

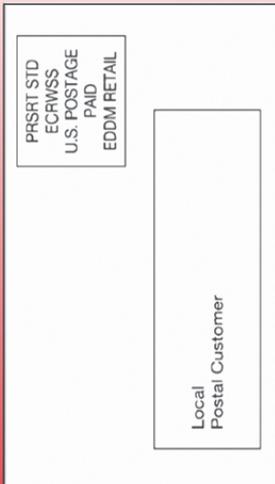
**HAPPY HOLIDAYS**  
 from  
**The Diablo Gazette**



**THIS CHRISTMAS  
 ART COMES TO LIFE**

see page 10

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# What Makes a Police Chief?

The City of Concord is asking the community for input about what characteristics the next Chief of Police should bring to the job. To gather the information, the City has launched a survey asking community members



what the City Manager should consider when filing this leadership role.

This fall, current Police Chief Guy Swanger announced his retirement after nine years of leading Concord's Police Department and 36 years in the profession.

The City is working with a recruiting firm to identify the most qualified candidates to fill this role. The application period will be open until December 9, 2019. Interviews for the position will be held in late January 2020. The City

Manager expects to have this role filled by spring 2020.

To ensure that the City Manager is selecting a candidate with the qualities, skills and experience that are most important to the Concord community, the City developed a short survey to request community feedback.

The survey can be accessed in English and in Spanish, at [www.cityofconcord.org](http://www.cityofconcord.org). The deadline for completion is December 20, 2019.



**concord mayor**

by Carlyn Obringer, Email: Put MAYOR in subject line [CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org](mailto:CityCouncil@cityofconcord.org)

# 2019 Milestones

It's hard to believe a year has passed since I had the privilege to accept the gavel and the title of "Mayor of the City of Concord." We have experienced many significant milestones, including the land transfer from the Navy to the East Bay Regional Park District for the purpose of establishing a new regional park in Concord, the memorial of the 75th Anniversary of the Port Chicago explosion, the 50th Anniversary of the Concord Jazz Festival, and the celebration of 45 years of Sister City Friendship with Kitakami, Japan.

Since being elected into office, I have been focused on recruiting and retaining living-wage jobs in Concord. Together, we have partnered with top employers headquartered in Concord to support their expansion and I am continuing to lead the City of Concord in the Diablo Valley Tech Initiative, a group formed to foster economic and social growth for startups, entrepreneurs, educators, and students here in our community. It is my goal that through such efforts, we will be able to increase opportunity and prosperity for all Concordians.

As Mayor, I have worked with my colleagues to solve the budget challenges facing the City of Concord. We have been able to improve our local roads and streets after years of deferring maintenance. In addition, we are working to ensure we meet our pension obligations in a fair, balanced manner that will not saddle our community with long-term debt. However, I also know that many members of the public have not had the opportunity to follow the City Council's budget discussions over the past few years. In turn, I have initiated community outreach efforts for the City of Concord to consistently engage with the public in a variety of ways to explain why we face budget challenges in the midst of an economic expansion and, more importantly, to solicit feedback as to how the community wants the Council to address these issues. We recently finished hosting a series of community meetings, titled "Prioritizing Our Tomorrow," to share information on Concord's projected budget gap and to request community input. The October 10 community meeting was recorded and is available for viewing on the City's website.

The City also launched new online tools to help explain Concord's budget challenges and allow people to explore the City's budget through an interactive web feature.

When I announced my City Council candidacy in 2015, one of my goals included establishing a four-year public university, on the Concord Naval Weapons Station (CNWS). We have made significant progress toward achieving that goal by establishing a 120-acre campus district within the draft CNWS Specific Plan. As Concord is one of the cities being considered for a new CSU University, I look forward to working with our education, industry, and state representatives to bring us one step closer toward our community's goal of a public institution(s) of higher learning/research facility/innovation center at the former Concord Naval Weapons Station!

As Mayor, I wanted Concordians to feel connected to their neighbors and proud to live in our city. To that end, I instituted a "September of Service," with over 200 volunteers participating in this inaugural community initiative! Thank you to all Concordians who were able to spend time with me during my year-long "Mayor's Office Hours" most Friday mornings and the "Coffee with the Mayor" or "Beer with the Mayor." Thank you to all the Concord establishments, who were gracious to host us this past year. It was fun and productive to engage on a variety of issues and connect more deeply with all of you.

As I turn over the mayoral gavel, I will continue to strive each day to serve the people of Concord to the best of my ability as a Councilmember. Going forward, I look forward to continuing to work on job attraction and retention, spearheading the campus visioning process for the former Concord Naval Weapons Station, continuing to hold community office hours at local establishments, and working with the rest of the City Council to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability, including a full, transparent accounting of the work being performed at the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

# Hark the Anglers Sing

After years of District efforts and requests by anglers, the Park District's Fisheries Program has finally gotten a supply of lightning trout. Lightning trout from Mt. Lassen Trout Farm was planted at Del Valle, Lake Chabot, Quarry Lakes, and Shadow Cliffs the week of Nov 25-29, approximately 500 pounds per lake. Anglers should head out early for a special chance to catch these amazing fish. Trout typically bite during the mornings and evenings this time of year.

Lightning Trout, golden in color with a bright red stripe down their sides, are known as a beautiful, great fighting fish with meat resembling that of a salmon. If you are lucky enough to see one, they often look like neon lights shooting through the water.

"Lightning trout are a beautiful, unique fish that you don't get to see every day," said Park District Fisheries

Program Manager Joe Sullivan. "We've been trying to get lightning trout for quite some time, but it's been difficult the last couple of years due to the drought.

Lightning trout are a unique genetic strain of rainbow trout, which is native to East Bay waterways. They are specifically bred to be planted in waterways for recreational fishing and are not able to reproduce.

As a public service, the Park District plants 130,000 pounds of hatchery-raised fish annually in its lakes. Daily fishing permits and a state fishing license are required to fish in regional lakes. For avid anglers, the Regional Parks Foundation sells an annual angler membership which covers the cost of parking and fishing permits. Visit [www.regionalparksfoundation.org](http://www.regionalparksfoundation.org) for more information.

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**to ALL our readers and advertisers!**

**Thanks for a great year!**

**See you in 2020**

**from The Diablo Gazette**

# Crisis Requires **Renewal** to **Recycling Basics**



As many of you know, there has been a major downturn in the global recycling market, we are in a recycling crisis. Many thought that this recycling crisis was temporary, but what we are now seeing is a fundamental change in the world of recycling. It is now clear: recycling has changed permanently, and now we must change with it.

To understand what we must do going forward, let's reflect on how we got here. On April 22, 1970, Earth Day was formed, and 20 million Americans took to the streets to demonstrate for a healthy, sustainable environment. In 1990, Earth Day went global mobilizing 200 million people in 141 countries and lifting environmental issues onto the world stage with an emphasis on recycling.

Earth Day 1990 gave a huge boost to recycling efforts worldwide. Government policies requiring recycling, along with a public desire to protect our environment through vigorous recycling, gave rise to global commodities markets for the items we toss into our blue recycling bins. Indeed, those global markets – dominated by China – were so vibrant they made recycling a self-funded endeavor because the value of the commodities fully covered the costs of processing the material generated by our homes and businesses. This system conditioned us all to throw as much into our blue recycling bins as possible. It was a win-win situation, so it seemed. It was too good to be true.

That all changed last year when China decided they no longer needed our material and effectively shut their doors to many items including mixed

paper (paper cups, product packaging, junk mail and magazines) and most plastics. The global commodities market collapsed and with it much of the financial resources that funded our recycling system.

But despite these global forces, California continues to mandate recycling. And here at home in the East Bay, we remain steadfast in our belief in environmental stewardship and resource conservation. It is who we are. So, we aren't ready to give up on recycling. And we don't have to. But we must renew it.

In 2020 and beyond, A Recycling Renewal means:

Get back to basics. In order to maximize the value of recycling, the only items that truly belong in your blue bins are bottles (glass and plastic), cans, newspaper and cardboard. That's it. Seriously.

Reduce. Do your best to consume less of materials that aren't bottles, cans, newspaper and cardboard

Spread the word. Help your friends, neighbors and colleagues get the message that we all must play our part to Renew Recycling. Have them visit [www.WeCycleTogether.org](http://www.WeCycleTogether.org) to learn more.

Mt. Diablo Resource Recovery will continue to strive for excellence in the way we collect and process recycling to maximize our contribution to our local health, safety and environment. And though we are all just part of a local community, your support to help us Renew Recycling can make all the difference in the world.

Eighth Annual  
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God's Redemptive Design Through Living Art

Imagine... You are in the audience, the room is dark, the curtain opens, the orchestra begins, and before your eyes is a 20-foot recreation Leonardo DaVinci's The Last Supper. Your mind tries to convince you what you are seeing is simply a flat image, but every human figure in the painting is a live person adorned in costume and makeup, frozen in place for several minutes. Eventually your mind allows you to simply enjoy the beautiful recreations of works of art. You begin to see the colors, the textures, the message that the artist desired to communicate to you through their brush – The biblical story. Introduce the choir, orchestra, and narration, and you will experience The Story.

**2019 PRESENTATIONS**  
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# Selling During the Holidays

Selling your home during the holiday season can actually be a great time to sell. The trick is to put yourself in the right frame of mind and to understand how to use the holiday season to your advantage. Here's what you need to know about selling your home over the holidays.

Use holiday decorations wisely. One of the best reasons to sell during the holiday season is that you can capitalize on the cozy feeling that the holidays inspire. You can use tasteful holiday decorations inside and the outside of your home to make it feel both warm and inviting. The key is to use these decorations in moderation. For the outside, stick to basics like potted poinsettias and a simple evergreen wreath for the door. On the inside, choose general winter decorations like pinecones and candles. A few decorations placed strategically throughout your home will create that feeling of coziness you desire.

Lighting is key. Now that Daylight Saving has arrived, it's more important than ever to consider lighting when selling your home. Make sure that all the interior lights in your home are working and turn them on during a showing – even during the day. Open all the curtains and let in as much natural light as possible. You can even use a few strands of twinkle lights as part of your holiday décor. Outside, be sure that people have plenty of light to see driveways and sidewalks and that your front porch light adequately lights up the outside.

Take great photos. As the weather

turns colder, more buyers will be conducting their home searches online. For this reason, you should take great photos of your house for your listing. The photos will give buyers their first impression of your home. You want your photos to motivate buyers to see your property in person. If you have any great photos from the spring and summer when trees and flowers are in full bloom, even better. Or, if possible, hire a professional photographer to take top-quality photos.

Price it right. One of the most important things you can do when selling your home during the holidays is to price it right. Homes that are priced too high will sit on the market for weeks or months, making them much less attractive to potential buyers. One way to avoid this problem is to price your home correctly from the beginning. Consult with a professional real estate agent familiar with the market to help you determine the best price for the season. You might also consider offering other incentives such as paying towards repairs or closing costs.

Work with a professional. Finally, if you're selling your home over the holidays, working with an agent who is an expert in your market will make the process much less stressful. They can advise you on critical issues such as price, and help shoulder the load so that you can enjoy the holiday season, too.

Compliments of [VirtualResults.net](http://VirtualResults.net)

**Happy Holidays**

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## Road to Renewal: Students and Athletes Excel at CVCHS

It's countdown time at Clayton Valley as we head into the final stretch of our Road to Renewal campaign and final exams marking the end of the first semester. I encourage all community members to mark your calendar for Wednesday, December 11 at 5 PM at Pleasant Hill Elementary School to join us for the public vote to approve our five-year charter renewal petition. Land let your voice be heard!

As we approach this crucial date and big event, we're having some fun on social media urging the CCCOE Board to support our great school. Follow us on social media – Facebook, Instagram & and Twitter – as each day we feature students and faculty promoting “YES to CVCHS!”

Even with the charter renewal vote coming up, CVCHS continues to be a sought-after option for local families. Clayton Valley hosted the school's annual Academy Night showcasing our 5 five specialized career-oriented programs – Medical Careers Academy, Digital Arts & Technology Academy, Engineering & Design Academy, Clayton Arts Academy, and Public Service Academy. We had a tremendous turnout with over 600 attendees filling up our large gym. Faculty members and Academy students shared their amazing academic experiences with current and prospective incoming students.

On November 13th, CVCHS honored eight Seniors as they signed National

Letters of Intent to compete in their sports at the collegiate level. Friends and family were on hand to witness their signing and show support for years of hard work. Congratulations to these



Road to Renewal social media campaign.

Seniors for their outstanding achievements: Joey Soberon – Baseball @ UC San Diego; Casey Barnes – Lacrosse @ Merrimack College; Jordan Frost – Waterpolo

Water polo @ UC Irvine; Chase Graves – Baseball @ University of the Pacific; Eddie Curley – Baseball @ St. Mary's College; Telly Hill – Baseball @ University of the Pacific; Ryan Pierce – Baseball @ Fresno State University; and Darby Dresdow – Soccer @ Biola University.

Our Fall sports teams concluded their seasons and made significant progress in their respective end of season playoffs and tournaments. Our women's water polo team made the D1 semifinals - their best performance to date. CVCHS women's golfer Kiana Fong made the NCS championships and missed the NorCal cutoff by just one spot. She's only a junior and is looking forward to coming back even stronger next season. Women's tennis won their league, advancing to the NCS playoffs and our top doubles team made it to the individual section playoffs. Additionally, the CVCHS women's volleyball team made the NCS playoffs, falling in a five-set

heartbreaker. Our men's and women's cross-country team faced some tough competition and finished 10th in the NCS championships. CVCHS's varsity football team has won two playoff games and heads to the sectional title game against Campolindo High School.

And finally, the Ugly Eagle marching band closed out another incredible season in mid-November taking second place at the Lincoln Review of Champions in Stockton. Band members enjoyed their annual pot-luck dinner and awards ceremony. They now look forward to their Winter showcases on December 10th (orchestra) and 13th (band). I'm so proud of all of our stu-



Clayton Arts Academy students @ CVCHS Academy Night.

dent athletes, and those band members, cheerleaders and dedicated parents who turn out for each competition to support all of our Ugly Eagles!

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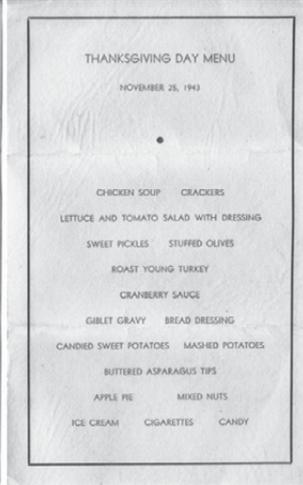
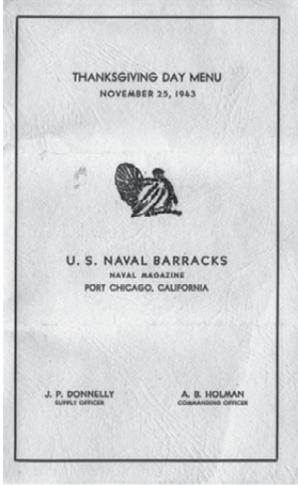
## In case you missed it...

### A 76-Year-Old Thanksgiving Day Menu

This is a 76-year-old Thanksgiving Day menu from the U.S. Naval Barracks at Port Chicago.

Delicious, and you even get cigarettes for dinner! The Claycord Online Museum is made up of historical photos, documents & anything else that has

to do with the history of our area. If you have any old photos or items that you'd like to place in the Claycord Online Museum, just scan or take a photo of them, and send them to the following address: [news@claycord.com](mailto:news@claycord.com)



The owner and CEO of Embarc is George Miller IV, the son of U.S. Rep. George Miller and himself a onetime state Assembly candidate.

The elder Miller, who from 1975 until 2015 represented parts of the East Bay in the U.S. House of Representatives, is the chairman of

Embarc's Community Advisory Board. Council members' top two applicant choices for the one certificate, as well as a third applicant, proposed retail store locations on Alhambra Avenue, one of the city's most traveled thoroughfares. The proposed Embarc location, a former bookstore at 3501 Alhambra Ave., is 2 1/2 blocks (1,150 feet) from the campus of Alhambra High School, and directly adjacent to the Martinez Unified School District's adult school property.

That proximity doesn't sit well with CJ Cammack, the school district superintendent. He told the City Council that the district had received "zero communication at any time in this process" concerning a retail cannabis business near the high school. The adult school, Cammack said, hosts a GED (General Education Diploma) program in which some younger students take part. He said he opposes a dispensary anywhere near a school, as they lend "a greater culture of acceptance of marijuana use."

Also unhappy was Helen Russo, an assistant school district superintendent. She said that the 3501 Alhambra location presents "a huge concern about our students' safety. There's no reason that we shouldn't have been involved with this. I feel really disrespected. I really do."

About a dozen others spoke up on the dispensary proposals, their opinions ranging from warm welcome to sharp criticism of the location near schools.

Ultimately, the council went with the Millers' proposal over more experienced cannabis sellers, not only because of Embarc's high score on the city's criteria ranking but because of the Miller name, long established in Martinez.

Councilman Mark Ross acknowledged he is wary of the old bookstore location near the high school, but also said a location in a light-industrial district wouldn't be a secret to students.

"Kids are going to get in trouble whether it's next door or down the street," said Ross, adding he said it was up to parents, school officials and the community in general to equip kids to make good life decisions about cannabis or anything else.

Embarc's proposal to the city includes giving 6% of gross revenues to the city and 2% of gross for a public safety fund, and 1% to a community benefits fund.

City staff was asked to bring back to the council a formal resolution for Embarc to receive the certificate. That is expected at the council's Dec. 18 meeting.

Read more at [Claycord.com](http://Claycord.com)

### Applications Open for Temporary Census Taker Jobs

Good pay, short commutes and flexible hours are among the enticements for seeking temporary work as a temporary census taker in the Bay Area. The U.S. Census Bureau is recruiting hundreds of temporary census takers in the Bay Area for work that will primarily be in May and June. Applications are now being accepted through Dec. 31.

Jobs will be following up with households next spring that have not responded by filling out the census form and the stakes for getting an accurate count are high.

Final figures will determine federal and state funding that comes to the area over the next decade for such needs as transportation, housing, and health care, Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson said in a presentation earlier this year.

The county estimates that each person not counted results in an annual funding loss of \$1,000, and that an undercount of 6 percent would translate to \$1 billion less in allocations over the ensuing decade.

The hourly pay rate is \$25 in Marin, Alameda and Contra Costa counties. To apply for work as a census taker fill out the online application at [2020census.gov/jobs](http://2020census.gov/jobs). Interviews for positions will be held in January and February. For more information about 2020 Census jobs, call (855) 562-2020.

### Cannabis Shop Run by Former Congressman's Family Gets Initial Nod in Martinez

The Martinez City Council has chosen the firm Embarc for its second retail marijuana dispensary – a firm, Embarc, led by the son of retired longtime U.S. Rep. George Miller.

The council voted 4-0 to award a "conditional certificate" allowing Embarc to apply for a commercial cannabis operating permit.

Mayor Rob Schroder, who sells insurance for a living, recused himself from the vote for having a business relationship with a partner in one of the proposed dispensaries (not Embarc).

Embarc was one of four firms selected as finalists to receive this conditional certificate, and the highest-ranked proposal based on a list of criteria set by the city.



## computercorner

by William Claney, Tech Writer, Computers USA

Tech in English

# Are You Oculus Ready?

Perhaps the hottest gift one could get this holiday season is the "Oculus Rift S." This device is hot like driving a Formula 1 racecar.

According to Digital Trends, "VR (virtual reality) has gone from a science fiction concept to a broad market of consumer devices in just a short span of years: It's no surprise some of us have whiplash."

If you do not know what VR is, here is a brief primer, "Virtual reality technology seeks to create a realistic three-dimensional image or environment that a human can perceive as real, and even interact with in realistic ways. Obviously, we aren't at holodeck levels of realism yet, but consumers do have easy access to VR headsets and controllers," Digital Trends.

That means you attach a device to your USB port on your computer, put a headset on and fire up an environment created by software. Suddenly you see a display - as if you were standing in the environment you just created. For example, let us say we

ask the computer to create a forest, replete with flora and fauna. There you are, walking around, having birds eating out of your hand, and seeing sunlight stream through the trees. Or, you could play a racing game. In order to have the VR experience you need to comply with a set of requirements. The first requirement is a great PC. Not

ordinarily a computer you picked up on sale, but something that meets conditions. Then, of course, you need the "Oculus Rift S" device. Not all computers will meet the advanced requirements. According to Oculus, "All Oculus Ready machines undergo a 100 points certification



test by our world-class quality assurance team. Each PC must pass this series of tests multiple times over a two weeks testing period and then, only then, are the best Oculus Ready. Beginning January 14, 2020, we will officially stop supporting the Rift platform on Windows 7 and 8.1 to align with Microsoft's announcement of ending support for Windows 7."

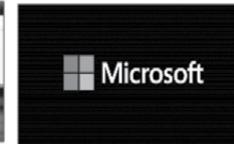
The minimum requirement is a PC running Intel i5 CPU, 8GB RAM, super-fast SSD

with 40+GB of free space, 3 USB 3.0 ports and a great graphics card. A custom-built computer is your best choice. I wouldn't recommend a standard laptop for this endeavor;

however, a game machine may do the trick, albeit a bit slow. We recommend Wal-Mart as best price, along with their great warranty, for the Oculus device, and a local custom builder for the compliant computer.

We at Computers USA wish all of you a great Holiday season and hope your New Year is successful, fruitful and full of love. Thanks for your support.

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# The Dos and Don'ts of Collecting a Debt

by Ann Harding Battin

Being in debt is no fun; having it owed to you is worse. Without talking about credit cards, bank loans or mortgages, let's say that you loaned cash to someone that you know, and they haven't paid you back. What are you going to do? Here are some dos, don'ts for a ....

DO think about the circumstances and DON'T harass the debtor. You have some options for getting your money back, but the first thing to do is to think the situation through rather than engaging in some violent 'self-help' that may subject you to criminal charges.

First, did you have an agreement that they were to pay you back? In other words, everyone was clear that the money was not a gift. If you did have an agreement that, in essence, was in exchange for you loaning them money, and maybe with interest, they were to pay you back in a certain amount of time; was the agreement oral or in writing? If it was verbal, were there any witnesses to it and/or, maybe you've got some paperwork regarding the deal: perhaps the conversation was followed up with emails, texts or, even better, an "IOU" (promissory note)? Did you include security for the debt such that you're holding an item of theirs that they value and which, if they don't pay you back, you can sell? Be aware that before you can sell something that has a registered title, like a car or truck, you're going to need to have the title to it before you can transfer it. Musical instruments, jewelry, tools, guns and the like may also be useful as collateral if agreed to and don't necessarily require evidence of ownership.

DO get in touch with the debtor, DO it in writing and DON'T delay if they fail to respond. If you've gotten near the end of the time by which they agreed to pay you back and they

haven't done it yet, have you gotten in touch with your debtor and asked when they're going to pay you back? This is what is referred to as making a demand for payment and you'll want to do it in writing, by mail and keep a copy. Give the debtor a reasonable amount of time to respond and make sure to put in all of your contact information: phone number, email, etc. But, if they don't respond in the time you gave them, well, then you've got your answer.

DON'T wait any longer if they fail to respond: the statute of limitations is two (2) years from the breach of an oral agreement and four (4) years if it is in writing. If they've failed to pay by the agreed time, that's a clear breach of the agreement and your time to file runs from then. If the amount owed is \$10,000.00 or less, then, you'd file in the Small Claims division of the court that has jurisdiction where the debtor lives. In Small Claims, you will have to represent yourself. If the amount owed is greater than \$10K, then you will need to file your collection action in either the Limited Jurisdiction (claims up to \$25K) or the Unlimited Jurisdiction division (claims over \$25K). The good news is that you can have an attorney represent you in these divisions of the court, and, as there is a possibility that you may be owed more money than just the face value of the debt, you are advised to talk to an attorney before filing your claim. If you need a referral to an attorney, contact the Lawyer Referral Service of the Contra Costa County Bar Association at (925) 825-5700.

Ann Harding Battin, Esq. practices in the areas of business, contracts, Civil and Probate litigation and represents both debtors and creditors. TENAX LAW GROUP, P.C. 510.234.2808. [bat-tin@tenaxlawgroup.com](mailto:bat-tin@tenaxlawgroup.com)



the concordian  
by Edi Birsan, [EdiBirsan@gmail.com](mailto:EdiBirsan@gmail.com)

# County Clerk Vacancy and Power Musical Chairs

The County Clerk has resigned and that leaves an opening. This is a Countywide office that is responsible for running our elections, keeping our documents and marriages etc. The sad reason for the resignation is just that: sad. It was shocking to all who knew the individual. However, here are some things to consider: the vacancy can be filled by appointment by the Board of Supervisors (Goia, Glover, Anderson, Mitchoff and Burgis) and the appointment will be for the rest of the term which goes to November of 2022 election certification and the subsequent swearing in.

You have till December 16th to apply to the County. Public interviews will be decided in early January and the final appointment date will be early February at the Board's regular meeting.

Ten of the anticipated qualifications for the position from my perspective are things like someone:

1. Who cannot be bullied
2. Who has had experience as an elected official
3. Has experience with dealing with civil servants ideally in the county offices
4. Long-time resident of the county
5. Some legal experience/exposure
6. Can supervise a staff of about 80 most of who have expertise in their job that is superior in the details than you
7. A detailed person with an orientation towards dotting the 'I' and crossing the 'T'
8. Work with a diverse staff
9. Strong knowledge of the county budget system
10. Able and willing to dedicate the time to both learn the details and interact with the staff.

An interesting prospect is that one of the County Supervisors: Karen Mitchoff has applied for the appointment. She will not be able to vote on the appoint but the appointment will still require three of the four remaining Supervisors to make it happen.

In the event that she is appointed, her position becomes vacant for someone to fill her term which also ends with the results of the November of 2022 election. Unlike the Clerk position, the Supervisor vacancy is filled unilaterally by the Governor.

## Appointing a Councilmember to Supervisor

In this county, it has been typical that another elected is appointed. The last two times were both from City Councils (Anderson and DeSaulnier). The qualifications and recommendations that the Governor may want is unknown as this Governor has not been in that position yet.

Should the replacement come from a

City Council, they will have to appoint a replacement within 60 days and the term is for whatever is left by whomever is replaced. If the Council cannot get a majority then there is a special election. Councils always have figured this out as elections are expensive and they want to have the final say on who joins them. Power to choose is not power they want to lose.

## Appointing an Assemblymember to Supervisor

For a short period, there was speculation that an Assemblymember would go for the position. Based on precedent down south, this would have set up a Rubik's Cube set of complications that would resolve itself this way. (This is my best Guess) See if you can follow along.

In the March primary, the top two candidates would be determined for the November Election. It would most likely be the Incumbent Assemblymember and one of the other challengers.

That fixes the November ballot listing, which cannot be changed.

The Assemblymember then must resign if appointed to Supervisor.

This triggers a special election to replace the empty assembly position.

The period of time needed for a special election is roughly 88+ days

The special election will determine who would fill the empty seat for a term, in this case of only a few months - from the date of the special election certification to the swearing in of the winner of the November election.

As the incumbent on the ballot, odds are the resigned Assemblymember is likely to win against a minor party candidate in November. The Assemblymember would then have to resign a second time which would then trigger another special election in the early part of 2021.

There is a rule called a 'Consolidation' whereby the office may be left vacant for a certain limited time and the vacancy would then be filled in the November election. If consolidation is declared, there is no special election in the final year of an assembly term but then a special election is triggered after the November's election if the original assemblymember is elected and stays as a supervisor.

At this writing, I am researching those rules as well as how much time the Governor has to make the appointment to the Board of Supervisors.

Indications are that this bit of twisted events, may not happen...but we are talking about politics here. So, stay tuned.

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**Your 2019 Guide to Bay Area Events**

**The Diablo Gazette's**

**ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE**



**VISIT CONCORD**  
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by Elaine Schroth,  
Executive Director



The Holiday Season in Concord starts Saturday, December 7 with the Official Holiday Tree Lighting and Mayor's Sing-Along at Todos Santos Park. Beginning at 3 pm, you can enjoy ornament crafting, hot cocoa and stories at Mrs. Santa's Bookshoppe. Santa arrives at 4 pm followed by the Mayor's Sing-Along and the Holiday Tree Lighting celebration. Then grab some dinner or drinks at one of the plaza's many restaurants and take a ride on one of the festive, horse-drawn carriages.

December 7th is also the Mt. Diablo Beacon Lighting Ceremony commemorating the 56th Annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day from 3:00-5:00 pm. The "Eye of Diablo" ceremony atop Mt. Diablo honors our WWII veterans. The City of Concord plans to live-stream the beacon lighting onto a screen on stage at Todos Santos Park.

By the way, if you miss Santa's arrival downtown, you can find him over at Sun Valley Mall bringing Christmas to life for kids with Santa's Flight Academy. Kids can meet Santa and maybe even become an official member of his flight crew and receive a personalized Cadet Badge and get to "try on" a virtual flight suit.

The Concord Historical Society promises one-of-a-kind gift shopping at their Gingerbread Boutique December 7 and

8 from 10 am -4 pm at the Concord Museum and Event Center. Among the hundreds of unique offerings, you'll find handcrafted soaps, sachets, jewelry, dolls, fine art photography, specialty foods, and much more.

Be sure to squeeze in some ice skating with family and friends. You can at The Veranda shopping center's 3500 square foot, outdoor ice rink. They're open every day (weather permitting).

On Saturday, December 14th, Solo Opera and Macy's Concord presents "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Guests will enjoy a continental breakfast, fashion show and raffle. Featured entertainment includes a performance by soprano Diane Squires and an audience sing-along of "The Twelve Days of Christmas." Tickets are \$22 and available now through Eventbrite. Proceeds benefit the music and outreach programs of Solo Opera.

Next month, Visit Concord's new state-of-the-art Visitors Center opens inside Salvio Pacheco Square.

And coming January 17 - 26, as many as 40 local restaurants will roll out their tastiest comfort-food fare for the 3rd Annual Concord Comfort Food Restaurant Week.

For more Concord happenings, visit [concordca.com](http://concordca.com)! We wish you a very Happy Holidays!

**Holiday Releases Opening in December**

**"Jumanji: The Next Level"** - The rebooted 2017 Jumanji was a bigger-than-expected hit. Starring: Dwayne Johnson, Karen Gillan, Jack Black, Kevin Hart, Danny DeVito, Danny Glover, Awkwafina. Opens December 13

**"A Hidden Life"** - Terrence Malick's latest drama tells the real-life story of Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian peasant farmer who refused to fight for the Nazis in World War II and faced execution for treason. Critics say it's ambitious, visually impressive, and enigmatic. Starring: August Diehl, Valerie Pachner, Maria Simon, Tobias Moretti, Bruno Ganz, Matthias Schoenaerts. Opens December 13.

**"Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker"** - J.J. Abrams entered the captain's chair for this highly anticipated sequel trilogy finale. Starring: Daisy Ridley, Adam Driver, Oscar Isaac, John Boyega, Lupita Nyong'o. Opens December 20.

**"Bombshell"** - Director Jay Roach sets his talents upon the real-life dra-



ma, the sexual harassment allegations made against Fox News founder Roger Ailes by various employees, including former anchors Gretchen Carlson and Megyn Kelly. Starring: Nicole Kidman, Margot Robbie, Charlize Theron, Alice Eve, Stephen Root, John Lithgow, Connie Britton, Mark Duplass, Kate McKinnon, Allison Janney. Opens December 20.

**"Cats"** - Andrew Lloyd Weber's mega successful musical about the Jellicle cats to the big screen, and universal has turned to "Les Miserables" director Tom Hooper for the job. Smart. Starring: Idris Elba, Judi Dench, Rebel Wilson, Jennifer Hudson, Taylor Swift. Opens December 20.

**"Little Women"** - Expect some awards consideration to come out of this new adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's classic novel. Some folks talking Oscars already. Starring: Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh, Eliza Scanlan, Timothée Chalamet, Laura Dern, Meryl Streep. Opens December 25.

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# DIABLO GAZETTE FUN ZONE



**frugelegance**  
by Carol and Randi -The Frugirls [www.frugelegance.com](http://www.frugelegance.com)

## Plastic Wrap Ball Game

If you are looking for a super fun game the whole family can play over the holidays, we have a winner for you. Have you heard of the "Plastic Wrap Ball Game" (aka Saran Wrap Ball Game)? It is an instant hit and perfect for any party: Christmas, Hanukkah, birthdays, any other holiday or family gathering. Who knows, it might even become a tradition to your holiday festivities like it has become for ours.



Meanwhile, the player sitting clockwise (to left) is now rolling the dice trying to roll "doubles". Once that player rolls doubles, he quickly takes the ball away and gets to unwrap it collecting as

many prizes as possible. The player to the left takes the dice and tries to roll doubles to win a turn at the ball.

Continue unwrapping and passing the ball and dice as fast as possible to win the most prizes. Game is over when the final prize is completely unwrapped. It's all very rushed, silly and fun. Watch everyone's faces when they are unrolling a long piece anxious to see what mysteriously drops out.

It's easy to make. Items you will need include: a pair of dice, a large box of plastic wrap and an assortment of small size prizes to fill the plastic ball.

At the end of the game, our family trades their prizes. That way, everyone gets a chance to get the prizes they like best.

The plastic wrap ball is put together with layers of wrap that you fill with prize goodies. Your first item to wrap should be your grand prize item which will reside in the center of your ball. Once wrapped, add another layer of prizes onto it and wrap. Continue adding more prize layers with different sizes of wrap, some short, some longer until you've wrapped all your prizes. As you add your layers, keep in mind you are trying to form a round, ball shape. Make the ball big so that there will be lots of prizes for all players.



Now you are ready to play the game. Any number of players can play. Sit in a circle and roll the dice to see who goes first. Play will go clockwise. Highest roller wins to first start removing the outer layers of wrap (find the edges to peel, no ripping allowed), and win any prizes that fall out as the layers are peeled away.

We played the Plastic Wrap Ball Game after Thanksgiving Dinner. Our ball was filled with mini / fun size candy, scratch-off lottery tickets (holy cow, my nephew won \$500!!), one dollar bills, gift cards, and a few small toys.

For more instruction on making the ball and to view how it's played, go to YouTube and search "Plastic Wrap Ball Game" and you will find videos on making the ball and playing the game. It's hysterical.

Carol and Randi, the FruGirls, are local home stagers and decorators. You can also find them blogging about many other ways to live an elegant life for less, online at [www.frugelegance.com](http://www.frugelegance.com). FrugElegance is where Frugal and Elegance come together.

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# calendar of events

**BELL RINGERS NEEDED!**  
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**Contact:** Cynthia Hodges  
 925-676-6180 x003



## FUNDRAISERS

**Pancake Breakfast** - Supporting Veterans of Foreign Wars – 2nd and 4th Sundays includes eggs, pancakes, sausage, beverage. 8 – 11 a.m. Willow Pass Road, Concord \$5 buys a terrific breakfast. <http://www.vfwpost1525.org>

## DECEMBER 7

**A Blue Star Moms care Package Packing Event.** This event is not open to public. However, the Blue Star Moms are accepting donations of cards and letters to the troops; monetary donations to cover the boxes postage (\$17.40 each); white cotton socks; travel-size toiletries and razors; and beef (or other meat) jerky. Donations can be dropped off at the office of A-1 Storage, 5296 Concord Blvd. in Concord.

Hundreds of “care packages” are being prepared to send to U.S. military troops stationed far from home over the holidays. The care packages contain items such as toiletries, canned food, individual drink mix packets, playing cards, chewing gum and other assorted goodies. For more details, visit [cbluestarmoms.org](http://cbluestarmoms.org). The group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group. All donations are tax-deductible.

## DECEMBER 14

**SOLO OPERA, “TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS”** 10:30am- noon. Includes breakfast treats, a concert of opera and holiday music featuring soprano Diane Squires, a fashion show, a sing-along, and 12 enter to win prizes! All proceeds benefit Solo Opera, a local non-profit opera company and their 2020 season. If you love fashion, food, and festive song, please join in for some holiday magic at Macy’s, Concord. 341 Sun Valley Mall. Tickets - \$22

## WANTED TURKEYS



**THROUGH DECEMBER 20**  
**Salvation Army Turkey Drive** To provide food baskets and frozen turkeys for the families we are serving, smaller 10-15 lbs. turkeys fit the needs best. Peanut butter, canned food, and other staples are useful too. Collecting Monday through Friday 9:30am to 4:40 pm through December 20. Bring to Salvation Army, 3950 Clayton Rd. Concord. Questions? Call

(925) 676-6180.

## FEBRUARY 1

**The Concord High School Athletic Boosters Club’s Annual Crab Feed and Auction, 6 pm at Centre Concord. Gather up your friends and family for an all you can eat crab and tri-tip dinner, silent auction, live auction and dancing, fundraiser! Buy your ticket now before we sell out! <https://www.concordhighschool.net/event-details/chs-athletic-boosters-crab-feed-and-auction-2020> . Any questions, or if you can sponsor, please reach out to [chscrabfeed@gmail.com](mailto:chscrabfeed@gmail.com) or 925-395-3023.**

## OUTDOORS

### Farmers’ Markets

**Concord Tuesdays:** Year-round, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. Thursdays: April 18 – October 24, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m. Martinez Sundays, 10am to 2pm, year-round, Main St. and Estudillo. Walnut Creek Diablo Valley Farmers Market Saturday 9a.m. - 1 p.m. Shadelands Business Park, N. Wigett Lane and Mitchell Dr. Also, from Contra Costa Certified Farmers Market - North Locust St between Giamona and Lacassie St. Sundays 9 am - 1 pm, Year Round, (925) 431-8361 <http://www.cccfm.org>

### NOVEMBER 8-JANUARY 20

**Walnut Creek on Ice** General Public Civic Park 1365 Civic Dr. Walnut Creek. Skating Hours Monday–Thursday 12 pm – 8 pm Friday 12 pm – 11 pm Saturday 11 am – 11 pm Sunday 11 am – 8 pm \$13-\$15. Go to <http://walnutcreekonice.com/> for more information.

## DECEMBER 7

**Concord Tree Lighting Ceremony.** 4PM Santa Arrives. Mayor sing-along, followed by Official Tree Lighting at Todos Santos Plaza, Concord. 4:30-6:30 PM Clayton Annual Tree Lighting and Caroling. Santa Arrival at 4:30 PM. at the Grove 6100 Main St.

## DECEMBER 7

**National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day Ceremony.** Mt. Diablo Beacon Lighting Ceremony commemorating the 56th Annual Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, “Lest We Forget”. California State University East Bay, Concord campus. Oak Room. 4700 Ygnacio Valley Rd. Free to public. from 3:00-5:00pm. Live-stream viewing of at Todos Santos Park stage.

### Ruth Bancroft Garden

All Event details available at [www.ruthgarden.com](http://www.ruthgarden.com).  
**December 7 Photo with Santa @** 10:00 am - 12:00 pm in the plaza space at the Ruth Bancroft Garden. This is a BYOC (bring your own camera) event. Free event on the Visitor Center Plaza – general admission fees for Garden entry apply.

### December 14 - Junior Botanist-Plants from down under.

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm \$5 In Australia, it is summer while we endure winter and the plants from Down Under are in bloom such as Banksia’s cone-like flower and leaves that look like band-saw blades. Junior Botanists will also learn about what it means when a plant is a ‘fire follower.’ Just like California, Australia has wildfires and some plants have developed strategies they share with Californian plants to cope with wildfires.



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This workshop is suitable for children ages 9-12. This is a drop off event, but parents are welcome to stay. Admission ticket or membership required to enter the garden.

**NOVEMBER 30-DECEMBER 29**  
**Garden of d’Lights:** Fri/Sat/Sun evenings 5pm-8pm. A new nighttime winter holiday event, using laser, spot and LED lights to illuminate the Garden, Enjoy musical entertainment and seasonal food and beverages. Garden of d’Lights is scheduled to occur every weekend evening,. Ticket sales begin October 1st. [www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/gardenofdlights-2019/](http://www.ruthbancroftgarden.org/gardenofdlights-2019/)

## CLUB/SUPPORT GROUPS’ NEWS AND EVENTS

### DECEMBER 14

Three California Writers Club members will present “Win-Win: Writers Helping Writers” at the next meeting of the Mt. Diablo branch of the California Writers Club at Zio Fraedo’s Restaurant, 611 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill. Authors Marianne Lonsdale, Colleen Gonzales, and Charla Gabert will discuss their areas of expertise. Marianne will discuss how to do author interviews, Coleen will explain how to participate in anthologies, and Charla will give the ways in which to promote your book through podcasts. **Sign-in starts at 11:00 am.** Registration is \$25 for CWC members, \$30 for guests. Reservations deadline: noon, Wednesday, December 11, 2019. Reserve at : <https://cwcmtdiablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/>.

### DECEMBER 6

**HOLIDAY GIFT AND CRAFT FAIR** 9 am - 2 pm. 45+ vendors, jewelry, ornaments, yarn crafts, handmade goods, stocking stuffers, and more. Concord Senior Center, 2727 Parkside Cir. Concord. 925-671-3320

### December 7-8

**Gingerbread House Boutique** from 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM. Concord Historical Society hosts Arts and Crafts from local artists for the perfect Holiday gifts. The Concord Museum and Event Center, 1928 Clayton Road, Concord. Parking can be found behind the Concord Museum and Event Center at Amador Ave and Marina Court.

### JANUARY 8

8-Week United States Power Squadrons Marine Navigation Course offered by Diablo Sail & Power Squadron. Reading marine charts and interpretation of aids

to navigation will be reviewed. Hands-on course planning and plotting, distance calculations, plotting in TRUE/steering in MAGNETIC, and plotting standards (symbols and notations on charts). All of the manual plotting methods will be compared and contrasted with GPS-based chart plotter methodologies using a software package (OpenCPN) that will be provided to all students. Wednesday evenings at 7pm at the Martinez Sea Scouts training facility (S.S.S. Albatross Sea Base, Martinez, CA) beginning on 1/8/2020. Open to all squadron members and non-members. For more information or to enroll, contact Michael Holland SN at [mjholland@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mjholland@ucdavis.edu) or (530)304-4487.

## VISUAL ARTS/THEATRE/MUSIC

**Through December 23**  
**54th Annual Holiday Collection for “Artful Giving”-** Open Tuesday – Saturday from 11 AM - 5 PM. Sundays and Mondays 11 AM – 3 PM. Free, open to the public. Valley Art Gallery: 1661 Botelho Drive, Suite 110, Walnut Creek. [www.valleyartgallery.org](http://www.valleyartgallery.org); (925) 935-4311

Holiday collection includes a wide variety of jewelry, ceramics, glass, textiles, decorations, small paintings, and many one-of-a-kind gifts crafted by Bay Area artists. Over 300 works in a variety of styles, media and prices. Valley Art Gallery is a volunteer run, non-profit organization representing Bay Area artists 1949.

### DECEMBER 8

**Diablo Women’s Chorale presents “Winter’s Light”.** Jazzy, uplifting songs to kick off the beginning of the holiday season with songs from Lisa Loeb, George Michael, Irving Berlin, Phil Spector, and many others. 4:00 p.m. at Temple Isaiah, 945 Risa Road, in Lafayette. Purchase advance tickets online at [www.diablowomenschorale.org](http://www.diablowomenschorale.org) or call 1-800-838-3006.

### THROUGH DECEMBER 29

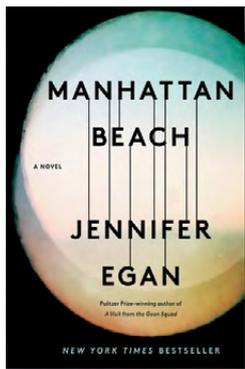
Main Street Arts - Christmas Show, “Bring Beauty into Your Life”. A gallery of paintings, jewelry, ceramics and metal sculptures for holiday gift giving. You can find small reasonably priced paintings. Main Street Arts, 613 Main Street, Martinez. 925-269-8049. Image: 2-sided vase by Jerry Hild. [www.Mainstreetarts.net](http://www.Mainstreetarts.net).



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 Author of *Between Shadow's Eyes* [www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com)

# MANHATTAN BEACH

Manhattan Beach (2017, Scribner, hardcover, 448 pages, \$15.51) by Jennifer Egan is at its core a family drama depicting life in the 1930's during an era when jobs became scarce and the war effort was the biggest news of the day. The novel weaves together the lives of a cast of interesting characters centered around the Kerrigan family. Eddie Kerrigan has lost his job and is trying to stay afloat financially and support his wife, Agnes, and two daughters, Lydia and Anna. Desperate, Eddie gets involved in a shady operation run by Dexter Styles and eventually disappears under suspicious circumstances. The loss of her father and his income leaves Anna shouldered with a great deal of responsibility. Eddie's daughter, Lydia, has special needs, and requires constant help which is provided by Anna and her mother. Without Eddie's support and her mother's need to care for Lydia, Anna is thrust into the role of breadwinner.



Dexter to drive the two of them to the shoreline. This shared experience creates a bond between Dexter and Anna that ultimately changes the course of Anna's life.

One afternoon when Anna observes scuba divers emerging from the sea, she becomes enamored with the possibility of descending into the depths of the ocean. The idea of woman becoming a diver is initially

rejected outright, but she is committed to making her dream a reality. As she tackles each task to prove herself, she must deal with the arrogance of the male divers and military men committed to make her quest to succeed a dismal failure. Beyond the compelling stories of complex characters forced to make difficult choices, "Manhattan Beach" offers a stark reflection into the constraints on women in the 1930s and 40s. Fans of Alice McDermott, Delia Owens, and Celeste Ng are likely to enjoy this novel.

"Manhattan Beach" is a New York Times Bestseller, New York's "One Book, One New York" Pick, and won the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction. Jennifer Egan has written 29 books. She received the 2011 Pulitzer Prize in fiction for her novel "A Visit from the Goon Squad". Her first novel, "The Invisible Circus" was released as a movie starring Cameron Diaz in 2001. Her second novel, "Look at Me", was a 2001 National Book Award Finalist. Her third novel, "The Keep", was also a national bestseller. Egan has written cover stories for the New York Times Magazine and her 2002 cover story on homeless children received the Carroll Kowal Journalism Award and her 2008 story on bipolar children won an Outstanding Media Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness. She lives in Brooklyn with her husband and two sons.

We first meet Anna as a pre-teen when her father takes her on an excursion where she meets Dexter Styles. Anna is in awe of the man's house and his wealth, but then Eddie stops taking his daughter with him and young Anna doesn't see Dexter again. As Anna grows into adulthood, she becomes an ambitious modern woman determined to do her part in the war effort as a worker in the Naval shipyards. Here she meets Nell, a tart with her sights on sleeping her way out of the day-to-day drudgery of work life. Nell convinces Anna to go into a nightclub run by none other than Dexter Styles, whom she recognizes, and suspects may have something to do with her father's disappearance. Dexter, who met Anna when she was 11 years old, does not recognize the grown Anna who has blossomed into a young woman. Meanwhile, Anna is distraught over her sister's failing health. She becomes obsessed with taking Lydia to the beach and manages to convince

# movie review

by Jeffrey M. Anderson



☆☆☆☆

# KNIVES OUT

"Knives Out" is an all-star murder-mystery comedy that's reminiscent of Agatha Christie stories. Starring Daniel Craig, Jamie Lee Curtis, Chris Evans, and many more, this expertly crafted movie is both a satisfying mystery and a hilarious comedy with appealing characters, and it even touches on the state of the world today and sends the message that kindness and compassion are virtues that win the day.



In KNIVES OUT, wealthy, successful crime novelist Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer) celebrates his 85th birthday with his family. But at the party, he argues with just about everyone over money, business, or other things. Later, he's found with his throat slit, and Linda (Jamie Lee Curtis), Richard (Don Johnson), Walt (Michael Shannon), Joni (Toni Collette), and Ransom (Chris Evans) are among the suspects. Master detective Benoit Blanc (Daniel Craig) is called in to solve the seemingly impossible case. The key to the mystery, Blanc realizes, lies with Marta (Ana de Armas), who was Harlan's nurse and caretaker and who has a condition that causes her to vomit whenever she tells a lie. The reading of the will sends a shockwave throughout the family, and Blanc finds his final, elusive clue when the murderer prepares to strike again. This delightful, hilarious, clever mystery-comedy is total entertainment, with expert, precision work at every level -- but also with an irresistible, gleeful sense of fun bursting from the screen. After taking "Star Wars" to a new level with "The Last Jedi", writer-director Rian Johnson seems fully refreshed on "Knives Out". From the ground up, he's crafted a solid movie-going experience, starting with a sparkling gem of a screenplay.

An Agatha Christie-inspired tale, the movie's mystery is airtight enough to puzzle most whodunit buffs. But the movie is also beautifully balanced among its excellent cast, with each member feeling appealingly human and shining in individual moments. Visually, "Knives Out" is splendid, fluid in the way it moves around the nooks and crannies of the huge house and when it lingers on its unforgettable "wheel of knives" centerpiece. The music by Nathan Johnson (Rian's cousin) is equally effective. Old-fashioned on the surface, the movie is nevertheless rooted in the modern-day, with several smart, sane references to current insanity. Finally, it's clearly designed for multiple viewings, not only to catch all the sly jokes but also the many concealed clues. If "Knives Out" has a flaw, it's that the movie is so effortless it might feel lightweight. PG

*Common Sense Media rates movies, TV shows, books, and more so parents can feel good about the entertainment choices they make for their kids. Parents can learn specific information on this movie's use of violence, language, and other components at [commonsensemedia.org](http://commonsensemedia.org).*

# "The Story" Returns to NorthCreek Church

Christmas presentations such as "The Nutcracker", "A Christmas Story" or "A Christmas Carol", and a few others are offered by several ballet and theatrical groups in a variety of theaters in just about any community. However, the living art performance of "The Story" is a one-of-a-kind



DaVinci, Michelangelo, Nicolas Bertin, Antonio Ciseri; and contemporary artists including Max Greiner and Morgan Weistling.

Combine that with a 30-piece orchestra, large choir, and biblically accurate narration, and you have an amazing production.

Christmas spectacle exclusive to Walnut Creek's NorthCreek Church. With six years of productions and over 25,000 in attendance, "The Story" has become a Christmas tradition for many local residents. It is a must see.

Each year, NorthCreek's production staff sifts through thousands of pieces of historical art searching for works that can be arranged to tell the story of the entire Bible as biblically as possible, from creation through today (and tomorrow) in a performance of tableau vivant, or "living art."

This year's presentation will feature 11 works from artists including Leonard

"The Story" includes painted or sculpted works of art that have been rebuilt by volunteers in three dimensions at life size, populated with cast members painted to mimic the careful brushstrokes of the original. Once on stage the art is carefully lit with complex stage lighting so that when the curtain opens to reveal the scene, it appears that you are looking at the flat, two-dimensional piece, or the original sculpture. It is truly a unique presentation.

For 11 months, more than 300 volunteers including artists, seamstresses, construction, and fabrication teams along with the NorthCreek Church's orchestra, choir, vocalists, cast, stage crew and production team collaborated on the recreation of each scene. Often a single piece can take between three and four months to design, build, and paint to meticulously recreate the original.

Cast members are painted, airbrushed, and costumed to look like marble, bronze, oil paint, ivory, and other materials that make up the original pieces.

Running time is approximately two hours with a 15-minute intermission. It is not recommended for children under the age of seven. However, childcare is provided at the Saturday 3PM and Sunday 2:30PM shows only by RSVP only. Email [thestory@northcreek.org](mailto:thestory@northcreek.org).

One audience member said it best, "I would expect to see something like what I just saw in a theater in San Francisco, or even New York, but not a church in Walnut Creek. Well done!" s Amazingly



professional and well presented!" "The Story" should be part of your family's Christmas tradition. NorthCreek Church is located at 2303 Ygnacio Valley Rd. in Walnut Creek. For ticket information go to [www.thestoryinart.org](http://www.thestoryinart.org).

### SHOWTIMES:

- Thursday, December 12 AT 7PM
- Friday, December 13 AT 7PM
- Saturday, December 14 AT 3PM (Free Childcare Available)
- Saturday, December 14 AT 7PM
- Sunday, December 15 AT 2:30PM (Free Childcare Available)
- Sunday, December 15 AT 6:30PM



## farmerfresh

by Debra Morris, Pacific Coast Farmers Market  
<http://www.pcfma.org/concord>

California was once known for acres and acres of citrus fruit, but as the population expanded, the fields were plowed under and homes and businesses built. There has been a resurgence of citrus tree planting the last 20 years that more than makes up for it with farmers specializing in boutique varieties such as Cara Cara oranges, Meyer lemons, and kumquats, all of which are available at your farmers' market.

The selection of citrus at the market is endless, from new tangelo and mandarin orange varieties to little fingerling limes and calamondin oranges. You'll find December brings the best navel and Valencia oranges, bright tart lemons, and tangy grapefruit and pomelos.

Later in the season the varieties will include luscious blood oranges with deep reddish flesh, grapefruit-like pomelos with both yellow and pink flesh and a sweeter taste, and the Kaffir lime, a superb variety with a nice depth of flavor. Also check out the fun bumpy-skinned Golden Nugget mandarin orange, the amazing Marsh White grapefruit, and the sweet Minneola oranges.

When selecting citrus, look for fruit with a shiny rind, free of blemishes, soft areas, or mold. The citrus should be heavy for its size which indicates they are full of juice. Lighter-weight fruit has more skin and a drier pulp resulting in less juice. Select navel oranges with small sized navels. Oranges with larger navels indicate they were overripe when picked. Store citrus in a cool place outside the refrigerator and try to eat them within a few days. If you need to keep them longer, refrigerate in the vegetable crisper section of the refrigerator.

You'll find a wide variety of delectable citrus from many of our farmers. At the



Concord Farmers' Market Diaz Farms of Fowler has navel oranges, Satsuma mandarins, and tangerines. Later in the season look for Cara Caras. J&J Ramos Farm out of Hughson offers navels and other oranges, lemons, and mandarins. Purchase from these farmers at your farmers' market. You'll know it came straight from the farm to you. Enjoy!

**Citrus and Avocado Salad**  
10 cups torn Romaine lettuce (or your favorite greens)  
1-1/2 cups orange sections, about 2 medium  
1-1/2 cups tangerine sections

1 cup grapefruit sections, about 1 medium  
2 medium ripe avocados, peeled and cubed  
3/4 cup crumbled feta or blue cheese  
1/4 cup red onion, thinly sliced  
1 cup sliced black olives (optional)  
**Dressing**  
2 lemons, juiced  
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
6 tablespoons olive oil  
1 shallot, finely minced  
2 cloves garlic, finely minced  
Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper, to taste

Carefully slice the peel off the citrus. Cut the citrus into slices and carefully pop out any seeds. Place lettuce, oranges, grapefruit tangerines, onions, and avocados in a large bowl. In a small bowl, whisk dressing ingredients together until thoroughly mixed. Drizzle over salad and toss gently to coat. Sprinkle with cheese. Serve immediately.

## Citrus Is in the City



David George

## THE NAKED GARDENER

**COMPOSTING IN-PLACE - A NEW WINTER TECHNIQUE!**

December is a cold time to be outdoors naked gardening. But it's no time for gardeners to hibernate. While the rest of us are cozy and warm celebrating the holiday season, our once-vigorous plants have shriveled with cold. Deciduous trees, full of fall color just last month have ejected those spent leaves, and annual plants have given up the ghost. Hmpf!

Mother Nature uses this time of year to recover from the hot, dry summer months. Even though the trees and shrubs look dead, they are very much alive with crucial activities to prepare for the next growing season. New leaf and flower buds are a priority now over leaf maintenance. That is one reason why old leaves fall. Your garden plants store energy produced during the growing season in their roots. They use this stored energy to manufacture next spring's bloom buds. Needed rainfall restores soil moisture this time of year, which will last, we hope until July or August. What can a naked gardener do now to help?

It turns out that there are plenty of crucial gardening activities we can accomplish during the colder, rainier months to give nature an assist. Raking leaf clutter away from the bases of trees and shrubs will decrease bug attacks in the spring and will preserve healthy trunks and crowns. Don't throw away the leaf clutter though. The carbon in those leaves are the energy source plants "burn" to produce their own food during the growing season. Rake the leaves into open spaces to allow soil organisms to break them down into nutrients over the winter.

I learned a new winter composting technique called "composting-in-place" and it's simple. Instead of throwing out your dead tomato, squash, bean, or other harvested and spent plants, cut them off at their bases then slice them into



Composted-in-place tomatoes with new cauliflower

small chunks or stems. (Use sharpened, long-handled shears to prevent back strain.) Leave the cut-up plants laying on the soil all winter in their original growing beds. Cover these plant parts with 1 to 2-inches of your home-grown compost before a good rain. Leave the roots of the old vegetables in the ground to feed soil organisms during the wet months.

This technique allows worms and bugs to break down spent vegetable plants over the winter into essential nutrients, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium to feed next year's plantings. Let the worms and bugs do the work while you relax. But remember to rotate your vegetable plants from bed to bed in the spring, so your beds do not run out of specific nutrients, and so plant diseases don't have a chance to get established. For example, grow beans next year where you grew tomatoes this year, and grow tomatoes where you grew squash. You'll have great harvests year after year without adding chemical fertilizers if you follow these easy steps.

Email your comments and questions to: [NakedGardener@diablogazette.com](mailto:NakedGardener@diablogazette.com). In some cases these may appear in future columns.



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Photo by Kelley Lotosky of Let's Spread Beauty



# The Awe of Air Force One

*Editors Note: Much of our understanding of Secret Service work comes from Hollywood. Few of us have ever met a Secret Service Agent, or maybe you have and don't know it. "Inside the Secret Service-A Former Agent's Stories" is about life as a Secret Service agent. These are stories of real-life experiences from a Concord resident who spent several years as a Secret Service agent.*

When The Diablo Gazette first approached me about submitting some stories about my time as a Special Agent with the U.S. Secret Service, I was a little hesitant because much of the job deals with matters of national security which are often top secret or classified in nature. In other words, "I could tell you, but then I'd have to kill you." (Okay, not really. But it's such a great line from Top Gun that I just had to throw it in.) But, obviously not all aspects of the job fit into a "don't ask, don't tell bubble."

I spent over 11 years with the Secret Service. As I reflected back on my time in the Service, I realized there were actually some pretty cool things that I got to see and do on the job.

For me, there was never a bad assignment, just some that were better than others. Sure, standing post hours on end in a hotel hallway in the middle of the night could get boring. Or being assigned to the command post and never actually seeing the protectee was not as exciting as working a rope line with the protectee while surrounded by fellow agents amongst a crowd of thousands. However, each assignment, whether in the limelight or far removed, plays an integral role in the overall mission. And regardless of where I ended up being posted, there was always something that would remind me of how fortunate I was to be doing this for a living.

One example, of many, of this took



place in June 1998. President Clinton was traveling from Washington DC (Andrews AFB) to China. I thought I would be assigned to China, but instead I was assigned to Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska, for the Air Force One's refueling stop. This would certainly not be as exciting as being in China. President Clinton would only be on the ground at Elmendorf AFB for a little over an hour where he would address the troops while AF1 was being refueled, then off to China.

Those of us assigned as post-standers arrived in Anchorage a few days before the President. We attended the agent briefing where the advance team briefed us on the President's itinerary, local and national "lookouts" (persons of concern) and informed us of other security assets (personnel and equipment) that would be utilized for this short visit.

On the day of the visit, we arrived at Elmendorf AFB several hours before AF1's scheduled arrival and

reported to the Secret Service Command Post. There the Site Advance Agent provided us with our posting assignments and a further briefing. There are a multitude of different post assignments at any presidential event. For this this visit I was hoping to be posted inside the main hangar for the President's address, maybe even at the stage (dais). But, instead of the hangar, I was assigned to the control tower where I would monitor air traffic between AF1 and the Air Force Air Traffic Controllers, passing relevant information via radio to the Secret Service Command Post. Not what I was hoping for, but this would be my first tower assignment, so maybe it would be interesting.

Most agents were posted several hours before the President's arrival to secure key areas and those which would be in close proximity to the President in conjunction with the completion of the bomb sweeps. However, this was not the case with my post since the control tower would be at some distance from AF1 and the President. Therefore, I had some downtime before I would need to report.

I was assigned an air force escort who asked if, before driving me to the tower, I wanted to go to the runway to watch F15 Eagle fighter jets practice touchdowns and take-offs. We did and what a great experience that was. Standing approximately two hundred feet away from some of the world's most formidable fighter jets as they came in for hot landings and then immediately fired up their afterburners in deafening emergency takeoff scenarios. I could have watched that all day.

It was time for me to assume my post in the tower control room. I was introduced to the tower personnel then set up my large "brick" radio and conducted a radio check with the

command post. I now had more downtime as we would not have direct contact with AF1 for some time until they entered Elmendorf AFB airspace. The controllers explained the various radar systems they utilized and showed me on the screens the vast and congested airspace they monitored. This included not only Elmendorf's traffic, but that of the Anchorage International Airport, which is only a dozen miles away, as well as numerous smaller airports. It was very impressive watching and listening to them as they calmly conducted their regular Air Force communications with multiple military aircraft, to include F15's, guiding them in for landings and clearing others for takeoff.

As with any Secret Service protective detail, I felt the intensity in the air as the clock ticks down and the arrival time of the protectee nears. Once AF1 reached Elmendorf AFB air space, all chatter and normal communications stopped. Radar screens soon appeared almost motionless as controllers immediately cleared all air traffic from all airports in the greater Anchorage area. This was and is standard protocol. No takeoffs occur during this time and aircraft coming in to land are put into a holding pattern outside of the designated no fly zone. I communicated AF1's status to the command post as it passed different markers. There was virtually no ground movement at the base as all Secret Service and air force vehicles were in position.

AF1 was on its final approach and I noticed there were suddenly more "authorized" Air Force personnel in the tower. All were there to see one thing - Air Force One. AF1 is not the world's (not even America's) largest plane or the fastest, nor has any guns, bombs, or missiles; yet, it is the most powerful and symbolic aircraft ever built.

All eyes peered out the tower windows. Suddenly AF1 majestically broke through the clouds. An immediate sense of patriotism and pride hit all of us in the tower simultaneously. Personnel, all with big smiles on their faces were pointing saying things like "there it is," "look at that" and "cool." It struck me how these air force professionals, controllers and the like, who on a daily basis would witness some of the most technologically advanced, fastest and most lethal, aircraft in the world perform, watched with awe and excitement as AF1 made its grand decent and graceful landing. No other plane in the world has this impact on people.

The flying White House and the symbol of freedom throughout the world -this was a good assignment.

Photo: US Air Force





# aRt Cottage

by FROgard [www.aRtCottage.info](http://www.aRtCottage.info)

## Handmade for the Holidays

Holiday shopping is well underway. If you are looking for those unique items, aRt Cottage's Holiday Boutique is featuring one-of-a-kind gifts, all hand-crafted by local artists.

Fingerless gloves, scarves, coasters, notebooks, designer mugs, jewelry, shawls, and toddlers "lovies" are only a few of the items available in our Holiday Boutique. Some of my favorite pieces are unique creatures hanging on the walls



which are assembled from found items.

This month, Saturdays are special here at aRt Cottage. On December 7, 14, and 21, from 11am to 5pm, we are rewarding purchases with one unique vintage ornament from our tree. This is a way of saying thank you for your support and for visiting us. These ornaments are sure to bring back memories.



Anything Goes

The January - February show "Anything Goes", opens on Saturday January 4th. The public is invited to come to meet the artists at their reception from 2 to 4. There will be live music and refreshments. This is a free event.

All mediums are accepted, and all shows at aRt Cottage are non-juried. Everyone has an equal opportunity. Artists are welcome to submit their work between now and Dec. 26. Go to [artcottage.info](http://artcottage.info) and click on the artist submission page. It's as easy as that. We look forward to many newcomers in 2020. For more information call (925) 956-3342

aRt Cottage is located at 2238 Mt. Diablo St., Concord. Open Tuesday - Friday 11am-5pm. [artcottage.info](http://artcottage.info).



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# Out to Lunch

by Rich Grubb

In what was previously a gastronomical wasteland for good restaurant food, new places are popping up in with increased frequency. One such place, Mona's Bar & Grill at 4535 Clayton Road in Concord which opened just over a year ago has already developed quite a popular reputation as having the area's "Best Burgers." This is Mona's 3rd location, so I had to check out what all the fuss was about.

The brainchild of partners Mouloud Toumert from Algeria and Dennis Aragon who hails from Peru, the two started the first Mona's in Walnut Creek on Geary Road (adjacent to Lunardi's Market) 6 years ago.

For the previous decade the two worked for the iconic burger chain Barney's which has its roots in the Piedmont/Berkeley area.

After consuming one of Mona's signature 7 oz cheeseburger handcrafted from Niman Ranch grass-fed chuck served on a Brioche bun, the connection between their establishments and Barney's is most evident. If one does not care for beef, Mona's also offers Turkey and veggie options.

Their commitment to quality can also be found in their handmade milkshakes which feature vanilla Blue Bunny Ice Cream with over 10 choices of flavorings from Very Berry to Espresso Shot. Their shakes are also an area favorite.

Mona's slightly more expensive

burgers come with gourmet fixings served with your choice of house-made sauces: BBQ, ranch, blue cheese, Dijon-aioli or chipotle-aoli.

According to Aragon "using top level ingredients comes first with us in everything we serve." This is shown with Mona's wide selection of fried onion rings, sweet potatoes, and several shapes of fries that are prepared in separate fryers.

Their salad selection is varied with large helpings that can be an entrée or shared. These are no ordinary salads. Indicative of Mona's leafy side is their Chicken Cobb

creation. The bacon was crispy, the avocados perfectly ripe, and the marinated strips of chicken breast and crumbled bleu cheese were delicious.

Another salad winner is their Tri-Tip Arugula which includes cooked to order steak, beets, goat cheese, and crispy onions served with a house made vinaigrette.

Unlike their two other independently operated Mona's, Mona's Bar and Grill has a much larger dining area, a full bar, and a much-expanded menu that goes far beyond burgers and shakes.

If one does not care for burger fare, Mona's has a selection of pastas, all made with house made sauces. A basic

Bolognese (meat), Chicken Alfredo, and Marsala, are among their menu items.

For meat lovers Mona's cooked to order char-roasted steak sandwich with jack cheese and grilled onions is a winner as is a New York steak plate. In addition, on Friday night they serve a special brisket entrée and on Saturday's an awesome \$17.95 prime rib dinner. I tried the slow-cooked medium rare



serve traditional Eggs Benedict to French toast and Omelet menu along with original dishes not seen elsewhere. Their prime rib French dip and Belgium Waffles with crème fraiche are special. Of note is Mona's version of a Monte Cristo sandwich

called a Croque Monsieur with ham and Swiss cheese finished with greens and a béchamel sauce.

For those who enjoy a libation in the afternoon or at a late lunch, Mona's full-service bar operates a Happy Hour Friday through Sunday menu each day between 2 pm and 5 pm and 4:30 to 6 pm Monday through Thursday. They feature a \$ 7.00 quarter pounder and fries and Buffalo wings or chicken tenders for five bucks along with discount soda's and milkshakes. There are also cocktails including Margaritas and Mojitos go for \$5.00.

The owner's Mona's take great pride in the quality of their premium mixed alcoholic beverages. I tried their award-winning Basel Tajin Gin Gimlet. But, I slightly preferred Aragon's Peruvian inspired Pisco Sour.

Mona's is a family friendly place that has a solid Child's Menu. Mona's exterior is a bit understated on Clayton Rd. and therefore, easy to drive pass. But make no mistake, Mona's is a dining destination you will want to remember.



Prime cut. Served with mashed potatoes and perfectly prepared fresh mixed vegetables, this item compared favorably to premium steak house quality found in restaurants I can't afford to normally visit.

On weekends between 9 am and 2 pm, Mona's on Clayton Road serves an extensive Brunch Menu inspired by San Francisco's famous Baker Street Bistro where Aragon used to work. They

- 2 outstanding meals served daily
- Concierge style service
- Chauffeured transportation
- Weekly housekeeping & fresh linens
- Abundant program of diverse recreational and cultural offerings
- On-call 24-hour professional staffing
- Community gardens for green thumbs
- Full service beauty salon
- Library and computer center
- Workout Room along with regular exercise classes
- Arts & Crafts Area
- Community Theatre Room

## ARF UPDATE

by David King

### ARF Adoption Stars



#### GHOST

Meet Ghost, Certified Adventure Dog. 1 & 1/2-year-old Ghost is a spunky, energetic Siberian Husky mix who's a bundle of fun. Between going on long walks, running around at the park, playing with toys, and exploring new places, this is a guy who prefers to be in motion as often as possible. He's also bright, outgoing, will do just about anything for a treat, and happens to be a pro at fetch. To help Ghost put his best paw forward in his new home, complimentary enrollment in ARF's basic manners class is included in his adoption. We recommend he does not go into a home that has cats or small animals. He currently weighs 48 pounds. <https://arflife.org/dogs/27108699>

#### FELIX



Nineteen-week-old Lilypad is a dar8-year-old Felix is a regal gentlemen that is eagerly looking forward to occupying your cozy sofa this winter. He is a mellow Manx mix that likes life in the slow lane. His idea of a great afternoon is stretching his paws, eating treats, and relaxing in the beaming sunlight peeking in through the window. He likes to set the pace with petting and will let you know when he wants gentle cheek scratches by approaching with soft eyes and leaning his head into your hand. Felix will be happy to find a quiet home that will give him a safe place to settle in and call his own. <https://arflife.org/cats/26954837>

ARF encourages family members to participate in the adoption process, especially children. Please visit [www.arflife.org](http://www.arflife.org) information on adoption and to view more cute canines and great cats. Meet your forever friend at Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation at 2890 Mitchell Drive in Walnut Creek. Adoption hours are: Noon to 6 pm Wednesday & Thursday, Noon to 7 pm Friday, and Noon to 6 pm Saturday & Sunday. Special adoption hours Tuesdays 11/26, 12/3 12/10 & 12/17, Noon to 6 pm.



## Ruby Dooby Do to the Rescue

Dachshund/Beagle/Chi mixes 9-year-old Shawn and his 3-year-old son, Kyle, still haven't found their forever home. They are a bonded duo that need to be placed in the same home. They are not the type of dogs to come up enthusiastically wagging to potential adopters but once they find they can trust, they become big cuddle monsters and love to play. Shawn (white stripe in photo) and Kyle (the Shyles) had been part of a backyard breeding operation and were badly neglected. Both were terrified of almost everything. Kyle required surgery to fix his leg and both needed teeth extractions. It's been many months now since they were rescued and while they are still scared of new people and of the big world, both are now happy, healthy boys. They LOVE to play with each other and toys. These entertaining mischief-makers and are now both pretty good on leash and navigate stairs. Both are huge cuddle-bug, lap lovers. Shawn (12-lbs) is good with all dogs while Kyle (10 lbs) can be a little protective of his dad. We recommend a mellow, adult home with no kids or cats. Ideally, their new family will have experience with fearful dogs. They're fine home alone. An adjustment period will be needed, but, they will thrive with understanding and patience.

Tails of Gray is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization located in Clayton. They offer a safe and loving sanctuary for senior dogs regardless of breed, health or ease of placement. The special two-for-one \$200 adoption fee for Shawn and Kyle helps cover vaccinations, spay/neuter surgeries, microchipping, and medical/health expenses incurred while readying them for adoption. To adopt, fill out the on-line application at: <http://www.tailsofgray.org/adoption-application-1.html>.

Other ways to support this organization include: Help raise money for Tails of Gray while walking your own dog through the ResQWalk smart phone app. Download the app, press start and get to walking! You can also purchase a Bissell pet product and enter the 'ADOPT' promo code and select Tails of Gray as your pet rescue organization of choice and a percentage of your purchase will be donated. Or purchase a custom license plate-themed tag (TagsForHope) for your pet and 25% of your purchase will be donated directly to Tails of Gray.



**Dog Bites** "Pawsitive" News: If your pet is microchipped, your odHere's a shout-out to Muttville. If you are over 62 and want to adopt a senior dog, Muttville waives its \$200 adoption fee on all Seniors for Seniors adoptions. Or if that isn't a possibility, Muttville has another solution: Join Muttville's Cuddle Club. Scientific studies have shown that pets can provide health benefits such as a reason to get more exercise which can lead to increased socialization, lower blood pressure and cholesterol, less depression, less anxiety because of a greater sense of physical security, you can even save money on medical costs because of improved health.

There's even an alternative to a long-term adoption commitment. Senior can now come cuddle with a Muttville mutt! Muttville's Cuddle Club is an opportunity for senior citizens to spend time with some wonderful senior dogs in a home-like community space. The dogs enjoy the cuddle time, so everyone wins. Senior citizen living in the Bay Area that would like to spend some time snuggling up with our older mutts on a sofa, should contact Muttville at [seniorsforseniors@muttville.org](mailto:seniorsforseniors@muttville.org) to find out more. Not a senior? Help support this program by becoming a Mutt Guardian. Gifts of beds, dog bowls and medications are also always welcome donations.

Speaking of gifts, don't forget Fido when you're out shopping for family members. Indestructible chew toys like Kongs that can be stuffed with doggy treats make a great choice.

# SHAWN AND KYLE

If you've over-indulged on Aunt Em's fruitcake, how about taking your pup out for a walk? The exercise will not only keep the waistline in check, but it can reduce stress for both you and your dog.

#### Holiday Pet Dos and Don'ts A Bone to Pick:

Holidays can be hazardous for dogs from festive decorations to knocked over candles to chocolates left in paw's reach. Make sure you take the necessary precautions to keep your pets safe. Securely anchor your Christmas tree so it doesn't fall onto your pet. Be aware that mistletoe can cause vomiting and possibly cardiovascular problems. Be diligent about those holiday festive foods and drinks (and also advise guests).

Avoid leaving unattended plates of food and alcoholic drinks. Ingested alcoholic drinks can make your pet go into a coma. As tempting as it may be to indulge your pets with special table scraps, it's better to avoid feeding fatty and spicy human foods. It's also better to forgo giving Fido those leftover bones. Their temporary enjoyment is likely to end up in an upset stomach.

**A Final Note:** Columnist Jill Hedgecock (and on behalf of her own three rescue dogs) wish you a safe and happy Holiday Season!



*Editor's Note: Ruby is Concord's Instagram celebrity with more than 99,100 followers. [Instagram.com/Rubydooby\\_Do](https://www.instagram.com/Rubydooby_Do). Column written by Jill Hedgecock. Her novel, *Between Shadow's Eyes*, features Ruby on the cover [www.jillhedgecock.com](http://www.jillhedgecock.com).*

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# Whole Foods Markets' 5% Day Uplifts Lives

On October 17, seven Contra Costa Whole Foods Markets, including the 365 by Whole Foods, donated 5% of their net sales, or \$31,000, on that day to White Pony Express (WPE).

WPE's Food Rescue program picks up over 7,000 lb. of surplus food from grocery stores, produce markets, and restaurants every day. It then distributes that food to over 70 nonprofit organizations that provide it to the hungry throughout Contra Costa County.

"We are so pleased to have raised these funds from our seven stores to support White Pony Express," remarked Amber Parker, Marketing Manager—Community Engagement & Events for Whole Foods Market. "I

think this shows the community's support for White Pony Express and the amazing work that they do in Contra Costa County. Our shoppers all live here and it is very evident with this support that they choose to give here as well."

The Whole Foods Markets that participated in the "5% Day" included stores in Dublin, Fremont, San Ramon, Lafayette, and two in Walnut Creek plus 365 by Whole Foods in Concord. Their participation is in addition to their ongoing support of WPE.

"Whole Foods' stores, WPE's largest food donor, provides an average of 2,200 pounds of fresh food daily, which plays a major role in helping WPE to aid 80,000 people, which is 70% of the population in Contra Costa County living in poverty," said Erica Brooks, WPE's Director of Strategic Partnerships. "It was such an honor when Whole Foods provided us with the opportunity to share our story within their stores. We are immensely grateful to benefit from the 5% Day as we come together and work to uplift lives."

WPE is a mostly-volunteer powered organization headquartered in Pleasant Hill which helps people by providing free food and clothing. The organization was chosen by State Senator Steve Glazer as 2018 California Non-Profit of the Year which is one of many recognitions it has received over the past few years. For more information on WPE, visit [www.whiteponyexpress.org](http://www.whiteponyexpress.org).



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# Inmates Prepare Toys for Local Children

For the 27th straight year, representatives from several Contra Costa County non-profit agencies were on hand for the annual Marsh Creek Detention Facility's Holiday Toy Show to fulfill children's Christmas wish lists.

A dedicated group of Marsh Creek Detention Facility inmates refurbished 544 handcrafted toys and 90 bicycles over the past year which will then be given to the children who are being served by these agencies during the upcoming holidays. They have been fixing up used bikes to look and ride like brand new, and crafting colorful and beautiful wooden toys, such as, motorcycle rocking chairs, spinning carousels, cars, doll houses, baby cradles, toy tractors, train sets, and more. All the toy makers and/or bike mechanics are students in the Contra Costa Adult School, an accredited school directed by the CCCOE, located within the jail facility.

All the attendees were absolutely awestruck when walking into the Detention Center's woodshop, which had been turned into an elaborate, colorful Santa's Workshop. Coordinated by Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE) instructor John Putt and with the help of some of his adult students, their beautiful bicycles and toys were on display among Holiday



decorations. "This outstanding event always officially kicks off the holidays for me," said Sheriff Livingston addressing the inmates who had been working on the toys and bikes, "I want to thank you gentlemen and those before you that have been working diligently on this

year-long program." Contra Costa County non-profit organizations that attended the Toy Show included: Bay Area Housing District, Bay Area Rescue Mission, Brighter Beginnings, Contra Costa County Independent Living Skills Program, El Cerrito Rotary, Friends of Oakley, Pittsburg Police Department, Shelter Inc., The Salvation Army-Antioch Corps, Shepherd's Gate, La Casa, and VESTIA, Inc.

The students have produced many great toys using their hearts, minds, and hands to create tangible products," says instructor John Putt. "Many inmates are very proud of their work and proud their products are going to under-served children." After the toy project is completed, Putt said that he would be back teaching basic carpentry skills, along with more specific proficiencies, such as framing and installing sheet rock. Of course, they will also make time to begin building toys and refurbishing used bikes for next year.

# Blue Star Mom's Concord 5000 Race Results

More than 200 people took part in the 3rd annual Concord 5000 on Sunday, November 10 at Newhall Park in Concord. The charity fundraiser proceeds benefitted the Contra Costa Blue Star Moms. The Contra Costa Blue Star Moms will use the funds to send care packages to troops over the Holidays. Winning the men's race and setting a new course record was Anthony Cortes in a time of 17:40. He was followed by Wyatt Erickson at 19:19, Alex Walker at 19:54, and Kent Sasaki at 20:59. Kevin Sinats clocked in at 21:05 to round out the top 5 men. The women's champion was Loren Delmonico with a time of 23:32. In second place was Aubree Hayes at 24:03. Rounding out the top 5 for the women were Skylar Bennett at 24:22, Sara Martinez at 25:24, and Karolina Simmons, just fractions of a second behind Martinez.

Medals were awarded by Concord Mayor Carlyn Obringer and Concord Vice-Mayor Tim McCallian. Theresa Neal, a Board Member with the Blue Star Moms, remarked "We are thrilled so many people came out in support of our cause. The troops serving far from home really appreciate the care packages we send, and this event will help us expand our reach." Next year's race is slated for Sunday, November 8, 2020 in Newhall Park. The race website is [www.concord5000.com](http://www.concord5000.com). Contra Costa Blue Star Moms, California Chapter 20, is a non-partisan, non-political, non-discriminatory organization. whose mission is to provide support for members of the United States Armed Forces and its veterans. [www.ccbuestarmoms.org](http://www.ccbuestarmoms.org)

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**THE JOURNEY-MAN JOURNAL**  
by Eileen Majors

# A Hope Valley Holiday Road Trip

“We greatly enjoyed the small-resort experience at Sorensen’s. Fueled by a soul-warming meal in the café, our hike was truly picturesque. The West Fork of the Carson River winds through the property for a beautiful hike, snowshoe or cross-country ski.” - *NorCalTravelGuide.com*.

I have always felt fortunate living where I do. There is so much opportunity to find adventure nearby or escape for

an impromptu short getaway for some recreation and relaxation. The holiday season can be quite hectic, and at this time of year, I always have a desire for a quick jaunt to the

mountains for a change of pace.

Seeking out a much-needed boost to my holiday spirit, I embark on a vigorous online search, and stumbled onto a Christmas cabin nestled in the woods at Sorensen’s Resort in Hope Valley, California. The resort is approximately four hours east of San Francisco off Highway 88, twenty miles south of Lake Tahoe. I had no idea what a treat my companion and I were in for.



you book your stay. As we unpacked the car, we had already discovered the peace and serenity of California’s Hope Valley.

There are plenty of outdoor adventures in this forest wonderland, from fishing, hiking, and bicycling to snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, or just relaxing by the fire with a favorite book.

The west fork of the

Carson River winds through the high mountain meadows at Sorensen’s Resort. Also, with Kirkwood Ski Area and Grover Hot Springs State Park nearby and of course, beautiful Lake Tahoe just up the road, there is no end to the recreational possibilities available at this getaway.

We were pleasantly greeted by the friendly staff at Sorensen’s. I had opted to stay in one of their log cabins and chose the St. Nick’s Cabin since this was for our



Resort in the snow

resort’s nearby country café.

Sorensen’s full-service restaurant creates some great mountain favorites. I enjoyed a deliciously moist slice of quiche served with fruit and flavorful muffin in the morning.

With complimentary hot cocoa, tea and coffee served throughout the day, the café became the preferred location where most guests would rendezvous to start the day before heading off for a day’s adventure.

Evening time brought guests inside for dinner by the fire. They serve New York steaks, salads, and scrumptious, house-made desserts. I went for their signature Beef Burgundy Stew.

They offer an excellent assortment of wines, champagnes, and beer, both imported and domestic.

Some enjoyed beverages indoors next to the large-window views of Hope Valley scenery; many meandered outdoors to take a seat on the deck or by the campfire while others soaked up the warmth of the wood-fired sauna.

After a fabulous meal and a short stay at the campfire, we headed back to our cabin to enjoy our dessert by the wood

stove and get ready for a morning hike. Our visit delivered a wonderful hike right on the property where a spectacular backdrop of fall color surrounded us. Whether nature is clinging on to its final days of



Sorensen’s Resort and Restaurant



Snowshoe @ Sunset2

We followed the Carson River on our journey into Hope Valley entering the high-elevation forest at 7,000 feet on the eastern side of Carson Pass. Large, smooth rocks set into hillsides next to giant trees towering over a clean forest floor promoted a picture of solitude.

The charming setting offers cozy cottages, log cabins, and mountain home vacation rentals amid 165 acres of pine and aspen forest. On their website ([sorensensresort.com](http://sorensensresort.com)) you can download a printable map of the resort with locations and descriptions of the cabins before

pre-holiday adventure. This little gem depicting Santa’s very own cabin was not the fanciest of their accommodations, but it comfortably holds two and was reconstructed from Santa’s Village in Scotts Valley, a whimsical land I remember from my childhood. A framed photo of the holiday village took me back to that wonderful memory I’d nearly forgotten. As a little girl, our family had visited Santa’s Village and Christmas came to life for me there.

Downstairs our small but cute cabin had a full kitchen with a cozy little living room and wood stove. The bath had a shower and oversized Jacuzzi-style tub. A circular staircase lands in the queen bedroom loft with a lovely private deck out back overlooking stunning views of the forest. A giant rock, taller than me, standing just outside our back door, seemed to anchor the scene as we enjoyed our hot tea and cocoa on the downstairs deck.

Nothing beats waking up to the morning’s brisk fresh mountain air, infused with the alluring scents of home-cooked breakfasts billowing from the



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## San Ramon Singing Nurse Invited to China to Perform for WWII Vets

Francine Fitzgerald is an Occupational/Employee Health Nurse at San Ramon Regional Medical Center. She is also the only Caucasian member of the local Chinese band, Arthur and Cool Cats which traveled to China earlier this year to sing at two benefit concerts for WWII veteran families.

China was the first country to enter World War II and was an ally of the United States at the same time they were resisting and escaping communism. During this tumultuous time, American music became the sound and beacon of freedom.

In May of this year, they were invited to Taipei, Taiwan, to sing at two benefit concerts for WWII veteran families. The show called "Memory Lane" features primarily popular American songs from the 50's and 60's with one exception.

"Being the one Caucasian in an all Chinese band is a huge compliment," said Fitzgerald. "I was first asked to sing this traditional Chinese folk song, 'In a Far Away Land', at the San Jose Chinese Cultural Fair a few years ago and then asked to sing it again at an international Chinese medicine conference, in front of Chinese doctors from all over the world. From there, our band was invited to perform in Taipei. Singing this beloved folk song in Chinese for the Chinese was a huge honor."

The song is a touching story about a Chinese maiden who tends her sheep in a remote land when along comes a boy who sees her beauty.

"Connecting with people and making them feel good is what I like to do.



Arthur and Cool Cats on stage with family members after the show in Taiwan. Francine is second from the left.

Performing and nursing are a lot alike. It's that heart-to-heart connection," Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald has been singing, playing guitar and traveling with Arthur & Cool Cats for 15 years and a nurse for 35.



A San Jose Mandarin newspaper promotes Arthur and Cool Cats show, "Memory Lane". Francine Fitzgerald, center.



theRIGHTmove

by Terrylynn Fisher, Broker Associate  
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## The True Value of a Real Estate Agent

With the wealth of information available Online, many of today's consumers are incredibly knowledgeable about the home buying and selling process. Add in the desire to save, or make, as much money as possible, and it's easy to see why you might be tempted to pass on hiring an agent. Before flying solo, consider these benefits of having an empathetic, experienced negotiator and advocate on your side.

**Local Data and Insider Knowledge** - You may have lived in your neighborhood a long time and know exactly how much the neighbor's house sold for, but do you have the tools of an expert? An agent's local data can show you everything that's selling right now and what buyers in your area are looking for and are prepared to pay for your house. There are differences in every home sale that affect value, even between neighbors, and a lot that goes into pricing strategy. Many sellers will say "I can always drop the price". Did you know that the longer a home is on the market, the lower the final sale price? Do you know why? Your Realtor does. Your Realtor will help you understand the market and what the process might throw at you so you can be proactive.

**Contract Expertise** - Buying a home is one of the biggest decisions you'll ever make, and the amount of paperwork and legal jargon required proves it. Omitting or mis-wording even one line can lead to a costly mistake that's much higher than the price of an agent's commission. Your Realtor has extensive knowledge of the contract, addendums, counter offers, and other documents and their usage. Use the wrong form and you could inadvertently be making a mistake that costs time and money, or worse your purchase

or sale. **Skilled Negotiation** - Haggling over contract contingencies and home pricing can lead to negotiation fatigue and poor judgment calls for emotionally invested buyers and sellers. It's hard not to take it personally. Your Realtor can help you stand back, explain the pros and cons of your decisions and their ramifications. It serves you to work with a Realtor who'll put your best interests first. With single agency, meaning your Realtor is representing only one buyer or seller in a transaction, you get the assurance of advocacy when the going gets tough. Behind the scenes Realtors are avoiding issues on your behalf just by the experience and knowledge of many transactions. There are no less than 20 - 30 things that can or might be negotiated in a transaction. Don't you want an advocate to help you with options and strategy?

**Professional Networks** - The complexity of property transactions means inspectors, engineers, contractors, plumbers, landscapers, pool services, electricians, designers, stagers, attorneys, lenders, financial advisers and many more are also involved. A well-connected agent can put you in touch with other qualified and trustworthy real estate professionals who are ready to help.

*Terrylynn Fisher, Broker, #1 in Units sold in 2018, Dudum Real Estate, DRE#01882902, Senior Real Estate Specialist (SRES), 5 YR-5 Star Professional Voted by clients, and Voted by panel of Brokers, One of Top 500 Brokers in the nation. She's got the experience. For a Buying or Selling Plan, call 925 876-0966, info@BuyStageSell.com. DRE#00615420*

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by David King and Bill Yarborough



Bill Yarborough of Clayton has lived a successful adult life, working for a large public accounting firm and then in the financial industry. He has

also served as president for two non-profits and has written a novel for which he is currently seeking publication. Although it is fiction, it is based on his real-life experiences which are far from normal.

In the September, October, and November issues of the Diablo Gazette, Bill recalled his time as a young child, age 4, in what he concluded was the CIA's notorious MK-Ultra program; an experience he endured with his younger brother and

older sister. He also described the startling manner in which their repressed memories arose, his subsequent healing journey, and his heartfelt memories of the Mexican boy from a Shamanic tribe who helped him

survive his MK-Ultra experiences.

MK-Ultra was a secret mind-control program operated by the CIA in the 1950s. The New York Times first exposed it in 1974, and a number of government and journalistic investigations followed. Although MK-Ultra experimented predominately on adults, it also placed children in a program designed to create super soldiers and spies. It took 30 years before Bill and his brother and sister cracked open the Pandora's Box of repressed memories, an awakening that began in the 1980s. In this article, Bill shares more shocking details about his MK-Ultra experiences and the therapeutic impact of his writing journey.

One question I've struggled with is why the MK-Ultra project I was in (there were 149 separate MK-Ultra projects) was so brutal with its concentration camp-like atmosphere. As highlighted in previous articles, I recall it included jail cells, electroshock, drugs, deprivation, isolation, psychological assault, and other traumas. I've also wondered how my brother, sister, and I ended up in such a program.

Stephen Kinzer's recent book "Poisoner in Chief" helped shed light on those questions. His book, featured a couple of months ago by The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and NPR's "Fresh Air", exposes the shadowy life of Sidney Gottlieb—the man who headed

up MK-ULTRA for the CIA. Kinzer spells out how the War Crimes Staff after World War II was used to identify Nazi war criminals with biological weapons and mind control expertise as part of Operation Paperclip, a program created to identify Nazi talent to help America win the Cold War. A number of individuals with mind control expertise were brought to the United States to ultimately work for the CIA in MK-Ultra. Some of them conducted horrific experiments on human subjects in the concentration camps during the war—but those war crimes were overlooked to garner their expertise.

My father worked on the War Crimes Staff of the US Army where he interviewed Nazis running the Dachau concentration camp. He shielded this experience from my brother, sister, and me for many years. I had always known my father fought in the US Army during World War II and met my German mother after the war ended. I also knew they were married in Germany before returning to the United States. But one day in my thirties I noticed my parents were married in 1947

two years after the war ended. I asked my mother, "What was Dad doing in Germany two years after the war?"

"Oh, he worked on the War Crimes Staff both in Dachau and Nuremberg."

Stunned, I quizzed my father about his experience, but it was clear he didn't want to discuss it. When I pressed my mother on what specifically he did, her answers were vague. "Oh, he worked for both the prosecution and defense," she replied, reluctant to offer specifics. Of course, I understand his experiences interviewing the perpetrators of war crimes would have been traumatic and may have explained his reluctance to talk, but I can't help wonder if he was one of those individuals assigned by Operation Paperclip to identify potential mind control experts for the CIA.

Kinzer's book points out that a lot of MK-Ultra activity centered in Maryland, where we lived as young children. My father may well have encountered individuals he met from his war crimes work again in Maryland—which led us into the MK-ULTRA program.

As I mentioned in a previous article my father displayed aspects of a split-personality when I confronted him with our memories of that program—one personality claimed ignorance while another displayed knowledge of the program and defended the people who ran it. One key objective of MK-Ultra with adults was to

create split personalities, so my father could have been a victim himself.

In the last article, I discussed the various healing techniques I've used to address my childhood traumas. One I did not mention is how writing has had a tremendous cathartic effect. My interest in writing began immediately after my brother had his psychotic breakdown at age 23. I experienced significant anguish about his plight—we were very close—and plunged into creative writing, mostly horror short stories, to escape my depressed state of mind. I came to realize later that some of the comments my brother made during his psychotic episode related to our repressed memories. And I believe some of those repressed memories influenced my writing—in that they pointed to the buried secrets in my character's lives. I recently updated one of those long-ago written short stories named "Night Mother," which was just published last month in an anthology of horror short stories:

"Jitter # 8" by Jitter Press, a part of Prolific Press Inc.

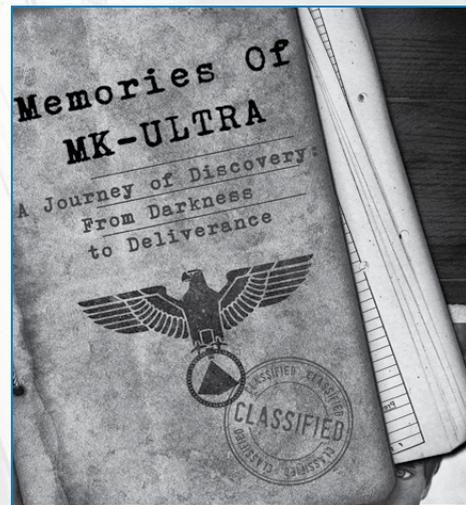
A number of years after my short story writing endeavors, I began to write "MEMORIES OF MK-ULTRA", a novel inspired by my true-life experiences. It took considerable time to write, since I edited it and re-edited it again

and again while holding down a fulltime job. But it was a bit like the psychotherapy and energetic healing I was receiving in that it helped sort out my experiences in a less threatening manner.

It would be fair to say my therapy and writing endeavors sometimes intersected. Although my brother, sister, and I recalled a significant majority of our repressed memories on our own, several did arise as a result of therapy sessions. In the November article, I recounted how the memory of the Mexican boy surfaced after a week of intensive therapy with my Texas therapist.

I had an experience like that with my California therapist as well. Although we primarily addressed issues that I was struggling with in the current time—sometimes they led back to my traumatic experiences from childhood, often ones I had previously remembered but hadn't yet processed. But on one occasion, I asked my therapist to conduct a hypnotherapy session to help me recall the first day I entered the MK-Ultra program, something I'd never been able to recall. I made the request since my wife had said there was a gap at the opening of my novel. "You don't show the kids entering the MK-Ultra program," she said. "They just appear there." Of course, since my book was fiction and only inspired by true events I could have made it up—I made up other scenes in the novel. But I couldn't bring myself to do that since deep down I wanted to know what actually happened.

During that session, a pretty clear



memory arose of riding in a car down a long driveway lined with trees toward a large house. When we arrived at its door, I was dragged into the house by strangers and brought me down into its basement. With that memory I plugged the opening gap of my novel.

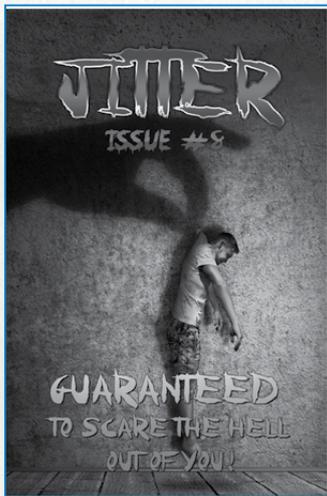
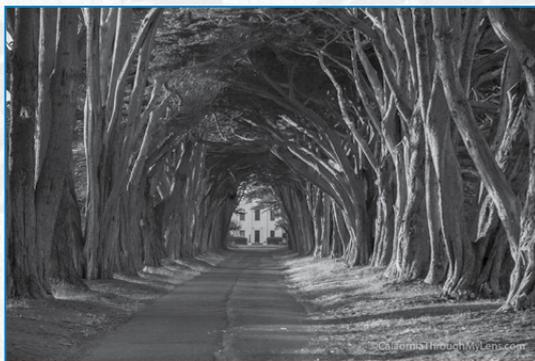
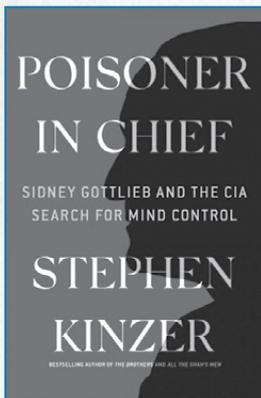
Of course, a question I often get is why did I write a novel rather than a memoir? I did so because of my young age in the program and the nature of repressed memories coming to the surface 30 years later. Also, our memories often came to my brother, sister, and me in a different fashion—mine, while consciously awake, my sister, while dreaming, and my brother, while in what our Texas therapist called altered states of consciousness. However, our recollections were typically the same. Our repressed memories can be fuzzy though, and I couldn't write in confidence that my recollections were fully accurate. I feared I'd be second-guessing myself if I wrote a memoir and chose to write a novel inspired by actual experiences instead.

So now that it's done, the next job has started: to get a literary agent. It's a daunting effort. I've been told that very few query letters eventually lead to publication. If I'm not successful in getting a literary agent or publisher, then I will self-publish. I've worked with professional editors, taken part in many writers' conferences, workshops, and critique groups. I've also worked with anonymous beta readers through a professional focus group, who critiqued and rated my novel. The representative of the focus group told me my novel received one of the highest scores they've seen. Outside of that focus group, I've had close to another 100 people read my manuscript, with similar positive responses. Traditionally published or self-published, I will aggressively market my novel.

To that end I've just launched a website to promote my writing, short story publications, articles and interviews, and my progress toward publishing "MEMORIES OF MK-ULTRA". The link to the website is: <https://billyarborough.com/>

If you're interested in being notified of the novels publication or have a questions, please send me a note on the "contact" page of my website.

I like to close by expressing my appreciation to the Diablo Gazette for allowing me to share my story.



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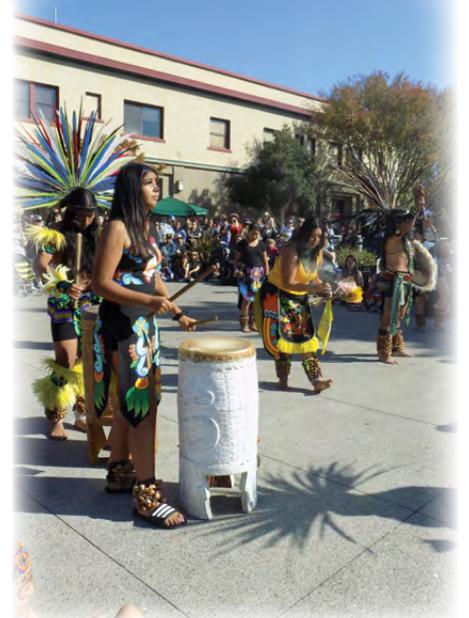
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# Views of the Valley

Photos by Micah



These turkeys were playing it safe and keeping out of forks way on Thanksgiving Day. (photo by Brian Ambrose)



November 2, Día de Muertos, Day of the Dead, Main Street celebration in Martinez



Carolers sing at "Light up the Night" Tree Lighting event in downtown Pleasant Hill Photo by Diane Walsh.



Blue Star Mom's 3rd annual Concord 5,000 winners. L-R: Concord Vice Mayor Tim McGallian, Men's Champion Anthony Cortes, Women's Champion Loren Delmonico, and Concord Mayor Carlyn Obringer

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