



At Ease!
Richard Rico

Goes down like velvet

IT'S NICE to know that in *ungovernable* California, somebody is doing something right. Especially when he's one of ours. After serving on the school board and city council, Steve Hardy in 2007 was called to Sacto by Gov. Arnold to head up the state Dept. of Alcohol Beverage Control. As I said then, the appointment wasn't overtly political. Hardy is Blue. Gov. Arnold is Red. Alcohol is color blind. ABC oversees 80,000 state alcohol licenses. A coalition of 2,000 small firms likes the job Hardy is doing. The Neighborhood Market Assn. named him its "Law Enforcement Agent of the Year." It's a big deal; good for him. With that kind of dossier you'd think Hardy might re-enter politics at home. Who knows? If Steve becomes more visible at civic events, you'll know something's up.

Like the cat on the roof for Dist. 4 Supervisor: Look for Vasquez-Pippo sightings now that Don is challenging John's seat. Their local roots run deep. They're also old friends. Just don't expect to see a Vasquez fundraiser at Pippo Park, any more than you'll see Don driving John's beater pickup in the Fiesta Days Parade.

ANY HOPEFUL who wants to see or be seen wouldn't miss Willis Jepson Middle School's 9th annual USO Style Show Feb. 26 and 27 at NT Airport. A small army of young entertainers will slip into uniform and fill Copart's hangar with the kind of 1940s music that buoyed the spirits of G.I. Joes and Janes in WWII. Half of Vacaville will be there. The kids love doing the dinner show as much as the audience eats up the mood and Chef Daniel Bell's catering. The show is wildly popular; the fact that the kids and most of the parents weren't even born in the '40s makes it even more unique. The USO-style show is a hot ticket. A few are still available at 330-7130. Ask for Janet. Dinner and show goes for \$30 for adults. It's \$20 for under 18s, over 60s, military and vets. Last year, \$15,000 was raised for Jepson's Music Boosters. Other schools' programs shared receipts. Out of necessity, next year the venue will change. But in USO style, director Patty Phillips and more than 100 young performers will make sure the show goes on.

THOSE WHO claim they walk the talk can prove it Mar. 7 at Main Street's Ulatis Creek Bridge. Upwards of 100 will gather for International Women's Day to spiritually join hands with women survivors of wars around the world. Then they'll walk en masse down Main St. to V. Museum for more words, music, dance and food. It's also a first step toward a museum event, "Africa: We Connect" this fall. At the museum last week, Mayor Len and I vowed to walk. It's not political; I can assure you that one of us is not running for anything.

People will gather on symbolic bridges all over the world in a show of solidarity. Showtime on ours is 10 a.m. All welcome. Call 447-4513 to register. As of Tuesday, Vaca had more signups than Spokane.

* * *

WESTERN RANCH on Aegean is the Pacific Hardware of pet supply stores. If they don't have it, you don't need it. This I know because, thanks to Super Pup Sam, we own one of everything in the store. It includes "bully sticks." A book said they are the ticket for teething pups. WR has a lot of them. Looks like beef jerky. I held one up and shouted over customers to Jason Boykin, store owner with his dad, Charlie: "What is this?" He shouted back, "A bull's p....!" (I can't say it.) They're all over the house now, plus every toy, treat, and leash in the animal kingdom. "How's Sam?" everyone asks. His moods swing from an angel to Damien. The golden pup is taking a bite out of life, and me. He is discovering birds and butterflies. He will fetch for treats, if he feels like it. We will be fine, as soon as the exorcist shows up.

Jason's grandfather, Ord Kyte, bought W. Ranch in the 1950s. Ord passed away last week at nearly 90. He's the gentleman who called me 35 years ago, saying he was forced to kill a mountain lion on his Mix Canyon place as the cat dragged his bleating goats into the darkness. I drove out to see it. A rogue, Fish & Game said. One of its paws covered my hand. Awesome cat.

On Ord's land is a spring with water so soft it rolls over the tongue like velvet. He sold it to health stores. Nowadays, we pay \$3 a bottle for any water. Ord's silk could be worth a fortune. Imagine, Sam, a bully stick or a bourbon. Vaca Mountain Water chaser. Who says it's a dog's life?

The author is former publisher of The Reporter.

Your Forum

In politics, money talks

But that doesn't necessarily mean California voters listen

By Thomas D. Elias

The bleating from the left has been loud and long over last month's U.S. Supreme Court ruling that will allow political advocacy advertising by corporations — even foreign-owned ones — right up until Election Day.

Meanwhile, the right rejoices over the decision rammed through by the court's narrow conservative majority.

Both sides are likely mistaken, at least as far as this rule change figures to affect California.

Corporations and wealthy individuals have been spending almost as much as they want here for many years, with little to restrict them in anything besides races for federal offices, such as president, the U.S. Senate and Congress. Just as with laws covering federal elections,



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their donations to individual candidates are limited in state elections, but not their spending on either advocacy or issue-oriented politics.

To see how this works, there's no need to look any further than the initiatives that have already qualified, or are in the process of qualifying, for this year's two statewide ballots.

Mercury Insurance, for example, spent more than \$1 million to gather the signatures needed to qualify Proposition 17, a June initiative that would let it and other car insurance firms penalize anyone who has not previously had an insurance policy or has allowed one to lapse, even if a policy was suspended because someone moved out of state for something like college or mili-

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No Schmal feat

At 86 years old, Fairfield woman continues to ski — and race

By Cecil Conley
Special to The Reporter

As an ophthalmologist for Fairfield's Sutter Regional Medical Foundation, Dr. Donna Seabrooks treats her share of senior patients.

It is safe to say she rarely comes across one quite like 86-year-old Phyllis Schmal.

Seabrooks never ceases to be amazed by Phyllis, who refuses to sit still when most folks her age have retired to the rocking chair. The Fairfield resident has nothing against chairs, rocking or otherwise. Phyllis has no problem climbing into a chair as long as it is attached to a ski lift. Despite the inherent risks of skiing at her age, she has given no thought to slaloming into the sunset in the near future.



"As long as I can walk, I can ski," Phyllis said. "I'm going to keep on skiing. It's easy. It's downhill all the way."

Skiing is much more than a recreational activity for Phyllis, who is quite proud of all the trophies and medals she has won over the years. An armoire in her living room is filled with her skiing trophies, and figure more honors will be added as Phyllis continues to compete in races held west of the Rockies.

Phyllis' competitive fire was ignited during her days at Grant High School in Portland, Ore., in the 1930s, when classmates talked her into joining them on a skiing



Photo courtesy of Christophe Genty

A little thing like age won't keep Phyllis Schmal off the slopes.

trip to nearby Mount Hood.

"Everybody in high school skied," recalled Phyllis, who was hooked despite having no idea what she was doing on the slopes.

After graduating from the University of Oregon in the early

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Coming Feb. 21:
We feature The Reporter Book Club's next selection, "The Confession of Max Tivoli," by Davis author Andrew Sean Greer.

Sorry, Elspeth Gootch doesn't live here anymore

As you sort through your daily mail, do you ever wonder if the people responsible for printing out address labels on catalogs, newsletters and magazines may have a truly bizarre sense of humor when it comes to spelling the names of addressees?

Here at the newspaper, we receive truckloads of pre-addressed press releases and announcements as well as such varied magazines as Poultry Press and Lubrication Management & Technology. For some reason — perhaps the aforementioned bizarre sense of humor — the

spellings of our names frequently leave a lot to be desired and more to be deciphered.

I was reminded of this not long ago when I received an important missive from a local art gallery addressed to Brein Hamled.

Hmmmm. Not bad. Most of the letters are there, but you wouldn't immediately associate the name with the one on my Santa Clara County birth certificate of 60 years ago.



Brian Hamlin

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Schmal ...

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1950s, Phyllis worked for the government in the atomic energy field, eventually ending up in Washington, D.C., working for Adm. Hyman Rickover, known as "The Father of the Nuclear Navy," where she helped design the first atomic submarine.

She was then sent to Munich, Germany, working for the Department of Defense. While there for six years, Phyllis took advantage of the nearby Alps, skiing in France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

It was in Munich she met U.S. Army Lt. Col. Robert Schmal.

"Bless his heart, he didn't know how to ski when I met him," said Phyllis, with a laugh. But Phyllis taught the Lowell, Ind., native how to



Photo courtesy of Cecil Conley

Phyllis Schmal poses for a photo at her Fairfield home.

navigate the Alps. They married in 1957 and Bob quit skiing soon after.

"That was OK," Phyllis said of Bob of dropping the sport. "He had already won my heart."

When the couple returned stateside, Phyllis began to take skiing more seriously. She took racing lessons, purchased better gear and her confidence

soared.

In 1967, she won a gold medal at the age of 44 during a national ski competition in a masters slalom race at Stevens Pass in Washington.

"It was real gold," she said of the medal. She has won four silver medals since.

There is still no stopping Phyllis — even a number of broken bones over the years

from bad falls while racing haven't deterred the downhill racer.

"I've had my share of breaks over the years," Phyllis said, referring to bones and not luck. "But I heal well. I've got no pain. No arthritis."

Bob passed away 11 years ago after 42 years of marriage. But Phyllis has a longer marriage with the Palo Alto Ski Club.

She will be skiing with some of those members when she leaves tomorrow for a weeklong trip to Squaw Valley, her favorite Sierra destination. Mother Nature will be providing ideal skiing conditions.

Phyllis fell in love with Squaw Valley and then moved there after attending the 1960 Winter Olympics.

"Squaw Valley and Lake Tahoe, what a beautiful combination," she said. "I had a place right on the lake."

In order to hold her own on the slopes, Phyllis stays in

shape by taking her beagle Bobby for three walks a day. She takes the stairs after leaving her second-floor apartment in a retirement community.

"There's 22 steps," she said. "I always take the stairs."

When asked if skiing keeps her young, Phyllis responded by saying, "I prefer to say it prevents you from acting and feeling old."

The continued care she receives from Sutter also helps, allowing Phyllis to lead a healthy and active lifestyle, and Dr. Seabrooks is honored to be part of her care team.

"She does not let her age impact anything in her life," Seabrooks said. "It's her attitude. It's phenomenal. She has the greatest zest and zeal for life. She's choosing how she's going to age. With Phyllis, aging is a celebration."

Segments of this story was first published for the Sutter Regional Medical Foundation.

Hamlin ...

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To be honest, if this was happening to just me, I could care less. I've been called a helluva lot worse than "Brein Hammler." As long as the name on my driver's license is correct whenever I hand it to some frowning California Highway Patrol officer, everything's good.

The address label misidentifications we receive continue to occur with remarkable frequency and, frankly, are more than a little bit weird.

Our best remembered victim was a no-nonsense former business editor names Lesley Guth. No Mary Smith, to be sure, but hardly a Svetlana Borgward, either.

Lesley was the hands-down winner when it came to address label aliases.

She was variously known as Lesli Gruff, Ellie Guff, Elspeth Gooch, Lipsey Groof, Leslie Goot and Lester Gruff. Being a good-natured sort, the former business

editor took this in good humor. For about 10 minutes. After that, everybody gave her desk a wide berth after mail arrived.

One of our former sports editors, and later city editor, Brian Blomster, was plagued by similar address label blunders while he labored here.

His mail sometimes came addressed to — you probably guessed this one — Brian Lobster. But he also received press releases and sporting news from Bryan Boomster, B. Lomster and Brian B. Brian.

It's no surprise that a former features editor here, Linda Cruikshank, routinely had her name brutally mangled by address label terrorists. The strangest name to come out of her workplace mail bag, we all agreed, was "Rinda Quickshnars."

Worse, that spelling multiplied like antibiotic-resistant bacteria in a dirty petri dish. I think the first letter came from something like the Greater Vacaville Ladies' Stirrup Pants Society, but soon it had been widely adopted by every-

thing from the National Organization for Women to the Vallejo Chamber of Commerce.

Linda, I recall, finally got fed up with it all and moved to Thailand, where people can at least speak decent English ...

Although we don't get as much snail mail as we used to — e-mail having taken over a significant share of the press release and newsletter market — we still receive a goodly amount of pre-addressed mail and we have great hopes that future mailing misnamings will continue to provide us with hours of wholesome entertainment.

After all, we've got Chalk and Bernardini and Murphy and Fu on our newsroom roster now.

Bernardini? He may be headed for American Addressograph immortality even as you read these words.

I wouldn't kid you on that, amigos ...

Reach Senior Staff Writer Brian Hamlin at BHamlin@TheReporter.com.

Cancer should rekindle some relationships

Celebrities born on this day: Ellen Page, 23; Jennifer Love Hewitt, 31; Kelsey Grammer, 55; Tyne Daly, 64

Happy birthday: Focus on partnerships and bringing out the best out in everyone with whom you are connected, professionally and personally. Opportunities are present but, if you aren't willing to take action, you may not reach your full potential. Apply a little force if that's what it takes to excel. Your numbers are 9, 12, 22, 26, 30, 39, 41

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Take stock of your finances and set a budget that will allow you greater freedom in the future. A little low-cost entertainment during the evening hours will bring about some interesting alternatives for the future. 3 stars

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Your talents will come in handy and your services should be offered to a group in need. The people you meet along the way will make excellent contacts for future projects. A change of plans will affect an emotional relationship for the better. 3 stars

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Don't say something that will lead to future debates or cause you to lose ground personally. Mistakes made now will be difficult to reverse. Focus on what you have, not what you haven't. 3 stars

CANCER (June 21-July 22): Rekindling or starting up relationships will lead to opportunities, added knowledge and the kind of experience that can get you ahead. Be a participant and you won't be sorry. 4 stars

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Doing more with loved ones, children or any group to which you belong will result in adventure, excitement and an experience you shouldn't miss. Fixing up a workspace will eventually lead to extra income. 4 stars

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You will not be able to skirt issues that arise, so tell it like it is and be ready to get past whatever develops from your honesty. Love is in the stars and your openness will determine who you will end up with. A change of heart will take you by surprise. 2 stars

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): A new look, a little pampering or getting out and enjoying the company of others or an entertaining event should be scheduled in. A trip may be instigated due to your insight, clarity and an idea you mention. Prospects look good. 5 stars

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): You may be tempted by a deal for the wrong reason. Don't feel pressured by someone else's demands to take action. Time is on your side and jumping too fast without sufficient information will lead to regrets. Focus on love for now. 3 stars

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Accept the inevitable, keep things amicable and, most of all, avoid anyone trying to pick a fight. Moderation will be required if you want to end up in the winner's circle. Use your head, your intuition and your ability to find solutions. 3 stars

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): For now, it's up to you to pull in everything you've got to come out with the changes you need to find happiness, better health and peace of mind. Let your emotions speak so that everyone knows exactly how you feel. 5 stars

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Rethink your strategy before it's too late. You are at a turning point that needs to be addressed and properly dealt with before moving forward. Ask for help but don't take advantage. 2 stars

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Interacting with others or getting involved in a team effort will awaken some of the old ideas and goals. Refreshing the memory can bring about a desire to contact someone from your past who enjoyed similar interests. 4 stars

Birthday baby: You are imaginative and know how to handle the limelight. You are aggressive and a leader and you believe in your own potential.

Web sites: eugenialast.com for confidential consultations, myspace.com/eugenialast for Eugenia's blog, astroadvice.com for fun.

Mom flips out when twins want to enlist

Dear Straight Talk: My twin sister and I are very interested in joining the military when we graduate from high school in June. The recruiter said we can be together during training and service which is important as we are close. Our parents are opposed and want us to go to college first. They say that females as well as males are sent to war and killed. But where would this country be if nobody risked their life? We put up a military poster in our room that the recruiter gave us and Mom tore it down and threw it in the trash. Are we wrong to want to serve our country? — **Debbie**

Peter, 23, Monterey: Not as long as you have both eyes open. Before I went to the recruiter's office, I explored everything I could about my career choice, including going to college three semesters before ruling that out. Once I was truly informed, I sat down with my family. Because I had thought it out, they supported me entirely. Now, at the two-year mark, I obviously made the right decision. You can get a lot out of the military: sense of duty, free college, travel, but it really is a different lifestyle. You have to

make sure you're ready for that. Talk to people currently serving. Not that recruiters aren't reliable, but there is no guarantee you and your sister will be together.

Anjanette, 16, Safford, Ariz.: Not many women are brave enough to serve. I know I'm not. Your mom is reacting like any mom would.

Rose, 22, Flagstaff, Ariz.: First, recruiters lie. There is no way you and your sister will stay together. Second, the Iraq war was wrongly waged and is not serving our country. Third, the goal of the military is to make you one unit, not a person. You lose every aspect of freedom. Do your research because once you're in, there's no turning back. I've seen many friends join and then flee to Canada, be dishonorably discharged or return in a coffin. Visit an "Iraq vets against the war" Web site, such as www.ivaw.org.

Lennon, 23, Fair Oaks: Your parents probably went through Vietnam. The Iraq war isn't much different. It has ultimately been a massive waste of resources that could have been spent building



STRAIGHT TALK
Lauren Forcella

the country rather than blowing it up. Morally, it'd be wiser to get involved in a process which saves more lives than it takes away.

Gabriel, 18, Ashland, Ore.: I called my father about signing up for selective service. My mother grabbed the phone yelling, "Gabriel, NO!!" I'm in college now and don't plan on joining. But if I had to protect this country, I would in a heartbeat. Do what makes you happy and proud. Serve America, protect our people and honor our freedom.

Dear Debbie: "Inform yourself" is the repeating message from the panel and I couldn't agree more. Pursued with 20/20 vision and for the right reasons, military service is a good thing. There are also excellent nonmilitary ways to serve, such as Peace Corps abroad, and AmeriCorps and Teach for America here at home.

To ask a question or inquire about being a youth panelist, visit <http://www.straighttalkforteens.com> or write PO Box 963 Fair Oaks, CA 95628.

When abuse won't stop, it's time to leave him

Dear Amy: I have been married for nearly 41 years. From Day One, my husband decided it was OK to criticize my looks and every move I made. According to him, I have never done anything right in my entire life.

I am so sick and tired of the constant abuse. Nothing I do even makes him slow down — he just goes on and on.

He doesn't physically beat me, but emotionally he has beaten me down to nothing.

At one point, he agreed to go to counseling. I made the appointments, but he conveniently stayed late at work.

I don't know how

much more of this I can stand. He attacks me, and now I respond by screaming about all the mean things he's done.

There's nothing but anger in me now. I'm ready to blow, and I feel as if I'm losing my mind.

He attacks what I do at home and even what I do at work, although he really knows nothing about my job.

I've been told I'm inept, incompetent, worthless and a burden. The list goes on and on. Our children are grown and gone, but we



Amy Dickinson

do have grandchildren who would be affected if we got a divorce.

And I really don't want a divorce; I just want him to stop constantly belittling me. Any advice for me? —

Worthless

Dear Worthless: I realize that getting a divorce seems like a painful process, but given what you're going through and what you say you have been through for the entirety of your marriage, leaving your husband will be the only thing to bring you peace. You must realize by

now that you simply cannot make someone change. You cannot make your husband stop belittling you, and the process of trying to get him to stop has transformed you into a screaming, nasty, unhappy person.

If you can't afford a place of your own, stay with a friend or family member for now. Get counseling and legal advice.

Do not use your grandchildren as an excuse to stay in this abusive marriage.

Send questions via e-mail to askamy@tribune.com or by mail to Ask Amy, Chicago Tribune, TT500, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611.