane into one of the above stockings. You have one chance to guess who will get it.

Answer: Tom (No. 3) is the lucky one.



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A WORD BRIDGE!

The bridge above contains 10 supporting words. We give you the first letter of each word, plus plenty of hints.

1. Someone who is ineffective.
2. Nervous or irritable.
3. To go and bring something back.
4. To draw your breath in sharply.
5. Keenly aware of the latest trends.
6. A mischievous child.
7. A small, durable vehicle.
8. A small musical instrument.
9. A type of sandy soil.
10. To keep silent.

Answers: 1. Dud, 2. Edgy, 3. Fetch, 4. Gasp, 5. Hip, 6. Imp, 7. Jeep, 8. Kazoo, 9. Loom, 10. Murn.

A MANY-SIDED PROBLEM! A large cube, made of brown wood but painted white on all six sides, was cut into 27 smaller cubes. Once it's cut apart, can you tell us how many smaller cubes were white on 3 sides, on 2 sides, on 1 side, and finally, on no sides?



Answer: 8 were painted on 3 sides, 12 were painted on 2 sides, 6 were painted on 1 side, and 1 had no sides painted at all.

WORDS FOR YOUR "DATABASE" Below are two puzzle grids for you to fill in. Hints are given for each word. The words in Grid B contain the same letters as the corresponding words in Grid A.

1. Faded and dull.
2. Golfers need them.
3. To satisfy fully.
4. Flat-top elevation.
1. Thin wire nail.
2. Talks too much.
3. Region of the U.S.A.
4. Identical in every way.

GRID A	GRID B
D _ _ _	B _ _ _
A _ _ _	A _ _ _
_ _ _ T	_ _ _ S
_ _ _ A	_ _ _ E

Answers: 1. Dull, 2. Dumb, 3. Satisfy, 4. Mesa, 5. Nail, 6. Gaffer, 7. South, 8. Identical.

Wishing Well

8	5	3	8	2	7	6	5	3	2	3	5	4
Y	D	S	O	K	D	A	E	P	E	R	E	C
5	6	7	3	4	2	6	5	7	8	7	6	5
P	N	O	E	H	E	E	R	C	U	U	W	O
7	4	6	8	3	6	8	3	8	7	3	5	4
M	A	F	G	A	R	A	D	I	E	L	O	R
5	2	3	4	6	8	2	6	4	7	5	2	7
T	P	O	M	I	N	P	E	I	N	E	R	T
4	8	3	2	7	4	6	4	5	2	5	4	5
N	A	V	O	I	G	N	D	M	L	E	O	
4	3	7	4	8	2	8	2	7	4	7	8	7
W	E	D	F	P	I	P	S	E	R	A	R	S
6	4	8	5	4	8	5	4	8	2	4	2	8
D	I	O	V	E	V	E	N	A	E	D	S	L

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

TAMOTIA VHTOOT

MAGIC MAZE

WORDS THAT APPEAR WHEN VIEWED IN A MIRROR

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

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

- | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| ATOYOT | MUMIXAM | TUOHTIW | YMAHWH |
| HTOMMAM | OOHAY | YAWIXAT | YMMUY |
| IIAWAH | OTAMOT | YHTOMIT | YTTIW |
| IMAIM | TAMOTUA | YHTOOT | |

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TRIVIA TEST
By Fifi Rodriguez

1. MOVIES: What horror actor starred in the 1958 version of "The Fly"?
2. LANGUAGE: "Draw, O Caesar, erase a coward" is an example of what?
3. COMICS: What was the name of Caspar the Friendly Ghost's ghost horse friend?
4. LAW: What did the 21st Amendment to the Constitution do -- or rather, undo?
5. TELEVISION: What was the name of the evil group that battled the good guys on "The Man from U.N.C.L.E."?
6. CHEMISTRY: What is the symbol for the element gold?
7. INVENTIONS: Who is credited with inventing the bicycle pedal?
8. LITERATURE: Who wrote the autobiographical novel "Empire of the Sun"?
9. ART: For what subject matter was painter John Singer Sargent best known?
10. FAMOUS QUOTATIONS: Who said, "The unexamined life is not worth living"?

Answers

1. Vincent Price
2. A palindrome (reads the same forward and backward)
3. Nightmare
4. It repealed Prohibition
5. THRUSS
6. Au (from the Latin word "aurum")
7. Pierre and Ernest Michaux
8. J.G. Ballard
9. Portraits
10. Socrates

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Click on "Local News" at

Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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JERRY CRAFT



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



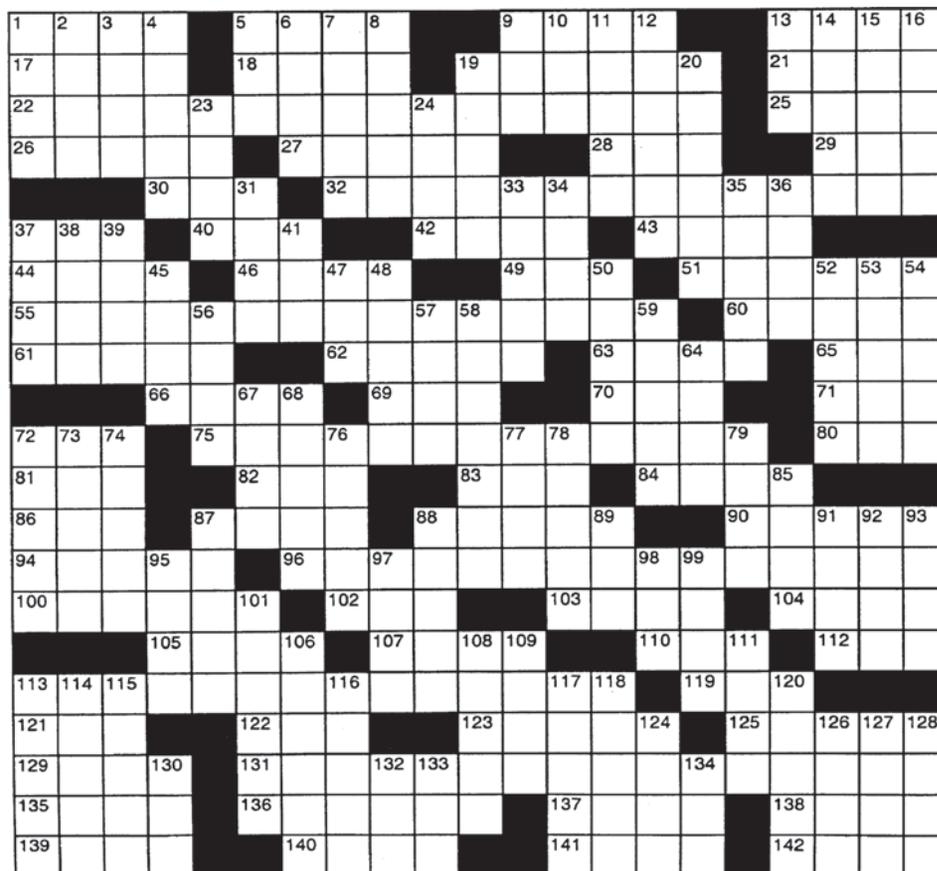
HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels. Differences: 1. Sale sign is added. 2. Button missing from woman's jacket. 3. Ceiling light is added. 4. Bowtie is missing. 5. Man's tie is white. 6. Row of rings is missing.

Super Crossword



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- ACROSS**
- 1 Scrabble piece
 - 5 Colt color
 - 9 Chore
 - 13 Marine leader?
 - 17 "Tosca" tune
 - 18 Woody's boy
 - 19 Synagogue singer
 - 21 Columbo or Tamblin
 - 22 Cheesy football player?
 - 25 Decree
 - 26 Incorporate, as territory
 - 27 Madame Tussaud
 - 28 English trio?
 - 29 Self-esteem
 - 30 Scientific site
 - 32 Cheesy TV character?
 - 37 — de-sac
 - 40 Throng
 - 42 Robotic rock group
 - 43 Bit of hardware
 - 44 Perched on
 - 46 Beppu brew
 - 49 Miscalculate
 - 51 Award
 - 55 Cheesy late-night host?
 - 60 Binge
 - 61 Gossamer
 - 62 They just want to have fun
 - 63 Close as can be
 - 65 "— Believer" ('66 hit)
 - 66 TV's "My Two —"
 - 69 Toyshop initials
 - 70 Stocking stuffer?
 - 71 Deface
 - 72 Old Testament book
 - 75 Cheesy clarinetist?
 - 80 Sheridan or Sothern
 - 81 Copy
 - 82 Singer Tex
 - 83 Tallahassee sch.
 - 84 Baal or Elvis
 - 86 Actress Tilly
 - 87 Find fault
 - 88 George Hamilton's ex
 - 90 Chula —, CA
 - 94 A Muse
 - 96 Cheesy tel-evangelist?
 - 100 Swift stuff
 - 102 Where flocks frolic
 - 103 Go it alone
 - 104 Green land
 - 105 Mississippi senator
 - 107 Hellenic letters
 - 110 Red cap
 - 112 Actress Zadora
 - 113 Cheesy basketball player?
 - 119 Massage
 - 121 Tempest — teapot
 - 122 Mineral suffix
 - 123 Throws down the gauntlet
 - 125 Soprano Tetrizzini
 - 129 Brink
 - 131 Cheesy aviator?
 - 135 Is inexact
 - 136 Sporting dog
 - 137 Toast topper
 - 138 "— Came Running" ('58 film)
 - 139 Pub missile
 - 140 Director Nicolas
 - 141 Request
 - 142 Baseball's Speaker
 - 4 Blackboard support
 - 5 —4 (Toyota model)
 - 6 38 Down city
 - 7 Islamic deity
 - 8 — Dame
 - 9 Kind of cross
 - 10 "— Day Now" ('62 hit)
 - 11 Word with bath or shovel
 - 12 Agile Olga
 - 13 Pound sound
 - 14 Peace's partner
 - 15 Custom
 - 16 Mary of "The Maltese Falcon"
 - 19 — de menthe
 - 20 Just out
 - 23 Final
 - 24 Encircle
 - 31 Comice kin
 - 33 Maintains
 - 34 Comic Crosby
 - 35 — shark
 - 36 Defeat by a knockout
 - 37 No gentlemen
 - 38 A Four Corners state
 - 39 A many-splendored thing
 - 41 "Pshaw!"
 - 45 The — Piper
 - 47 Beer barrel
 - 48 Uplift
 - 50 Jamaican cultist
 - 52 — ballerina
 - 53 Macho type
 - 54 Long for
 - 56 Olive —
 - 57 Lug
 - 58 With detachment
 - 59 Campbell or Judd
 - 64 Knight's quaff
 - 67 — vu
 - 68 Stallion sound
 - 72 Maestro Levine
 - 73 Wagner work
 - 74 Biblical repetition
 - 76 Katmandu's country
 - 77 Lofty initials?
 - 78 Sahara sights
 - 79 — Scotia
 - 85 Relish
 - 87 French painter
 - 88 Cremona craftsman
 - 89 From — Z
 - 91 Omit
 - 92 Hatcher of "Lois & Clark"
 - 93 Geometry calculation
 - 95 Joust
 - 97 Encounter
 - 98 Landon or Kjellin
 - 99 Johannes-burg resident
 - 101 Standards
 - 106 Restrict Rover
 - 108 Furniture wood
 - 109 Railroad depts.
 - 111 '64 Michael Caine film
 - 113 Brandish
 - 114 Where to eat biryani
 - 115 Light beer
 - 116 Cold-war assn.
 - 117 Certain deck
 - 118 Sam of "Jurassic Park"
 - 120 Pop
 - 124 Hook's right hand?
 - 126 Oistrakh or Stravinsky
 - 127 Word form for "some-what"
 - 128 Pugnacious Olympian
 - 130 Cornerstone abbr.
 - 132 AAA offering
 - 133 Poultry serving
 - 134 Stole
- DOWN**
- 1 Reid of "Just Visiting"
 - 2 Nutritional need
 - 3 Pride papa

FUN PAGES

Who wants to help the Ranchos?



12/09

That's what we thought ...

A non-profit group is forming in the Madera Ranchos to finally give us some say over what happens here, specifically regarding our water. County representatives are doing what they can but they can't do it all. This organization of local people will answer to one group only: the people of the Ranchos. If you have a passion for the Ranchos or if you want to get involved in water issues, this is for you. Please call to see how you can be a part of this history making group. 559-363-9095 or email ranchos.community@gmail.com.

If we don't get together, outside forces will take it into their own hands. Guaranteed.

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