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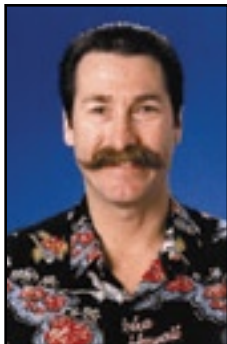
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Photo courtesy the Salvation Army-Sacramento County Operations
East Sacramento Rotary Club president Carroll Dudley gets a close cut after keeping true to his hair-raising pledge.

Bald, but for good reason

Special to the East Sacramento News

SACRAMENTO – Earlier this month, the East Sacramento Rotary Club celebrated raising \$6,144 for The Salvation Army during the 2009 Christmas Red Kettle drive. The event was capped off by the club's president, Carroll Dudley, having his hair and mustache shaved off at the Feb 11 event.

Dudley pledged that he would go bald if the club – as bell ringers – would generate \$6,000 or more. More than 25 mem-

bers of the East Sac Rotary took that challenge.

The East Sacramento Rotary Club has been involved with the kettle drive for over 30 years, raising more than \$200,000 over that time period.

For more information on the Rotary Club of East Sacramento, visit <http://rotary5180.net/EastSacramento>. For more on the local Salvation Army, visit www.salarmysacto.org. For an expanded version of this story, with audio interviews, visit www.valcomnews.com.

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Twain you and me

By RYAN ROSE
East Sacramento News Editor
ryanrose@valcomnews.com

In response to a news story that he was at death's door in London, Missouri-born Samuel Langhorne Clemens, known popularly by penname Mark Twain, wrote, "The reports of my death are greatly exaggerated."

Indeed, as Twain has since passed, his legend (and wisdom) lives on in popular culture. And while his larger-than-life persona is sometimes exaggerated by modern authors and playwrights, Twain's pointed humor, dogged honesty, keen insights and plain-spoken ways are as welcomed now as they were when he was writing for The Sacramento Union newspaper during the 19th century.

It has been nearly a century since his death, but his ghost still haunts Sacramento. The capital city's deep political divide would be the perfect fodder for a Twain novel or the subject of a community chat.

Next month, Twain returns to life via the stage – and he is back in Sacramento. Actor Hal Holbrook portrays the famous author Saturday, March 6 at 8 p.m. at The Community Center Theater. Tickets are available at the Convention Center Theater Box Office (1301 L St.), Tickets.com, and (916) 808-5181. Ticket prices are \$30-\$60 plus facility and service fee.

Considering Twain's far-reaching legacy, our city is very lucky to have such a connection to the author (much as I'm sure Salinas values John Steinbeck). Clemens might have been born on the Mississippi River, but Twain spoke the language of modern Californians – in his time, he was a pioneer for human rights, women's rights, the environment and the humane treatment of animals. He may have been a character of the Gilded Age (having coined the term in fact), but Twain, pseudonym and all, was the real deal.

The Sacramento Union believed that – and they traded on that reputation. Anytime The Union encountered financial problems, the publisher would drag an old desk out from the backroom and sell it as a "Desk used by Mark Twain." Almost always, those desks sold quickly.

A chance to experience a form of Twain today is a treat. As Twain's close friend Helen Keller wrote, "I think 'Mark Twain' is a very appropriate nom de plume for Mr. Clemens because it has a funny and quaint sound that goes well with his amusing writings, and its nautical significance suggests the deep and beautiful things he has written."

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American Guild of Organists concert

The Sacramento Chapter of the American Guild of Organists joins with St. Johns Lutheran Church in presenting the famous Wanamaker Grand Court Organist, Peter Richard Conte. Held Feb. 26, Friday, at 7:30 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church, 1700 L Street, Sacramento, \$10 suggested donations.

Known for his orchestral transcriptions played on the organ, Conte performs at the

Macy's store in Philadelphia 2 times daily. That organ is the largest fully functioning organ in the world. Conte's performance in Sacramento will include a silent movie "The Kid" (Charlie Chaplin).

More information about Conte is available from his management association: www.concertartists.com. Information about the organ at St. John's is available from nmetzger@rcip.com.



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Love is the 'heartbeat of the universe' in Sac Opera's 'La Traviata'

By SUSAN LAIRD
East Sacramento News Writer
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True love and tragic misunderstanding, aristocrats and commoners, noble sacrifice, betrayal and dying young... Sacramento Opera's production of Giuseppe Verdi's "La Traviata" has it all.

Verdi based his opera in three acts on a novel by Alexandre Dumas, fils, called "La dame aux Camélias." The novel, which was based on Dumas' own affair with the beautiful courtesan Marie Duplessis, who died at the age of 23 from consumption, a common term for tuberculosis. Duplessis was known for her petite figure, charming smile and her smart conversation in French salons of the day. It is reputed that no fewer than two French noblemen (and former lovers) were at her bedside when she passed away. In death, as in life, she was a legend.

In English, Dumas' work was translated as "Camille," and the title character was successfully portrayed to great success by Greta Garbo on the silver screen in 1936.

In contrast, the first performance of Verdi's opera, at Venice's La Fenice in 1853, was an utter failure. However, Verdi had faith that his work would endure ("La Traviata" last night a failure," he wrote.

"My fault or the singers'? Time will tell"). After some revisions, an 1854 production at the Teatro di San Benedetto in Venice proved to be successful. "La Traviata" has been in production ever since.

The title for Verdi's work, "La Traviata," means "The Woman Who Strayed," or "The Fallen Woman." It focuses on the lives of a famous courtesan, Violetta Valéry, and a young nobleman, Alfredo Germont. The two meet at a party she is hosting to celebrate her "recovery" from a "brief illness."

Alfredo woos Violetta, who has her doubts about the young man who "has loved her long from afar." However, she also wonders if he could "be the one." In the Act I finale, Violetta sings "Ah, fors'è lui" – "Perhaps, he is the one."

The second act finds the two as lovers, happily ensconced in the French countryside. But trouble is on the way, in the form of Alfredo's father, Giorgio Germont. Giorgio informs Violetta that his daughter's upcoming marriage is threatened because of Alfredo's affair with her. Because of her love for Alfredo, Violetta agrees to sacrifice her love for the sake of his family and leaves for her former life in Paris.

Alfredo, at first determined to bring her back, eventually is led to

believe that Violetta has betrayed him. He confronts her publicly, throwing money in her face at a party. She faints and the members of the party reprimand him: "You have offended a noble lady."

Too late, Alfredo realizes that Violetta's love for him was true all along. In the third act, the lovely courtesan is told by her physician that she has not long to live, as her consumption has worsened dramatically. Violetta sings "Addio del passato" – "So closes my sad story." Alfredo rushes to her side, and the two lovers are reunited. Alfredo tells Violetta that he will take her away from Paris, back to the countryside. But she senses that her life is slipping away.

Together, Alfredo and Violetta sing "Gran Dio! morir si giovane" – "O, God! to die so young." Giorgio enters with a doctor to save Violetta, but it is too late – Violetta dies in her lover's arms.

"La Traviata" is listed in the Top Three most popular operas in the United States by "Opera America," just behind "Madama Butterfly" and "La bohème." Sacramento Opera's production will be sung in Italian with English supertitles. James Marvel directs and Timm Rolek returns to conduct the Sacramento Philharmonic Orchestra.

Soprano Karen Slack will perform as Violetta. She has



Photo courtesy

Sacramento Opera presents Giuseppe Verdi's "La Traviata" at the Sacramento Community Center Theater, 1301 L Street, Sacramento, Friday, February 26, 2010 at 8 pm; Sunday, February 28, 2010 at 2 pm; and Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at 7:30 pm. (Pictured is an earlier production.)

performed internationally to much acclaim. Her voice is described as "warmly expressive." Slack's career has been fostered by both the Santa Fe and San Francisco operas, which recognized her native talent and invited her to participate in their programs for young artists. She is noted as a talented performer whose star is on the rise.

Tenor Alexander Boyer is cast as Alfredo. Boyer has performed with the San Jose Opera, as well as the Merola and Santa Fe Opera programs. He

is a winner of the Mario Lanza Scholarship Award.

"La Traviata" will run for three performances: Friday, Feb. 26 at 8 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 28 at 2 p.m. and Tuesday, March 2 at 7:30 p.m. The Sacramento Community Center Theater is located at 1301 L Street in Sacramento. Admission is \$18 to \$130. For tickets, call (916) 808-5181, visit the box office at the theater or visit www.tickets.com. For more information, visit www.sacopera.org or join the Sacramento Opera on Facebook and Twitter.

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A new view

'Tall Wonders' giraffe exhibit now open at Sacramento Zoo

Special to the East Sacramento News

Exactly one year from the February 2009 groundbreaking for Tall Wonders, the Sacramento Zoo is proud to announce the facility is now open.

For the very first time, visitors will be eye to eye with Val, Skye and Goody, the stately residents of the 1,100 square foot raised deck – a brand new exhibit for the Sacramento Zoo. The elevated platform also provides a magnificent view into the neighboring zebra and ostrich area.

The state-of-the-art block barn (yes, it's heated) provides warm nights for the three giraffes, while the expanded grounds allow for leisurely giraffe-size strolls during the day.

With the finishing touches almost completed, zoo staff is grateful for the community's support and commitment to the project. They are just dollars away from reaching the \$2 million goal. The Sacramento Zoological Society is 100 percent committed to providing the best possible care and facilities for the zoo's animals. With continued community support, they will improve and enrich the zoo for future generations.

About the Sacramento Zoo

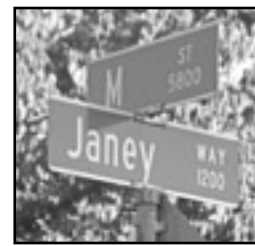
Open since 1927, the Sacramento Zoo is home to over 140 native, rare and endan-



Photo courtesy Kari Marie via Flickr.com
Meet giraffes eye to eye: For the very first time, visitors will be eye to eye with the stately residents on the 1,100 square foot raised deck.

gered species and is one of over 200 accredited institutions of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Located near the corner of Land Park Drive and Sutterville Road in William Land Park, the Zoo is wholly managed by the non-profit Sacramento Zoological Society. This Sacramento treasure inspires conservation awareness through education and recreation. Open daily from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, general admission is \$11.00; children ages 3-12 are \$7.00 and two and under are admitted free. Parking is free throughout the park or ride Regional Transit bus No. 6. For information, call 916-808-5888 or visit saczoo.com.

Janey Way Memories



Boxing at the Relles Gym



By **MARTY RELLES**
East Sacramento News Columnist
marty@valcomnews.com

One Christmas, my father gave two pairs of boxing gloves to my brothers and me. He hoped this would help us learn to defend ourselves. Terry and I put on the gloves and sparred. Soon other kids came over to try on the gloves and box. We set up an imaginary ring in our backyard. A large tree marked one side of the ring, the garden in the rear marked another, the patio another side and the fence opposite the patio completed the square.

Soon we began scheduling regular 3-round bouts. I fought Dan Petrocchi and he bloodied my nose. He won in a TKO. I fought him later that year in a return match and bloodied his nose. I fought both the Ducray boys. They were tough fighters. I moved adroitly around the ring, kept jabbing and avoided heavy blows. I "flew like a butterfly," but did not "sting like a bee."

We had many other good fights in the newly founded Relles gym. I remember one fight in particular. Lou Viani fought a barnburner with Bob Pesce. They came right out throwing blows as if the fight would last only one round. No blood appeared, but faces reddened from the contact of the gloves. In the second round, the pace slowed. The boys slowly ran out of gas. By the third round, the pace of the fight slowed to a crawl, but the boys kept throwing leather, missing mostly. At the very end of the round, Lou slipped to the ground and in the heat of battle, Bob kept punching. We rushed in to halt the bout. By this time, the two boys were very angry at each other, but we made them shake hands and called the fight a draw. After that, the two good friends walked away with arms around one another's shoulders.

Bob Pesce died from a stroke last year. Lou Viani, a successful architect here in town, found the time to attend his old friend's funeral. They might have once traded blows, but the bond of friendship they forged on Janey Way lasted a lifetime.

The days of boxing at the Relles gym are only a memory now, but dad was right, the boxing did teach us self-defense. It taught us more. We learned to settle our differences by the Marquis of Queensbury rules, not the rules of the street. This lesson was doubtlessly more important than simple self-defense.

"They might have once traded blows, but the bond of friendship they forged on Janey Way lasted a lifetime."



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Know your neighbor

Eppie's restaurants, The Great Race founder reminisces about his local memories

By LANCE ARMSTRONG
East Sacramento News Writer
lance@valcomnews.com

When it comes to local history, there have certainly been a great number of businesspersons who have gained widespread recognition within the capital city. But of these individuals, few have maintained such a lengthy career as Eppaminondas "Eppie" Johnson.

Many East Sacramento area residents remember Eppie for the first of his chain of restaurants, which were each known as Eppie's Restaurant and Coffee Shop.

This restaurant, which opened at 3001 N St. on June 15, 1964, was designed by the Los Angeles architects Louis Armet and Eldon Davis.

The building, which fronted James and Geraldine Burkett's Imperial 400 Motel at 1319 30th St., was no ordinary structure, as within a year it was named the "Best Designed Coffee Shop in the Country" by Institution Magazine.

Built at a cost of \$285,000, the popular eatery was originally operated under a lease from Edwin J. Bedell, a former Sacramento hotel and restaurant owner.

Launching a legacy

The grand opening of the restaurant, which was attended by Mayor James McKinney and other notable Sacramento figures, included the first dollar paid to the business by Richard Rathfon, who was the head of the city's planning commission and a then-future city manager.

Rathfon's contribution of a 1957 Silver Certificate dollar was additionally significant, since Rathfon had suggested the 30th and N streets site to Eppie.

Eppie recalled that Rathfon explained to him that the location of the restaurant was ideal due to its surroundings at the time.

"(Rathfon) said that it was a great location," Eppie said. "The freeway wasn't in yet and there was no off-ramp going on there. There was a bowling alley and you had the Alhambra Theatre (in the area). It was just the best (site)."

Eppie recalled his desire to own his own restaurant and coffee shop.

"I always wanted to do a 24-hour coffee shop like Denny's and Carrow's, so I heard that Eddie Bedell owned a whole half a block at 30th and N streets," Eppie said. "I contacted Mr. Bedell, who was in Carmel and he came up to see me, but it looked like Sambo's really wanted it. (Bedell) wanted a \$15,000 lease deposit, so I assured him that I had the money that I didn't have and then I started selling stock to different people. I wasn't sure if I was going to get the site and one day, (Bedell) called and he said, 'Let's make a deal. I went to Sambo's and the place is filthy.' So, we kind of shook hands on it and we went ahead and hired an architect. I went to Los Angeles and I found the best restaurant architect I could find."

Eppie added that an architectural sketch was created and then approved by Bedell.

Working to come up with the money for the building, Eppie sold stocks



East Sacramento News Photo/Lance Armstrong

Eppie Johnson, who established the very popular chain of Eppie's restaurants, has had a very notable life during his six decades in the capital city.

to various people, including the Hansens of Crystal Creamery.

In addition to purchasing \$25,000 in stocks, the Hansens also leased equipment to Eppie.

Eppie said that he was very prepared for the opening day of his restaurant.

"I put together an operations manual and job descriptions, etcetera and I also got a simplified cooking manual," Eppie said. "I had pictures of everything on the menu, hamburgers, five steps how to put it together and everything. I was really, really organized and when we opened the doors, we had a lot of people waiting to get in."

Expansion outside East Sacramento

Eventually, Eppie's restaurants expanded to include many locations, including sites in Las Vegas, Cameron Park, Turlock and other Sacramento area locations, including 6341 Florin Road, 4600 Madison Ave., 2525 Watt Ave. and 4657 West Capitol Ave.

Eppie said that the opening of other locations of his restaurant was spurred

through customers who would often ask when he was going to open new locations of the restaurant.

Eppie, who was once recognized on the cover of Sacramento Magazine with the title, "The Greek Tycoon," explained that although he is most widely known for his Eppie's restaurants, his establishment of these restaurants, which folded about a decade ago, were far from his first experiences in local restaurant service.

Many longtime residents remember that Eppie once worked at his father, George E. Johnson at Del Prado Restaurant, which was located at 5500 Stockton Blvd.

Eppie said that after being raised by his mother, Anastasia Johnson, in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens, New York, he attended New York University, before heading to Sacramento in 1950 to work for his father.

George, who was born in Broussa, Turkey in about 1900, was well estab-

See Eppie's, page 7

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Eppie's: 'They share with me their memories of the place. Everyone just really loved Eppie's,' said DeWitt

Continued from page 6

lished as a successful businessman by the time Eppie became a Sacramentan himself.

In addition to owning the Del Prado Restaurant, George at various times also owned the Little Giant Restaurant near Hart's Cafeteria on K Street, Cordova Lodge at 10701 Folsom Blvd. in Rancho Cordova and 8 Pillars Coffee Shop on Stockton Boulevard at Fruitridge Road, adjacent to Del Prado Restaurant.

Eppie's story

Coming to America at the age of 13 and volunteering for the United States Army five years later, George was an essential member of the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation in Sacramento and a nationally known figure in Democratic politics.

Eppie said that in addition to working for his father, he spent time as a caterer for such places as The Limelight bar on Alhambra Boulevard and many Bar Mitzvahs in South Sacramento.

Adding to his accomplishments with Eppie's restaurants, Eppie also had several restaurants, called Eppaminondas. These restaurants, which opened in the late 1970s, were located at Cal Expo, in Rancho Cordova and in Stockton.

Eppie also purchased tennis clubs in Davis and in the south area at 6000 South Land Park Drive.

These days, Eppie no longer owns any restaurants or tennis clubs, despite common confusion caused by the fact that his old West Sacramento location that bears his name is still in operation – it is privately owned by a different owner – he is still very active in the community.

His current activity in the community consists of the continuation of one of the city's better known annual events, The Great Race, which is sponsored by Eppie's Great Race Foundation.

After two decades as an avid skier, Eppie took an interest in kayaking during the early 1970s.

This interest led to the creation of The Great Race, which is recognized as the world's oldest triathlon and the largest paddling event in the nation.

Eppie, who will turn 82 in May, said that although he no longer competes in the kayaking portion of the race, he still enjoys being a very active part of the event's operations.

"The Great Race"

This year, the 37th edition of this nonprofit run, bike and



Photo courtesy of Eppie Johnson
Eppie's Restaurant and Coffee Shop at 3001 N St. is shown in about 1964.

paddle event, which was first held on July 27, 1974, will be held along the American River Parkway on July 13.

Today, the 30th and N streets Eppie's building – a newer, yet still classic structure that was built after a fire struck the original building – still stands awaiting a new tenant.

While working on the upkeep of this building last week, handyman Per DeWitt explained that although The Great Race is Eppie's last remaining major public endeavor, people certainly have not forgotten about their fond memories of Eppie's restaurants.

"Every single time I'm working here, 15 to 20 people will come up to me and ask me about the restaurants and this (location)," DeWitt said. "Anyone from street people to bus drivers ask me when the restaurant is going to open and they share with me their memories of the place. Everyone just really loved Eppie's."

Eppie added that East Sacramento residents and others should eventually be able to dine at the old restaurant site, once he finds the "right people to lease to."

"I have had offers for the place, I am just waiting for the right people to come along," Eppie said.

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By **BENN HODAPP**
East Sacramento News Writer
benn@valcomnews.com

*“I consider myself a real world
photographer...”*

Like many children, Jay Canter was given something to do with his curious and potentially destructive hands. Unlike most of them, however, Canter developed an infatuation that continues to grow to this day. At age six or seven, Canter was given a camera to keep his hands busy during the annual family trip to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. Idle hands could be a very expensive proposition in such a place, after all.

At first, it was just point and shoot, of course. He knew nothing of lighting and shadows and any number of other tricks known by professionals. But what started as a project to curb youthful exuberance for the Carmichael-raised Canter, eventually turned into a life-long artistic journey.

“I had my first stuff published when I was 16,” Canter said. “I was really into race cars and that was what I photographed first.”

It wasn't long before car magazines became

aware of his skills. Executives came from all over to see this kid with the camera. He went on to graduate from El Camino High School in 1996, but photography was still just a hobby for the most part.

The first national magazine to feature his work was a high-performance car magazine called “Turbo.” The honor came at a pivotal time for him, as he was unsure about whether or not to pursue photography as a job.

“Photography is absolutely my full-time job now,” he said. “I left corporate America 10 years ago.”

But how did he come to be so outstanding that he was able to make a career off his skills? He took photography class in high school, but he never really absorbed the nuts and bolts aspects taught in structured classes. Instead, he learned by doing.

“I am totally self-taught,” he said. “I have always had an artistic eye.”

That might be just a bit of an understatement for someone who was named “The Best Photographer in Sacramento” by the Sacramento News & Review in 2008. Canter knew he was good, but even he was shocked to be given that honor.

“I had no idea about the award,” he said. “I wasn't even in town when the issue came out.”

Canter recalled getting a text from a friend congratulating him.

“Congratulations for what?” he laughed. After hearing the news, he sent his parents on a search for copies of the end of the year “Best Of” issue of the publication. The voting is all anonymous and to this day, he doesn't know who voted for him or which

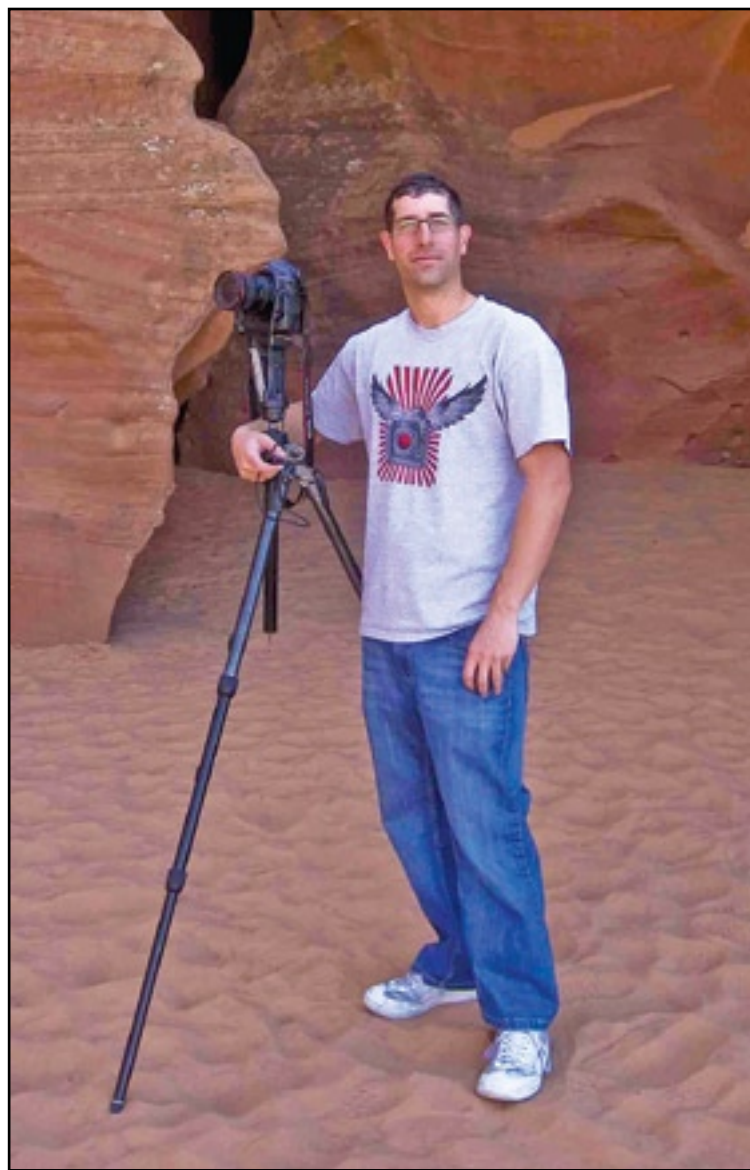


Photo courtesy Jay Canter

Now a world-class photographer, Jay Canter graduated from El Camino High School in 1996. See his photos online at www.valcomnews.com.

See Photographer, page 9

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Photographer: 'I stay here because I love the community'

Continued from page 8

works of his inspired said votes.

Shots from around the world

In his career, Canter has traveled all over the United States as well as internationally. He has shot fashion, commercial, weddings, parties and the aforementioned sports cars, but now most of his work deals with scenery and architecture photography.

"I consider myself a real world photographer," he said. "I'm not going to cut your head off and put it on Brad Pitt's body. That's not what I do."

Canter takes pride in tinkering as little as possible with his pictures. Either he got the shot he wanted, or he didn't. It would appear that he generally gets the shot he wanted. His scenery pictures have been so well received, in fact, that Mercy San Juan Hospital features 32 works in its new six-story critical care facility.

Twenty pictures are in the lobby of the facility, while the others are in the actual patients' rooms. The pictures are what Canter describes as "iconic stuff from the western U.S." The pictures are from all over California including Pollock Pines and Placerville. They are meant to be colorful and cheery pictures in the hopes that they might make a stay in a critical care facility a lit-

tle more comfortable for the patients.

An eye on the future

As for future projects, Canter has something in the works for Second Saturday on March 13 at the L Street Lofts at 1818 L St. He will have an entire floor dedicated to his work alone and proceeds from the event will go to a local charity. As of right now, some of his pieces can be seen at the Appel Gallery at 931 T St., which Canter said is the only photography-exclusive gallery in Sacramento.

Eventually he would like to open a gallery and studio where people can come and see his work permanently on display. In the meantime, Canter continues to spread his message about his craft. He teaches seminars, gives private lessons and helps with the photography department at El Camino.

"Just because you have a camera doesn't make you a photographer," he said. "I want to get that awareness out there that photography is an art and that we need to support local artists."

He also encourages people to ask him questions. He says that he has people come up to him all the time with photographic queries and he always answers each one to the best of his ability.

Canter has made it as a big-time photographer published all over the world, but



Photo courtesy Jay Canter

Eventually Jay Canter would like to open a gallery and studio where people can come and see his work permanently on display.

he still calls just one place home.

"I love Sacramento," he said. "I have had opportunities to move to Los Angeles and New York, but I stay here because I love the community."

In the end, it looks like his parents had the right idea sticking that camera in his hands. He found what he loves and has become a success without destroying even a single priceless artifact.

People interested in buying some of Canter's artistic works can do so at his Web site www.jay-canter.com. There you can find contact info and pretty much anything you need to obtain one of his unique prints.

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Good things grow at county organic gardening club

By **BENN HODAPP**
East Sacramento News Writer
benn@valcomnews.com

A lot of things seem to be taking the "green" approach these days. But this movement seems to have only started in the last few years as far as cars and other machinery are concerned. One Sacramento club, however, has been advocating the green motto for 25 years in the form of gardening.

The Organic Gardening Club of Sacramento County is a non-profit organization founded in 1985, in the absolute infancy of the movement.

"Nobody really knew much about it at the time," club president Barbara Schulte said. "But now I think a lot more people are going organic."

The club meets on the first Friday of each month at Carmichael Park, 5750 Grant Ave. in Sacramento. The meetings are open to the public and

one of the goals of the club is to educate people about the benefits of organic gardening rather than just how to do it.

"It is absolutely the healthiest way to grow food both for the environment and for people," Schulte said. "It is very important to grow without pesticides and trying to make the healthiest soil possible."

Healthy soil doesn't just aid in the growing of different fruits and vegetables, it also acts as a nature-made insect repellent, according to Schulte.

"If the soil is healthy it keeps away the harmful insects," she said.

There is a misconception that going organic is a difficult thing to do that leads to much more work being done by the gardener; Schulte described why that's simply not the case.

"It's absolutely easy to do," she said. "You can make it difficult if you want to, but you certainly don't have to. Most nurseries have organic products and staff that can answer any questions you have about it."

As with anything else, there are levels of difficulty depending on how far you want to get into it. Schulte spoke of the organic growing of flowers and plants that can actually attract beneficial insects to an organic garden, which could greatly aid growing.

She also believes that the word is getting out about the benefits of organic gardening, partly thanks to groups like hers.

"I think it has become more common recently," she said. "There are many articles out about the different ways to become an organic grower. People are beginning to realize that

it isn't complicated and our programs teach them what to do. People are really starting to learn that it's a healthy way to grow."

The group welcomes new members, but Schulte asks that people attend a couple of the monthly meetings before deciding whether to join. The meetings are open to the public and are a good way to introduce yourself to the concept of going organic.

She also said that the Fair Oaks Horticulture Center has an organic exhibit that could be helpful for interested parties.

The March meeting (which will take place on March 5) will welcome master gardener Mary Ose, who will talk about spring gardening preparation.

Those interested in becoming a member can contact the club at (916) 635-6724.

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Photo by Robert Ossa

Meghan Vasquez, on left, and sister Arielle Hill at East Sacramento's Sushi Café. The rolls they are enjoying are the Café Special roll and the Alhambra roll.



Photo by Robert Ossa

The sake collection at Sushi Café, located at 1221 Alhambra Blvd.

Faces and places

Love at first bite: East Sacramento's Sushi Café

By **JENKA SANFORD**
East Sacramento News Writer
reporter@valcomnews.com

It's hard to remember the first time I stepped foot there, but it was love at first bite.

I'd heard about Sushi Café several times before we ever went. Various friends were always saying, "We found the best new sushi place!" I was curious what all of the commotion was about because for years, East Sacramento has been known for many things, but great sushi restaurants were never one of them.

Located at 1221 Alhambra Blvd. behind the old Andiamo's restaurant, Sushi Café can be hard to find, but it has become a favorite among East Sacramento residents. When we walk in, we are always greeted with a warm and friendly "Irashaimase," which means "welcome" in Japanese,

from the hostess and sushi chefs, and we rarely have to wait for a table.

We usually start with two tall Asahis and an order of their barbecued albacore, which is delicious. The menu offers 68 different sushi rolls, but we always order our two favorite rolls, which are the Café Special and the Alhambra rolls.

The Café Special roll includes shrimp tempura, snow crab, avocado, fresh salmon, sauce, green onion and masago. Not being a sushi chef or connoisseur, I can't claim to know what makes this roll so tasty, but I think it has to do with the combination of the crunchy shrimp tempura, the special sauce and the fresh snow crab that makes the Café Special truly special.

The Alhambra roll, which includes spicy lobster, tempura scallions, and lightly torched salmon with garlic sauce, works so well because

The end result is a very savory, spicy-sweet combination

the end result is a very savory, spicy-sweet combination that does not disappoint.

What to expect

Although we are only there once or twice a month on average, our favorite servers, Phoebe and Michelle, always remember our order, and service is always speedy and efficient.

On a recent Friday night, we decided to try happy hour, since we'd been told they had great deals on happy hour. As

usual, we weren't disappointed. Happy hour, which is offered on Mondays through Saturdays from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., is very popular among East Sacramento residents, especially on Fridays. Rolls are \$5.00, and beers on draft (Kirin and Sapporo) are only \$2.50 a pint. On most nights, the owner, Dean Louie, can be found having a beer or shot of sake with friends and restaurant patrons. A sake enthusiast, he has a wealth of knowledge regarding sake made both locally and abroad. Ironically, he said he is not a huge sushi lover, which I found unbelievable considering how incredible his restaurant's sushi rolls are. He prefers sashi-

mi, he told me, along with the great selection of sake and beer they have to offer. The general manager, Damon Lee, however, does love the rolls, and his favorites are the Paradise, Freeport, and Alhambra rolls.

The Sushi Café in East Sacramento has been open since late 2007, and the other Sushi Café, which is located at 4491 Freeport Blvd., has been open since 2002. My fiancé and I can't ever go there without running into several friends and acquaintances, which is always so nice. If their present success is any indicator, I imagine that Sushi Café will be a well-loved East Sacramento establishment for years to come.

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Sacramento Buddhist Church Spring Food Festival is March 14

Annually, on the second Sunday of March, the Adult Buddhist Association and Buddhist Women's Association of the Sacramento Buddhist Church host a spring food festival. This year, as in years past, the event will take place at 2401 Riverside Blvd. in their church social hall. The event will be March 14 and runs from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

This event is the "little brother" of the Annual Buddhist Church Bazaar held each summer in August. The larger event is an icon of cultural food festivals in the Sacramento Valley and is attended by an estimated 50,000 people over the warm summer weekend. The Spring Food Festival is much smaller, but provides attendees the opportunity to sample a variety of Japanese dishes such as maki, inari and chirashi sushi, teriyaki,

udon, salads and sandwiches, and pastries. The sushi is made with sweetened rice vinegar flavored rice and comes in different shapes and sizes. Unlike nigiri sushi, there is no raw fish. Nonetheless, the sushi is a traditional hand-crafted (hand-molded) rice dish that is considered a staple of Japanese cuisine. Teriyaki Chicken is the soy-ginger flavored barbecue chicken that is served in all Japanese restaurants.

All proceeds of the event are used to fund Adult Buddhist Association and Buddhist Women's Association programs. Both organizations are affiliated service organizations of the Sacramento Buddhist Church. Annually, the proceeds of the event are used for church maintenance and children and senior programs.

Women and the gravity of aging

By DARBY PATTERSON
East Sacramento News Columnist
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I am surely not the only person (okay, woman over 50) who watched Nancy Pelosi sit at the President's left side during the State of the Union Address and make faces. From her inaugural appearance as the first woman on the dais in 2009, she's been, well, a distraction.

More than a year ago Pelosi, 69, staged her own performance as Mr. Obama made his first speech to the nation. She contorted her face, pursed and un-pursed her lips, scratched her cheek, pushed her hair, ran her tongue across her teeth and engaged in what my grandmother would have called "monkeyshines."

Now, I mention this in the context of my aging and longevity column because I believe I understand her desire to be facially animated. Simply put, stern faced women over a certain age are worried about looking like shar peis – with deep wrinkles creasing from nostril to outer lip. Television cameras make this effect (and the presence of wrinkles – that seem to have miraculously disappeared from Pelosi's face) even more pronounced. In short, pulling back the facial muscles with a slight smile is a female device (and an effect of Botox) to minimize the effects of gravity.

Vice President Biden, 68, had no such worry because, surprise, life is not fair. As men age and their hair turns silver (or vanishes altogether) they assume the look of wisdom, the cache' of experience. Thus, as Biden sat stone faced through the speech, resembling one of those unhappy emoticons people add to e-mails, he looked just fine.

The issue of personal appearance as women age is complicated by America's cultural mores' – we worship the young and beautiful. We Botox, eyelift, chin-tuck and pile on expensive serums guaranteed to shrink your bank account, but not those wrinkles. Of course, the ideal is to grow older with grace, accept physical changes that we can't control and focus on characteristics that matter – personal traits that make us unique and bring value to people in our environment. That's the ideal, not our reality.

The poster-woman for remaining youthful through the wonders of cosmetic surgery is Joan Rivers who swears she would have been out of work 20 years ago had she not dubbed herself the Face Lift Queen. Who knows, she may be right. Although her humor is as ribald and sharp as ever, it may have not been enough to keep the moguls of show biz laughing with her.

I can neither condone nor condemn the surgical solution because I am experiencing the conundrum faced by women who continue to work in a competitive professional environment. I want to be the wise sage that develops greater inner beauty as the outer shell transforms. At the same time, I fear my contributions will be discounted in the presence of youthful enthusiasm.

However, those of us in the second half may find ourselves in good company. With the Baby Boomer generation about to take center stage, aging issues and preconceptions are changing. Surprisingly – or perhaps not so surprising – Hollywood may be leading a charge. In the past few years, mature women have been winning leading roles that don't make them look like dithering fools. Recently, Meryl Streep appeared as a love interest sans lots of glamour; she'll turn 60 this June 22. Helen Mirren is 64 and landing substantial roles; and Judy Dench still gets great parts and appears to have gone knife-less.

We're learning much more about healthy longevity for our bodies, and for our minds. I'm hoping that this growing demographic and new scientific research will help create new perceptions about growing older and, in many ways, better. Perhaps women will become beneficiaries of changing attitudes and expectations. It would be nice – comfortable – to simply grow better with age that mirrors the beauty of our spirit.

Darby Patterson is a member of the Sacramento County Adult and Aging Commission and the author of "Meow.org: The Cat-Napping Caper." Visit Darby at www.storiesandbooks.com.

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Ambulance canopy opens

East Sacramento's Mercy General continues expansion

By **BENN HODAPP**
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The blessing of a new ambulance canopy earlier this year at Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento was the first step in what is sure to be an eventful two-year process for the facility. Fifty to 60 people attended the ceremony, which ushered in the beginning of the expansive Alex G. Spanos Heart & Vascular Center, set for open in the second quarter of 2012.

According to Shelly King, marketing communications manager of Mercy General, the new ambulance canopy is better suited to unloading patients and shielding them from the elements.

"It used to be that when people were taken out of the ambulance they were exposed to the weather," she said. "So if it was raining they would get wet or if it was 110 degrees they would have the hot sun hitting them."

Since its opening two months ago, King said the canopy has worked very well and has helped to make patients' stays as comfortable as possible.

The success of the canopy was important, but the next two years will see massive changes for the entire hospital.

The planning for the Heart & Vascular Center has been years in the making, with final clearance coming in winter of 2007. After tinkering and re-tinkering with the plans to make them feasible, they finally came to rest on a four-story, 123,350 square

foot space that will cost an estimated \$170 million.

Although the price tag may seem steep, King explained some of the reasons why Mercy General is deserving of the new facility.

"We are the first and only accredited chest pain center in Sacramento," she said. "We have also won awards eight years in a row for cardiology and were voted Best Overall Cardiac Care in the Region."

Health Grades offers up ratings for all hospitals in order for people to make as educated a decision as they can when deciding which hospital to use. Along with its designation of Best Overall Cardiac Care, Mercy General was also deemed Best in Region for cardiac surgery, cardiology, stroke, general surgery and spine surgery.

There are 14 hospitals in the region comprised of Sacramento, Arden Arcade and Roseville.

The expansion

The new addition will also allow the 85-year-old hospital to make room for the always-changing technology, according to King.

"The technology is always changing and we needed more space to utilize it," she said.

King added that the new patient rooms will be state of the art and will allow patients to have their own room instead of two or more to a room like in the past.

"That might not sound like such a big deal, but it's huge in terms of patient approval."

With the opening of the center planned for the spring



Photo courtesy Mercy General Hospital
The Heart & Vascular Center at Mercy General Hospital, located at 4001 J St. in Sacramento, has been years in the making, with final clearance coming in winter of 2007. The new ambulance canopy is part of that expansion.

of 2012, helping patients remains the number one priority while construction is ongoing.

"We've always had a high volume of heart patients," King said. "Experience is what makes us different from other hospitals. It separates us because of the type of care that people receive."

The plan

Construction timeline: August 2010, Heart & Vascular Center base-ment/foundation completed; October 2010, structural steel erection begins; fourth quarter 2010, Heart & Vascular Center "top out" steel; second quarter 2011, building is dried in,

interior work underway; second quarter 2012, obtain final Heart & Vascular Center licensure and begin move in.

Mercy General is located at 4001 J St. in Sacramento. For questions about possible care or other concerns, the hospital can be reached at (916) 453-4545.

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Is your club, group, church, school, or organization having an upcoming event? Let us know. Send information about your event—including date, time, location, a brief description, cost (if any), and contact information—to Calendar, c/o Valley Community Newspapers, 2709 Riverside Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95818, or e-mail ryanrose@valcomnews.com. Deadline is one week before publication. Priority is given to events that are in the community and/or of little or no cost. There is no guarantee that events submitted will appear in the calendar. To ensure placement within the newspaper, please call 429.9901 to place an advertisement.

FEBRUARY

Jo Anne Marquardt art show

The Unitarian Universalist Society of Sacramento presents an exhibition of the artwork of Land Park resident Jo Anne Marquardt Jan. 22 to Mar. 21, 2010 at the UUSS Auditorium located at 2425 Sierra Blvd, Sacramento. An opening re-

ception will be held on Friday, Jan. 22 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. This event is free. For more information visit www.uuss.org.

Pocket girls softball

Register now through March 1 for the 2010 season or visit www.pocketgirlssoftball.com. For girls ages 4 1/2 to 16.

Short Story Contest

Open to ages 16 and older. \$5 entry fee. Please make checks payable to Friends of the Elk Grove Library. Deadline for entries is 5 p.m., Saturday, April 3, 2010. Entries may be fiction or non-fiction and not longer than 1,000 words. Manuscript must be typed and double-spaced. Final word count to be written at the top of the title page. Name, address, phone number, email address and story title to be written on a 3x5 card and attached to the entry. Do not put your name on the manuscript. Winners will receive cash awards. First place-\$100 Second place-\$75 Third place-\$50. Awards will be presented at the Elk Grove Library

Writer's Workshop, April 17, from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. Submissions will not be returned. Mail or bring your manuscript to Elk Grove Library Short Story Contest, 8900 Elk Grove Blvd., Elk Grove, Ca 95624.

FEBRUARY 18

What Do I Do with All This Stuff?

Event is Thursday, February 18, 2010 from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Carmichael Park Clubhouse, 5750 Grant Ave, Carmichael. FREE class, but must pre-register by calling 485-5322. Start 2010 with a clean-sweep! Surrounded by clutter? Need to organize years of belongings, mementos and paper? This class will help you begin the task of sorting and disposing of clutter to help keep things manageable.

Brown Bag Poetry Readings

Held 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. at 828 I Street, the Sacramento Poetry Center will hold a poetry reading from 12 noon to 1 pm, the third Thursday of every month, at the Central Library. Brown Bag Poetry will be held Thursday, February 18th and continues through the year. Sacramento poet Mary Zeppa will host the readings with assistance from poet Lawrence Dinkins and Poet Laureate Bob Stanley. Bring a brown-bag lunch and a favorite poem - or you may select from material available in the library. Information: 264-2920.

FEBRUARY 20

Crab feed for Children's home

Sacramento Children's Home Guild to hold "Down By the Sea" Crab Feed, Saturday, February 20, 2010, at the Folsom Community Center, 52 Natoma Street, Folsom, CA 95630. Tickets are \$45. For reservations, call 916-698-1150.

Boy Scouts Recycle E-Waste

When: Saturday, Feb 20, 2010, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Where: Arcade Wesleyan Church, 3532 Whitney Ave., Sacramento (near corner of Whitney & Sunset Ave.) They can take: TVs (including flat screens), laptops, monitors, VCRs, stereos, disk drives, PDAs, Zip drives, computer mice, printers & copiers, scanners & faxes, telephones, video game consoles, small appliances (such as blenders, mixers toasters, vacuum and carpet cleaners). CEAR shreds all computer disk and hard drives to protect your privacy. We can't take: Large appliances. Questions? Want to arrange a pick-up (if you've got big items or you're a business)? Contact: ponyexpress@surewest.net.

FEBRUARY 24

Los Ninos Service League

The Los Ninos Service League is holding its next recruitment drive for volunteers to work within our organization. We would greatly appreciate it if you would post the following notice in your next

upcoming publication. Thank you in advance for your continued support of the Casa Garden Restaurant and Sacramento Children's Home. Want to give back to our community and have fun too? Become a volunteer in the dining room, kitchen, or garden at the Casa Garden Restaurant. The restaurant, located in the Curtis Park neighborhood, has been raising funds for the Sacramento Children's Home since 1974. For more information about being a volunteer, please join us at our restaurant on February 24, 2010, 9:30 a.m., at 2760 Sutterville Road, Sacramento, CA 95820. Please RSVP by calling (916) 452-2809, as we look forward to meeting you.

Embroiderer's Guild of America

Embroiderer's Guild of America, 7 p.m. Wednesday, February 24, 2010, SMUD Building, 6301 S Street. "Petite Project" from National EGA. (A bookmark). Visitors welcome. (916) 961-3558

FEBRUARY 26

Crab feed

South Sacramento Rotary invites you to attend its 28th Annual Crab Feed and Silent Auction, Friday, February 26 at 6 p.m. The event will be at the Elks Lodge No. 6, 6446 Riverside Blvd. All proceeds go to support schools/charities in the community. Call (916) 428-0311 or (916) 396-7244 for tickets. Tickets: \$40.

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