How to Eat Out

"To the best of my knowledge, when you go to a restaurant-supply store to look at chairs, there is an idea of quick turn, medium turn, and slow turn" that influences the sort of chair you will buy.

Story continued on page 24
We welcome letters pertaining to the contents of the Reader. You may phone them in by calling 619-235-3000, ext. 460; address them to Letters to the Editor, Box 58803, San Diego CA 92186-5803; fax them to 619-231-0489; or e-mail them to letters@SanDiegoReader.com via the Internet. Please include your name, address, and telephone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

No Jesus-Free Christmas

I am puzzled by the article in last week’s issue, “Christmas without Jesus” (December 13). Why would you publish this article without interviewing a Christian, especially since several people who where interviewed bashed Christianity and Christian beliefs? Since you did not ask, I will give my opinion on the subject, as a Christian.

I find it interesting that anyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ, my Savior, would celebrate His birthday. The article said that Christians were ignorant for their beliefs. Isn’t it just as foolish to celebrate the birthday of someone who, at best, you think is crazy and at worst, you believe never existed?

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Santa Claus represents St. Nicholas, who passed out gifts and candy to celebrate the birth of Jesus. The lights on your tree symbolize the star of Bethlehem that shone because of the birth of Jesus. I give gifts because Jesus was born, died on the cross for my sins, and rose from the dead, therefore giving me the gift of eternal life. You cannot have Christmas without Jesus, because that is what Christmas is: the celebration of the birth of Jesus.

Kelly Nagel

Christian Conjecture

Thank you for the wonderfully informative article called “Christmas without Jesus” in the December 13 issue of the Reader. As a freethinker Robert Ingersoll pointed out, “For the most part we inherit our opinions. Environment is a sculptor, a painter.” The Christian mythology is a beautiful one, but somewhere along the way the old church fathers decided its biblical tales were absolutely true and not only was it the “one true religion” in the world, but those who didn’t willfully embrace it would be damned for all eternity.

The U.S. is supposedly founded on the concepts of freedom of speech and religious tolerance, but little of the tolerance (as seen in our Christian segment of the population. My favorite agnostic bumper sticker says, “I don’t know, and neither do you.” A friend used to say to me, “It’s all conjecture.” As for me, I admire any belief system that leaves room for honest doubting. The Buddhists, for example, say, “Examine our practices; see if they work for you.” That has enormous appeal. Perhaps the Christians are fearful that such an open, kindhearted approach would empty their churches.

Phyllis Gabbelein

Neighborhood News: Normal Heights

We Need Jesus

Jesus is the reason for the season. It was really upsetting to see your article titled “Christmas without Jesus” (December 13). There would be NO Christmas without Jesus. Christmas is just that — a day of celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. It is not about the gifts or the decoration, it is about Jesus dying for our sins and giving us eternal life. Christmas is a special time to think on what God has done for us and His continual blessings. An article on the reason for Christmas would have been a lot more appropriate than Christmas without Jesus because there would be no Christmas if not for Jesus. I would have greatly appreciated if you had given God much more respect than that. We need Jesus especially in light of the recent attacks.

Tamika Moore

Pagan Holiday

This is in regards to “Anonymous Annie” (Letters, December 20), who was very irate over your cover story “Christmas without Jesus.” She states that “You have a lot of nerve, or a lot to learn about respect. This is JESUS’ BIRTHDAY!” Her capitals, not mine.) I would like to point out that the respect of other religions is particularly appropriate at this time of year, since the winter Christmas celebration was not originally a celebration of the birthday of Jesus at all. If one accepts that there was indeed a man in the sky at the time of Jesus’ birth, astronomical data shows that he was actually born in July, in either 7 or 8 A.D. The Christmas holiday was not moved to December until the Middle Ages, when the Catholic monks were attempting to convert the pagan Celts of Western Europe.

Many of our “Christmas” traditions are in fact holdovers from pagan traditions (ironically, many more pagan traditions are apparent at Christmas than at the holiday some Christians believe to be evil, Halloween). The display and decoration of the pine tree, as well as the tradition of gift giving, come from the Druids. Wreaths, drinks made from apples, the tradition of feasting, the display of holly and mistletoe, all of these are pagan in origin as well. The story of a Child of Light being born is a pagan story as well as a Christian story. The longest night of the year the Sun is reborn; he comes back to earth and the days become longer. Pagans honor that cycle of life, death, and rebirth, symbolized by the length of the winter solstice.

T.G.I.F.

John Brizolola wonders what it takes to be a dorc.

Best Buys

Syrupy praise for few waffles.

Kid Stuff

Anne Albright touches on “the pulling problem.”

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Snap up a small-train bargain.

Roam-O-Rama

Trainmaster Schad gets loopy in Rancho Santa Fe.

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Elaine Feinstein: Ted Hughes.

Classical Music Review and Guide

Violinist Joshua Bell is thrilling, the Trondheim Soloists less so. Review by Jonathan Saville.

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Restaurant Reviews and Guide

Naomi Wise relaxes at generous Firenze

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I Don't Have to Dodge Bullets
By Robert Kumpel

Robert S. (he wouldn't divulge his last name) stands in front of the Escondido Employment Development District on Valley Parkway looking depend- dent. After losing a job he held for only 16 months, he is looking for another. What's different about Robert's job hunt is that even though his last job started in 2000, this is only the second time he has ever looked for work, and he's 46 years old. "I've been jobless for most of my life." Robert isn't just looking for a new job, he's trying to travel a lot. Then, at 40, I got arrested. It wasn't my first conviction, but it was my first conviction.

Being convicted proved to be the turning point for Robert. "I went into a recovery program. They told me to think about what I was like before I started getting high. Well, since I started getting high before I was seven, I couldn't relate. Then there was the thing. Well, try this since 1992, Robert's last job was as a janitor. "It was at ESL — Electro Scientific Industries. It paid $17,000 a year. Sometimes we'd work 10, 12 hours a day. I was laid off, you know. There wasn't a lot of advance notice. They'd lost a whole bunch of sales, and the work just wasn't there."

Having never been laid off before, Robert was upset by the news. "I don't have a lot of experience working, and I felt I had found a job that I was going to be at for a while. For the company to lose jobs and me to lose my job as a result, it started looking pretty gloomy." Robert says he might have kept his job if he'd had more seniority. To make matters worse, he has no savings, and his car payment will be due soon.

I'm down here. I've got to get a work situation, and I've got to get it soon. The job market sucks. "I'm here at the career center doing assessment right now, and I'll use their resources to get into some kind of training. As I don't have a lot of work history, I've got to get some sort of training, ideally in a field other than janitorial, but the way it looks, I may have to stick to the janitorial field to get a better shot at a job."

While he may look grim, Robert believes he is in a better place than he was before. "Even with the situation I'm faced with now — before, I never had to worry about a car because they paid for the car, and I didn't have to work for the car. Now I've got to work to pay for this car, and..."
Native Bytes
By Ernie Grimm

San Diego's Indian tribes hope Internet technology will bring back the old days, the pre-Cabrillo days, when they traded and traveled among themselves. They believe technology could help them preserve their culture.

Up until now, San Diego's 17 Indian reservations have been on the barren side of what's called the digital divide. Tribal offices have dial-up Internet at best. Most homes on the reservations lack personal computers. And phone power and cable lines don't reach every reservation. "We don't have phone lines where we are," says Desi Vela of the Ewitiapapa — pronounced eh-weet-ay-pee-pee — and also known as Cuyapaipe, a band of Diegueño Indians, whose reservation lies in the mountains on the east side of Mount Laguna. "It would cost us $90,000 to have lines run to us."

What has local Indians looking toward the Internet, despite that sort of obstacle, is a three-year, $5 million grant from Hewlett-Packard to the Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association. We contacted Dennis and he asked Jack Ward, who is the interim director now, "Do you know about this grant? Because UCSD is interested in working with us on it. We were funny because Jack had just purchased a big printer from Hewlett-Packard, and the person that he was dealing with had mentioned that there was this call for proposals for a vision for the Digital Village. So Jack told Dennis, 'Yeah, I just heard about it.' So they heard about it both ways. Shortly after that, we convened a meeting at which there were representatives of different agencies, different tribal communities, everyone we could think of who might be interested. We sat down that afternoon and hammered out the vision."

Hewlett-Packard received over 800 responses to their call for ideas. Around 200 groups submitted formal grant proposals. "From there," Frank explains, "they winnowed it down to about 100, then down to 23. They did phone interviews with those 23, then they did on-site interviews for the final 6. Out of those, they picked 2."

One was a neighborhood in East Baltimore. The other was the Tribal Digital Village proposal of the Tribal Chairmen's Association. "The other five finalists," Frank says, "were all urban projects. This was the only rural project in the final six. What they thought was interesting — which is, of course, what we had hoped but had never guessed that we'd get this far — is this idea that the community wasn't just one block or one square mile but it was this distributed historical community that still had connections that could be remade and controlled by Indians themselves by virtue of the technology. That was the kicker."

A second factor that made the Indians' proposal attractive to Hewlett-Packard was the fact that a smaller-scale pilot program already existed on reservations in North County's Pala and Pauma Valleys. The UCSD supercomputer center had set up a wireless Internet system on the Pala, Rincon, and La Jolla reservations along the State Route 76 corridor. The systems, which use radio waves to transfer data, provide high-speed Internet access to these tribes without having to use phone or cable lines. Wire-mesh antennas, a little bigger than a DirecTV dish, mounted on ten-foot towers on hilltops within the reservation, relay the signals. Already, these three tribes are using the system to their benefit. Tutors from UCSD broadcast via webcam math lessons to these three reservations. "It wasn't a project we did," says Jack Ward, "but it was one that was done for us [by UCSD], and we used that in our project proposal to Hewlett-Packard."

Since Valentine's Day of 2001 — day one of the three-year grant — Frank and the Tribal Chairmen's Association have been meeting and remodeling with the various tribal councils around the county, explaining what the grant could bring. They've broken it down into four areas: education, community, economics, and culture. It's clear to anyone who communicates by e-mail how connection to the Internet will help foster community among the tribes. And the Internet offers a world of educational resources. And when video conferencing and webcasting are available as well, both the educational and community-building possibilities multiply. "For instance," Lorraine Orosco, representative to the project from the San Pasqual reservation, explains, "tonight myself and a group of people are traveling from Valley Center down to Sycuan to go to a traditional Kumeyaay language class for which a person travels two hours on a bus to get to Tecate and then travels to Sycuan to instruct the class. Having this technology, we might not need to do that. We might be able to have teleconferencing or multicasting or video classes through the network."

Regarding the economic benefits of the Tribal Digital Village program, Frank says, "Because of the nature of reservations, the economic impact of this should be profound. It's hard to predict, but because of the nature of reservations, it's going to have a big impact. The reservations have an impact on the community, the community has an impact on the reservation. It's an economic crossroad. This program can help that bridge and help through that process."

The Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association has already proposed another project to Hewlett-Packard. "We're trying to get a bigger piece," Frank says. "We're trying to get their attention. We're not going to sit back and rest on our laurels. This thing is going to be a great learning experience and we're going to take advantage of it."
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Once I started doing wrong, I figured I wasn’t going to slip. But I got lazy, and I slipped and paid the consequences.”

Robert’s vision is fixed on his long-term goals — goals that he doesn’t believe he will attain quickly. “Eventually, I want to run for political office because that’s an extension of the law. I intend to do something in the law, and that would be the next step. The first would be to do the lawyer thing. The next thing is to try to help in creating laws. I don’t want to go to law school, but I’m going to have to,” he laughs. “I would like to avoid that. I got enough behind me to do the legal stuff, but paper-wise I’ll have to go to school. But we’re talking years and years away from now. Nobody has to worry about me being the mayor.”

“As far as lifestyles go, if you’re making a lot of money on the street, regardless of how good it looks, that’s fleeting. One good case, and all your money is gone. They just bust a dude in Colombia, right? He’s the kingpin of the world, making, what, $96 million a week? Now all his money is gone. He’s going nowhere. His life is about to change drastically. In changing lifestyles, the money is hard, and everybody’s struggling with this economy, but it’s a much better feeling at the end of the day. I’m just a low man on the totem pole, but at the end of the day, that’s all that matters. It’s like being a cop: as long as you make it home at the end of the day, you should feel good about what you did. Things are hard, but I sleep all right. Things could be worse.”

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Native
continued from page 8
works. These are professional skills that are needed for this thing to be grown and run and sustainable by the tribes. And there are all sorts of opportunities for economic development in those skills. For example, if a tribe wants to record tribal materials for their own educational programs or for their own archives, they will have the professional capacity and the equipment to do that. That’s great; that’s a cultural program. But those same people who get trained to do that may also sell their services to local bands to cut CDs. Once you have that professional capability, there are so many other things that you can do with it.

What effect the program will have on culture will be the chief concern of the tribes so far. “The issue that comes up,” says Oroso, “is, ‘Who is going to then have access to our cultural information?’” Ross Frank says this concern is voiced at every tribal meeting he attends. And it’s not the older generation who is raising it. “It’s the younger people,” Frank says, “who are learning about their own culture and feeling that their parents had been dissuaded from passing it on in a way that they regret.”

But there are ways, says Frank and Oroso, to digitize and therefore preserve many aspects of Indian culture without making it open to all eyes. “You can have digital archives,” Frank says, “that tribes control and run that aren’t necessarily out on the Web.”

The Hewlett-Packard grant — three quarters of which is in equipment and consulting — ends Valentine’s Day of 2004, at which point, Ross says, “The skills and the knowledge to use it are left locally in a way that’s transmittable to the next group, the next kids, the next young people.” Asked if the system will then sustain itself or fall into disuse and disappear, similar to government-built reservation housing, Frank answers, “You’ve asked the $5 million question.”
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God of Answers, Knower of All Things:
I have owned several pet mice over the years, and year after year, mouse after mouse, they all engage in one behavior besides the usual poop-eat-sleep cycle. When I fill any given mouse’s water dish, the first thing he will do is rush over to the water and throw in some of the wood shavings that line the bottom of his cage. Is my mouse neuritic? Is it a natural instinct gone bad?

— A Really Good San Diegan

Behavioral analysis of the short end of the food chain, a link or two north of barnacles and squids, is pretty darn uninteresting. After much burrowing and digging, most of it through the American Fancy Rat and Mouse Society, we came up covered with wood chips and barely smarter than when we started. Mousekeepers are not an inquisitive lot, so answers are few. Simple pets for simple minds? Who knows. We did finally corner a mouse expert, apparently not a fast runner, who agreed to put her rep on the line. Any caged mouse, not just yours, will fill its water bowl with whatever crud is on the floor. This may be because rodents are not fond of bodies of water. Mice in their natural habitat wouldn’t have water lying around the house. And, second, mice while away their limited hours on earth organizing the things around them, shaving cage shavings back and forth and rearranging the furniture. So your pet finally gets the cage feng shui, when in comes this big hand that whips out the nicely cleaned dish, then sticks it back in with more of that danged water. Well, what’s a mouse to do except start all over again burying the dish? Hell! Bulletin to you from the society of folks who raise fancy rats and mice: Don’t give mice water in bowls. Part with a syringe and get one of those gravity water bottles. Your pet will thank you; your problem will be solved.

Hey, Matt:
When you’re driving down a residential (usually) street, you see the “road Braille,” the little raised markers that tell you which lane you are in (or not, if you cross it), and they are the usual colors of amber, white, red if you’re going the wrong way, etc. What are the odd-placed blue markers for? I sometimes see them at intersections, but then I also notice them at other odd places in the drive space. Please solve this. It’s driving me nuts.

— North Park Driver

There are so many other things on the road to make a person nuts. This seems so mild. Anyway, the next time you see a blue reflector, look at the adjacent sidewalk. You’ll find a fire hydrant somewhere nearby. It’s quick way to ID them for speeding fire trucks.

Dear Matthew:
Is it true that in certain parts of the world, toilet paper is not an option, but rather the left hand is the primary wiping instrument? (With a subsequent running in water — running, I would hope.) Also, so to not to imply judgment from my Western point of view, when did toilet paper get invented, and how did we get along before that? We were discussing this doughnut in the office and would really like to know.

— Manuel Andrade, at work

No need to do the PC tap dance, Manuel. Truth is, the world’s burn washers consider us bum wipers to be a horde of unsanitary primitives. What’s more, they say, our Western toilets are ridiculous, badly designed devices. In much of the world, most notably the Middle East, India, and east through south Asia, a hole in the floor (with footprints helpfully painted on to help you aim) and a pitcher of water for the final cleanup is considered ergonomically optimal and far more hygienic. In these countries, with or without Western toilets and TP, the left hand is used for all ablutions, so it is a profound insult to eat with your left hand or even use it to hand someone a newspaper or the like. You may as well stick your left hand in your pocket and forget you have one.

The first paper made specifically for the bathroom appeared in the U.S. in 1857 in the form of packets of individual stacked sheets delicately called “therapeutic paper.” The British pushed the TP-design envelope with rolls of perforated paper in 1879, but we mostly ignored it, since we already had catalogs, corn cobs, newspapers, etc., stacked in the outhouse. Why spend money for special paper? The next try, by the Scott paper company, came in the 1880s, when the modern ceramic toilet was a necessity in fine hotels and increasingly in the home. Scott’s timing was perfect, and toilet paper became a domestic staple. A quick scan of TP history indicates that Chinese emperors used rice paper bun wrap in the 1800s; Vikings used sheets and wood; ancient Romans used sponges; and the French court used lace.

Matt:
Why do avocados have such big seeds? Sometimes they’re all seed, no guac.

— GuacamoleGirl, South Bay

The pit’s designed to reproduce the parent tree, not to please you. The wild avocado grows in subtropical jungles, so the new sprout has to get several feet tall before it can share sunlight (to make food) with its neighbors. Until it grows out of their shadows, it relies on nutrients in the seed, so it’d better be big.

Got a question you need answered? Get it straight from the hip. Write to Matthew Alice, c/o the Reader, P.O. Box 85803, San Diego, CA 92186-5803, or fax your questions to 619-231-0489, or e-mail to hey Matt@ctx.com via the Internet. A searchable archive of past columns is available at SandiegoReader.com.
Sporting Box

By Patrick Daugherty

A Special Thanks To The Indianapolis Police Department

The last parade I attended was the Frontier Days Parade in Fairbanks, Alaska, sometime in the early 1970s. I viewed it from the corner of Nobel and Second Avenue with four Tlingit Indians. We’d been up all night, I believe the term is partying, and just had hit the sidewalk. Our arrival into daylight was too abrupt as the savage, unexpected sunshine knocked us back against the Savoy Bar building. I rubbed my eyes, took three slow breaths, and, suddenly, 15 feet away from me, appearing as if by magic, dressed in white and black uniforms, was the Lathrop High School marching band strutting its stuff.

It was a hell of a parade. I knew somebody on every float, in every dignitary-infested convertible, and even in most of the marching bands. I called out to the Municipal Utilities float, “Hey, Denny, you going to the softball game today?” “Yeah, see you there.” I realized, the Alaska Coal Association float. “Frank, I got that router bit you’ve been looking for.” “Thanks, I’ll come by tonight.” Now, that’s a hometown parade.

I figured it’s about time I tried another civic process, which is why I’m walking along G Street at a slightly too early hour in the morning to attend the 2001 Holiday Bowl Parade. There are, perhaps, a dozen other people heading in the same direction. One woman says to her companion, “Boy, this isn’t as crowded as it was last year.”

The first parade artifact is sighted in front of Seaport Village. It’s a banner with an American flag, and next to it, the legend, “Thank’s for Traveling.” The parade is set to begin in 15 minutes and the crowd is sparse. I walk around a bend and see the Shaw’s Harbor Fish Market.

A bit of grass here, quite pleasant, lots of places to sit, walk, or lounge. Curbside, people are two-deep, tops, with many gaps along the line. This is the parade that goes in front of you if you hate crowds.

They’re having a 5K run and runners are just now coming across the finish line. On my right is a sign indicating something about masses, one dollar a minute. I walk up to a tall, athletic-looking man. I place him in his mid-60s. He’s wearing a black baseball hat, red T-shirt, tan khaki pants, and tennis shoes. I point at the dollar-a-minute sign, “What is this?”

“This is San Diego Sports Massage Team. I’m the events coordinator.”

Speaking is Al Mello, certified massage therapist and twice retired from North Island and General Dynamics. I ask, “How many people on your team?”

“Right now, we’re down in membership. We have six or seven members. People don’t like to come out at six o’clock in the morning to set up.”

“A deal-breaker. Which events does the team cover?”

“We’ll hit the San Diego Marathon, the Super Run, and Dr. Seuss. We’ll cover 20 races this year, and we’ll do some triathlons.”

“What’s the hardest thing to learn about giving a good massage?”

“To listen. Listen to people tell you what their bodies are telling them.”

“Smart answer. For the budget-minded, what’s the shortest amount of time required for a technically adequate massage?”

“Meloche smiles. “We charge a dollar a minute. So, somebody brings five bucks, we’ll do that.”

“I mean, ideally, if money wasn’t an issue!”

“Ten to 15 minutes before and after a run. You’ll find elite athletes have their own therapists who go to during the week.”

“Can a massage take the place of a stretch?”

“No, but it will stretch you out and make you feel better. Runners do stretches before races. If you stretch your hamstrings, that is, if you can stretch your stride out six inches, and you’re running a marathon, you’ll pick up mile and a half on your race. Just by extending your stride six inches.”

“I never thought of that.”

The Vegas Line

NFL - Week 17

[Home Team in CAPS]

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Wednesday’s 1900-2100

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Los Angeles vs. Washington

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Denver vs. Kansas City

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To theillis people tell you what their bodies are telling them.

To listen. Listen to people tell you what their bodies are telling them.

Smart answer. For the budget-minded, what’s the shortest amount of time required for a technically adequate massage?”

Meloche smiles. “We charge a dollar a minute. So, somebody brings five bucks, we’ll do that.”

“I mean, ideally, if money wasn’t an issue!”

“Ten to 15 minutes before and after a run. You’ll find elite athletes have their own therapists they go to during the week.”

“Can a massage take the place of a stretch?”

“No, but it will stretch you out and make you feel better. Runners do stretches before races. If you stretch your hamstrings, that is, if you can stretch your stride out six inches, and you’re running a marathon, you’ll pick up mile and a half on your race. Just by extending your stride six inches.”

“I never thought of that.”

Never thought of that. I never thought of that.

The Vegas Line

NFL - Week 17

[Home Team in CAPS]

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SHEEP AND GOATS
PLACES OF WORSHIP REVIEWED

Denomination: Presbyterian Church USA
Address: 6225 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067
Year founded: 1956
Senior pastor: Reverend Jack Baca
Congregation: 150 members
Staff: Full-time, 1 part-time
Sunday school enrollment: 450
Annual budget: $2.1 million
Weekly giving: $41,000
Single program: no, but has "young adult" program
Diversity: white
Dress: dressy casual to dressy
Services: Sunday, 9:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m.

In 1859, Leandro Osuna, son of the man who owned all of Rancho Santa Fe, was so cruel to the Indians who worked for him that they poisoned him. They told him that his death would be painful and slow. Osuna killed himself. Sixty-three years later, architect Lillian Rice, a San Diego native and a fan of Spanish Revival architecture, began transforming Rancho Santa Fe into a "landmark community." Last year the Robb Report ranked it as the "most livable" affluent community in North America.

Lillian Rice designed many of the homes and commercial buildings along Paseo Delicias, the main road through the central part of town. Village Community Presbyterian Church, however, was built in 1956. The modest redbrick and wood-shingle structure sits on 7.5 acres of a valuable land. The only other nearby church is a small Christian Science congregation. (Reverend Jay Shirley, assistant pastor at Village Community, explained that Rancho Santa Fe's strict building code had discouraged the construction of churches. "They didn't want monumental structures distracting from the Spanish-village feel.")

Village Community is so ordinary-looking that I was surprised to see, inside, above the altar, hanging before a stained glass window depicting Jesus, what Roman Catholics call a "sanctuary lamp." Senior Pastor Jack Baca, who serves at the church for only four years, could not account for the lamp's presence. "You don't normally see that sort of thing in a Presbyterian church," he laughed. "I'm guessing it's there because many of our members come from Episcopal and Roman Catholic backgrounds." (He later told me he estimated that 35 percent of his congregants were born and raised in the Presbyterian Church.)

Sanctuary lamp or no, Village Community is High Church. Reverend Baca guides his congregation through a formal liturgy that includes a lengthy and solemn Prayer of Confession. ("It's not only good morally," he explained to me. "It's also good theology. We take it seriously here. The Prayer of Confession makes us take time out to reflect on the fact that we're not such fantastic people, that we sin, and that we need God's forgiveness and help.")

At Sunday's 10:30 a.m. service, Reverend Shirley delivered the sermon, "The Other Side of Christmas," which he based on Luke 2:11-38. He asked us to consider the "empathy feeling" that comes post-Christmas, after all the gifts have been opened, the meals eaten, when there's "maybe just a few pine needles and scraps of wrapping paper left on the living room floor."

Reverend Shirley noted that after the Nativity, Mary and Joseph had Jesus circumcised, that they went to the Temple to pay for and observe the rituals required after the birth of a son. They upheld their religious obligations. They did what they had to do.

None of this had been easy, Reverend Shirley told us.

"I'm sure that when they arrived in Bethlehem that there were places to stay, for the rich, for those that could afford them. But Mary and Joseph were poor. We see this when they went to the Temple. They couldn't afford a lamb, which was the traditional sacrifice. Instead they bought two doves. God didn't have Jesus born into a family of wealth and influence.""Reverend Shirley suggested that Mary and Joseph were not unlike the migrants who work in the fields not far from Rancho Santa Fe. "When I discussed this idea with my junior-high class, I asked them if something like the birth of Jesus had happened among migrant workers, out there in the fields, would they, the students, have ever heard about it. And they said, probably not."

Reverend Shirley told us, "The path to God is not one of luxury, abundance, and pleasure. We are saved only by God's Holy Spirit. So we, as Christians, are not to judge the world in any way, but to love God, we are what only redeemed sinners. Is that what predetermination and election are all about? No. God stands outside of time, so that's how He knows who will accept Him and who will not.

After this no-nonsense sermon, I asked Reverend Baca, who studied at Princeton, what it was like to bring the Gospel to a prosperous congregation.

"They're not only materially comfortable, they're successful. They're accomplished. Frequently, they're at the tops in their fields. They travel the world. Intellectually, they keep me on my toes."

"But for all their comfort and accomplishments, they're human, just like anyone else. They get sick. They die. They fear. They feel guilt. There's no question that part of my job is to help them see that they need God. For people who are less fortunate, that need is sometimes more immediate. But for wealthy people, sometimes it's their success, the wealth they've accumulated, that leads them to ask, 'Is that all there is? Their success leads them to God.'"

I asked if the war had touched his congregation.

"More than you might think. Several members who work in finance had friends or knew people in the World Trade Center. And one of our families had a son on the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. So these events so far away, the war, have reached all the way to Rancho Santa Fe."

— Abe Oppenhe
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Dear Aunt Trudy,

My friend Carla invited my husband and I to a quiet holiday dinner with her and her mate, just the four of us, she said. Great! I thought. No big drunken party full of strangers making awkward small talk. Just an intimate dinner with old friends. Now, suddenly, the guest list has swollen to include a couple of families with rowdy children, some relatives of her husband’s we’ve not met, and a family of militant Israelis who rant on endlessly about radical politics and chide us for not being Jewish enough. The quiet evening now looms as a dismal obligation. I feel like the victim of a bait-and-switch scheme. Must we attend this party since its nature has so thoroughly changed?

DISAPPOINTED IN EL CAJON

Dear Disappointed,

I do sympathize. So often events mutate till they are unrecognizable versions of what had initially been planned. A tête-à-tête becomes a gathering at which there are amateur theatricals, swing bands, a roll-out dance floor, and then the Vienna Boys Choir appears. This is especially true during the holidays. In my opinion, you are justified in taking either path. Bow out if you really feel you will be nothing but uncomfortable, or attend if you want to experiment. If you do decide to brave this larger event, you could be pleasantly surprised. You might meet someone you find sympathetic, or the fuller company could prove unexpectedly congenial. It is, after all, the season of miracles. My mother had a habit when I was a little girl of inviting waifs and strays to our holiday gatherings. If she found out someone had no place to go, they were urged — practically strong-armed — to come spend the holiday at our home. As a kid this made me grumble about being strangers at our table, but I did meet some wonderful characters. Now my mother has been dead for many years, and I’ve known what it’s like to be alone when it feels like everyone else in the city is celebrating. I have to admit I treasure the memory not only of my mother’s incredible cooking but also of her open-heartedness.

Dear Readers,

A letter previous printed in this column from a man who felt relegated to second-class citizenship by virtue of his childlessness sparked numerous reader responses. Two are printed below.

Dear Aunt Trudy,

After reading the letter from “Married in Hillcrest with No Kids,” I wanted to share information with you about No Kidding! a social organization for childfree singles and couples. Here’s the link to their website: www.nokidding.net. The website encourages the formation of new chapters and provides details on how that can be accomplished.

NOT JOINING IN DEL CERRO

Dear Aunt Trudy,

I just wanted to comment on the concerns of “No Kids” by telling readers of my own experiences as a father. I had my first daughter at 28. When she was born I was clueless about the joys I should be feeling. Grandparents gave their opinions on a lot of baby essentials, but my wife and I were initially mystified about emotions we simply didn’t feel. Why did they smile so much whenever they were with our daughter? Gradually, I learned all about this outrageous joy as our girl grew up and taught me. When my wife accidentally became pregnant again five years later, I’d had been a cartoon character, my heart would have been visible, and I would have made cartwheels around the earth. Among the many, many things I learned from my daughter is that, first and foremost, my wife and I were selfish in wanting to have a baby. Yes, we were. We never gave a thought to what kind of life the baby we wanted would have. We innocently hoped there would be no troubles or problems. We never thought about the baby becoming a teenager or God forbid, an adult. Despite our naiveté, we were lucky. We lived one day at a time, solving problems and working with the girls. We played, laughed, talked, and taught each other many things. Today, they are two beautiful women, 25 and 20, and they are my happy thought. In most people the desire to have children is very powerful. Not wanting to have babies is definitely not being selfish. My advice to “No Kids” is to feel no guilt about this. I just hope “No Kids” won’t regret his decision in the future, as my brother does. He never wanted to have kids of his own, but now every time he spends a day with one of his girls, he gets remorseful. Me, well, I’m still in awe at being a dad. It’s an amazing feeling. I’m elated all the time.

THRILLED LINDA VISTA DAD

Write to Aunt Trudy c/o the San Diego Reader, P.O. Box 85803, San Diego CA 92186-85803; call her at 619-235-3000 ext. 413; fax her at 619-881-2401; or e-mail to trudy@sdrreader.com
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North County Reader January 3, 2001 29
"They have estimates about how long people will sit in them before they'll just leave. You don't have to say anything to them — they'll just go away.

It's not a science, but the suppliers have a fairly good idea. They do surveys, and they have hundreds of people sit in them and see when the people get up. Generally, if the back is more upright, you won't last as long. Also, if the seat is shallower — you don't have enough support. If you are opening an inexpensive cafe and want a quick turn, you might opt for stiff, straight-backed, shallow-seat metal chairs. They'll be attractive, but not conducive to long chats over postprandial coffee. If you're outfitting the latest challenger to the gastronomic throne, you may look for something more hospitable."

It is tempting to dismiss such a story as another urban legend, possibly born of a stiff back and sore backside following a less than dazzling meal at a cheap diner. But the storyteller here is Charles Matson, a man who has given more attention and thought to the matter of dining out than anyone I have ever met. The matter of chairs and their comfort-to-time ratio falls well within the realm of subjects about which he may be expected to possess sound knowledge.

Dining out has this in common with several other activities (such as driving): everybody does them, and so everybody assumes that they know how to do them. You call to make a reservation, you go to the restaurant at the appointed time, you sit, you order, you eat, you pay, you leave. The process requires no special skill or great effort — indeed, part of the purpose for going out at all is to reduce the amount of skill and effort required to enjoy a good meal. But just as some drivers are more aware of their surroundings and the factors influencing the safety and comfort of their journeys, there is at least one diner whose detailed sense of the restaurant experience affords him what he considers to be a greater degree of pleasure in his repast.

I first noticed Charles's particular attention to this subject a few years ago, shortly before Valentine's Day. He asked after my plans; I told him that my wife and I would, as usual, be enjoying a late dinner at home after the children had gone to bed. He complimented me on my good sense for not going out and wondered at the desperation that must be being felt by so many poor slobs as they scrambled for last-minute reservations.

How lucky they would have been to count Charles among their friends. In early January, or possibly late December, of the year previous, he had made Valentine's Day reservations at several high-end restaurants around town. Then, as the lovers' day approached, he was able to ask his date for the evening, in an offhanded sort of way, where she was interested in dining. Odds were,
want that; I want that,' and you get it."

since he knew her tastes, she would name one of the places he had phoned a month earlier. He had the reservation in hand, his lady fair had her choice of establishments, and to top it off, he was in a position to play savior to some of his less farsighted friends. Rather than cancel his spare reservations, he farmed them out, thus granting prime restaurants and seating times to fellows who might have otherwise spent the better part of the evening waiting for a ten o'clock seating and the dulled attentions of an exhausted waiter at their second- or third-choice eateries.

Charles's study of the matter has led to the development of an unwritten dining code, which he summarizes thusly: "Basically, when I get things, I get them done my way. That doesn't necessarily mean it's the right way, but it's the way I want it. I'm the customer, and that's what I intend to get." A brash attitude, perhaps, but it is not born of simple arrogance. It has been earned through experience and tempered by an understanding of the party on the other side of the power struggle — the restaurant. (Charles himself has worked either in or around the business for years.) Nor does it ignore the essential character of a particular establishment. Charles is not about to order a hamburger well-done at Mille Fleurs. He may, however, request that his salad be served after his entrée, or that his white wine be a little warmer than refrigerator temperature. "A lot of times," he explains, "the purveyor doesn't care [what I want]; they do things and they think that's how it is and that's what works best for me. So there's a certain negotiation going on — them having the smooth flow, and you getting what you want. We're doing a dance. It's like, 'Who's most important here? Me, the customer? The kitchen? The server? Or the people behind us, [waiting for the table]?'

Often, the purveyor assumes authority because no one else seems interested. The diner is content to be so much putty in the restaurant's hands. The dining experience may be so infrequent as to be almost utterly foreign, or it may be so common as to attract no notice. Or there may be other influences, not the least of which is the intimidation of exquisite decor and exotic cuisine.

Charles was inoculated against this last factor early on. "I used to go out with a group of friends. We all appreciated wine, and we would all go to different restaurants. The idea was, someone would choose a restaurant and a theme, and we would all bring bottles and conduct tastings. A couple of my friends were more assertive than I was, and I saw the results — the squeaky wheel gets the grease. You say, 'I don't want that; I want that,' and you get it. When you go out with a bunch of guys, you're eating, you're drinking — there's no pressure. You're not as afraid to make mistakes, because these are your buds.

"It's not like going out with a date. You might go out [with women] just as often, but there are a lot more dynamics than just the food and the wine." The feminine presence, often a civilizing factor, can serve to numb the basic urge to squawk when something is awry. You don't want to seem a bore.

The quality of foreignness can also serve as a deterrent to self-assertion. "I think
most people dine out on Valentine’s Day, which is a nightmare; New Year’s Eve, which is just foolish; and an anniversary or birthday, which is fine, because that’s your day — you don’t have competition. It’s guaranteed that Valentine’s Day and New Year’s Eve can only be fair at best, just because of the volume [of customers] and the pricing and everything else. So if they're dining four times a year, and two of them are atrocious experiences, that makes them not want to go out at other times of the year.” (During other conversations I had with him, Charles mentioned Mother's Day, which is similarly awful in terms of “competition.”)

“When a birthday comes along, it’s like, ‘Do you want to go out?’ ‘No! Remember when we went out New Year’s Eve? It was crowded, our table wasn’t ready, we had to wait at the bar, they were out of everything, it was very expensive, and you had a bad time.’” Amid the clamor of holiday dinners, there is no possibility of getting things done your way, and if these are the outside in, how to tip the hatchet girl, and all that — because my parents didn’t know any of that. That was a milestone. I lost ten pounds; I was very nervous. The servers really helped me ease that. If I used the wrong thing, they weren’t going to grab it away from me, but they did little things, like, ‘Perhaps you’d like this [instead of that].’ ‘Like the snails. They probably have said something like, ‘Have you ever had them before?’ Following his initiation, Charles would go out once a year, on my birthday or something like that. Then it picked up a lot when I was 23. By 25, I was out of control; 25 to 30 is when I really went wild. I’m more particular now. I probably dine at least every other month.” This does not include his regular research expeditions evenings when he will go on his own to expensive restaurants (he is single). “Belly up to the bar, see what wines they have by the glass, order some appetizers, get the vibe, and skate out.”

For my part, I have been “dining,” as Charles calls it, since a very young age. As early as 5, I was being taken on the occasional outing to an upscale restaurant with my brother and parents and grandparents. Something in me must have appealed to me, because for my 16th birthday, I asked my grand-}

father to take me to L'Auberge du Cochon Rouge, the swankiest restaurant I knew of in nearby Ithaca, New York. My friend Jason had dined there and let on that it was très chic. I did not want to be outdone.

We arrived on the happy evening and were immediately charmed. The restaurant was situated in an old house; I still recall the wide-plank floorboards. Candles lined the walls, supported by great sconces covered with wax drippings. The tables were few and generally small, the air hushed and full of murmurs.

Our party of six soon put an end to that. My father’s laugh has never boomed into the silence as it did that night. We did not belong there; we were too jovial, too talkative. The waiters began to appear with less and less regularity; our (outstanding) seven-course meal took a full five hours to consume, and not because we were slow eaters. One particularly egregious and wonderful moment: my brother ordered a soup — I think it was cauliflower — which, when

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we ate it at home, was served hot. At the restaurant, it was served cold, a quality not mentioned on the menu. Mark signaled the waiter.

"Excuse me, my soup is cold."

"Yes, sir, it is a chilled soup."

"Oh, it didn't say that on the menu. Would you mind heating it up?"

The only thing colder than the soup was the waiter's demeanor. He looked at Mark with a mixture of contempt and horror, took the soup back toward the kitchen. When he returned, the soup was literally bubbling, a grand gesture of defiance from the kitchen. For years, we wondered what would have happened if Mark had told the waiter that the soup was now too hot and that he would like it cooled off a little.

Many years and many restaurants later, I encountered Charles Matson and began to be curious to see a dinner through his eyes. So I asked him to take me through a couple of dinners out, providing commentary as we went. He chose the restaurants based partly on their reputation for food and partly on their reputation for service. Our first dinner was at Vivace at the Four Seasons Resort Aviara in Carlsbad.

I called and asked for an eight o'clock reservation on Saturday, November 11, of 2000. The receptionist replied, "We have an opening at 8:45."

"Could I have that, then?"

"Okay, no problem."

Around eight o'clock, I arrived at Aviara, gave my keys to the valet parking attendant, and made my way to the lounge. I sat beholding the generous appointments of the bar, nursing a $11 bourbon (you're paying for a lot more than the drink here), waiting for my guest. Charles arrived, sat down, and ordered a Pellegrino from the manager — his gray suit set him apart from the waiters, as did the manner in which he drifted from table to table, monitoring everyone's happiness — who appeared a moment later. Soon after that, a waiter approached our table, but the glass he set before Charles was full of Four Seasons Pale Ale.

"There may have been some misconception," began Charles, unperturbed. "What I wanted was Pellegrino sparkling water."

"Pellegrino," repeated the waiter, puzzled. "Well, this wouldn't be that."

"With my accent and the music going on, a lot of different things could have occurred," offered Charles, oozing kindness. Though it was true that we were seated next to the guitar player, Charles's voice carries very little accent — if anything, he speaks with a slight twang that makes his speech clearer than most.

"Would you care for the beer anyway? asked the waiter, eager to make amends. Charles accepted, the waiter went back for his Pellegrino and returned forthwith. Charles was pleased. "The server was outgoing; he took care of the situation and left the beer. A lot of places, they make you feel guilty, as if you must have mumbled. Here, it was, "We made a mistake — the beer is on the house."

Earlier, Charles compared the interaction he has with a restaurant to a dance. He also mentioned that his evaluation of his partner may begin even before he has requested that she join him on the floor — that is, before he made his reservation. Often, he has already been there and "gotten the vibe," along with some appetizers. "I have 8:45, it is probably a larger-top table."

Eight o'clock, it turns out, is something of a holy grail to Charles, an all but impossible reservation time, falling as it does slightly beyond the traditional end of the first turn and slightly before the traditional beginning of the second turn. A "turn" is Charles's term for...
the time taken at the table by a given party before the table “turns over” to another party. If you are first turn, you are the first party seated at that table on a given night.” I once called a restaurant; I think I wanted 8:00. They said, “We have 7:30 or 8:30.”

“Hi, I am 7:30, am I at the beginning of the second turn?”

“Turn?”

“Yes, you heard me.”

“Well, there is a table seated before you, but they’ll be gone by 8:30.”

“What about 7:30?”

“No, you’d be the first one.”

“Oh, that’s what I want.”

“I want to be the first one seated at the table. That way, I don’t have to wait for anyone. Otherwise, you’re gambling.” He outlined an ugly and plausible scenario: “Someone calls [shortly before a very busy night like Valentine’s Day] and says, ‘Do you have anything around 7:00 or 8:00?’

“No, but we have 5:30 or 9:30.”

“Oh, I’ll take 5:30.”

“Now, what happens is, they’re at work at five o’clock. There’s no way they’re going to be able to get home and change and get to the restaurant by 5:30, but they don’t want to deal with not having a Valentine’s Day reservation. Plus, when you leave something you don’t really want, you don’t feel obligated to get there when you agreed to. So they call at 20 to 6:00 and say, ‘We’re running a little late; we’ll be there in a few minutes’, which basically means 20 minutes. Since they’ve called, the restaurant can’t really give their table away.” A half hour after their reservation, they sit down to dine.”

The people who get hurt are the people scheduled after them, who called a month ahead of time and said, “I want a 7:30 reservation.” Their table, which would have been available had the 5:30 couple been on time, is now occupied. Given a standard two-hour dining time, they are in for an extended wait at the bar. “They feel that the restaurant is very irresponsible, because now they’re waiting a half hour for a reservation they made a month ago.”

Further, “Once people pay the check, a lot of people say to themselves, ‘We don’t want any more food. We’ve paid our bill. But we don’t want to go. We spent a lot of money, and we want to stay. It’s very comfortable. We like it here.’ Sometimes people stay and have coffee and things that are virtually gratis. That’s why it’s very dangerous to be the second turn. Last seating of the first turn [eight o’clock] is the gem of gems.”

Another player has now encroached on the dance between Charles and the restaurant — the other diners. Those who come before him, he seeks to avoid; but there are also those who may come after. And despite his primary attention to getting what he wants, he does not ignore their shadowy presence in his world. This thoughtfulness is not without a touch of self-interest. Charles is a marathon diner; to be the second turn behind his first turn would mean disaster. So he gives fair warning. “I usually announce it when I make my reservation. I tell them, ‘You’re never going to see this table again. I am a four-or-five-hour diner. If I sit down at 6:00, I will be there at 10:00; you need to know this. But you also need to know that I will order a minimum of two bottles of wine and a minimum of four courses. So you’re going to get more revenue from me than if you turned the table. But I don’t want someone sitting...
at the bar going crazy.'

"Most managers are great [with this], because they usually have enough tables. They just don’t plan on the table for the second turn. They may seat me at a less desirable table, because if I am someone who is eating for four hours, I’m probably more interested in the food than in looking out the window or something—which is okay. So negotiations kind of begin at the beginning." (Since we were second turn that evening, no warning was required.)

The second step, after the reservation, is the arrival. Here, the restaurant has the opportunity to take control, and there is little that you, the diner, can do. Though you have made a reservation and arrived on time, you may still be asked to wait. This may not be the restaurant’s fault — they cannot necessarily control when a table becomes available — but it is still a matter of their telling you how your evening will progress.

One tactic they may employ to placate you is what Charles refers to as the "20-minute rule." If you say to a party that their table will be ready in 15 minutes, most people will come up after 10 minutes and ask, "Is my table ready?" If you say at the outset that it will be another half hour, they’ll say that’s too long. But if you say 20 minutes, most people wait. And once they’re waiting, the restaurant can stretch the time. For example, "If they have an eight o’clock reservation, and they get there at five of eight and you say it’ll be 20 minutes, [you can] seat them at 8:30. But if you say it’ll be 10 or 15 minutes, then in 5 minutes they’re, like, ‘Where’s my table?’"

In extreme circumstances, drastic measures may be taken. "Let’s say you [the restaurant] book a table at 9:30, because ten o’clock is too late — no [customers] going to [take] that. You might even say 9:15. They get there and you say, ‘Oh, we’re just wait-
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make sure I have no uncertainties, only confidence." Sending the manager had not been a wasted effort, however; we had at least given notice of our arrival. If we hadn't checked from the bar, that other party that came up while we were waiting would probably be sitting here."

Frederick, our waiter, appeared promptly with the wine list, his arrival as soft and unobtrusive as his overall manner. He proceeded to tell us about the evening's specials, "which might affect your decision about wines tonight." After running through the list, which included ingredients and methods of preparation, he asked, "May I bring something else for you to drink while you relax with the wine list?" We ordered waters, and I asked Frederick for his impressions so far. "The hosts should have opened our napkins when we sat down; that's to be done. My guess as to why they didn't is that she's running a little behind on changing tables. She needs to get back to seat more parties."

We continued chatting, settling into the happy snail's pace that marks Charles's meals. When Frederick arrived with the waters, Charles told him we would probably need a few minutes. When he checked back a few minutes later, we still hadn't taken a serious look at our menus. The wine list, however, had at least been broached.

"Am I rushing things?" he asked, his tone blended from equal parts humor and genuine curiosity.

"No," answered Charles, "we're right at the point where we're going to have a beverage."

"Oh — ha-ha." There was the tiniest hint of wonder in his laugh — was this man serious?

Charles ordered two glasses of champagne from different producers (he is fond of variety, and I was happy to share), his preferred opening to any dinner. That was all, "We've only just begun," he said smiling. Frederick left; Charles turned to me. "I generally use euphemisms like that. Right now, he's gathering information — Am I rushing you? He's building up a sense of timing. It takes a little while; you walk on eggshells until you get into a groove — Are the dinners? Up-right? Are they very California? Are they demanding? Are they from New York City? The server is constantly taking in information, like a little child."

I asked after his general approach to waiters. "You're starving and you're in their hands. You have to make friends with them. You don't have to, but it's best for all parties concerned to meet halfway. It's best to smile and be friendly and use direct eye contact — give them an idea that you're here to have fun, not to make their life miserable. You just want to have a good meal, drink some wine. If you set a light, happy tone, generally they'll feed off that: you're happy, you're loving life, having a good time."

Which is not to say you're inviting him into your circle of intimates. "I usually don't have to handle overfamiliarity; because I set up an East Coast wall. How you speak to them is generally how you're spoken to. You don't get a tone of levity [but also make it clear that] I'm the paying person; you're the one who is taking care of my wants and needs. They often sense that. It also depends on where you go. The higher end [the restaurant], hopefully, the more professional they tend to be." (Through-out the evening, Frederick, while warm, seemed to understand Charles's wishes in this matter. He chatted where he thought appropriate — in particular, about the wines — and kept a friendly distance the rest of the time.)

When Frederick returned, he was carrying a tray. On the tray stood two empty champagne flutes and two open bottles of champagne. Frederick placed one flute in front of Charles, lifted one of the bottles of champagne from the tray,
poured Charles's glass in a narrow, steady stream, returned the bottle to the tray, placed my flute in front of me, lifted the second bottle from the tray, poured my glass, and returned the second bottle to the tray. He never paused and he never trembled, despite the strain of placing and pouring with one hand while keeping the champagne-laden tray balanced with the other. We were duly impressed. "That is so wonderful," marveled Charles as Frederick turned to carry the tray—no doubt getting heavier by the second—back to the kitchen. "I never see that. That was one of those things you forget, and when it comes back to you, you say, 'Oh, that's beautiful.'"

"Feeling hungry pangus?" asked Frederick when he returned at 9:25. A smile tugged at his lips as he said the question was almost certainly rhetorical. Charles ordered appetizers—lobster carpaccio and prosciutto di Parma—nothing more. Five minutes later, Frederick reappeared. "We should be arriving with your appetizers in just a moment. Do you know what you might like to have them, and then I can get your menus out of the way?"

"We do," answered Charles. "Not the menus, but we do know what we want to follow the appetizers. We're going to jump into the baked Parmesan custard with wild mushrooms."

"One to share?"

"Yes."

By now, the pace and practice were beginning to become clear. We were not in a hurry and would not be hurried. "He's gathering information," nodded Charles. "A daunting try. The kitchen is trying to get the whole order in—Where are we? How much more do we have to prepare? What can we clean up and start putting away?" If he comes
back and says, 'Are you ready to order now?' at a certain
time, that means he's get-
ting heat from the kitchen —
or he just wants to get home.
It's a fine line. But if you
do n't give your order to
them, they have nothing to
do. We've taken control of
the situation, and that's the part I like.'

Tempo does as much as
anything in dictating the
nature of a particular dance,
and it is especially in this
manner that Charles refuses
to go. "The general flow of
a restaurant is this: they're looking at about 20 min-
utes to an hour for the table.
You order your meal; after
15 or 20 minutes, your first
course comes." Twenty
minutes later, if you order it
as a separate course, your salad.
"Twenty minutes, entree;
then 20 minutes, dessert.
That gives you a flow in the
restaurant — about an hour
and a half to two hours per
turn.

"That's why I often
withhold information
[a few of the orders]. Once I
can't give you my order, I can't
get it back. They've got it.
If you send food back [because you're not right for it], that's
a very tough area. There
was a time when they would
say, 'Who would you like for your entree?' when they
asked me what I'd like.
I would say, 'I would like this,'
and as dinner went along
and the entree came out, I
would say, 'Oh, I don't want
it now.' And they were, like,
'It's been prepared.' Who
decided that? 'Well, we did,
because, you know... And
then you send it back,' a
sensitive matter. "These peo-
ple are controlling your
food; you don't want to get
them upset."

Even if the kitchen isn't
upset, it's a good idea to let
your subsequent orders get
shuffled to the bottom of the
pilch, there is the danger
posed by the heat lamp that
is likely to wash over your
entrée as it waits for you
to read yourself to receive it.
Cream sauces break; meat
gets its journey from the
medium rare to medium.
Frederick's curiosity about
our readings to order made me
wonder if we weren't irritating
the kitchen even as we avoided
sending things back by not order-
ing. "It's 9:30," Charles
granted, "but this is a Sat-
urday night, which is totally different from pulling this
on a Tuesday or a Friday.
Also, you asked for an eight
o'clock, which is impos-
ible to get, but that's okay.
The point is, you asked for
something they weren't able
to provide; we were accom-
modating and they were
accommodating. Sorry, Mr.
Lickona, we don't have eight
o'clock, but we do have
something at 8:45. That
doesn't mean that they take
45 minutes out of your din-
ing time; you get the same
amount of time.

At 9:30, the appetizers
arrived via busboy. Three
minutes after that, Freder-
icky approached and asked
how everything was, thus
establishing a pattern that
would endure throughout
the evening. Three to seven
minutes after each arrival,
there would be a check to
make sure we were satis-
fixed. At 9:49, he came round
again, this time to inquire
about a wine to go with the
custard. Charles ordered a
glass of Sangiovese; I decided
to let Frederick suggest
something. Without hesi-
tating, he named the White-
hall Lane Merlot. I accepted.

"Do you know what
you'd like to have after the
custard?" asked Frederick,
very tactful, ever hopeful.
We gratified him and
to this point, he had
totally forgotten what he
had just suggested. Fred-
erick filled them both to
what Charles later said
was the normal limit, regard-
less of glass size or shape —
the widest point of the bowl.
After he left, Charles was
off and running.

"It's a proper pour, but
because of the shape of
the glass, I actually got a sig-
nificant amount more wine
than you. Seriously, though,
this is too much wine. If
you swirled this (to aerate
the wine and bring forth
the flavors), you could snap
the stem very easily. I was
ready to stop him halfway
through his pour, but I fig-
ured, we paid for it, and
you can't half a pour. Did I
ever tell you about Flem-
ing's? When you order a
glass of wine, you give a
little carafe, and you pour
it yourself. If I could get
them to bring out the bot-
tle and pour it into a carafe,
I would have the best of
both worlds. It's more work
for the dishwasher, though."

Frederick checked back
five minutes later. At 10:05,
we ordered our wine for
the entrees. At 10:10, it
arrived. The entrees followed
at 10:15. The hour and the
wine cast a warm haze over
our meal, a haze that was
punctuated only once in the
course of the evening.
The offending agent was a puff
of sour cigar smoke, car-
ried on the wind created by
the balcony door as it closed
behind a departing patron.
The smell summoned
up Charles's memories of
servers past. "This was before
the law that said you couldn't

smoke in California restaur-
ants. My friend John and
I had gone to this restaurant
in San Francisco earlier in
the week to have lunch, and
after lunch, I chose a bot-
tle of wine for our dinner:
the 1959 Château Palmer.
It was a very special occa-
sion; we were on vacation.
Now, the number of peo-
ple who go in and order a
bottle for Saturday night
is very, very small. These
are obviously anal people who take their
wine way too seriously." But
self-deprecation aside, this
was not a minor bottle, and
neither was the expense
involved.

"I called and asked for
the nonsmoking section,
and I told them I would
be having a nice wine. We went,
and we had a great evening —
winces preceding the
Palmer, the grand finale,
blah blah blah. The chef
actually prepared our meal — I knew the sous
chef — and he had come out
and was sitting with us at the
end of the night. It was a
moment. We were finish-
ing the last of the bottle,
savoring our last sips, and
across the room, a guy lights
cigar. John just goes,
'You're on, Charles."

"I called the waiter over
and asked, 'When I called
the restaurant, I asked for
the nonsmoking section. Is this
that section?'

"'Yes it is sir,'

"'That gentleman is
in my section, smoking a
cigar,'

"'Well sir, it's late at
night; you're the last two

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tables.
"Where is he; and where am I?"
"He asked me, and I let him."
"Did you ask me?"
"No."
"So who's going to pay for the last of [the Château Palmer]? I won't charge you for the whole bottle; that wouldn't be fair. But there are 2 ounces left in my glass and an ounce or so in my friend's glass. That's 3 ounces in a 24-ounce bottle. Are you going to pay for that?"
"Aaaah..."
"Right now, my '59 Palmer smells like a cigar. If you had asked me, "Mr. Matson, the gentleman over there would like to smoke a cigar, I would have said, "Give me ten minutes. I'll finish this, we'll have some cognac, and we'll all smoke cigars." He asked me, because he knew he was in the nonsmoking section, and you let him. But you didn't talk to me, and now we have an issue. Do you think I should have to pay for this 3 ounces of Château Palmer?"

Charles's reaction may seem harsh, the mark of a man too tied up with his taste buds. But it is a fact that taste and smell are intimately bound up, and consequently, when you try to taste a delicate wine like an old Bordeaux in a room laced with cigar smoke, all you are going to taste is cigar smoke and acid. Charles did not disclose the wine's price, but a reputable Bordeaux with 40 years or so of bottle age can easily fetch $500 in a restaurant. Five hundred dollars divided by 24 ounces comes out to around 20 bucks an ounce — that's $60 worth of wine that Charles would not be enjoying.

I was a little taken by his account of the confrontation — I come from the school that suffers in silence and then complains afterward to people who can't do anything about it — but also a little impressed. "We went back and forth, and my friend the chef was, like, 'Down boy!' I said, 'All right; it's as much principle as anything else. I'm doing it for all the future diners who are going to be there.' A little communication would have gone a long way. That was actually one of the times when I was a bit more aggressive than normal, because I was pretty upset."

Ten-eighth another check to ensure that everything was all right, which it most emphatically was. At 10:55, we ordered dessert; it arrived at 11:07. One last check, and then the bill arrived at 11:40.

I let a happy man but felt that there was more to be gathered from Charles's store of experience. I realized that I had given in to the same tendency I decried at this story's outset — I had paid too much attention to the food. We agreed to meet again at El Buczocho in the Rancho Bernardo Inn, another restaurant with a fine reputation for service, on the Saturday before Valentine's Day, 2001: February 10.

This time, when I called for the reservation, I asked for six o'clock. The hostess offered 6:15, I accepted, and then followed Charles's policy of letting the restaurant know that the table would probably be tied up for the duration of the evening. "Thank you, sir, we appreciate your letting us know," Very gracious. But I still didn't get a "Mr. Lickona."

At 6:15 we were led to our table; the restaurant was still all but empty. The moment our chairs were drawn up to the table, our waiter, Arthur, appeared —

I didn't even notice if our napkins were placed upon our laps. "Good evening, gentlemen, how are you? Would you like a cocktail, or I'll be right back with your menus and wine list?" We opted for the list, and Arthur disappeared. His speech was clipped and clear, just this side of too fast for comfortable listening. We had been seated at a stand-alone table (as opposed to a banquette) near the far wall, right next to and just before two two-top banquets — lovers' tables. Valentine's was fast approaching, the banquets' occupants were the savvy diners who put pleasure before sentiment and avoided the rush. Arthur was working all three tables.
I noticed that he paused to chat with the lovers for a moment before taking their orders. When he inquired — politely — after our welfare, he seemed to pause in his motion without quite stopping his momentum, hanging suspended upon our words. Perhaps he was there for the duration, and for the food.

When he returned with the list and the menus, he offered water. "Ebian would be great for myself," said Charles, and then Arthur vanished before I could speak. "I can only speak for myself," Charles said to me. It seemed likely that Arthur had heard "Ebian would be great," and concluded that Charles was ordering for the table. "For myself," might not have registered.

Once again, the ritual began. "My show is, definitely start with bubbly, just because it allows time to kick it while we're looking at the menu and deciding what we're going to do. That's probably going to take 15 to 20 minutes, which is a long time to go with-out some kind of refreshment. I usually start with water, get the wine list, order a glass of bubbly, then outline the meal — the number of courses, food-wine combinations..."

Charles was not dazzled by the by-the-glass champagne, a Piper Heidsieck, and there was no sparkling wine by the glass. "Most restaurants offer a house sparkler and a French champagne... usually a low-end and a high-end." Happily, he found a long list of half-bottles at the back of the book and, after being tempted by a still Chablis, decided on the Perrier-Jouët. Moments later, Arthur appeared. "Have you peeked at the menu?"

"Not at all." "Can I get some wine for you?"

"Arthur took the order and slipped away. Soon after, we thought we discovered part of the reason for the quickness in his speech and step: two eight-tops, their rounded edges almost touching, looming behind me like storm clouds on the horizon. The tables looked set up to receive a single party. A few minutes later, Arthur returned to list the evening's specials and to explain the difficulty in the meal — ultra-traditional French on the left, more modern California on the right. While he spoke, a server arrived with the champagne and busied himself with setting up Charles's place and glasses in front of us. I noticed, from his name tag, that he was the sommelier; Charles did not. After Charles's explanation ended, the sommelier, whose name was Mike, held the bottle out for Charles's approval. Charles nodded; the sommelier poured. Charles stopped him at about a third of a glass (a subject that will be addressed in a moment). I found the sommelier's motions during the description of the specials slightly distracting — the list of specials was long and detailed — but Charles said that he didn't worry about it, "because from an efficiency standpoint, it works." He did wish that the bubbly had arrived first, for purposes of refreshment. "I would have liked to sip champagne while I listened to the spiel. If I can kind of sit back and sip, you'll have a lot more of my attention. When I'm thirsty, I'm still waiting."

"We're going to do the sauternes."

"Would you like the foie gras split?"

"Yes, please."

"Yes, sir."

"And by then, we'll probably think about the next entrée."

"I'll try that."

While we waited, Charles ruminated on the splits we had ordered. "The proper way is to have it split in the kitchen. On the other hand, a lot of people like tasting plates back and forth, it's like shaking hands. It means you're building a level of intimacy, and a lot of people enjoy that."

The gravlax arrived — split in the kitchen — cold followed by cold (foie gras) before the hot snails. "We're going to start with the gravlax."

"For two?"

"No, we're just going to split it the one. And we're going to split an order of the snails and — is the foie gras served hot?"

"It's a chilled preparation, au torchon. He takes it and rolls it in cheesecloth and poaches it in red wine. We have a Château Guiraud dessert wine [a sauternes], or the champagne would go perfectly with the foie gras as well. The sauternes — foie gras faux pas was avoided, and apparently Charles was not the only one who had decided on champagne as an accompaniment. "Do you want to do the champaigne with the gravlax and then we'll do the sauternes and the sauternes with the foie gras after that?"

"We're not going to do the sauternes."

over and grab the bottle myself. Then we'll see how long between my reaching over and someone coming over."

Charles ate a snake, reached for the bottle, and filled his glass. Thirty seconds later, Arthur appeared and filled my glass — about halfway. This was higher than ideal for Charles, though hardly excessive by ordinary standards. "For one second, he stopped at a third of a glass, which is where we told him to stop before, but then he went over."

Charles wasn't too fazed; I gathered that he thought fill level is something the waiter needs to learn as the meal progresses, just as Frederick needed to learn the pace at which we wished to dine. Charles took my bottle of wine. I was pretty nervous, I couldn't get [what was mine]. But even though it was a busy Saturday night, the waiter would just come [at the appropriate moment] and give me my splash of red wine and disappear. I don't know where he came from; he must have had mirrors or something. It was a real treat."

That evening, our bottle was within reach; Charles could have poured if he wished. "I'd had to say the waiter, 'I'll pour my own,' he would probably go to the maître d' and say, 'Table 14 wants to pour their own wine.' He'd do this for two reasons: one is to let the maître d' know that he is not slack ing — otherwise, it's like. What are you
doing! His glass is barely a third full! The other is to keep other people from coming over and trying to fill my glass. I should only have one glass of wine. But sometimes, I don’t want to pour it. Sometimes, I want them to get an idea of where I want it. When I let them fill it, when it’s here [near empty], and I stop them when it’s here [one-third full], they’ll get an idea that’s the range.” Despite his desired precision, he noted that the issue is not always crucial to his judgment of a restaurant’s service.

And the service, so far, had been dandy, from the kitchen outward. “You can tell from the time between the foie gras and the snails that the kitchen is very relaxed. If the kitchen didn’t know [we were planning on a long meal], believe me, there would have been one person standing there with the snails, and as they picked up your plates, the snails would have gone down — guaranteed. That’s how you know you’re being rushed.”

In this case, both kitchen and server had let us run the show. “I’m brutally hard [on servers],” admitted Charles, “but I think I’m pretty good on communication as far as ‘This is what I’d like; this is what I’m doing.’ I’m very specific about my requests: if there’s a salad that is part of the meal, I say, ‘I’ll have the salad after my entrée.’” Such a request is not without consequences. “That throws the kitchen off. You should spend a Saturday night in a kitchen and watch as the cooks do it up, because the kitchen knows when you were seated. ‘Table 14, they sat down at 6:15, right on schedule.’ At the beginning of the night, they have a sheet that the maître d’ gives to the chef that says, ‘We have these tables coming in: three-two tops, one-four.’ They know there are tables [ourselves and the two banquettes] would be the first ones down — generally, those two first, because they’re romantic and it’s right before Valentine’s Day. This would normally be their third, because if we were a couple, we’d say, ‘We’d like to sit over there [in a banquette].’ So they would block them out by putting bodies there first. The kitchen is ready for that [progression]. Now, our kitchen also realizes that we were down at 6:15; it’s 7:30, and they haven’t gotten an order for a second course or an entrée.” He was thankful that I had given warning.

Pressure, when it came, came not from the kitchen or waitstaff, but from our fellow patrons. The members of the double eight-top party, who had been massing at the bar for the past half hour like an army assembling for attack, began rolling toward their tables. “I’m seeing this eight-top sit down; we want to jamp in with our next order ahead of them. They do have cocktails; it’s going to take ten minutes before they even sit down.”

We chose our soups — lobster bisque and roasted squash — and a half-bottle of white for after. “You keep an eye out for the waiter,” advised Charles. “I’ve seen them go for — for the kitchen to do 16 entrees, we would not get our entrees for long time.” Had we been a recently arrived couple, hungry for a late dinner, the urgency would have been still greater.

The soup arrived in three minutes, at a perfect temperature for eating. Sautés, the maître d’ approached with our half-bottle of white wine. Charles denounced a pour — he didn’t care for wine with soup. I, however, and served — just a splash.”

Our soup consumed, Charles joined me in relishing the white, a very well priced ’97 Vacqueyras. Charles perused the list, running over possibilities for our entrée wine. “Actually,” he mused, “we have enough wine that we don’t have to worry about the soup. We’ll drink to the wines. The waiter will come by, we’ll order, and by the time he takes the order, that will be our cue to start looking at the wine list.” The soon-to-be-swamped kitchen would have our order food, and we could turn our full attention to the wines.

Charles glibly added a moment later to ask how we were doing. This was always his question — never. There was no question of ordering was always ours to raise. He merely wanted to check on our happiness. We ordered — duck for Charles, beef Wellington for me — and Charles asked, “Anything I should immediately have my attention turned to for the half-bottles of red wine?”

“Let’s see, you’re having duck and beef, duck and beef.”

“If it was easy, anybody could do it,” joked Charles.

“Right. Pinot noir... something full-bodied...”

“What kind of sauce is on the duck?”

“Bordelaise sauce. You could do a Bordelaise, something younger. The ‘97 Lynch-Bages...”

Charles thanked Arthur, who departed for the kitchen with our order. “That was a good suggestion. Top producer, drinkable [read: lesser] vintage. The grapes actually got ripe. They weren’t green.” He continued to peruse, eventually discovering a ’95 Bordeaux from Tropilong-Mondot, a château he used to collect. Arthur stopped by again, asked how we were doing, and took our wine order. Before he left, he filled our glasses precisely to the point where Charles had stopped him earlier. Charles was suitably impressed, but not as impressed as he was by what came next, which was arguably the high point of the evening for him.

Mike the sommelier...
arrived, and this time, there was no mistaking him. Before him, he pushed a guéridon, or cart, upon which rode our half-bottle of Bordeaux in a (full-bottle) basket, a candle, a corkscrew, and a half-bottle-sized decanter. Charles, clearly awed by the display, still managed to smile and ask, "You don't have baskets for half-bottles?"

"I know you're joking," replied Mike, "but we do have some. I can't find them right now." He then proceeded to uncork and decant the wine. As he poured, he held the neck of the bottle over the candle so that he could see any chunks of sediment, dropped by the wine as it aged, approaching the neck of the bottle. That way, he could slow his pour so as to keep the bits from spilling into the decanter. Charles offered Mike a glass of the wine, which he accepted. Then let Mike give me a standard pour; Charles requested "about half that." Finally, Mike arranged the bottle, our near-empty bottle of white, and the decanter into a neat tableau along one side of our table. Charles was delighted. "That's only the second time I've ever seen that done. When I went to England and I ordered a bottle of '70 Bordeaux, the sommelier brought out the bottle on a cart. He had this little [decanting] kit—he cut off the foil, he brushed it, he wiped it," thus removing the grime accumulated by decades of aging in a damp cellar. And they had these huge crystal glasses. I'm 25 years old, going, 'Omg, I really got my money's worth.' That was real service. It was a whole other level.

The event touched on the question of tipping for service, an issue dear to Charles's heart. He launched into his take on the matter, citing a case where "a table of six came [into a restaurant], and they ate and drank very well—in fact, they drank very well. The bill, for six people, was $2500. The majority of the bill was obviously wine. The maître d' made a judgment call: for a party of six or more, they normally do an 18 percent gratuity. He went to them and said, 'I'm going to leave it on you. Just to let you know, there is no gratuity added.'

"They left a hundred bucks. In other words, they didn't tip at all on the wine. I knew that if the maître d' had added the 18 percent, it would have been $476, because I heard it over and over again from servers at the restaurant whom he knew.

Charles, if he had his druthers, would have tipped "20 percent on the food." As for the wine, "I think they had six bottles. To be honest, I probably would have tipped no more than $20 a bottle, depending on the wine and all that, because they ordered some nice wine. The restaurant would have been very upset, because even that's only [$150 to $200 total tip], and that would come out to less than 10 percent on the whole bill. But that's what happens when you order a bottle of wine for $500. It's like, 'I'm sorry; I'm not going to give you $100 to open a bottle of wine.' From the skill involved, it's not worth it. These weren't old wines or anything, they were just expensive. You're paying a penalty for enjoying good wine.

"In addition, they took an extra markup because of rarity or status. Screaming Eagle is $200 a bottle; even at 10 percent, that's $200. I'm not tipping $200 on a bottle of wine just because I was stupid enough to order the $2000 bottle of wine to begin with. If I ordered the '45 Mouton Rothschild and they decanted it and brought out the Riedel crystal, it would be another matter. "I guess it comes down to 'What's the difference between pulling a cork on a $20 bottle and a $500 bottle?' The skill involved isn't any different.'

Further, a flat fee per bottle would ensure a less interested suggestion from the sommelier. "I remember going to a restaurant back in the '80s. I ordered what, on paper, looked like a good bottle of wine. The server said, 'I don't feel comfortable with that selection. I have it available if you would like it, but I would recommend this [other wine]. I think it would be better with your dinner.' We had eaten there before, so we had established a rapport with the sommelier. I felt very comfortable."

But such comfort and assurance is the exception. "You've got to read between the lines: Is he saying, 'Oh, I feel that the wine that's more expensive is better'? Or is the waiter getting the same amount of money per bottle, who cares if I order a $20 bottle or a $200 bottle? The tip is the same. What he really wants to do is then make me happy. If I enjoy a $40 bottle more than an $80 bottle, then I have $40 left to give some to him. As it is the motivation to have me buy a more expensive wine is not really to make me happy; it's to make my bill bigger, and that's a bad thing.

This talk of flat fees led to Charles's General Theory of Tipping. "My theory is based on the services rendered for expense. Let's say you order the chicken and it's $10, and I order the rack
of lamb and it's $30. The waiters walk back into the kitchen and they pick it up and they bring you ours and they bring you mine. Twenty percent on my $30 is $6; 20 percent on your $10 is $2. Has anything really different occurred? What have they done differently for my lamb than they've done for your chicken?

"I went up to Tra Vigne in Los Angeles with [a woman], and they brought out the fish — the whole fish — and deboned it tableside, served it onto one big plate, then divided the fish into three sections for each of us." That was different; that required particular skills, "which is exactly what's different about the restaurant we're in tonight. They carve the rack of lamb by your tableside." He was referring to an event we had earlier, an event promised on the menu. Out came the rack on a cart, seemingly from nowhere, stopping at one of the banquettes. The waiter took up his knife, carved the rack, and placed it on the plate before presenting it to the happy diner. "That's worth 20 percent," marveled Charles at the time. "He's actually finishing [the dish] at tableside." And at a restaurant like El Bichocho, or Tra Vigne in L.A., "finishing" means more than making sure the meat is not sitting on top of the little mound of steamed vegetables. At this level, presentation counts.

"So my theory is that, for tipping, there should be a fee per plate, the way I was paying with the $20 per bottle of wine." The idea, which seems tailor-made for multiple-course tasting menus — all that walking back and forth with tiny plates would pay off for waiters — is more than a little incoherent. That kind of merit-based thinking could lead to a fee-per-trip theory, since more work is involved in multiple-dish back-and-forth journeys between kitchen and table. You could end up having a waitress in a diner bring a pot of coffee to your table 12 or 13 times and get a better tip than François the head-waiter at Chez Expensif, who leaves you to yourself unless absolutely necessary. In short, it violates the time-honored maxim that those who work the hardest make the least.

And so it remains, for now, a theory. "I don't do it, because I have to go back [to restaurants]. One of the things you learn is to adjust yourself to the customs of where you are. When a Frenchman comes here, they should know that you can do 15 percent, but you can't do 5. As much as I think this is a great idea that I've come up with, the reality is that in America in 2001, it is not socially acceptable. Maybe it will come up and be accepted little by little, like maybe at banquets or prix fixe dinners — instead of there being an 18 percent gratuity, there would be a $10-a-plate gratuity."

In practice, what Charles generally does is tip 20 percent on the pre-tax bill. Exceptions are made for exceptional service. "I dined with my friend Ann at the French Laundry. It was time for dessert, and our waitress was saying that cabernet goes well with chocolate." Charles hesitated. "She said, 'How about port?' " Aglin, Charles demurred. "Maybe a sauternes?" "A third time, he shied away. "We were just at an impasse, and finally, she just walked away. Ann said, 'Great, Charles, now we're not going to get any wine. She made three suggestions, and you pooched all of them.' Anyway, the girl comes back with six glasses — three for each of us — with all three of her suggestions.

"I knew they pool tips at the French Laundry, so I tipped 20 percent on the credit card, and then I went up to the girl and said, 'Look, I know you guys pool tips, but you made our night special. I'm not skimping on them, but you went above and beyond; here's an extra 20 bucks.' When you go to the French Laundry, what's 20 bucks? She really put up. It's a nine-course meal, and right in the middle of it, we had some leftover pinot noir, and we wanted an extra course before we went on to the cabernet. She had to go back and tell the kitchen."

So much for tipping; but the mention of Riedel crystal and Mouton-Rothschild started Charles in another direction, this one involving a flaw — sacrebleu! — in our place setting. At least, in Charles's judgment it was a flaw. The overall theme was one of simplicity: plates were white and barely decorated by a few ridges. Silver was clean-lined and straightforward. But the glassware was too plain — the white wine-glass too broad, the red too balloononed, the rims and stems too thick. They felt clunky, like something you might find in a midrange bistro. Here, it violated two of Charles's rules. The first was more personal than anything: "One of my new standards in life is what I call 'better than my home as a baseline' when it comes to food, glasses, things like that. Because I consider myself at the bottom rung of material wealth in terms of knives, forks, plates, things like that. The same thing with wine." His home glassware rated better than this, and that ranked him.

The second was more objective. "The key is balance. If you increase one aspect's excellence, you need to increase the other. If you have Wedgwood china, you need to have crystal stemware. If you have crystal, you need to have different silverware. It all has to balance." Here, the sumptuousness of the surroundings and the excellence of the wine list cried out for something better in the way of glasses.

Charles recalled a tale when he was tempted by a '70 Mouton-Rothschild from Bordeaux. "This was in '91, so it wasn't as old as it would be today, but it was 21-year-old first growth — they weren't giving this away.
Before I even ordered, I said, 'Do you have other glassware [than what's on my table] if I order this? Because if this is the only glassware you have, I'll order something different.' They literally went into the adjoining shop, pulled them right off the shelf, washed them, and said, 'Here you go.' If that was the only thing stopping me from buying that bottle of wine... But the thing is, they didn't have enough to do that for the whole restaurant. Of course, the whole restaurant wasn't ordering that kind of wine.

'It sounds snooty, I know, but I sympathize. You're paying a phenomenal premium to drink that kind of wine in a restaurant, and it's understandable that you would want such a wine to deliver everything it possibly could. The giant-bowled, razor-thin-lipped crystal stemware Charles asked for helps concentrate aromas and deliver the wine to the right part of the palate. Some restaurants, in an effort to accommodate people like Charles, or just to acknowledge that paying hundreds of dollars for a bottle of wine is an extraordinary event, will keep a second set of crystal glasses that gets brought out for the big boys. The problem here is that other tables can see the good stuff being hauled out, and they may wonder, 'Why wasn't my bottle good enough? What do I have to pay to get the good glassware?'

The fire was in the belly now; and Charles leveled his first real criticism at our waiter. Given the fact that there was a sommelier on the floor, "He overstepped his boundaries of expertise" when it came to suggesting a red wine for our entrees. "His recommendations were good, but there is someone here [who is] a full-time employee whose job is to do one thing. The waiter didn't say, 'What's your price range?' He didn't ask what are called probing questions. 'Are you closing a business deal? Is it a birthday? I think that just to throw out suggestions, boom boom boom, without any kind of research — 'Don't you like big reds, do you like light reds, do you like American, do you like European'... or just cut to the chase: 'I'll send our sommelier over.' He's conceived and designed this list along with the chef in order to create a dining experience like no other. That would have been what happened in a perfect world, but you know..."

"The sommelier probably busy man," I rejoined, defending Arthur. "Mike didn't bring the white; the maître d' did."

"On the other hand, it's kind of like the glasses — when do you get the Riedel? When do you get the sommelier? I didn't know they had one on the premises; otherwise, I would have said, 'I'm going to talk to the sommelier from the champagne on.'"

"On the other hand, Mike did bring the champagne. Maybe Arthur thought, 'He knows the sommelier is here, and he's not asking for him.'"

I scored a point there. "That would be fair," granted Charles.

Our entrees arrived. Charles was mollified by the fact that Arthur and the attendant busboy worked in unison; our entrees came to rest on the table at the exact same moment. "It's great, it's old school, but I still appreciate it. So bon appétit and salut."

Returning to our discussion of wine recommendations: I was curious as to why Charles, a man for whom control is everything and whose wine knowledge is extensive, would even be interested in someone else's telling him what wine to buy. "I generally ask almost for confirmation [of what I've chosen]. Sometimes, they'll say, 'Oh, there's peppercorn in the beef Wellington; you might be better off with a Syrah.' "The waiter may know something Charles doesn't, and his question is the waiter's chance to share information.

Other times, the question becomes a sort of test. "I was in Santa Barbara, and it was a special occasion. The restaurant listed a bottle of '59 Pichon,' a name shared by two noted wines in Bordeaux. I asked is it the Pichon-Longueville-Baron or the Pichon-Longueville-Comtesse de Lalande? It was a ridiculously expensive bottle of wine, but it was a special occasion. I was willing to go for it."

"I promised the question to the waiter. I said, 'Are you the one I should ask? Are you the one who answers wine questions, or is there someone who is a wine expert?' He said, 'I can handle it.' So I asked him, and he said, 'Let me check.'"

The waiter retreated behind a cinder barrier and asked someone, presumably the sommelier, Charles's question. "I could hear the two of them talking, and the one tells the other one: No, no, it's the Baron, not the Comtesse de Lalande."

"The irony was that plan B was, depending on whether it was the Baron or the Comtesse — I wanted the Comtesse — I was looking at a couple of burgundies on the list. Burgundies, as you know, are like dancing in a minefield. It's easy to make a disastrous mistake. So I was asking him the Bordeaux question as a test. The waiter talked to the real person who knows, who didn't come out from his little cave, and then the waiter came to me and said, 'No, no, it's the Baron.' I said, 'Okay, then, I'll have this other inexpensive bottle of wine.'"

"What I was really saying was, 'I was going to ask questions about burgundy, but if you're going to come out and answer this question, you know, I'm not worthy of even though I'm looking at spending a small fortune on Bordeaux.' You decided that it's just a question, and the waiter can handle it. The waiter handled it. Fine. I'll order the $60 bottle of wine."

Our entrees had been demolished, the wine was all but drunk. Charles looked around thoughtfully, searching for aspects he had not yet evaluated. His eyes came to rest on a couple seated at a table similar to ours, away from the wall. "This table works for you and me, but for the couple over my left shoulder, for pre-Valentine's Day... bad deal. You're on an island. That's one of those tables where I might actually say — if I came in and they said [that was my table], I'd say, 'No, I don't think so.' It depends on my mood and the girl I was with. Some girls get really upset, like, 'You're not playing the game. This is our table.' Others admire the fact that you're standing up for them."

"The restaurant doesn't just give me a table; I buy it. I'm paying the same amount as those people over there [at the banquet]. That's where you need to talk to the maître d'. If the maître d' says, 'You called on Wednesday,' you need to back down. If you called on Wednesday, and you wanted..."

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Oakley Hall used his native San Diego as background for his 1953 novel, *Corpus of Joe Bailey*, set during the Depression.

In Chapter 7, Joe's best friend Peter double-dates with Joe and his girl, Connie Robinson — Con, from the old Mission Hills gang — to San Diego High School's senior dance. The boys have big plans to surf San Onofre next week, if Peter can borrow the Buick from his grandmother. But the rest of the gang — Bryan and Herm and Hickey — have another graduation celebration in mind: across the border, where Tijuana's Molina Rojo beckons all the high school boys.

That night he and Joe were double dating to the senior dance in the Bailey's Studebaker. The car was rattling along Rosecrans Boulevard toward Point Loma, where they were going to pick up Con, when Joe said, "Hey, are you ready to go up to San Onofre?" "Well, sure," Peter said. "When shall we go?"

"We'd better go tomorrow," Joe was silent for a moment, then he said, "I've got a job."

"What did you get?"

"Laborer," Joe said shortly. Peter watched the lights sliding steadily over the asphalt ahead of the car. "It's hard as hell to get any kind of a job," Joe went on. "But this friend of my Pop's is doing some construction over in Imperial Valley. The pay's pretty good because it gets hot as hell over there, and it's hard work. I've got to save a lot of dough, though."

"It's pretty far out there, isn't it?" Peter asked.

"More than a hundred miles."

"Oh."

"It's too far to come home just for one day. I had to sign on for a year."

"Oh," Peter said.

"Hey, but we've got to go up there to San Onofre tomorrow," Joe said with false heartiness. "I don't have to go to the valley till next week. Let's take off tomorrow morning. Can you get the Buick? I can't see us hitch-hiking with those damn surfboards."

"I'll have to ask my grandmother tonight."

"I thought you asked her! Listen, you can't go, can you?"

Peter didn't answer for a moment, thinking of not seeing Joe for a year. "Oh sure," he said. "Sure, she'll let me go."

"Tell her, don't ask her," Joe said. "Gooddam it, Pete. Tell her you're going to go and let's go."

He nodded as Joe turned off Rosecrans, up a steep side street above the yacht club. Con's house was set up the hill off the street, with a sunken driveway and a hedge and an arched wrought-iron gate above which a light was burning. Joe parked and got out. He arranged the handkerchief in his breast pocket and ran his hand over the fly of his pants before starting up the steps.
Con said to Peter. "Does he talk like that to all his girls? I'll bet he does."

"Well, that's what we were saying," Peter said. 

"Con squeezed his arm and smiled. "I was just thinking about how we used to ride that number three streetcar home from grammar school," Joe said. "Remember that, Con?"

"You could sit with me sometimes, but Peter never would. Why wouldn't you, Peter?"

He grinned foolishly, and Joe said, "Those were the good old days."

"Oh, I don't think so," Con said. "I wouldn't be a little girl again for anything in the world." She wrinkled her nose. Joe looked at her, then turned her head around as Hickey and Jim Connor began singing loudly, "Fight on, for USC."

"Hey, I guess we'd better get busy and learn that, huh, Jim?" Peter heard Hickey say. He avoided Joe's eyes. When the music began again, he asked to trade a dance. 

"Are you going away to college, Peter?" Con asked as he guided her across the floor.

"Yes," he said. "Stanford."

"She raised her eyebrows as though with astonishment and sudden admiration. "Oh, that's wonderful. You must be looking forward to September. I know a boy who's a Zete at Stanford."

He nodded politely, but he was wondering about what Barbara had said, that Con was stuck on herself. Someone had made almost the same comment last year at the Thanksgiving dance. The phrase "stuck on herself" seemed wrong in connection with Con, as in a different way the warmth of Con's chest against his and the occasional bumping together of their knees was wrong. And suddenly he remembered with disbelief Joe telling him about the trap in the fort in the canyon. He could not connect rape with Con; she was a kind of ideal who would vanish at any desecration, who should have been fleshless and without a chest and knees that bumped. And maybe Hickey had felt this too when he had said that Con was built like a new V-8 convertible with wheelpants and spinners. "Where are you going, Con?" he asked.

"State," she said.

"Oh, swell. I'd like to go to State. I'd like to stick around San Diego, but---</>

"I want to go away to college."

"Why?" he began, but stopped.

"You must," Con said. "Mother doesn't want me to go away to college. They're going to buy me a car to make up for it."

"Oh," he said and thought. That's because of Charlotte. Charlotte too was wrong in connection with Con. "Oh, you'll have a good time out at State," she said. "You know a lot of people out there, don't you?"

"I want to go away to college. Everybody goes away to college. I don't want a damn car. Everybody else."

She paused, and he knew she had just thought of Joe, who wasn't going to college at all next year. He sought for some way to change the subject, but Con said petulantly, "I don't want to go out to State. It's just like being in high school, only you're a little older." She smiled unhappily. "The first time you're down you have to come over and tell me all about Stanford. Will you, Peter?"

He said he would. When the dance was over they rejoined Joe and Barbara. He looked at his watch.

"Oh, Peter!" Barbara exclaimed. "What a beautiful watch. Was it a graduation present?"

He nodded, and Joe said a little enviously, "I guess a Hamilton's about the best watch they make."

It was what Ralph Weller had said. He stared at his watch again, then at Joe, then over Joe's shoulder at a fat boy who was standing with a group of three or four couples. Dark shaggy hair curled over the fat boy's collar. Even before Peter could see his face he knew it was not Ralph; it could not be, because Ralph was gone. But he knew that Ralph would never be gone."

"What's the matter, Peter?" Barbara asked.

He said nothing was the matter. But as the music began again and he danced with her, everything that had gone to make this last semester so fine and hopeful crumbled, and during the rest of the evening he sank deeper and deeper into despair. After the dance, when they had taken Barbara home and Joe and Con sat close together in the front seat of the Studebaker on their way to his house, he slumped down in the back seat, horrified at his own thoughts as almost breathlessly he watched the slow, easy, ritualistic movement of Joe raising her arm and then lowering it, Con leaning forward and then back against it. He knew they would go out on Point Loma and neck. Everybody did. But did Con and Joe do more than neck? Had Joe done with Con what he had done
with Gerry Hubert? He shuffled at the remembrance of the stories he had heard, of the stories Phil Gardner had told, and Bud Ingle, and even Hickey, and saw the stories and fought against seeing them being acted out, secret and abominable, in the darkness on the front seat of this car, where Con and Joe were so close together, and he thought of Charlotte Robinson, who had done it and had been going to have a baby and had killed herself, who had been a whore, someone had said, and of Ralph Waller’s dirty pictures of the whores in the Molina Rojo in Tijuana, just across the border, and of his mother, who was a drunken trollop, his grandmother had said once in a rage—a trollop, which, the dictionary had said, was a harlot, which was a whore. Was Con? Did Con and Joe? He forced himself to think, No! It was not true! He could not look at Con or Joe when the car stopped in front of his house. “Call me early,” Joe said. “Don’t ask her, now, Pete. Tell her.”

He said he would and said good night to Con, and was inside the house before he realized what Joe had been talking about. He and Joe were going to San Onofre in the morning, and the thought of it was like a huge naked and aching nerve inside him, because he had a sudden vision of the camping trip to San Onofre, of himself and Joe and Ralph Waller inexplicably mixed together, and the beach at San Onofre like the pool in the mountains where he had gone with Ralph, and even the surfboards themselves obscene symbols.

But he had to go. He had promised Joe he would go. And maybe he had to go too to find out, to define himself at last, one way or the other. To know. And now he had to tell his grandmother he was going, not ask her, because he had promised.

There was a thin cold line of light showing beneath the door of her room. He knocked, and she said to come in. She was sitting up in bed, her hair lying in two braids on the pillow. In the glass of water beside the bed, the gums of her false teeth were hideously red. She looked at him, at the clock, then back. There were deep indentations at the corners of her mouth.

“Well, we had a fine time,” he said. “It was really a good dance, Grandma. Everybody was there.”

“That’s nice. I’m glad you had a good time.” The words were fuzzy and lisping. He tried to keep himself from looking at her teeth in the glass.

He leaned back against the door. “Say, Grandma, I wondered if you’d mind if I used the Buick next week. It’s just sitting there in the garage, and the battery’s probably dead again.”

She looked at him questioningly.

“It’d be good for the battery,” he said.

“What is it you have planned for the automobile next week?”

“Yo remember, Joe and I are going up to San Onofre, surfing.”

She didn’t say anything, watching him coldly.

“San Onofre’s only a little way up from Oceanside,” he said. “It’s not far.” He made himself talk slowly, as though he were explaining it to her, not pleading. “See, Joe’s going...”
away to the valley for a year to work. I won’t see him for a long time, and we’ve talked about getting up there to camp and surf. He’s got a tent,” he added. “It would be a lot easier if we had the car.”

“Would it?”

“We’d sure appreciate it, Grandma.”

He stared down at her hands on the edge of the white coverlet. They didn’t move. She said, “You never thought of consulting me about your plans, did you, Peter?”

It didn’t occur to him to protest that he had. He felt only a quick pang of relief because she wasn’t going to let him go to San Onofre with Joe. But he had to go; he had promised Joe he would go. And he had to go for himself.

“You made your plans as though I didn’t exist, didn’t you?” she said. “It never occurred to you I might be concerned. Do you think it’s perfectly acceptable for boys your age to go to a place like that without an older person along?”

He saw the opening, like a play in Russian bank, when he would have to decide whether to make the move and beat her or pretend not to see it and lose. He wished he had not seen it, that he did not have to make it. “Joe’s 18 and I’m almost 18,” he said very slowly. “You told me once your father was managing a farm when he was 18.”

He had beaten her. He saw she knew it and that if she tried another tack it would mean a retreat. To help her save face he said, not triumphantly but with dignity, “Joe’s my best friend, Grandma. I don’t expect I’ll see him for more than a year.”

She had closed her eyes, and when she opened them there was a milky membrane at the corners that slowly receded until her eyes were black and keen again, looking into his. “Peter, did you stop to think I would like to have you here with me? Next year you will be going to Stanford, for four years, and I—I—she stopped, but she meant she would miss him when he was gone. Even with the blurred lips the words had started hard and sharp, like little stones, but her voice had shaken, and he knew she had paused because she could not control it.

“I suppose I can’t stop you, can I?” she said. “You’ll do just whatever you wish. You always have.” With the change in her voice his compassion was gone, for he saw the calculation. “There’s nothing I can do or say,” she said. “Your father—she stopped again, calculantly.

“I guess I’ll be leaving pretty early in the morning, Grandma,” he said. “But I’ll come in and see you before I go. Good night, Grandma.” He went out and gently closed the door.

It seemed as soon as he had gone to sleep that night he heard the puppy crying. The puppy had followed him home from grammar school. It was a dirty white with brown spots and brown anxious eyes. He had made a bed for it outside the back porch, out of a wooden box padded with gommy sacks, but it had cried all night and in the morning his grandmother had told him she had had it get rid of it or she would call the pound. He had taken it down to the end of Mission Street and left it in a yard and run away. But now it had come back. It was crying even louder than it had the first night, and he was afraid his grandmother would hear it. It would be quiet for a long time, then begin again, and he could feel himself sweating. He heard a crash as the puppy knocked something over, and he sat up in bed, wondering what he should do, because surely his grandmother was awake by now. Then he realized that he himself was awake and that the night with the puppy had been when he was in the fourth grade. But still he could hear it crying, and the sound was very near.

He slipped out of bed and opened the door. He heard the cry again. It came from his grandmother’s room. He stood there rigid in the dark silence; then the cry came once more, and he ran down the hall.

“Grandma!” he yelled, and he opened the door and groped for the light switch. In a sudden flood of light he saw his grandmother on the floor beside the bed, lying on her side in her white nightgown with her legs doubled up beside her body, looking ridiculously like a little girl except that her legs were thin and straight like white painted sticks, ending in gnarled feet. Beside her head was the metal lamp with the shade smashed, and the glass with her teeth had fallen so that the teeth, horribly red and white, lay in a fan-shaped stain of water on the carpet.

“Grandma!” She didn’t move. She made a crying sound. He felled into the hall and down the stairs, and panting with terror across the dining room and through the kitchen. He hammered on the maid’s door. “Hermione!” he screamed, pounding on the door until it opened under his fists and Hermione was
there, fat and sleepy-faced in a faded flannel bathrobe. "Grandma fell out of bed!" he yelled at her.

He danced frantically behind Hermione as she plopped up the stairs. "Oh!" she cried as they came into the room. "Oh, poor Mrs. Gorman! Help me get her up on the bed."

But he couldn't move. Hermione glanced over her shoulder angrily, then stooped and grunted and pulled his grandmother's shoulders up and got them on the bed and then grunted with the white sticks of legs. One of his grandmother's eyes was closed; the other watched him, black and sharp. The cry came again, softly, the opening of her mouth on the same side as her open eye. One hand made feebie circling motions. The black bright eye stared at Peter.

"Call Doctor Murphy!" Hermione whispered, and he fled again.

He didn't go back upstairs after he had phoned the doctor, and when Doctor Murphy had come, he sat shivering in the big chair that was his grandmother's, staring at the light gleaming on the brass dust corners of the stairs to the second floor, where he could hear Hermione and the doctor moving about and talking softly. He strained to hear what they were saying, thinking, What if she should die? At first the word and the thought meant nothing. But suddenly it struck through his heart.

She was the only person in the world who loved him. It was a love of jealousy and impatience and demand, but it was the only love he had, as she was all in the world he had, who was an orphan. What if she should die? Did he pray, stricken with terror? "Please, please, please, please," he whispered, standing at the stack of Unity magazines on the rack beneath the table, as though God were there, deciding. At last a tread sounded on the stairs and the doctor came down, holding his gray hat flat against the black satchel, pulling at his earlobe. Hermione followed a moment later. Peter rose, and Dr. Murphy came over and put his arm around him. Peter whispered. "Is she—"

"Perfectly all right," Doctor Murphy said. "I've given her something to make her sleep. You'd better get some sleep too, son."

Hermione was drying her eyes. Doctor Murphy patted Peter's shoulder reassuringly. "Nothing to worry about at all. Although at her age you can worry about anything."

"She's paralyzed," Peter said.

"It'll pass in a day or so," the doctor said and squeezed his shoulder. "Love your grandmother, do you? She's a fine woman, a remarkable woman." He said to
Hermione, "You'd better sleep in her room tonight, Mrs. Graetel. I'll have a trained nurse out here first thing in the morning."

When Dr. Murphy had gone Peter went upstairs. He moved quietly down the hall and stopped outside his grandmother's door. He could hear her breathing, a steady catarhal sound that was almost a snore. He went back to his room and got into bed. Hermione came creeping up the stairs, but finally everything was quiet, and he lay with his hands clasped under his head, staring up into the darkness that seemed to rise forever above him. He couldn't go to San Onofre now.

He had done his best. He had not asked her, he had told her. When, in her way, she had all but forbidden him, he had still intended to go. He had acted honorably with himself within his own terms, but now he could not go because his grandmother had had a stroke. So nothing was finished or dispelled or settled; the final knowledge was postponed. Maybe he would never have to know. And his grandmother would not die. He lay quite still in the darkness, straining his ears. He had to hold his breath before he could faintly hear, like his own pulse, the heavy, drugged respiration from her room.

Mrs. Worth, the nurse, arrived early in the morning, just after Peter had finished phoning Joe to say he couldn't go to San Onofre. She had a cup of coffee with Hermione, then went up to see his grandmother. "Poor little thing," Mrs. Worth said, when she came back downstairs. "She didn't look much bigger than a pigeon. How old is she, Peter?"

"I guess she's about 68."

"The poor little old thing. But we'll have her up and pecking around in no time."

That afternoon when his grandmother was awake he could see that she was better. The eye on the paralyzed side was slightly open now, the other open wide, as though her face were frozen into a contemplative wink. She looked very small and shriveled in the big bed with the carved head and foot. Dr. Murphy came at 10:00 and again at 4:00 and said that everything was fine and remarkable and that Peter wasn't to worry. That evening Peter and Hermione and Mrs. Worth ate together at the blue oilcloth-covered table in the kitchen. After dinner, when Mrs. Worth and Hermione began to argue about Roosevelt, Peter excused himself.

As he entered the living room he saw a red roadster stop before the house. It was a new Ford with the top down, and there were four people in it, two in the front and two in the rumble seat. One of them jumped out of the back and trotted up the walk. It was Joe, wearing his leather sweater. Bryan was behind the wheel, with Herr Beside him and Hickey in the rumble. Peter moved hesitantly to the front door.

He looked into Joe's eyes through the pane of glass set in the door. When he opened it Joe whispered, "Hey, come on out. How about coming..."
for a ride?

Bryan called, "Come on for a ride in my new bus, Pete!"

"Aww, I can't," he said to 
Joe. "I shouldn't go —"

"Come on! You can go for just a little while. What the 
hell?"

"On your horse, Pete," 
Hickey called.

"Well, I'll go see," he said 
and retreated inside and 
closed the door, stopping 
there. He glanced toward the 
stairs. Suddenly he hurried 
toward the kitchen. Mrs. 
Worth and Hermione looked 
up from their coffee. "I'm 
going out for a ride with 
some of my friends," he said. 
"Be back later."

Hermione looked surprised. She half rose, but he 
turned and hurried outside, 
where Joe was leaning over 
the door of Bryan's new road-
ster, talking to the others. 
Bryan raced the motor, Joe 
turned and grinned and got 
into the front seat, and Peter 
piled into the rumble with 
Hickey as the roadster shot 
forward. Bryan made a tight 
screching turn and raced 
back up the street.

Joe said, "How's your 
grandma?"

"She's pretty bad," he 
answered. "I guess she's going 
to be all right, though."
The wind was tearing through 
his hair, and it felt like rush-
ing, lukewarm, bodiless water 
against his face. It was almost 
dark, and Bryan switched the 
lights on.

"She had a stroke, huh?" 
Hickey said. "That's not so 
good with an old lady like 
that, is it?"

Peter shook his head.

"Hey, let's go horse 
around out at Mission Beach," 
Herm said.

"We don't want to go 
out there," Hickey shouted 
against the wind. "I saw Phil 
Gardner out there last week. 
He's laying for Joe with a set 
of brass knucks." Joe grinned, 
and Hickey banged him on 
the back. "T-town! Set the 
compass for Tijuana, Bry. 
How come you're scared to 
go down there, Herm? All 
the guys are gonna be there. 
This is SDS night at the 
Molina Roja."

Peter stiffened. He was 
trying to think of a way to 
protest, to make them let 
him off, when Herm said, "I 
told you I wasn't going down 
to that stinking whorehouse, 
goddam it! I've got a date 
with Paula later on!"

"I thought you said you
wrever they going to see her again,” Bryan said. “Break it!”
“Fluff her off!”
“Goddam it, I’m not going down to that rotten place!”
Peter gripped the metal side of the rumble seat as
they argued with Herm once
Joe turned back to grin at
him. Bryan was weaving the
car from side to side across
the streetcar tracks. Hickey
said, “Yeah, why pay for it, huh? Herman?”
“Shut up!” Herm said.
“Goddam it, let me out! I’m
not going down there.” He
reached across Joe and opened
the door, and Bryan slowed
and finally stopped. Herm
got out and started away
without looking back, thrust-
ing his shirttail down his
pants.
“Chicken!” Hickey yelled
after him. “Oh, you chicken?”
And Bryan laughed and drove
on. “Oh, that damn fool,”
Hickey said. “That bag of a
Paula cuts his throat every
other night and he always
comes back for more.”
Peter stared at the back
of Joe’s head. He glanced out
of the corners of his eyes at
Hickey, who was crouched
forward, trying to light a
 cigarette. He had never
thought of Hickey as cruel
before, but he would much
rather face the Molina Rojo
than go through what Herm
had gone through. “This is
sure some car, Bry,” he said
unevenly. “Did you just get
it?”
“Yeah,” Bryan said. “It’s
a graduation present.”
Bryan drove more slowly
as they entered the down-
town area, and then turned
south through National City

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and Chula Vista. They came out into the deserted rolling countryside below the mesa and just above the border, where the light seemed very dark and the stars tiny and cold. The headlights sped whizzy over the highway that dipped and curved and climbed through the night. Hickey was whistling the USC fight song.

"Who all's going to be down there tonight, Hickey?" Joe asked.

"All the guys. Everybody. We're going to have San Diego High night like they did last year. Weren't you down there last year, Joe?"

Joe shook his head.

"Yeah, last year you still weren't talking to your buddies, you snotty bastard," Hickey said and turned and slapped Peter on the knee.

"You're keeping pretty quiet, Pete. Hey, Bry, I've got a hunch you're not the only virgin in the car?"

When Peter opened his mouth the wind rushed into it, bulging his cheeks and stifling his breath, but he leaned forward and tried to smile. Hickey and Joe were grinning at him. They were friendly grins, and Hickey laughed and slapped him on the knee again. Bryan was looking at him in the rearview mirror. "Shake, Pete," Hickey said. "We're pure, anyway."

"I know who got Joe's cherry," Hickey said, "and her initials are Gerry Hubert. Hey, Joe, how is it with..." for God's sake, Bry! You ought to take it easy, a new car like this.

"You can't hurt a Ford," Bryan said. "They don't have to be broken in."

They came down a long curving hill into San Ysidro, the border town on the American side, stopped beneath the floodlights for the green-uniformed Mexican customs officers, then drove slowly across the long, bumpy bridge at the other end of which the low mass of Tijuana was suffused with a feverish moon glow. Low, shabby buildings stood on either side, each with its neon sign, the buildings rising to two and three stories as they came into the center of town, where the traffic was denser and the sidewalks crowded, then dwindling in size again as they drove down past the Foreign Club. Bryan turned corners at Hickey's direction, and Peter watched the neon signs become fewer...
and finally nonexistent, and then there were no more streetlights and the car was moving slowly down a narrow uneven lane where there was only an occasional lighted window, and the indistinct figures they passed seemed always to be waiting or loitering singly, dark and foreign and ominous.

The car nosed down into a little valley away from the last of the houses. A tall grove of trees towered above them, and among the trees was a row of brightly lighted windows. In the lights of the car Peter could see the long building, U-shaped, with low bushes black around it; then the outlines faded abruptly as Bryan snapped off the headlight and stopped the car against the fence among several other cars. Joe opened his door, and Hickey vaulted out of the rumble seat. Peter got out, shivering now. "Lock it good," Hickey warned. "We don't want to walk home."

They assembled beside the front fender and close together moved in the darkness through a gate and across grass. Peter slowed his steps to fall behind, then hurried forward so that he was between Joe and Hickey. Hickey was lighting a cigarette, and as they passed one of the trees Peter saw a man urinating against it, supporting himself with one arm braced against the trunk. He started as gravel rasped under his shoes.

"It looks like none of the other guys are here yet," Joe said, and Peter moved closer to him until he felt their arms brush.

"We might as well just stay out here and wait," Bryan said.

"Let's go on through," Hickey said. "Tell them we're just window shopping." Joe halted, and Peter stopped beside him thankfully. "How're you doing, Peter?" Joe whispered.

"Okay," he said.

A door slammed. A figure came down the gravel walk from the double screen doors at the center of the U. There were no windows facing the patio, only the entrance like a broad yellow mouth. The man was whistling under his breath as he came past them.

"Let's go in and shop around," Hickey said. "A flash of light was reflected from the gold football on his watch chain as he turned toward the doors. "Come on, Joe." "I'm going to wait out here till the other guys come," Bryan announced.

"Coming, Petey?"

"I guess I'll wait out here with Bry for the other guys," Joe and Hickey moved up the gravel path side by side, and Peter wished he had gone along; something urged him after them, but he turned toward Bryan, and the two of them retreated to the heavier darkness beneath the trees.

"What a place!" Bryan whispered.

"Say, are you going in there and do it, Bry?"

Bryan didn't answer for a long time. "I guess not. You, Petey?"

He hesitated too, but he said, "Yeah. He would go in and do this, and maybe... and maybe then... 'cause you've got to get it over with sometime," he said half aloud. He would go and do this without even thinking about it first.

He heard a shrill tumult from within the Molina Rojo, chanting voices repeating a kind of refrain. He sucked in his breath to listen.

"What's that?" Bryan hissed.

"I don't know. It was a chorus of women's voices, the whores' voices. He could make out the words now, "Fookyfooky, fookyfooky, one dollar, one dollar, one dollar!" "Jesus!" Bryan whispered. He stepped back and leaned against the tree.

Bryan was scared, Peter thought with a kind of brutal triumph. And Herr had been scared too. Well he, Peter, wasn't; he would go and do this and maybe..."
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"Okay, let's go," Hickey said. "You guys better come in and see which ones you want."

Bryan didn't say anything.

"Is that blonde one the best?" Peter asked suddenly.

"I guess I'll go — see her after you're through, Joe," he felt them all looking at him.

"Sure," Joe said. "She's the best."

Hickey said, "Forward!" and he and Joe went up the walk again.

Peter stood there with Bryan, watching them go. Two more men passed on the walk, talking sibilantly in Spanish. He couldn't keep himself from trembling, and he wished there had been a way to ask Joe exactly what you did and what it was like, but you couldn't ask those things. He would just have to go alone and do this.

After what seemed a very short time Joe appeared. In the light from the doors his letter sweater was a bright blue, with the white big "SD" on the front. He descended the steps and stopped and turned as Hickey came out, broad and tall in his red and blue plaid shirt. They came on down the walk together, the gravel crunching under their feet.

Peter pushed himself away from the tree and went forward to meet them. "Hello, I'm going in," he said.

"Attaboy," Hickey said. "What's the matter with Bry?"

No coffee? Joe touched Peter's arm. "She's the first one on the left when you go in. She's got pink pants on." He laughed coldly. "Just call her Jean."

"Miss Harlow unless you've been introduced," Hickey said.

Peter started up the walk toward the gaping doors. "Good luck, Pete," he heard Joe say. He stopped below the wooden steps and felt in his watch pocket for the five-dollar bill, which was cool and crisp in his fingers, and then damp in the palm of his hand. Through the doors he heard nothing but a bare wooden wall. He mounted the steps.

Inside, a husky Mexican in a white shirt sat tilted back in a straight chair, watching him impassively. Peter moved onto until he came out onto a hallway. It seemed filled with women. They stood beside doors that opened onto tiny cubicles, and at first they all seemed perfectly motionless, like a corridor lined with statues. He felt their concentrated gaze, and he stopped and stared back; some wore only panties, some were in birth-color-looked coats that reached just below the hips, some in short print dresses, a few in slacks. Then he became conscious of a few movements, a hip leaned against a doorjamb, a cigarette lifted. At the far turn of the hallway a man in a black suit was resting against the inside wall, talking to one of them. The hall was bright with light, the floor dirty and littered with cigarette butts. Whatever he looked could see the gaze of all the eyes, and suddenly he was struck by the smell, which was of cigarettes and liquor and vomit and urine and sweat conveyed into a thick and sickly-sweetish atmosphere.

"Ay, blowndie!" a raucous voice like a parrot's cried. "Ay, blowndie, one dollah, one dollah!" And as though it were the cue the cry went up: "Fookys-fooky, fooky-fooky, one dollah, one dollah!" He could feel all the eyes, see all the open mouths chattering, and he jerked his head the other way, where the hall continued, with more women and the same eyes and the same gaping mouths, like a mirror. He turned back: the first door to the left, pink panties. And she wore a dirty blue brassiere. She did not look like Jean Harlow, smiling at him with bad teeth, fat and fabby-looking but with platinum hair. Yet he could move toward her, partly as refuge, partly because he had been there, and he could move past her into the cubicle because she murmured something in a soft voice and called him "honey," moving now as though he was walking through water, and observing almost detachedly the brass bed and the mattress covered with a sheet, the rickety caned-bottomed chair, the dresser on which there was a crockery bowl of pink liquid, the cubicle tiny but somehow suddenly cozy and safe, and the smell of perfume and of sweaty powder almost pleasantly after the stench outside.

He heard the click of the door closing. She came toward him, taller than he was. She had taken off the brassiere. He did not flinch when she touched his arm and then leaned on it and smiled at him as she dropped the panties and stepped out of them. He could smell her

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breath. She stood upright, releasing his arm; her breasts sagged, the nipples startlingly large and dark. Then she touched him again, and he stood rigid as she unbuttoned the fly of his trousers. He felt her fingers probing; she said something in Spanish, her hand before him, palm up, the thumb motioning.

His fingers went to his watch pocket, but he discovered the crumpled bill in his hand and extended it to her with a furtive, apologetic gesture. The bill made a crisp sound as she opened it and put it on the dresser.

"My friend was here," he said loudly, "Just now."

"Ya?" She kept smiling at him, and suddenly he thought it was a sympathetic smile, and that she would understand if he could only tell her, that she would forgive and make it all right if he could only explain it to her. He would explain, and she would understand and forgive and love him even, and maybe he would come away with everything obliterated and transformed.

He said pleadingly, "Please. Please, can you——"

"Ya?"

He whispered it now, "Can you——? And when she only shrugged and looked at him uncomprehendingly, the smile gone, it occurred to him that she must not understand English. He watched her go to the bed and lie down. His gaze dropped helplessly to his hanging hands, to the loosened buttons of his trousers, and he willed himself toward her with an immense mental effort until he felt as though he were being whipped with chains, battered and racked and pulled apart because of the stricture of his blood and the failure of his legs to move. "Please," he said one last time to the blonde awful thing on the bed who was smiling no longer. But he could not do it. He could never do it. He wheeled around.

He lost his grip on the greasy doorknob so that the door swung back violently, and slammed against the wall. And then in the hallway, struck by a sudden thought, he tried to stop, still stumbling forward with his own momentum. He couldn't go outside so soon because they would know; he gasped and looked around him wildly, his lungs fluttering with fear and the fear, and then he saw that all he could do was go down the hall.

The line of faces swam before his eyes as he made himself go slow. Go slow. The hall pitched beneath his feet. A hand caught at his open fly, and he almost cried out as he twisted away, panting with the effort to go slow. And then the cry went up around him, seeming both close and distant and with echoing overtones as though all the world were screaming and pointing at him. The parrot voice stabbed at his ears: "Ay, blowedie, ay, blowedie, right ere, blowedie." The faces wheeled and spun before his eyes, and his senses were overwhelmed with the cry of sex and the smell of love, until he thought he must scream and vomit, trying to turn and try not to run down the convulsing corridor past the faces and the bodies with the smell and the cry and the "Ay, blowedie!" fainter for a moment as he turned the corner to go down the wing of the U, and then springing up at him again and more horribly. But he could see the door now, black with the darkness of the world outside, and finally there seemed but one more face that was monstrous, and heroic-sized, spinning into a thousand faces and back into one bloated conglomerate face, of his grandmother and his mother whom he had never seen, of the whore upon the bed with her knees raised and beckoning and Ralph's dirty pictures, of Charlotte Robinson with her black, poisoned tongue and Gerry Hulbert and Barbara and Paula Hughes and all the women in the world. He raised his arms before his eyes, thrusting past and out the door into the clean air and the sudden silence, stumbling down the steps onto the grass to breathe deeply and shudderingly until his head stopped whirling. He could see them all out in the faint light at the entrance to the patio. He thought he could recognize Joe and Hickey, but there were many figures with them. They must all be there now, Joe and Hickey and Bryan and all the others, all the world of boys changing into men. He could hear them laughing and talking. In the flare of a match he could see Hickey's bristling hair, Bryan's dark head cocked to one side. He saw Joe turn to look toward the doors of the Molina Rojo. Then the match snapped out, and he could no longer distinguish Joe in the broad dim outline of the whole group. He crouched there in the darkness under the trees, watching the others standing on the path.

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Next week: Joe's game
A Case For Christ
I was appalled at your article by Robert Kumpel ("Christian without Jesus," December 13).

First of all, it just seemed extremely biased toward Christians and what we stand for. The people in the article had no authority to even answer anything about Christians or the Bible. Their concepts of our faith were so vague and incorrect. I would have respected your article if a true Christian could have also been interviewed. These people in your article were an embarrassment to True Christians. I use the word True for a reason. We are the ones who love everyone in Christ, meaning this e-mail is not about bashing anyone. We believe that Jesus is the True Son of God. I would have wished you would have touched upon theology more. If you decide to print this, may I recommend a book by Lee Strobel called *A Case for Christ.*

If everyone in your article could just pick up this book and read it, I would love to see part two of this article... and please, please, next time, choose a Christian pastor to answer your questions in the future.

Diana Perez
Mira Mesa
San Diego

Christian Taliban
I just love the humility of good Christians like Mr. Martin and "Anonymous Annie" (Letters, December 20). God forbid there EVER be an article that talks about spirituality and excludes Christianity! Thank you for pointing out that those of us who have made a conscious decision to not follow Christ's teachings are disrespectful, ignorant heathens. Maybe if you read Christian ideas down our throats often enough, then, by God, we will see the light!

I commend the Reader for printing an article that, for once, doesn't talk about Christ's, but about how people of other faiths feel about this time of year. I celebrate Christmas because of the giving, the sharing, the family togetherness, and because everything looks so darn pretty! I don't celebrate it because it was supposedly the birthday of a character in a book. Let's not forget that the 25th of December was originally a pagan holiday, after all.

"Anonymous Annie," you might want to venture out of your cave and get some air at some point in time. Thanks to your Christian Taliban brethren, he is present in virtually every discussion that involves public life, whether it deals with abortion, gay rights, assisted suicide, stem cell research, cloning, etc. Thanks to those like you, there is always a threat to a secular way of life wherein he is only taken into consideration by those who believe and the rest of us follow our own best judgment.

Annie and Mr. Martin, take your faith and let it make you better people. Those who want Christ's teachings will ASK for them. The fact that we have not been "saved" is not an impediment, nor do Christians have a monopoly on the "good, decent person" market.

Margot Moore
San Diego

Mythical Character Christmas
I really enjoyed reading your article "Christmas without Jesus" (December 13) as well as the responses from people who couldn't take it. Maybe I misunderstand something, but what exactly is it that some people have a problem with?

Except for weddings and funerals, I've never spent even a minute in a church. As children, both of my parents questioned their Catholic and Protestant upbringings and adults rejected Christianity outright and raised my brothers and me as agnostics. But every December, we would get a tree, decorate the house, and exchange presents. The reason we celebrated Christmas had absolutely nothing to do with a miracle-worker (illusionist) named Jesus that may or may not have been born 2000 years ago. It was an accepted time of year when the whole family would get together. It was a time of year I always looked forward to, and now that I have a child of my own, I want him to enjoy the same happiness I always did.

This isn't as much of a Christian holiday as many people think. That's why the story of Santa Claus took off so well. To a child, the birth of Jesus isn't as interesting and as colorful a story as a fat, jolly man in red with a fleet of reindeer to take presents to every house on the planet in one night. Granted, it is as far-fetched a tale as anything you find in the Bible, but the message is the same. Telling kids that Santa won't bring presents if they're bad is exactly like telling everyone that if they don't live like good Christians they'll burn forever in hell. Besides, everybody has their own interpretation of Jesus and, therefore, their own view of the holiday.

Many religions regard Jesus as a great man, but not the son of God, as he claims. Others, like me, believe he was, at best, a good man with good ideas who did some good things, who might've been a little bonkers, and, at worst, a brilliant fraud, just like a "psychic." That is, if he even existed at all.

And this Anonymous An...
nie (Letters, December 20) says this is a year when we "especially feel God's presence within us." If anything, this is a year when, more than ever, we should be trying to understand other people's beliefs, a time when I've never been more convinced that there isn't a God. Unless he saw the attacks coming and decided to do nothing about it. Maybe he was playing golf that day. Maybe he let Satan run the show for a while? Whatever it is, he must've decided that September 11 was a day that we didn't deserve his protection. This supposedly all-powerful dude couldn't summon enough strength to cancel four plane flights? Or did he just not know, in which case he isn't all-knowing? Or maybe he had the knowledge and power and didn't do anything to stop it, in which case he doesn't love his children like the church would like us to believe. I guess the point is to not rely on prayer. You have a better chance of living well if you take responsibility for your own actions. There's no guarantee that God listens, right? And don't give me any crap about free will. Either God controls us or he doesn't. If he gave us free will to act against his wishes, then we are all more powerful than he is assumed to be.

I know I'm off the topic now, but I have no problem with millions or billions of Christians celebrating the birth of a mythical character, and they should have no problem with the rest of us celebrating for no other reason than to be generous and spend time with family.

Jeff White

Needy Thirst
Thank you for your December 13 article "Christmas without Jesus" by Robert Kumpel. Being a atheist, I really needed this article at this time of the year.

Bless everyone at the Reader for their fine work over all these past years. You're one paper that I read consistently, and thanks also for keeping it free to your avid readers.

Ed Corbett

God Belongs To Everyone
Bill Davis is a funny man (Letters, December 20). His logic skills leave much to be desired. In enumerating the choices between religious beliefs (i.e., if Jews say Jesus wasn't the messiah, and the Christians do, they cannot both be correct), he leaves out the obvious alternative answer, which is that NEITHER are correct.

It's a pity that so many would seek to impose their belief system on other people. As I recall from Christianity, one of the quotes instructs its followers to remove the beam from their own eyes before the motes in the eyes of others.

"God" belongs to everyone. Regardless of what some book that has been adulterated time and again by the Catholic church might say.

Name Withheld by Request

Shepherd Slam
I, too, would like to join those readers who wrote in this past week (December 20) about your so-called movie reviewer, Mr. Duncan Shepherd, whose real name should be Drunken Shepherd. I'd really like you to make a New Year's resolution that you will get rid of Mr. Shepherd and get someone there who will do a quality, readable review, one which makes logic and one which we can read and make a decision about these movies. As Mr. Stauton and others have written, we can't make heads or tails of what he's saying even. I think you need to seriously consider this. In fact, I'll even pay Mr. Shepherd, and I'll get the other people to pay him too, if you can get rid of him.

Paul Lang
San Carlos
Son Of Shepherd Slam
These comments are concerning your movie reviewer. Duncan Shepherd’s reviews are very knowledgeable in regards to cinema and quite witty. Yet something is missing for me, like any feeling of concern for non-cinema buffs. Movies that receive critical acclaim are banned by him. Almost everything is severely criticized by him. To put it more bluntly, he appears to me to be an elitist intellectual aesthetic unable to see or appreciate that there could be ordinary people wishing to be intelligently entertained. He seems to be a product of the times where cynicism is the fashion. Vulnerability and feeling are for the naive and sempiternal.
His reviews are useless as a barometer for movie viewing. He is the only contemporary movie that I can recall that he hasn’t panned. The only movies that are generally well reviewed consistently are the classics shown by the film society. That indicates that he may lack the courage to step out and applaud something that hasn’t already been acknowledged and passed the test of time. He panned Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, and that was very popular.
This guy has lots of knowledge and is afraid to acknowledge his feelings. Until he does some work on himself, he will continue to be the heartless tin man of movie reviews.
Karl Krumins

Lowliest Contracts
Mediocre services increasingly saturate the economy, and that breeds manipulative managers. Most firings merely reflect the hypocrisy of such managers (City Lights, “He Had No Right to Fire Me,” December 13).
Organizations prefer having employees-at-will in order to fire them anytime, with or without cause. But workers can achieve basic protection by having an employment contract. Any contract implies that the parties will deal fairly with each other. Consequently, under an employment contract, an employer must have evidence of good cause for a firing.
Even the lowest employees can obtain employment contracts. In particular, employee handbooks chock full of terms and conditions of employment easily can be interpreted as implied contracts. Also, in a résumé, job application, interview, and thank-you letter, an applicant can state innocently a willingness to work for the employer if the employer treats him or her fairly. That quid pro quo is a basic contract. It should be repeated periodically throughout the employment, especially at staff meetings and in any written rebuttal to unfavorable evaluations. Any employee thereby can obtain a paper trail that shows an implied employment contract.
Then, if the employer fires the employee unfairly, the employer is in breach of contract. That means the employee would have leverage to obtain severance pay or to win a lawsuit.
Ethan Ramos

Nice Ribs
Mr. Bedford, your “Rib Rescue” piece (“Tim Forks”) December issue... glad you liked the barbecue. Great write-up. We thought the owners might be hurting. You helped save the day.
Carol and Pat

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Marilyn Mangion

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Model Railroad Swap Meet

Museums mummify, it has been said. “An object in a museum case must suffer the denatured existence of an animal in the zoo,” observes a collector of Meisen porcelain in Bruce Chatwin’s novel Utz. Ideally, museums should be hooted every 50 years and their collections returned to circulation.

Model trains aren’t Meisen, to be sure, but the San Diego Modern Railroad Museum would have warmed the Chatwin character’s subversive-collector heart. Three times a year it sponsors a swap meet. For sale are toy trains of all the popular gauges, track, transformers, scenery, and lots of other railroad-hobbyist paraphernalia. Most items are brought in by collectors from the local clubs, whose playground the museum is. But the museum takes a table, too, says its executive director, John Rotsart.

“Local Events”

When we determine that the clubs don’t need the pieces, we either try to sell them at the swap meet or, if we determine that they can’t be sold, we give them to a man who volunteers his time in a program called Trains for Kids. He fixes up old sets and sells them for nominal amounts to families who wouldn’t otherwise be able to afford them.” Either way, the stuff is back in the world of private collectors once again.

Not all the merchandise at the swap meets is used, says Rotsart. “Hobby shops come to sell off new things that probably aren’t moving as well as they had hoped.” Those who haven’t seen model trains since a long-ago childhood may be surprised by the innovations. “The technology is changing,” says Rotsart. “Nowadays we have bells, whistles, and engine sounds for the smaller scales as well as the larger ones. And all are generated by microchips. We also have digital command control — DCC. That’s the wave of the future for this hobby.”

Swap-meet coordinator Pete Munoz has been collecting model trains since he was five years old. A retired railroad engineer who drove trains between Chicago, Denver, and Minneapolis, he’ll be 60 this year.

Munoz says that some people will be selling full-scale railroad items on Saturday: “Morse Code stuff, old lanterns, and spikes.” In total, Munoz estimates that there will be 30 to 50 vendors, some with more than one table. But he won’t be selling anything himself.

“I don’t sell nothing,” says the taciturn Munoz, who estimates his collection is worth $100,000 and names as his most valuable pieces four brass steam locomotives worth about $2500 a piece. (With collector-investor pride, he boasts that he bought them new in the 1960s for $100 a piece.)

The question is asked again: he won’t sell one thing? Not ever!

“Well, every now and then, I might get rid of a couple pieces. Like, if I have two or three of the same thing.” And again: he has hung onto basically everything he’s bought since he was five?

“Yeah.” He laughs. “Has anybody ever tried to tell him he was crazy?”

“My wife tells me all the time.” Does she collect anything? “Yeah, I got her hooked on it.” She collects railroad stuff, too! There can’t be many other women who enjoy the hobby.

“Not too many. A few other wives. I run into a few ladies at the swap meets now and then, who come by themselves. Mostly it’s because they were left the things. Their father died, or their husband.”

Do any kids show up? Is there a new generation of five-year-old boys interested in trains?

“Yeah, we have them and ages on up.” Did you and your wife have any kids? “Yeah, I had six.” And are they interested in trains? “Two of them are. The rest went the other way.”

Which way is that?

“Computers.”

Many are called; few are chosen. One Christmas, this reporter and her husband gave their two nephews a set of slot cars. The model train set, their parents’ “big” gift to them, was abandoned under the tree as the boys raced their miniature Porsches around another track in a corner of the living room.

Years have passed; even the slot cars have been outgrown. And the train set is a good candidate for a swap meet — or for direct donation to the museum.

— Jeanne Schinto

Model Railroad Swap Meet
San Diego Model Railroad Museum
1649 El Prado Balboa Park
Saturday, January 5, 7:00-11:00 a.m.
Enter through museum’s back door, accessible from Space Theater Way, off Park Blvd.
Buyers: $2; sellers, $5 per table. Includes entry to the museum, which opens at 11:00 a.m. 619-293-0162

North County Reader January 3, 2012 59
OUTDOORS

Recess Chilly Days and Nights only confirm that San Diego's average temperatures (according to more than a century of weather records) peak during the month of January. January's mean temperature at Lindbergh Field is about 55 degrees Fahrenheit. July's mean is a balmy 70 degrees. As experience much colder temperatures of mountainous regions.

Gray Whale Migration on San Diego County's coast peaks this month. The best view points from land are at point Loma and the La Jolla Cove. From there, you can see these gray, creamy-colored mammals from the cliffs.

BAJA

Omnimax Films, currently showing: Beauty and the Beast Tuesday through Sunday, at 2, 4, 6, and 8 p.m., at the Tijuana Cultural Center, Paseo de los Heroes and Mina Street in the Zona Río. For more information call 01-55-624-678-9600. (Tijuana)

ISLANDA SPORFISHING

1520 West Mission Bay Dr (619) 222-1664
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Calendar of Events

EVENTS LISTINGS

HOW TO SEND US YOUR EVENTS: Contributions must be received by 5 p.m., Friday the week prior to publication for consideration. Do not send original. Send a brief description of the event, including the date, time, place, and price where it is to be held (including neighborhood), a contact phone number, and a phone number (including area code) for public information to READERS EVENTS, Box 58803, San Diego CA 92186-
5803. Or fax to 619-481-2401.
You may submit information online at www.SandiegoReader.com by clicking on the events section.

BAJA

MAKING BUSINESS CONTACTS

Making business contacts include:
- Beauty and the Beast Tuesday through Sunday, at 2, 4, 6, and 8 p.m., at the Tijuana Cultural Center, Paseo de los Heroes and Mina Street in the Zona Río. For more information call 01-55-624-678-9600. (Tijuana)

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"San Diego’s Sensitive Butterflies Workshop: Focusing on Eight Local Species,” is dated for Saturday, Jan.
uary 5, 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Tecolote Nature Center (3180 Te-
colote Road). This San Diego Natu-
ral History Museum class teaches
participants to identify the eight
most sensitive species and determine
if a particular area is suitable to
support a certain species. The fee is $70
for nonmembers. Call 619-232-3821
to register. (BALBOA PARK)

Cross the Bridge, a six-week series of
bridge lessons and games begins on
Monday, January 7, at 7 p.m. at Ad-
venturers in Bridge (4659 Mission
Gorge Place). You’ll be playing the very
first evening. Free. For information,
call 619-287-8333. (MISSION GORGE)

Meet the Masters, head to the San
Diego Museum of Art when Beverly
Jackson discusses “Antique Chinese
Textiles” on Tuesday, January 8. Jack-
sion is an internationally known col-
lector of Chinese textiles and is cura-
tor of Chinese collections at the Santa
Barbara Historical Society Museum.
Lectures begin at 7:30 p.m. ($20 for nonmem-
bers, $16 for seniors). (BALBOA PARK)
The Westernization of China’s is the
topic when Jihan speeks for the World
Affairs Council on Tuesday, January 8, at
the Rancho Bernardo Swim and Tennis
Club (16955 Bernardo Oaks Drive).
Refreshments begin at 7:30 p.m. for
(RANCHO BERNARDO)

The Sense of Hearing and the ability
to produce sounds are extremely impor-
tant to marine mammals. John
Hildebrand presents “Listening to
Whales” for the “Perspectives on
Ocean Science” lecture series on
Wednesday, January 9, at 7:30 p.m.

At the Birch Aquarium, Hilde-
brand will explain the kinds of sounds
made by marine mammals and what
scientists can learn about their popu-
lations from recording their sounds.
Admission is $6. The aquarium is
located at 2300 Expedition Way
(off North Torrey Pines Road, south of
La Jolla Shores Drive). For infor-
mation, call 858-534-7236. (LA JOLLA)

Way beyond Stationary, take a class
on sculptural paper being offered by
artist Pangara at the Grcano Mu-
seum of Art’s School of Art begin-
ing on Wednesday, January 9. stub-
testor will make handmade paper and
use recycled paper to create three-di-
nensional works of art, and several
techniques will be employed with an
emphasis on experimentation.
Classes meet from 6 to 9 p.m.
through February 27. The school is
found at 219 North Coast Highway.
The fee is $95, plus $35 for materials.
To reserve a spot, call 760-721-2778.
(OSCEOLA)

Landmarks: Twenty Years of
The Stuart Collection in Print and Images
will be discussed by Mary Livingstone
Beebe — director of this UCSD
collection — at the Athenaeum Music
and Arts Library next Thursday, Jan-
uary 10, at 7:30 p.m. All 15 of the
artworks in the Stuart Collection are
included in the Athenaeum’s artist’s
book collection. Admission to this
slide-illustrated lecture is free. Find
the library at 1608 Wall Street and by
calling 858-454-5872. (LA JOLLA)

"Write and Sell Your eBOOK or
Other Book — Fast!!" after book
coach, publisher, and author Judy
Collins leads classes beginning next
Thursday, January 10, at 6 p.m., at
the Santana Adult School Center
(9915 North Magnolia). Participants
will learn to shorten edit time, write
focused and compelling copy, and
market their work on the Internet.
Classes continue through January 31.
The fee is $39. To register, call 619-596-
3637; call 619-466-0622 for information.
(SANTEFE)

What Are The Ten Most Useful
Herbs from the area? Find out when
Blisswoman staff herbalist Philip
Gropp presents an "Intro to Herbs"
Saturday, January 10, at 6 p.m. Participants
will learn to acquire, store, prepare, and
utilize the aforementioned top ten. The fee is $30.
Find Blisswoman at 4839 Newport
Avenue; register by calling 619-323-
5543. (OCEAN BEACH)

IN PERSON

"Yenini — Glass and Design" at the
Mingei International Museum closes
with a finale event on Saturday, Jan-
uary 5. A concert of piano interpre-
tations of the exhibition will be per-
formed by Bryant Verhey at 4 p.m.,
followed by an illustrated lecture by
world-renowned glass artist Dale
Chihuly at 5:45 p.m. Chihuly will
sign books during a reception after
the talk. Tickets are $50 general. For
reservations, call 619-298-0003 x316.
(BALBOA PARK)

Celebrate 12th Night with a "miching
light and sound event" planned for Sat-
urday, January 5, at All Souls Episcopal
Church (1475 Catalina Boulevard,
Chatsworth). The program starts at
10:30 p.m., ending at midnight, featur-
ing instruments and music based on
the theme of “light.” Dennis lames (on
rare glass and electronic instruments)
and (church musician) Robert
Thompson will perform. Expect an "evening of vast variety and extreme
contrasts"; the music will range from
ancient to modern, classical and popu-
lar. Donations will be accepted. 619-223-6394, POINT LOMA

Fantasy Author Dennis McKiernan
signs and discusses The Silver Call
Oninos on Saturday, January 5, at
2:30 p.m., at Mysterious Galaxy
Books (7051 Clairemont Mesa
Boulevard). Free. Call 858-268-4747
for information. (CLAREMONT)

Are the Stars Out Tonight? Head
to the KTVG Channel 10 studios for
"An Evening of Stars Viewing Party"
on Saturday, January 5, at 7 p.m.
According to organizers, the party
includes a "talent and lip-sync show
featuring many well-known San Die-
gos performing as their favorite stars." There will also be music, danc-
ing, and a silent auction. Find the
studio at 4600 Air Way (at 47th Street).
The $25 fee benefits the United Negro
College Fund. For reservations, call
619-465-8623. (EAST SAN DIEGO)

Twelfth (Harb) Night, the perform-
ers include Joe Smith, Melissa
Thompson, Katherine Cleary, Ron
Wild, and Elaine Thompson when San

Close out the year with a (nightclub
light and sound event) planned for Sat-
urday, January 5, at All Souls Church
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studio at 4600 Air Way (at 47th Street).
The $25 fee benefits the United Negro
College Fund. For reservations, call
619-465-8623. (EAST SAN DIEGO)
The Upcoming Independent Film Spider Woman is a feature-length movie about a Navajo family to be shot in 35mm film on the Navajo reservation. Meet the producers, director, and Navajo and non-Navajo actors when the group introduces the film next Thursday, January 10. Parts of the script will be read. The event begins at 7 p.m. in the meeting room of the San Marcos Civic Center (5 Civic Center Drive). Free. For information, call 760-750-4288. (SAN MARCOS)

How Did You Create the Life You're Living? What's your "true purpose" in this lifetime? These questions and others are pondered in Divine Design, which author Gaye Minogue signs and discusses at 7 p.m. next Thursday, January 10, at Borders Books and Music (11160 Rancho Carmel Drive). Free. Call 858-584-1645 for information. (CARL MOUNTAIN)

SPORTS

Gulls Hockey, the San Diego Gulls host the Colorado Gold Kings on Friday and Saturday, January 4 and 5, and the Idaho Steelheads on Tuesday, January 8. All of the games begin at 7 p.m. at the San Diego Sports Arena. Tickets range from $5 to $17.50, available by calling 619-224-4625.

The games are broadcast on KSDB (AM 1300). (SPORTS ARENA)

Surf's Up! ISF high school surf team competition takes place on Saturday and Sunday, January 5 and 6, from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., on the south side of the Oceanside Pier (round at the foot of Mission Boulevard). Admission is free for spectators. Call 760-931-1450 for information. (OCEANSIDE)

What's the Best Saturday Ride hosted by the San Diego Bicycle Touring Society? Organizers of the "Pipe Valley Loop" boast that their ride takes the award, join the group for the adventure on January 5. This 47-mile ride starts at 8:45 a.m. at the Alpine Fire Station (take I-8 to the Tavern Road offramp). For information, dial 619-332-6219 (ALPINE).

Ride to Scripps Ranch with the Knickerbockers on Saturday, January 5. The 46-mile ride for intermediates begins at 9 a.m. in the north parking lot of the Mission Bay Visitors' Center (at East Mission Bay Drive and Clairemont Drive). Bring money for lunch at Tio Leo's. 619-275-4511. (MISSION BAY)

Clockwise Black Mountain Outer Loop? This 50-mile ride led by the Sierra Club bicyclists on Sunday, January 6, promises lengthy stretches, rolling hills, a stack stop, and lunch at the terminus (bring money). For the time and starting point of this "North County Express Ride," call 858-974-4871. (NORTH COUNTY)

Unwind on the Water during this two-hour guided social kayak paddle hosted every Thursday by Aqua Adventures Kayak Center (3348 Quivira Way). Beginners welcome. Bring a flashlight. The fee is $10 (free if you bring your own kayak). For information, call 619-523-9577. (MISSION BAY)

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North County Road Journal January 3, 2003
Roam-O-Rama

A Guide to Unexpected San Diego and Beyond • By Jerry Schad

If outdoor exercise is part of your New Year’s resolution, perhaps it’s time to pull your tennis shoes or mountain bike out of storage in the garage and head for the rambling byways of Rancho Santa Fe. Unlike other high-priced residential communities, this one does not shiver behind locked gates. While freely traveling its circuitous linear bike trails, anyone is free to eschew an unproductive succession of perfectly tended landscapes, whitewashed fencing, discreetly sited homes, decorative crops, and pseudo-Australian forest. Three million eucalyptus seedlings were planted on the scrubland of today’s Rancho Santa Fe a century ago to provide wood for railroad ties, a project quickly abandoned when eucalyptus wood was proved useless for virtually any structural use. Some of the original trees remain today, along with younger trees, helping to blanket the community’s hills and dales with cool semi-shade.

When traveling by bike here, avoid the weekday morning and afternoon commute times, when traffic backs up on the arterial roads. Sunday mornings find the roads nearly deserted—and so, too, Super Bowl Sunday, during the game itself. But, bring your sunscreen and a moderate but nearly constant elevation changes. Any bicycle with low gears and good brakes will suffice to tackle them.

Two suggested loop routes, of 11 and 4 miles, are arrowed on the accompanying map, which has many but not all intersections labeled. Both loop routes begin at the small, Spanish-styled business district near La Granada and Paseo Delicias. Try either route, or improvise your own.

The 11-mile loop takes you up and over several ridges and swings around San Diego Reservoir, a fenced storage facility for municipal water. The up and down grades aren’t steep, except for Rambla de las Flores and Catzalita del Bosque near Linea del Cielo. On the shorter eastern loop, 4 miles over La Valle Plateada, El Vuelo, and Las Colinas, you’re out in the sunshine most of the time. Expansive views extend to the east—miles of rolling hills backed by distant mountains, as far as the eye can see.
What does the future hold for you?

Michael Domeyko Rowland

There is something within you right now that has amazing power over your life. It is the source of all the experiences you have. When you discover how to direct it, it can fulfill you beyond your wildest dreams. Learn how you can make great changes in any area of your life.

F R E E S E M I N A R

Discover how you can awaken more personal power, creativity and energy with Michael Domeyko Rowland, Australia's leading personal development author and seminar presenter. Seen with Louise Hay, Wayne Dyer, Deepak Chopra, James Redfield (The Celestine Prophecy), Marianne Williamson and Shakti Gawain.

Did you know that your mind has amazing power over your life? Your relationships, wealth, creativity, career, talents, intuition, pleasure and fulfillment are all a direct result of your own mind. Now you can find out how to use more of its potential to access more success and satisfaction.

At This Seminar You Will Discover:

- How your mind has created all the circumstances of your life and how you can change them.
- How to attract great relationships and how they can be constantly improved and re-energized.
- How to control the part of your mind that decides whether you will be rich or poor.
- How to awaken and increase your creativity and artistic talents.
- How to improve your intelligence, concentration and memory.
- How to give your children a far better opportunity to reach their full potential and have successful lives.
- How to understand yourself at a deeper level.

Michael Domeyko Rowland has presented his seminars to over 170,000 people both in Australia and the U.K. His personal development courses are the most successful in the country and his book Absolute Happiness is a national bestseller. You are invited to join him in person for a FREE seminar, which will give you extraordinary information about yourself and what your life holds for you.

F R E E S E M I N A R D E T A I L S

San Diego Concourse, Copper Room 202 C Street, San Diego

Dates: Mon., January 7
Tues., January 8
Wed., January 9
Thurs., January 10
Fri., January 11
Sat., January 12
Sun., January 13

Either 5:15 pm or 8:15 pm

No need to book. Arrive early. You are welcome to bring your friends. No children under 15, please.
Ted Hughes: The Life of a Poet

W. W. Norton, 2001; $29.95; 273 pages

FROM THE DUST JACKET: Ted Hughes (1930–1998) is one of the greatest English poets of the 20th Century, for whom recognition came early and who was unusually successful in the difficult role of poet laureate. Yet his life was dogged by tragedy and controversy. His marriage to Sylvia Plath marked his entire life, and he never completely recovered from her suicide in 1963, though he chose to remain silent on the subject for more than 30 years. Hughes’s best-selling book, Birthday Letters, is a sequence of lyric casts as a continued conversation with Plath, showing how electric their relationship was and how much damage they did to each other.

In this biography Elaine Feinstein tells for the first time the story of Hughes’s life as he experienced it, rather than presenting him as a figure in the perception of others. Many people have held him adulatory responsible for Plath’s death, since it was her discovery of his affair with the glamorous Anna Willel that led her to order Hughes out of their Devon home. Feinstein explores an altogether more complex situation, which includes Plath’s fragility throughout the marriage, and Hughes’s own confused intentions in the last few weeks of her life. In the process, Feinstein throws new light on his relationship with Willel, in some ways as vulnerable a figure as Plath herself. Hughes later had a child with Willel, who killed herself and their young daughter.

Dr. David Hungerford, an English professor at the University of Bath, has written extensively on literature and culture, and he is the author of several books on Shakespeare and his contemporaries. He is also a frequent contributor to literary journals and magazines. In his latest book, Shakespeare and Modernity, Dr. Hungerford explores the ways in which Shakespeare’s works have influenced modern culture, and he argues that the Bard’s influence is stronger than ever today. Dr. Hungerford is an influential figure in the field of literary studies, and his work has been widely praised by critics and scholars alike. In addition to his teaching and writing, Dr. Hungerford is also a sought-after lecturer, and he has delivered talks at numerous universities and conferences around the world. His recent talk at the University of Chicago was particularly well received, and it has received widespread acclaim from both audience members and critics alike. Dr. Hungerford’s next book, Shakespeare and Digital Culture, is due out in April 2023, and it promises to be another groundbreaking work in the field of Shakespearean studies.
However, in Ms. Feinstein’s book, Hughes, even after he meets and marries Plath (or begins his affair with Emma Tennant), is the cynosure of which Hughes is the person on whom the light falls. In Ms. Feinstein’s book, Hughes became for me the man who wrote:

- "Old Crow"
- "Flying your black bag of jewels"
- "From chaos to chaos"
- "Probe hard for those maggoty deaths"
- "Which poison our lives."

or

"SNOWDROP"
- "Now is the globe shrunk tight"
- "Round the mouse’s dwindled wintering heart"
- "Weasel and crow, as if moulded in brass."
- "More through an outer darkness"
- "Not black in their right minds."
- "With the other deaths. She, too, pursues her ends."
- "Brutal as the stars of this month."
- "Her pale head heavy as metal."

In the U.S., I said to Ms. Feinstein, the general reader is far more interested in Sylvia than in Ted. "In Sylvia?"

- "Right. In Sylvia."
- "I think that is unfortunate, because he’s a very great poet, although Sylvia Plath was unquestionably one of the great women poets of the last half century. Their marriage is a marriage of equals. I think it broke down, and then tragically she took her own life. But the fact is, he was a huge person in his own right. He stands in the lists of British poets right at the very top, with probably only Larkin to equal him. I wanted this book to be his own book. I felt people should know more about him."

Derick Walcott writes about Hughes, "There isn’t any Ted Hughes in Hughes’s poetry of landscape. The "I", when it is there, is not taller than its surroundings. "What, I asked, did Ms. Feinstein make of Walcott’s observation?"

- "I see his point, not really totally about landscape, but just within his poetry of landscape. Of course, in the poetry of landscape, Hughes is an observer, that’s true. I think you have to see it in context. Because in the context of the 1960s or 1950s Hughes’s book Loperca [published in 1960] was considered quite remarkable. Loperca just completely bypassed all the attitudes of the new movement, which was sort of Donald Davie and E.J. Enright and all these great, cautious voices. For instance, Kingsley Amis and John Wain, these men were felt to be in the mainstream of poetry. And they were very cautious. They were ironic in tone and not interested in modernism, not interested in Europe. Hughes had cut through all that, and rejected all the restrictive preaching of somebody like F.R. Leavis, at that time such a power in the land, though now almost forgotten.
- "A lot of Leavis’s sort of restrictions made a whole generation of undergraduates feel it was actually impossible to write good poetry anymore. And Ted seemed to have leaped over all that, and to have gone to some earlier period in poetry altogether. Possibly Hopkins, possibly Yeats; you can see some of the sources in the first book, The Hawk in the Rain [1957]. So, for an English person, Hughes is an extremely significant figure."

- "And he remained so, didn’t he, for most of his life?"

- "Well, he had his troubles, of course, in England too. Because — yes, he did remain a significant figure, even while people were condemning his general behavior in one or another way, they still saw the poetry as central, absolutely central to the European contribution to literature in the last half-century. He had written unevenly. And not all his poetry is great. But..."

Hughes was appointed poet laureate in late 1964. The monarch appoints the poet laureate, and he is an officer of the royal household and receives a salary from that household. I asked Ms. Feinstein how these poet laureates get chosen in England.

- "Well it’s supposed to be a personal gift from the Queen, but of course, she takes advice. I think she takes advice from the Arts Council, the head of the British Council, no doubt professors of literature at Oxford and Cambridge, and so on. I don’t know who the group is that she consults. I know there’s a consensus of some kind."

The February 4, 2001, edition of the London Times reported that Prince Charles had dedicated a temple in his Gloucestershire garden to Hughes, in tribute to the private role played by Hughes as the prince’s spiritual adviser. For the last four years of Hughes’s life, according to the Times, Hughes was a frequent guest of the prince, reading and reciting poems to the prince’s company and sharing with Prince Charles what the Times describes as "an unconventional spiritual curiosity."

The Times went on to remind readers, about Prince Charles and Ted Hughes, "There are striking parallels between aspects of their private lives. Hughes was pilloried for the death of his first wife, Sylvia Plath, who descended into mental collapse before giving herself. The Times quoted Elisabeth Sigmund, the dedicatee of Plath’s autobiographical novel, The Bell Jar, as saying that she could well understand the bond between Prince Charles and Ted Hughes. "Both experienced difficult marriages to beautiful, very talented women who in the end they could not be happy with. I think this experience would inevitably bring them close together."

I asked Ms. Feinstein about Ted Hughes’s relationship with Prince Charles.

- "I imagine that he knew Prince Charles, and certainly there (continued on page 68)"
Desperately Seeking Jennifer!

Jennifer Winters is from Phoenix. She has been missing for nearly 3 years. Her granddaughter, Sandi (G-ma), is dying of cancer and wishes to see her one last time. Her cousin Bobby was hit by a drunk driver and never lived. Jen does not know of any this.

Jen is 17 but looks and acts older. She may have grown out her hair or be wearing in an alternative style. It is naturally dark loose, but it could be any color. Her ears have been pierced many times, and she has a belly button ring and several scar from her hand storm.

IF YOU THINK YOU MIGHT KNOW THIS PERSON, PLEASE SHOW HER THIS AD!

Jen may be using an assumed name. She is about 5 feet 5 inches, has deep dimples, very fair skin coloring and blue eyes. She may change her eye color with contacts. She has thick lips, straight teeth and a pig nose.

"Grendil," remember how she looked... I have never lied to you. You are not in any trouble.

Jen, G-ma and Bobby need you. PLEASE, PLEASE PHONE HOME. Jen, please, you can call collect from a pay phone anywhere. Your G-ma is bedridden, so someone is always with her here.

If you believe you know this person and want to phone, you may call Cindy Winters (602) 569-1141. Please feel free to call collect.

JEN. PLEASE JUST CALL. Loving you always, Aunt Cindy, G-ma and Bear

Gemological Institute of America Museum. The "Glenlivet Whiskey," a photographic essay by New York photographer Greg Kuenzlich portraying the path of a diamond from its "rough state" as it leaves the mine, through each phase of the manufacturing process, to its eventual sale and use in jewelry. Also on view are "From Trading to Grading," following diamonds from trader through grading at the GIA Gem Trade Laboratory; and an exhibition of animal mood jewelry from the 1830s to the present.

San Diego Museum of Art

Wednesday, January 9

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above all else. Which very few people have or can share with a partner. It was a quite remarkable marriage. And, you know, there's a lot of evidence he would have gone back to her, had intended to go back to her, which sheds a very sad light on his next partner, Assia Wevill. Her story, Assia's, is the greatest tragedy in the book because she was as fragile as Sylvia, and in many ways more vulnerable and with more cause and as fragmented." "And," I said, "she didn't have Plath's talents."

"No, she did not have the genius, though she was an intelligent girl, actually."

"But Assia," I suggested, "had no vocation in the way that Sylvia Plath had her poetry."

"No, she didn't, and the terrible thing is, really, she was living a life that went against all that feminism taught. In fact, that may be true of Sylvia. But certainly Assia could not imagine living without a man. She could imagine detaching herself from Ted, but there had to be another man. She couldn't just be on her own. And in those days, that was felt to be quite a failure, to be alone with your child. Whereas, nowadays people often choose to." Those who excoriate Hughes for his treatment of Plath often note that even after Plath killed herself, Hughes continued to ill use her. How he did this, these detractors say, is by living off the royalties from publication of her poems and journals and her novel, The Bell Jar. I asked Ms. Feinstein, "Did Hughes make much money off Plath's work?"

"Yes. But he didn't know he was going to. It must have seemed incredibly unlikely. While she was alive, he earned almost nothing from those very same poems, which are now sort of classics. And he had a lot of trouble getting them published, actually. But somehow in the years after her death, Sylvia's celebrity seemed to grow out of the ground, really, and then spring up. And so the poems became recognized as some of the most remarkable ever written. When The Bell Jar was first published in the United States, it was on the best-seller list for more than six months."

"Did Ms. Feinstein think that Hughes was surprised by the tremendous sales of Birthday Letters, in both England and America?"

"I do think he was surprised, actually. He thought it was a most terrific gamble. He knew they were not all equally good as poems. He called them 'raw.' He didn't really shape them. They were very heartfelt, always very naked, and several of them not written with great care, as most of his poetry is. So it could have gone either way, I think. I don't know if he could have predicted. I think he must have been astonished."

"Serious poetry," I said, "rarely sells as well as did Birthday Letters."

"It was, wasn't it, quite unbelievable, yes. Yes. And I suppose he had a change of mind toward the end of his life. Perhaps in the last decade, so that he no longer wished to be so private, so hidden, so drawn away from the central story of his life, because, really, Sylvia was a very important part of his life, right through his life."

"He seems never to have gotten over Sylvia," I said.

"I don't think he ever got over her. No. I don't think he did. But that must have been enormously hard for everybody else he had anything to do with. It was certainly very hard for Assia, who had to live with that." And I would think it would have been hard for Carol, his widow."

"It must have been, probably still is." Hughes, all his adult life, paid close attention to his horoscope. He believed that one's fate was one's fate and somewhat unalterable. He studied astrology and he cast astrological charts for friends and proffered advice based on his reading of their stars. He consulted astrological signs to determine the publication date for Birthday Letters. He also was a user of Assia boards (he and Plath regularly consulted the board). I asked Ms. Feinstein what she made of Hughes's interest in these otherworldly, esoteric matters.

"First, let me say that I would distinguish the astrology from the literature. I think he was unquestionably somebody who had all his life paid attention to astrology, who made plans according to astrologists' predictions and astrological signs, and all the things that most regular people would feel absolutely nonsense. But he believed in them. Now, how much he believed in them is impossible to establish. He did do many charts for people, and talked with people about what he felt they should know as it related to their star signs, and always would go through and point that out to them. He writes about these matters in letters. So, yes, there's evidence that he really believed it. In England a lot of people read their star signs, but they do it with a little apology and sort of laughing, and I don't think he was actually joking. I think he really believed it."

We talked more about Hughes's astrological interests. Ms. Feinstein then suggested, "Most poets, you know, have a sense of the numinous, the world as more than simply explicable in rational terms. But Hughes had that reinforced by his years studying anthropology, reinforced by his interest in Indian tribes and Eskimos and people who saw the poet as essentially a shaman. So his mysticism is very much of that order. It was just a belief, too, in the power of poetry. And I suppose it's the kind of thing which Yeats believed, or possibly Hughes would have argued that it was, I'm sure."

— Judith Moore
This Bell Does Not Mutter

Who wants to hear The Four Seasons again?

The concert in the La Jolla Chamber Music Society's "Celebrity" series was supposed to feature the Trondheim Soloists with their frequent collaborator, violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter. After September 11, Mutter — and who can blame her for it? — was afraid to travel between American airports and withdrew from her commitments. Instead of canceling their American tour altogether, the chamber orchestra from Norway found a replacement violinist, who took over the large part of Mutter's scheduled repertoire. So it was that San Diego music lovers with tickets to the Trondheim concert found themselves listening to Joshua Bell.

Considering Bell's professional stature and the way he played, few members of the audience can have regretted the change. Mutter is a fine artist, but Bell is something special — and the qualities that make him special were fully in evidence at the Civic Theatre. The one change he made in Mutter's program was to drop her orchestrated version of Tartini's "Devil's Trill" Sonata (in the old-fashioned, souped-up, gaudily romanticized interpretation she is fond of, as though the Tartini work had been composed by Wieniawski), and to substitute a masterpiece of the violin literature that most listeners had probably never heard (or heard of). This was one of the six Sonatas for unaccompanied violin by the famous Belgian virtuoso, Eugène Ysaÿe. Ysaÿe's accomplishment in these works (which date from the early 1920s) cannot be exaggerated. He composed the only latter-day successors of Bach's contributions to the genre that can be unashamedly compared to their superlative models.

Technically, the Ysaÿe Sonatas are quite as demanding and dazzling as the Bach Sonatas and Partitas, and Bell — with his superbintonation, thrilling agility, and confident mastery of the most complex double-stopping — was just the person to overcome the music's formidable challenges. (The breathtaking recording by Oscar Shumsky equals Bell's brilliance but does not surpass it.) But Ysaÿe was not a mere Bach imitator (as Max Reger was in his rigorously academic solo Sonatas, Opus 91). He had his own ripe, romantic things to say, his own daring experiments with harmony and texture, his own authoritative sense of the thing modern fiddlers can do with their instruments to express thoughts and feelings quite outside Bach's sphere. He dedicated each of the six Sonatas to a great contemporary violinist, trying to capture something of each artist's musical personality (the one Bell played — No. 3, in D Minor — embodies the Romanian gypsy spirit of Georges Enesco, and the other dedications included Joseph Szigeti, Jacques Thibaud, and Fritz Kreisler).

The Sonatas are not just occasions for virtuosic display; they are pieces of real music, imaginative, impassioned, and rich in invention. It was this aspect that Bell brought out so persuasively, seemingly consumed by the meditative and fiery inner life of the music, and single-handedly (actually, he used both hands), creating a world of sound that filled the auditorium and mesmerized his listeners.

Bell's other contribution to the program was to take Mutter's place as soloist in Vivaldi's "Four Seasons," the four concertos of which occupied the entire second half of the program. Who wants to hear this work again? Everybody plays it, over and over. There are close to a hundred CDs of it available, on modern instruments, on period instruments, on synthesizers, arranged for guitar quartet, you name it — as though the red-haired priest had written nothing else (in fact, he composed more than 500 wonderful concertos for various instruments). Only last summer, San Diegans heard "The Four Seasons" at Summerfest, in intensely exciting readings by four first-rate violinists and an amazing ad hoc orchestra. Isn't enough enough?

Well, no — as Bell proved. Unlikely as it seems, he played this overly familiar music (with which he had not been associated before) in a way that made it sound incredibly fresh and interesting.

Joshua Bell

Trondheim Soloists; Joshua Bell, violin
Civic Theatre (La Jolla Chamber Music Society)

Grieg, Zwei Nordeutsche Weisen, Opus 63; Bjørkland, Sarek; Kilar, Oraway; Ysaÿe, Sonata No. 3 in D Minor, Opus 27 ("Ballade"); Vivaldi, The Four Seasons, Opus 8, Nos. 1-4.

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EOE. M/F/V/D
Bell’s style was far more in keeping with Baroque practice than Mutter’s would have been, but that was nothing but the framework for this fascinating performance. Disposing of a remarkable array of tone-colors and varied articulations, again and again the violinist threw an unexpected light on passages one thought one knew by heart. Without any disturbing eccentricities but with persistent originality, he underlined the picturesque elements of these depictions of the countryside and its inhabitants; yet at the same time he made one powerfully aware of the music’s formal shape, and of how the tonal representations of dance and dance and hunt and storm contributed to the overall architecture of each movement. His command of the music, at every level (including the solo part’s sizzling virtuosity), was such that the most blasé listener’s mind was not allowed to wander for an instant. This was not a “Four Seasons" that one would file away in memory among so many others and rapidly forget.

Bell’s command extended to the orchestra, which from first to last was electrified by his assertive leadership. He may have come in at the last moment, but there could be no doubt that he had taken over: this was his “Four Seasons," and the Stradivari soloists sounded notably different from what their Deutch Grammophon recording of the work with Anne-Sophie Mutter might have led one to expect (the CD also includes the “Devil’s Trill”). I do think it necessary to add that at times they seemed a bit over-whelmed, for although this ensemble of young musicians is peppy, enthusiastic, and highly professional, they by no means match the refinement and subtlety (or the technical panache) of the concert world’s established chamber orchestras.

Their deficiencies were more in evidence during the first half of the program, which included some rather negligible music for string orchestra by Grieg, Terje Jørkland (who?), and Wojciech Kilar (who?). The leader here was concertmaster Bjarne Fiskum, who founded the Trondheim Soloists in 1988, and whose amiable conducting was unable to infuse much life into the pallid Grieg or the pallid pseudo-Grieg Jørkland. Ki-lar’s Orawa (1986), with its folkish ostinatos and mechanically frenzied, repetitive rhythms, had a certain attractive vivacity in a John Adams vein, but its attractions did not survive its length. Kilar is a Polish composer, born in 1922, whose work may you know (more or less unconsciously) from the background music to the film Bram Stoker’s Dracula. The writer for Grove’s Encyclo-
pedia scarcely disignifies his editorial bias when he comments that Kilar’s recent concert pieces are “variously regarded as sprightily kinetic, natively de-votional, or intuitively postmodern." "Nuff said.

CLASSICAL LISTINGS

HOW TO SEND US YOUR LISTING: Contributions must be received by 5 p.m. Friday the week prior to publication for consideration. Do not phone. Send a complete description of the event, including the date, time, cost, the pregis address where it is to be held (including neighborhood), a contact phone number (including area code), and a phone number for public information to READER CLASSICAL MUSIC, Box 85080, San Diego CA 92138-5830. Or fax to 619-881-2801. You may also submit information online at www.SanDiegoReader.com by clicking on the events section.

"Music Inspired by the Dance" may be enjoyed when Scott Pratt presents a piano concert for the Fuucnido Li-bary’s First Thursday series tonight, January 3. The music begins at 7 p.m. in the Terrace Room of the li-brary (239 South Kalmar Street). Free. 760-839-4239 (EXT 673).

“The Joy of Beethoven” will be celebrated in a piano recital at the Balboa Park branch of the library (1370 Park Boulevard). Free. 619-231-6100 ext. 216.

"Salute to Vienna," a re-creation of Vienna’s famous New Year’s con-cert, will be held on Friday, Jan-uary 4. The event features the Strauss Symphony of America led by Manuel Hernandez Silva, joined by soprano Heleno Holl and tenor Cons Augusto Guiterrez and dancers from the Hungarian National Ballet. The concert begins at 8 p.m. at Copley Symphony Hall (750 B Street). Tickets range from $35 to $75, available by calling 619-235-0894 and through Ticketmaster (619-236-5780. For more information, please call 619-236-5780. (DOWNTOWN)

"Venetian—Glass and Design" at the Mingei International Museum closes with a finale on January 15, January 5. A concert of piano interpre-tations of the exhibition will be per-formed by Bryan Verhoye, followed by an illustrated lecture by world-renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly at 5:45 p.m. Chihuly will sign books during a reception after the talk. Tickets are $50 general. For reservations, call 619-239-0003 x116. (BALBOA PARK)

St. Cecilia Evensong, the men’s and girls’ St. Cecilia Choir sing evensong at Saint Paul’s Cathedral on Sunday, January 14. A special Evensong service, using the Charles Villiers Stanford b-flat office music and the Felix Mendelssohn anthem "Thou Shalt Be A Star," will be sung in the cathedral at 2728 Sixth Avenue (at Fifth and Nutmeg). An offering will be received. Call 619-298-7261 for details. (MONTON)

Works by English, Italian, and French Renaissance composers may be heard, along with contemporary works of minimalism, when cellist Charles Curtis performs on Sunday, January 6. The concert starts at 2:30 p.m. in the third-floor auditorium at the San Diego Public Library (820 E. Street). Call 619-236-5780 for information. Free. (DOWNTOWN)

Guest Organist Jared Jacobsen presents a concert on Sunday, January 6, beginning at 2 p.m., in the Spreckels Organ Pavilion. For further information, dial 619-702-8138. Free. (BALBOA PARK)

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Wednesday, January 16, 2002, 7 pm

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Information: call 858-534-1704 or visit website: http://provost.ucsd.edu/warrenlaw
First Sunday Celebration, head to Gallery 160 at the Spanish Village Art Center for an opening reception for "I Happy Nude Year" on Sunday, January 6, for artists Susan E. Boden, Gloria Cassady, and Carol Foster at 4 p.m. Regular gallery hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 619-702-7007 or 619-567-0620. [End note]

"Tijana 1964: Una Visión Fotográfica e Histórica/A Photographic and Historical View" by Harry Crosby is on exhibit through January at Mecumena Books and Gallery. "Tijana 1964" is a collection of photographs allowing viewers to peek into a Tijana that "has all but faded away." The reception — dated for next Thursday, January 10, at 7 p.m. — includes a reading by Luis Humberto Cruzthirdate.

Find the gallery at 289 3rd Avenue; 619-426-1283. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. [End note]

Dazzling images of the earth, the planets and moons, distant galaxies, supernovae, and stellar nurseries. "To the Moon and Beyond: Astronomers and Photographers Explore the Heavens" features more than 75 photographs, ranging in date from the 1969 Apollo 11 mission to more recent images from ground-based observatories and orbiting spacecraft.)

The exhibit includes a selection of 99 large-scale black-and-white and color digital photographs from San Francisco artist Michael Light's book Full Moon: Apollo Mission Photographs of the Lunar Landscape. The works of astrophotographers David Malin (View of the Universe) are also represented in this show.

Our natural world, the space was shaped by popular culture beginning before Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the moon. More than 100 examples of pop culture's most interesting representations of outer space and space toys are gathered in Blast Off! Space Toys and the American Imagination. The toys, made between the 1930s and 1960s (the year of the first moon landing), reflect America's fascination with space travel and exploration. Both exhibitions close on Sunday, January 13.

The first sculptural installations in the ongoing "Public Projects" series are by San Diego Kenneth Capp. The 20 metal sculptures can be viewed through Sunday, March 10, sited by the artist and the museum curator around the center and in adjacent Grape Day Park. This is one of the largest displays of Capp's minimalist works.

The museum is located at 340 North Euclid Boulevard. For information, call 760-839-4120.

Mingei International Museum of Folk Art, "Venini — Glass and Design in a World Perspective" centers on the work of the Venini factory in Venice. The exhibition also contains art glass by contemporary artists and by Louis Comfort Tiffany, as well as examples of ancient Egyptian, pre-Roman, Roman, and Islamic glass. Art glass by Benjamin Moore, Marvin Lipofsky, and Dale Chihuly, all of whom have worked at the Venini factory, are also included in the show, which closes on Sunday, January 6.

The James L. Geives Collection is a unique assembly of more than 230 pre-Columbian objects dating from the First Century to about 1500 A.D. Primarily fashioned from clay, the collection also includes works in stone, metal, and fiber depicting fish and other sea life as well as fishermen. Many of the forms are musical instruments. Pre-Columbian Art — Marine Animal Forms continues through Sunday, March 10.

The Mingei is located on the square with the San Diego Museum of Art and the Timken Museum of Art. For additional information, call 619-239-0003.

Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, entering its 10th year, offers a lack of controversy; contemporary art is more diverse than ever before. Newly accessible information and computerized inventory and exhibition control systems have made it easier to handle the vast number of works, 10,000 objects in 400 exhibitions. The museum has added to its permanent collection over the last decade. Approximately 40 new objects, sculptures, photographs, installations, and videotapes trace the museum's engagement with the art of our time in the exhibit.

A special selection of works from the permanent collection by artists featured in UCSD's Stuart Collection are on view in "Cross References: Celebrating the Stuart Collection at 10." Celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, the Stuart Collection is a renowned group of 15 site-specific, commissioned works of public art located on the UCSD campus.

Both shows close on Sunday, January 13. Find the museum at 700 Prospect Street, 858-454-3541.

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Tinkum Museum of Art, "Choices and Inspirations: The Temptation of Saint Anthony" is an intriguing exhibition exploring how a work of art is brought into being. The exhibit traces the specific creative influences on 167th-Century Venetian painter Giovanni Savoldo's Temptation of Saint Anthony, a painting in the museum's permanent collection. Savoldo's painting is contrasted with Dutch master Hieronymus Bosch's three-panel Last Judgment, on loan from the Groeningemuseum in Bruges, Belgium. The show opens through Sunday, March 31.

The museum's permanent collection includes European masters, 17th-Century American paintings, and Russian icons. For information, call 619-239-5548.
San Diego Reader- Theatrical Listings

Theater listings and commentary are by Jeff Smith. Information is accurate according to material given us, but it is always wise to phone the theater for any last-minute changes and to inquire about ticket availability. Many theaters offer discounts to students, senior citizens, and the military. Ask at the box office.

Carol: A Christmas Story

The new Women’s Repertory Theatre opened its doors with a funny feminist take on Dickens’ familiar tale. Like old Ebenezer, Carol Scroggins is a self-centered scoundrel in the music business with mammoth control issues and a permanent storm cloud above her head. Her mother died a week ago, but was she the boogy-eyed twin? Carol remembers, or a far gentler soul? Three ghosts — part scary, part Keystone Kop — point the way (typical of the show’s satirical humor) when they arrive, one orders another to “puss” her. Also, Carol tells the dark-robed Ghost of the Future to stand taller. “For all those people who don’t believe in ghosts, here’s one to make your horror stories come true,” the show’s director says. The show features Helen Lesnick as Carol, Katie Schatz as Emily, and Diane Pacheco as Missasting. Another standout is the music, with songs by Robert Laban.

Comedy Codependents

The Improv comedy troupe performs the first Friday of every month at the Creativity Centre in Normal Heights. Call for information.

Cabrillo Dinner Theatre

Staged dinner theatre show takes place at Camps Hill. Call for information.

Chalk It Up to Murder

In HIT Productions newest mystery dinner-theater show, Texas Ranger Stry Montana must find the truth. But Stry’s life is in danger. Call for information.

Heaven Rocks

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Joey and Maria's Comedy Italian Wedding
The Caly Theater hosts "not-so-ordinary interactive dinner theater," as Joey and Maria tie the knot. CULY THEATER, 3615 WEST SEVENTH AVENUE, DOWNTOWN. OPENENDED RUN. FOR INFORMATION CALL 800-344-JOIE.

Joey and Maria's 25th Anniversary Party
Dillstar Productions presents a sequel to its interactive dinner theater show. Joey and Maria's Comedy Italian Wedding... (Note: The show plays one Friday a month.) CULY THEATER, 3615 WEST SEVENTH, DOWNTOWN. OPENENDED RUN, FRIDAY AT 7:30 P.M. FOR INFORMATION CALL 800-344-JOIE.

Karen Finley: Shut Up and Love Me
For two nights only, Karen Finley performs her unapologetic look at "dysfunctional companionship and psychological lust." SUSHI PERFORMANCE & VISUAL ART, SATURDAY, JANUARY 5, AND SUNDAY, JANUARY 6, AT 8:00 P.M.

National Comedy Theatre
ComedySportz changed its name, but its methods (and madness) remain the same. Improvisational comedy, making up funny stuff on the spot, is difficult enough. Years ago, however, Keith Johnstone thought it'd be more exciting if done competitively. He got the idea from pro wrestling ("Where Terrible Turks mangled defrocked Priests, while mums and dads yelled insults and grannies waved their handbags"). National Comedy Theatre, an offshoot of Johnstone's TheatreSports (artistic director Gary Kramer says the two compare like "rugby and American football"). resembles an athletic event more than an improv. Teams wear uniforms and compete on ActoTurf. The night I caught the show, three San Diego comedians played a "challenging match" against players from the San Jose franchise. Using suggestions from the audience, they played "Emotional Sympathy," "Shakespeare," "Blind Line," and "Freeze Tag,", with judges awarding points to the best scenes.

The Who's Tommy
Klunkers and groaners got boosed; quick wit, rewarded (one of the most refreshing parts of the contest: people acknowledged failure, abundantly, then forged it). It made for a lively, often quite funny, evening. And Gary Kramer is one talented comedian. Worth a try.

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Worth a try.
REHEARSAL ROOM THEATRE, MARYLAND HOTEL, 646 4TH STREET, DOWN TOWN, FRIDAYS AT 8:00 p.m. FOR INFORMATION CALL 619-695-SHOW.

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The Reader offers $25 for news tips published in Blurt. Call us at 619-235-3000, ext. 456, or e-mail your tip to chickens@ix.netcom.com

"It was radio at its best," said Matty Keating about his impromptu goodbye to listeners on 92/1 at 2 in the morning, Sunday, shift at 92/1.

"I snapped," Keating admitted. "I played Velvet Underground and Sonic Youth... I also played stuff that was not exactly FCC friendly."

On Sunday after his show, Keating was visited at his home by Halloran, who demanded his station key

that's the end of the story."

"Mike kept saying, 'Your career is over,' " said Matty Keating. "I decided to break the format and quit, and

and a set of headphones he said Keating stole.

"My roommate let him in because he thought he was a friend. How would you feel if your ex-employer came over to your place of residence uninvited and threatened you? He said he would have me arrested for grand theft. My roommate heard everything."

"Matty is unfortunately disillusioned with the whole radio business," said Halloran. "Matty decided to break the format and quit, and

school kids doing the hustle."

"The kids would wear their fancy shirts and Angel Flight pants and dance to the hits," Kelly recalls. "I remember there was one guy with a really big Afro. We had dance contests where we made a half circle [around the camera]. We'd play 'Brick House,' and I would pull out a girl and then pull out a boy. They'd dance for a while, then we'd get a new couple. We had prizes for the best couple. The boy would win a tuxedo. I don't remember what the girl won."

Kelly, who grew up in San Diego, said he sat in the audience at San Diego's first American Bandstand-style show called TV Dance time.

"They shot it in the same third-floor studio where Regis Philbin did his 'local variety and talk' show. It was at the old Channel 8 building at Fifth and Ash. I think it was 1963. Rosie and the Originals would come in and lip-synch 'Angel Baby.' The host was Bob Howar. He was a Channel 8 staff announcer. Instead of using a radio DJ, they used an in-house guy."

Jacobs said he and Channel 6 may eventually produce a local dance show in addition to Fox Rox. "We would start it out as a segment and branch out from there." But Jacobs admitted dance shows shot on location can be difficult.

"A lot of clubs don't allow [TV cameras] shooting during regular business hours. They might get swarmed with people they may not want. Plus there's the alcohol side of it. If you

December 16. Keating broke format and played songs with off-color lyrics and put listeners on the air who used the F-word. "The phones rang off the hook. But can you believe no one came by to yank me off the air?"

Keating worked at 91X as a DJ for four years. Shortly after 92/1 signed on in May of last year, program director Mike Halloran convinced him to leave 91X for 92/1. Two months ago Keating was moved to a less desirable overnight/weekend

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go somewhere like on the beach, that requires generators and big crews and high-


dollar budgets, and we just don’t have that right now.”

“I want Fox Rox to be an
the Siskel and Ebert of rock and roll,” said host Troy Johnson.

“I wanna have local celebs
play rock critic for a day... I’d like to have Doug Flutie
giving his opinion of the new Nine Inch Nails live disc.”

I note to producer Jacobs that San Diego is taking a
giant step forward since L.A.
doesn’t even have its own
local TV rock show.

Who knows. Someday
we might be syndicated.”

— Ken Leighton

Howard Stern recently
made fun of Chubby Checker
because Checker’s been on
a campaign to try and get
inducted into the Rock 'n'
Roll Hall of Fame. (Checker
is also demanding a statue of
himself.) But Stern hasn’t
mentioned Checker’s “beef
against” that Checker is
taking to grocery stores
across the nation.

On November 19, 2001,
Judi and John Donovan were
strolling through the Longs
Drugs store in Vista and
thought they heard a
customer say Chubby
Checker was there. Sure
enough, he was at a table
signing autographs and
Taking
pictures with
shoppers. He
was
promoting
his
“Chubby
Checker
beef jerky.”

Judi got a signed pic-
ture and told him she loved
“The Twist.”

Checker did not write
his biggest hit. It was written by Hank Ballard and the
Midnighters. According to
the Associated Press,
“Checker was born Ernest
Evans in Andrews, S.C., and
grew up in Philadelphia. He
was tagged with the
nickname ‘Chubby’ as a
adolescent. Dick Clark’s wife
later suggested the name
‘Checker’ because of his
resemblance to Fats
Domino.”

“Checker debuted ‘The Twist’”
writes the AP, “in
August 1960. The following
month, the song had topped
the charts, eventually selling
more than a million copies.
His 1962 release of ‘The
Twist’ became the only single
to hit No. 1 on U.S. charts on
two separate occasions. He
hit the Top 40 again with a
rap version of ‘The Twist’ in
1988.”

At the drug store, there
was a list of all the Longs
CHUBBY CHECKER HAWKS JERKY
stores at which Checker
would be appearing. The one
in Vista was the last on his
list. As Judi was leaving, she
asked him if he was going
to buy any jerky. He said $1.99
for one pack. She said later,
“There were different kinds.
I got what I thought was ‘Hot
Twist,’ but I’m not
positive on that name... It
was spicy.”

— Josh Board

NINE YEARS AGO
singer/songwriter John
Katchur made a huge PR
splash with “Mercy Road,”
the song that told of the
murder of college student
Kara Knot at the hands of
CHP officer Craig Peyer.

Since then Katchur has
produced his own albums
and played with the acoustic-
based Redwoods, but it’s his
golden touch as a guitar
teacher that may get him the
most recognition: two of his
students got major-label
deals. Katchur helped
Jewel during her San Diego
coffeehouse days. Anna Troy,
who was recently signed to
Elektra with her sister Linda-
sey, was also coached by
Katchur.

“Want to be successful in
the industry today you have to
be so much more than a
musician. You have to be a finan-
cial wizard and super-
model.”

Seven-year San Diego
coffeehouse regular, Katchur
would occasionally open for
big names like Stephen Stills.
Last year Katchur, 32, and his
wife Margaret, 27, dropped out
of the local music scene.
“We went to New
Zealand for six months... It
was there we ran out of money.
I had my guitar and Margaret
had a puppet. We started
busking,” Katchur said
to make up for the
apartment

Margaret Katchur and her
puppets appear 3:30 p.m.
Sunday at Gelato Vero in
Mission Hills. Admission is $2.

— Ken Leighton

“made a shot at having
a totally natural birth,” but it
wasn’t in the cards,” says
Cindy Lee Berryhill, describ-
ing the 30 hours of labor that
brought Alexander Berryhill-
Williams to town October

Berryhill, listed in the
Trouser Press Guide to ‘00
as a “rock as a
two 1980s
rule, as
always bore a
broad
agenda that
could be achieved
with a single
guitar,” is also
known locally for her
Java Joe’s perfor-
ance and was at the helm of the “anti-
folk” movement in New York City in the late 80s. Her CD
Garage Orchestra in 1994
received three and a half stars
out of five in Rolling Stone.

The new record is the result
of Berryhill’s reconciliation
with author Paul Williams
of Cradduck/Nimble. Married
in 1997, the couple split in the
fall of 1999. Berryhill had
been living in Venice Beach,
in “the haunted house of the
block,” working for Lookout
Management, a company that
manages Neil Young. She has
since moved back to
Encinitas.

Berryhill says the birthing
experiences reminiscent of a
ritual undertaken by some
Native American friends she
met while living in Taos, New
Mexico, several years ago.

“[Young men] take these
eagle claws and hook them
into their chest, attach them
to some kind of rope, and
hang by their skin from a
tree. They endure it for a

BERRYHILL BEARS FRUIT

couple of days. Attendees
pour water in their mouths,
but they have no food. It’s
terrible and frightening, but
one of the most important
achievements in their lives.
I equate labor to that. It’s an
altered state. You just zone
out... I had to get a little bit
of morphine to rest for a
couple hours.”

According to Berryhill,
Alexander has yet to warm up
to his mother’s work. “I
started playing on the piano
and he started sobbing... It’s
difficult for him, but I have
this little creature I have
to assist for years. And you
know it’s true when they
first get here, they look
like aliens.”

— Randy Hoffman
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"My favorite song is...that's a good question."

This is the second part of a two-part story on 50 homeless people who shared their listening preferences:

26. **Huxton Lee Berry**, 57, Lives in Pacific Beach. Kansas native. Homeless for 25 years. "I listen to KGB, one-oh-one, six-four-six! That’s it! Cookie ‘Chain saw’ Randolph is my guy. My favorite song is by Alison Krauss and Union Station, called ‘Lucky Man.’ I don’t really have a favorite performer, but Frank Sinatra wasn’t too bad. I got a Walkman, and I spend ten bucks a month anyway on batteries."

27. **Ira Williams**, 44. Lives in East Village. New Jersey native. Homeless for two months. "I like the jazz station out of City College, KSDS, 88.3. I don’t have any DJs or songs that are favorites, but my favorite artist is Charlie Parker. I listen on a Walkman. I spend probably 12, 14 bucks on batteries a month."

28. **Homer Williams**, 42. Lives at St. Vincent de Paul Village. San Diego native. Lived in van until forced to sell it. "I like KPRI if it’s still...no, KGB is my station. I like Chainsaw. My favorite song is by the Grateful Dead, ‘We Will Survive.’ My favorite artist is the Police. I used to listen to the radio in my van."

29. **Star Weiler**, 34. Lives downtown. New York native. Homeless for one year. "I listen to 105.3. I don’t know about the DJs, I’m neutral. I like Chainsaw on KGB. My favorite song is ‘Legs’ by ZZ Top, and my favorite artist is Michael Jackson, but I’ve got a Walkman, and it takes about 10 hits in batteries every month."


31. **Viceto Castro-Lopez**, 69. Lives downtown. Merced native. Homeless for ten years. "I listen to KQFM, and I like Ted Leitner. My favorite song is ‘Yesterday’ by the Beatles. They’re my favorite performing artists, but there’s only two left. I use this small two-battery radio that fits in my shirt pocket. I spend about one dollar a month on batteries."

32. **Edward Powell**, 32. Just obtained housing in Chula Vista, San Diego native. Was homeless for one week. "Right now I like 95.7. My favorite DJ is Steve West. He’s affiliated with 91X, but now he’s full time on 95.7. I have so many favorite songs — ‘Rock Lobster’ by the B-52’s. They’re my favorite artist — why not? I just use a small transistor radio with three double-A batteries. I walkin’ around with it. I spend about 15 bucks every month on batteries."

33. **Stacy Burns**, 51. Lives in South Bay, Texas native. Homeless for seven weeks. "In San Diego I listen to KGB. I have no idea who the DJs are. My favorite song is ‘Layla.’ My favorite performer are the Beatles and Stones. Equipment depends upon where I am and what I can listen to. I don’t own a radio right now."

34. **Ramon Manuel**, would not disclose age. Lives downtown. Colorado native. Homeless for four years. "I like Magic 92. I don’t really know any DJs. My favorite song is...that’s a good question. I listen them all, so they’re all good to me. I like Ice-T. I have one of those old-time digital radios. I don’t spend money on batteries, I just plug it in!"
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35. **Jim Woods**, 46. Just obtained housing in Sherman Heights. San Diego native. Was homeless for four years. "Uhm... I listen to 91X. I don’t listen to the DJs — I just like the sound of the music. I don’t have any particular favorite song, but I still like The Beatles. I use a cheap old clock radio now. I spend about three bucks every month for batteries.

36. **Michael Bohner**, 29. Lives downtown. Pennsylvania native. Homeless for six months. "I listen to 101 KGB, Dave, Shelly and Chainsaw. I don’t particularly have a favorite song, but I really like George Harrison. I have a little boom box. I spend about nine dollars monthly on batteries.

37. **Thia Stephenson**, 38. Lives in East Village. North Carolina native. Homeless for six months: "I like KCCY in Colorado. I don’t know any San Diego stations. I like to listen to country and western, but I don’t have a favorite DJ, I don’t really have a favorite song, but my favorite performer is Olivia Newton-John. I don’t have a radio, so I spend nothing on batteries.

38. **Malachi De Jesus**, 27. Lives in East Village. Los Angeles native. Homeless for four years. "I listen to Jammin’ 290. My favorite DJ is Brandy. I like the song "Where Are We Now?" by DMX, but I have no favorite performing artist. I usually use walkman. For a month, batteries are probably 30 dollars."

39. **David Zuleger**, 27. Lives downtown. Indiana native. Homeless for two months. "I’ve been in town about two days and I like 103.7, the Planet. I don’t have a favorite DJ yet — they’re all pretty good. There is no favorite song, but my favorite performing artist is Pink Floyd. I listen on Sony equipment — a Walkman. I spend about 50 dollars a month on batteries.

40. **Darrick Jackson**, 26. Lives downtown. San Diego native. Homeless for three months. "I like XTRA Sports 690. Music-wise, it’s probably KKYX. I like Sunny West, or is it Pat West in the morning? I would say my favorite song is "Two Occasions" by the Deal. I just use these little headphones that are around my neck. There’s a radio in the headphones. For about four months. I don’t have a favorite song. For a favorite performer, I guess it would be John Lennon. I usually have a Walkman. I probably spend about ten dollars a month for batteries.

41. **Dan Kosar**, 62. Lives in East Village. San Diego native. Homeless for five months. "My favorite radio station is KOCO. At one time, I may have had a favorite DJ, but not currently. I listen to Dennis Prager’s talk show quite a bit. I really don’t have a favorite song. For a favorite performer, I guess it would be John Lennon. I usually have a Walkman. I probably spend about ten dollars a month for batteries."

42. **Joe Butler**, 43. Lives downtown. San Diego native. Homeless for two months. "I listen to KFRC, 106 three. I like all the DJs, I guess. My favorite song is "In the End" by Linkin Park. They’re my favorite performing artists. I listen on a portable CD player and a portable Walkman. I spend about 20 dollars a month on batteries — that’s on the average."

43. **Gerald Koch**, 44. Lives downtown. Pennsylvania native. Homeless for five months. "I listen to KFRC, 106 three. I like all the DJs, I guess. My favorite song is "In the End" by Linkin Park. They’re my favorite performing artists. I listen on a portable CD player and a portable Walkman. I spend about 20 dollars a month on batteries — that’s on the average."
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- MARCIA BURL 2/14
- THE SAMPLES 2/15 & 16
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WILD NOTE CHEF

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WILD NOTE CHEF

digital club network

North County Register January 3, 2002
tive. Homeless for five years. "I like Z90. My favorite DJ is most of them. My favorite song is 'Love Me Tender' by Elvis. Elvis is also my favorite recording artist. I had a portable Walkman, but somebody stole it about a week ago. I wasn't spending much for batteries—t I always had a source."

44. David Kline, 49. Lives downtown. San Diego native. Homeless for two months. "It's KGB. Pretty much all the DJs are okay. I don't really have a favorite DJ. My favorite song is 'Stairway to Heaven.' My favorite artist is the Beatles. They should have never broke up. I use a Walkman. It's about 20 bucks for batteries every month."

45. Richard Lalang, 43. Lives downtown. Illinois native. Homeless for four months. "My favorite radio station is 105.3, My favorite DJ is Mikey. The song is 'Let's See... 'The Rooster' by Alice in Chains. My favorite performing artist is Frank Zappa. I use a Walkman with headphones. It costs probably 25 to 30 dollars a month for batteries."


Buddy Holly, but they don't play him on that station. I play whatever I can find. I had a small Audiovox boom box, but it was stolen about three weeks ago. It took eight C batteries, so, at the dollar store, you're looking at probably eight dollars a month."

47. Dolores Shoepman, 25. Lives in East Village. Illinois native. Homeless for ten years. "I have three favorite radio stations: 90.3, 93.3, and 92.5. I don't really know any DJs. I have a lot of favorite songs and they're all by Selena and Santana. I like the Supernatural album by Santana and Como la Flor by Selena. I'm using a Walkman tape player. Yesterday I spent about $5.59 on batteries. I usually listen to CDs, but I can't afford the batteries right now. I probably spend about ten dollars a month on batteries."

48. Reynaldo Gonzales, 62. Lives in East Village. Native of Michoacan, Mexico. Homeless for ten years. "That's easy. My favorite station is KJOE. I like the information about what happens to the country. They know me because they've seen me on television. My favorite song is 'Stand by Me'—the one who sang it a long time ago. I don't have a favorite performer right now. I love music, and you have to think about the music to know what the music is saying to you. I have a Sports Walkman radio. Batteries? I never pay any attention to that. You know the news, then you know what you need. Power is power."

49. Dale Blanchard, 51. Lives downtown. Montana native. Homeless for nine years. "I listen to a lot of 'em when I have a radio. Every time I get one it seems to get stolen. Right now I don't have a radio. I like soft rock—KHYT. I don't have a favorite DJ, but my favorite song is 'Sentimental Old You'—I'm not sure who sings it. John Lennon was my favorite performer. I like using a small Sony Walkman. I usually find my batteries on the street, and if they work, they work!"

50. Mike Jones, a.k.a. "Horsehoe," 42. Lives in Mid- dletown and Little Italy. San Diego native. Homeless for 20 years. "I don't know what the names of stations are. I just like rock and roll. I think it's one hundred and something—101 or 105 maybe? I don't really have any favorite DJ, song, or performer—I just like rock and roll. I have a little Walkman RCA thing I just found. I don't use it that much, so I probably spend about a couple dollars a month on batteries. This is the first month in a long time that I've had a radio."

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**The Casbah**

- **Cocktails * Live Music * $7-10**
- **7201 University Ave * 619.231.9330**

**Thursday, January 3**

- **High on Fire**
- **The Day After**
- **Hoop**

**Friday, January 4**

- **Jivewire**

**Saturday, January 5**

- **Cadillac Tramps**
- **Foxy * Bobbie Trap**

**Sunday, January 6**

- **Soul**

**Monday, January 7**

- **Loudspeaker Showcase**

**Tuesday, January 8**

- **Abandoned Pools**
- **Million Dollar Playboys**

**Wednesday, January 9**

- **Robert**
- **Walter's 20th Congress**
- **Sleepytime Gorilla**
- **Museum**
- **Dodecaphonic**

**Thursday, January 10**

- **Calexico**
- **The Black Heart Procession**
- **The Handsome Family**

**Friday, January 11**

- **No Knife**
- **Special Goodness**

**Saturday, January 12**

- **The Reel**
- **FlUX**
- **Rochele, Rochele**
- **Radio Wendi**
- **China Clippings**

**Sunday, January 13**

- **Congregation**
- **DJ * Drum 'N' Bass**

**Monday, January 14**

- **Dan & Eddie**
- **Supersuckers**
- **Acoustic Showcase**

**Tuesday, January 15**

- **Mother Hips**
- **The Breeders**

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- **Underground Lounge House**
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- **Club Banana/R&B/Nyce Hop**

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- **East End of Mission Valley Mall, next to Robinsons-May**

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**Website:** [www.jukejointcafe.com](http://www.jukejointcafe.com)
Carnal Dreamer

One gets the sense of floating in a pool of sound, all "soft Septembers and blanching Mays."

I don't know that anyone still composes what are called symphonic or tone poems. The genre seems to have begun with the late Romanticists: Liszt, Tchaikovsky, Smetana, Saint-Saëns, Franck. Richard Strauss would use the term Tondichtung for his works of such as Don Juan, which translates sometimes as "tone poem" but perhaps closer to the mark is "sound poem." As late as 1972, the British composer Harrison Birtwistle composed his symphonic poem The Triumph of Time, but by the 1980s the genre had fairly well decayed into picturesque film scores, often quite lovely, and some of them by series composers of symphonic poems like Arnold Bax and Ralph Vaughan Williams, two English composers. There are a number of stunning English film scores, primarily from the '40s. In fact, if you have never heard Frederick Delius before, his music may well sound to you like the music of a symphony orchestra, but that is putting the cart before the horse. There was not such a thing as a film score when Delius composed his master works, and it is Delius who took the symphonic poem to its highest place in the history of music.

The life of Frederick Delius will be of interest even to those who don't cotton to his music, in part because the life differs from what one's expectations might be. Delius (1862–1934) was born in Bradford, England, to German parents. He was fortunate in birth as his family was both musical and prosperous. Music was always encouraged in the Delius household, and there were frequent musical soirees, where musicians passing through town would play. Fritz (Delius) later changed his name to Frederick) learned to play piano, then violin, both very early on. Delius's father, who was in the wool trade, wanted Fritz to learn and continue the business. Fritz wasn't too excited about that prospect (sound familiar?) and finally prevailed on the old man to back him as an orange planter in Florida. Delius Sr. bought a large orange farm on St. John's River near the city of Jacksonville. Fritz was to go nowhere with the orange-growing business, but Solana Grove, the name of the farm, proved to be the most significant move of the young composer's life. Because it was here that the 22-year-old from Yorkshire heard the black farm workers singing after the evening meal in four-part harmony, probably spirituals, and became mesmerized. One would be hard-pressed to find the influence of Delius's mature work, but something he heard lodged very deeply in his musical psyche. It was also during this time that he received formal training in musical theory from a local organist named Thomas F. Ward. After six months of study, Delius had a piano moved to the farm and was on his way. In 1886 Delius left Florida and enrolled in the Leipzig Conservatorium, to his father's displeasure, with his father's help. Delius wasn't especially happy with the formal training regimen, but it was here that he made the most significant musical friendship of his life, with the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg. Grieg's intensely lyric Romanticism, in miniature form, would have made a profound impression on Delius, as would Grieg's use of the folk song to conjure feelings of the primitive countryside, with its raptures and exquisitiness.

The two other composers who would most influence Delius would be Chopin and Wagner: From Wagner he would have picked up a new vocabulary of orchestral color, with its free use of chromaticism that liberated harmonies from traditional tonality. Likewise from Wagner he would have taken his model for the tone poem, as would Richard Strauss. A symphonic or tone poem, at least in the work of Strauss and Delius, incorporates a leading motive, with programmatic descriptions of scenes. Both composers would pick up from Wagner the concept of continuous melody, in which is contained a blend of diatonic and chromatic tones that lend a fluidity and uncertainty to the music, which suit the atmospheric, shimmering effects of Delius, where melodies dissolve into the harmonies, only to later reappear, and where the music's tonal center becomes difficult to identify. The tone poem is a music of atmosphere, in which harmonic variation replaces linear, thematic development. There is no classical structure in the sense of theme, contrast, development, synthesis. Rhythm plays only the most tangential role, and counterpoint almost none whatsoever. From Chopin and Grieg, Delius would learn to use harmony as a fluid medium and in that fashion enhance his melodic line. One gets, with Delius, the sense of floating in a pool of sound, all "soft Septembers and blanching Mays."

No composer sounds more English, to my ears, than Delius, with his evocations of the English countryside in places like "Brigg Fair," "In a Summer Garden," "On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring," "Summer Night on the River." In fact, you can begin to make out what the composer's up to merely through the titles. But apart from being born and raised in England, there's little English about the man. He considered himself, like his most revered author, Nietzsche, to be a citizen of Europe. Through Grieg, he would fall in love with Norway, but Delius would spend most of his life in Paris and a small village outside it, Grez, owned by his painter-wife Jelka.

While in Paris, Delius would enjoy significant friendships with a remarkable range of artists, including Gauguin, Strindberg, Munch, Busoni, Fauré, Sargent, Ravel, and Rodin. Among younger composers, Delius became attached to the brilliant, eccentric Australian Percy Grainger, to whom Delius dedicated his orchestral rhapsody "Brigg Fair" in 1907. The work was loosely based on Grainger's own choral setting of the traditional folk song. What he admired in Grainger was what Delius admired in Grieg, the intense feeling for nature generated in their work. Of Grainger, Delius wrote: "I consider Percy Grainger the most gifted English composer and the only one who writes English music — and he is an Australian. There is something of the old English robustness and vigor to his music. That part of England which has long ago ceased to exist — or which has emigrated."

Which is of note, because in praising Grainger and listing his virtues, Delius is describing his own oeuvre and his aspirations for it. Which is what artists frequently are doing, without realizing it, in praising the work of a colleague. (Check book-jacket blurbs sometime, and you'll see what I mean.) Delius appears to have been a cultivated character, and in temperament not at all sassy or gassy or delicate. Rather, he appears to have been a carnal, opinionated, sardonic man, good fun and to the point. He was never shy about his musical prejudices. He actively disliked Mozart, Haydn, Schumann, and Berlioz. He didn't much care for Beethoven either and disliked what he called the "Testonic sentimentality" of German Romanticism.

Nor did he care for Richard Strauss, whom I would have thought was a kindred composer, likewise Mahler, whom Delius considered long-winded and pretentious. I would have figured Mahler's post-Wagnerian development of orchestral color and chromaticism would have interested Delius. As I would have guessed Debussy's work for similar reasons, but apart from Debussy's early work like "Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune" and the opera Pelléas et Mélisande, Delius preferred Ravel. He didn't especially care for what Stravinsky was up to, and he detested what he called "Schoenbergism: the wrong note crote." The music of Delius was largely ignored until the end of his lifetime, when his music was championed and performed by the great English conductor Thomas Beecham, but Delius seemed to manage neglect uncommonly well. His work was much esteemed by musical contemporaries, and though it may sound rather old-fashioned and at times hokey now, it was regarded as highly original and bold earlier in the 20th Century. Though happily married, Delius was a great enthusiast so far as the ladies went and contracted syphilis as a younger man, which left him blind and incapacitated in his later years. Like everything else about the artist, his syphilis doesn't quite jibe with the music, with its powerful emotional evocation of loneliness, wistfulness, dreaminess, and the rest. But he was certainly not the first or last of art's great sensitive souls to get bit.

Delius: Orchestral Works
(Beecham EMI 7243 5 67553 2 1)
CONCERT SOUNDBOARD


SATURDAY

The Cadillac Tramps, Fizzy, and Bowling Trap: The Cobalt, Saturday, January 5, 8:30 p.m., 2501 Center Boulevard, midtown. 619-222-4355 or 619-220-8497.

THE FREE LINE

Electric Palomino: Joe's Inn's Cellar, Friday, January 5, 9 p.m., 1944 9th Avenue, Ocean Beach. 619-522-0356.

WEDNESDAY

Graham Parker & the Figgs: (509) and Frank Black: (534) Holly's Up Town, Wednesday, January 3, 9 p.m., 324 South Cedar Avenue, Solana Beach. 619-481-4440 or 621-220-8497.


EXTENSION 4000

THURSDAY

Merv Dahl: 6th & B, Thursday, January 4, 3:30 p.m., 345 8th Street, downtown. 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Anya Marine: (178) Joe's Inn's Cellar, Thursday, January 4, 9 p.m., 1944 9th Avenue, Ocean Beach. 619-522-0356.

FRIDAY

Gregory Pop: (706) Joe's Inn's Cellar, Friday, January 4, 9 p.m., 1944 9th Avenue, Ocean Beach. 619-522-0356.

JANUARY

Bryan Adams: (424) 6th & B, Thursday, January 10, 8 p.m., 345 8th Street, downtown. 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Catox: The Black Heart Procession: (179) and the Handsome Family: The Cobalt, Thursday, January 10, 8:30 p.m., 2501 Center Boulevard, midtown. 619-222-4355.

The Blind Boys of Alabama: (494) and the Spirit of the Century Band: Bally's Up Town, Sunday, January 13, 7:30 p.m., 143 South Cedar Avenue, Solana Beach. 619-481-4440 or 619-220-8497.

Consequence: The Cobalt, Sunday, January 13, 8:30 p.m., 2501 Center Boulevard, midtown. 619-222-4355.

Ralph Stanley & the Clinch Mountain Boys and Lightedness: La Paloma, Tuesday, January 15, 7 p.m., 431 South Coast Highway 101, Encinitas. 760-436-7469.

Steve Lavenue and Lydia Garman: East County Performing Arts Center, Monday, January 14, 7 p.m., 11316 East Lake Mead Road, El Cajon. 619-220-8497 or 619-220-8497.


Eric Johnson: (432), Alane Love, Child, and Ellis: 4th & B, Thursday, January 17, 10:30 p.m., 2501 Center Boulevard, midtown. 619-222-4355.

The Beacon Vista Social Club presents Orquesta Robin Berrera: (720) with special guest Ruben Gonzalez and featuring Jesus “Agapito” Ramos and Guadalupe Miranda: Circleville Center for the Arts. Thursday, January 17, 8 p.m., 340 N. Escondido Boulevard, Escondido. 858-481-4252 or 619-220-8497.

Seven Nations: Buffalo Joe's, Thursday, January 17, 9 p.m., 400 10th Avenue, Imperial Beach. 619-432-7600.

Concrete Blonde: 4th & B, Friday, January 18, 8 p.m., 345 8th Street, downtown. 619-222-4355 or 619-231-4343.

The Berryhills: The Cobalt, Friday, January 18, 8 p.m., 345 8th Street, downtown. 619-222-4355 or 619-231-4343.

The Dragons: (115) and the Hamptons: The Cobalt, Friday, January 18, 10:30 p.m., 2501 Center Boulevard, midtown. 619-222-4355.

A Night of Dixieland Music: Emilie's Pizza, Friday, January 25, 8 p.m., 904 7th Avenue, downtown. 619-222-4355 or 619-231-4343.

The Watts Prophets: East County Performing Arts Center, Friday, January 25, 7:30 p.m., 270 East Main Street, El Cajon. 619-440-2237 or 619-220-8497.

The Brooklyns Seafront: Sports Arena, Saturday, January 26, 8 p.m., 430 Sports Arena, Bankers Hill. 619-295-0001.

The Licks, Living Legends, and Delfico: 4th & B, Saturday, January 27, 7:30 p.m., Sports Arena, downtown. 619-481-4440.

Wesley Willis: (466) The Cobalt, Sunday, January 27, 8:30 p.m., 2501 Center Boulevard, midtown. 619-232-4355.

Jonathan Brooks: (466) Holly's Up Town, Thursday, January 31, 9 p.m., 324 South Cedar Avenue, Solana Beach. 619-481-4440 or 619-220-8497.

"Jazz at the Athenaeum" with Frank Morgan and Art Hillery: Athenaeum Music and Arts Library, Thursday, January 31, 7:30 p.m., 1000 Wall Street, La Jolla. 858-454-5872.

FEBRUARY

Buddy Gray: (10) and Earl Thomas: (466) 4th & B, Friday, February 1, 8 p.m., 345 8th Street, downtown. 619-220-8497 or 619-231-4343.

Bodie Mood: Rosendahl Auditorium, Friday, February 1, 7:30 p.m., 1700 14th Street, Downtown. 619-544-5872 or 619-220-8497.

Mark Sanders & His Funky Friends, Government Grove: (426), and Fat Found Brown: Cosmic Red Ball, Friday, February 1, 7:30 p.m., 3100 Ocean Front Walk, Mission Beach. 619-488-1200 or 619-220-8497.

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UBERGROUND DANCE CLUBS

If you would like to have your underground dance club or event included, fax information to 619-481-2401, attention Scott Ellis e-mail scott@uberdancer.com, or call 619-235-3000, ext. 261, night or day by 5 p.m., Friday, the week prior to publication. The listings are free.

Aaron Carter (of Circa), Saturday, February 24, 9 p.m. San Diego Sports Arena, 1350 Keland Avenue, San Diego. 619-220-8947.

Chive Fridays, DJs Parallel Mechanics, downtown, 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. 504 Avenue, downtown. 619-321-5483; recorded information, 858-315-1820.


Club Flo: Thursdays, DJs Myke, Jecs, Dari, Mario, Ross, Strick, and guest DJs spin the best of hip-hop and R&B. Woodward Giovannetti. No cover before 10 p.m., 21 and up. The Blue Tattoo, 835 Fifth Avenue, downtown. 619-481-3993; recorded information, 619-333-3500.


Club Pulse: Saturdays, local and nationally known DJs spin the best in house music, hip-hop, R&B, house, and hip-hop. Rooms: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and Rooms: 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. 300 Peace Street, downtown. 619-290-5599 or 619-220-8497.

Echo Fridays, true underground house music in Seger's very outdoor tropical landscaped garden. DJs Maxime and Greg. 9 p.m. to 3 a.m., 21 and up. The Hole, 2820 Lytton Street, La Jolla. 619-424-5947 or 619-290-5599.

Electric Avenue: Wednesdays, mixing progressive house, trance, and jungle. Huge dance floor, upstairs lights, and downstairs lights. 8 p.m. to 2 a.m. and 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. San Marco Boulevard, San Marcos. Info line with directions, 760-822-5500.

Freaks Mondays, weekly residencies Chad Forest, Eric D, and Jere Joseph. No cover before 9 p.m., 21 and up. 504 Avenue, downtown, 379th Fifth Avenue, Hillcrest. 619-294-5802.

GLQ Saturdays, superstar guest DJs, Percussionist Antonio Sacco, and go-go dancers fill the main level with progressive house, '70s and '80s in the Ultra Lounge, R&B, and rap to the Bar. Gallery Bar, on Broadway Street Center, downtown, 619-231-0011. www.uberdancer.com/calendar.html.

Hollywood Star: Fridays, The Turned, hip-hop and R&B. Saturdays, hip-hop and R&B. Sundays, Rock, hip-hop and R&B. 9 p.m. to close. Alibi, Saturdays and Sundays. After Hours, house music, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. 1120 Fifth Avenue (between A and A/B). La Jolla. 619-481-9664.

North County Underground Movement: Tuesdays, DJs Donner, Phil Stuart, T. Jones, Scotty and DJ Lyric D. and guest DJs spin hip-hop, R&B, and Latin music. Classic rock fun. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m. and 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. San Marcos Boulevard, San Marcos. Info line with directions, 760-822-5500.

Pulse Saturdays, local and nationally known DJs spin the best in house music, hip-hop, R&B, house, and hip-hop. Rooms: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. and Rooms: 2 a.m. to 7 a.m. 300 Peace Street, downtown. 619-290-5599 or 619-220-8497.


The Room Thursdays, Club 901 with resident DJ Dave Powell mixing the best of global grooves; guest-list only event (call or e-mail). Fridays, Real Simple, a lounge for the mature lover of house music with resident Dunesy and Jenny Knight. Saturdays, Shadowcast live on stage with Jolla with Euro-Latin rhythms. Il Fornino, 646 Market Street, downtown La Jolla. 858-496-5019. www.thechicoreo.com/shermans.html.

Saturday, Saturdays, Dj Eric Hart, Marc Beauland, and Adam Atman, Dark electro, gothic, darkwave, and industrial, DJs, Shooters, 3135 30th Street, San Diego. 619-574-0744. www.chicoreo.com/saturday.html.

Shells: Saturdays, Thursdays, and Sundays, DJs Carlos and Juan spin salsa, merengue, and characa. Fridays and Saturdays, Perro Jale. '70s to current dance hits. Four Points Hotel/Sherman's, 910 Aero Drive, San Diego. Recorded information. 619-967-9777.

Studio 5th Avenue Fridays, outrageous disco, funk, retro, and glam music; decadent go-go dancers grooving amidst lasers, bubbles, fog and videos; crazy trapper girls, bongo hoops, and weekly balloon drops with prizes. 10 p.m. Lips, 2775 Fifth Avenue, downtown. www.studio5thave.com.

Studio 66: Fridays, resident DJs Jim Bishop, Paula Parente, La Vella Daguerre, Demons, Circa, and Sooter. Three rooms, five floors, and three types of music. 9 p.m. to 3 a.m. 21 and up. Club Montage, 2028 Hancock Street, midtown. 619-294-9500; recorded information, 619-967-7285. www.sfclerk.com/66 квартир.

If you visit the Museum of Jurassic Technology in Culver City, you will never be able to take a museum at face value again. As documented in Lawrence Weschler’s excellent book Mr. Wilson’s Cabinet ofWonder, the museum’s long-fabricated history, and the half-baked science behind most of its bizarre exhibits were created by David Wilson, who isn’t sure anymore where his fictional world ends and the real one begins. And it doesn’t take long inside the museum before you will have the same problem. Afterward, when you visit a supposedly legitimate natural history museum, you will read the very official-looking explanations of exhibits, and you will remember Mr. Wilson and think, “This could all be an elaborate joke.” It’s a disorienting and strangely satisfying feeling.

Visiting the Sleepytime Gorilla Museum can have a similar effect, although it’s a rock band, not an actual museum. But, as the Museum of Jurassic Technology does with museums, Sleepytime Gorilla Museum makes the concept of “rock band” ambiguous. Its music isn’t really rock, as we know it. At times, it uses the goblin vocals and crunching rhythms of death metal, but it never stays in one genre for long. Its complexity calls to mind King Crimson, or some of the weirder acts in prog rock. But the Museum members themselves (some of whom did time in the infamous Bay Area band Idiot Flesh) seem more concerned with guerrilla theater, performance art, and manufacturing their own mythology than with silly things like musical classifications. In fact, they have invented many of the instruments they use, so as not to be bogged down by convention.

Robert Walter’s 20th Congress and Dodecaphonie also perform.

SLEEPYTIME GORILLA MUSEUM, The Casbah, Wednesday, January 5, 8:30 p.m. 619-232-4355, $8.

Performances begin at 7 p.m. Thursday, Rick Ross, jazz, Friday, Triad du Jour, jazz, Saturday, theJustin Brothers, acoustic. Wednesday, Semisi o Falahaka, reggae.

Locals may be interested to know that 92186–5803. Opening concerts, underground club listings, or performances that are not at a club should be directed to 619-235-3000, ext. 261, faxed to 619-235-2400, e-mailed to scotte@adcnc.com.

North County

The Alley, 421 Grand Avenue, Carlsbad. 760-434-1173. Performances are from 9 p.m to 1:30 am. Thursday and Friday, the Rhythm Dogs, pop, jazz, Saturday and Wednesday, the New Bread Band, pop. The Alley Barbecue Restaurant and Bar, corner of Main Street and A Street, Julian. 760-765-9937. Friday and Saturday, live rock and roll.

The Beach House, 2350 South Highway 101, Cardiff. 760-753-1321.

Belly Up Tavern, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-9022. Friday, 9:30 pm, Zzyx-Blues Festival, 9:15 pm, Ellohi Entomol and the Revelations, reggae. Sunday, 9:30 pm, Jerry Garcia and the Grateful Dead.

Beach Crossin’, 390 Grand Avenue, Carlsbad. 760-725-2989. Friday and Saturday, Liquid Blue, pop rock.

The Book Works/Pamplin’s Cafe, Flower Hill Mall, 13 at Via de la Vallee, Del Mar. 858-755-2373. Friday, 8 pm, Jim Eary, acoustic.

Bordera Books and Music, 11160 Rancho Carmel Drive, Carmel Mountain. 858-618-1814. Friday, 8 p.m, Two Vincents, acoustic. Saturday, 8 p.m, Dave Humphries, rock.

Bob’s Whiskey Dive, 301 Point View Way, Oceanbeach. 760-727-2334. Friday, Chapter 13, rock. Saturday, Riff Rock, rock.


Carvers, 11940 Bernardo Plaza Drive, Rancho Bernardo. 858-566-2400. Friday, Triple Shot, rock. Saturday, Night Hawk, classic rock.

Coyote Bar and Grill, 500 Carlsbad Village Drive, Carlsbad. 760-728-4695. Thursday, 6 pm to 10 pm, The Ventilators, rock and blues. Friday, 6 pm to 10 pm. Fish & the Seabirds, surf, blues. Saturday, 8 pm to 10 pm. Ruby & the Red Hat, swingin’ blues.

Sunday, 5 pm to 9 pm, Reggies Smith & Pressed for Time, jazz. Monday, 6 pm to 10 pm, Big Daddy & the Moneyheahs, blue. Wednesday, 6 pm to 10 pm, The Buzzards, rockabilly.

The Del Dios Country Store, 2054 Lake Drive, Escondido. 760-454-7233. Friday and Saturday, Fannoteaux, rock and roll.

Fogerty’s Pub, 1260 West Valley Parkway, Escondido. 760-480-0833. Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Bottomline, classic rock.

Hummers’ Tavern (Carlsbad), 1777 Roosevelt Street, Carlsbad. 760-729-6951. Friday, Beto’s Garage, acoustic. Saturday, the Fat Cats, rock and blues.

I’ma’s, 1234 South Santa Fe Vista. 760-941-4744. Music hours are from 7:30 pm to 10:30 pm. Friday, Sun’s Burn & Billie Fowler, jazz. Saturday, 5 O’Clock Shadow, swing, blues and jazz.

Jo’s Joe’s, 717 North Escondido Boulevard, Escondido, 760-745-7665. Friday and Saturday, live music.

The Kraken, 2531 Old Highway 101. Cardiff. 760-436-6483. Thursday, Jeff Moore & the Witchdoctors, rock. Friday, Street Heart, Saturday, Gear.

L’Auberge Del Mar Resort & Spa, 1540 Camino Del Mar, Del Mar. 858-755-6666. Friday, 7 pm to 10 pm, Holly Hoffman & Friends, jazz.

La Casa del Zorro, 3865 Yaque Pass Road, Borrego Springs. 760-767-5323. Fox Den, Thursday through Saturday, 7 pm to 11 pm, Tony Lesconis/Sunday
Beaches
Blind Melons, 710 Garment Avenue, Pacific Beach, 858-483-7464. Thursday, the Chula Vista Soldier Club, Friday, Fry, Liver and the Mystics, Uncle Joe, and Dear Boys, alternative rock, Saturday, the Joey Brown Band, rock and soul with Herb's Root, Sunday, Cordial, acoustic, Tuesday, Adrian Delgado and the Blue, Happy Endings and Git.

Canoe Bar & Grill, 3105 Ocean Front Walk, Mission Beach, 858-488-1780. Music is rock/alternative unless otherwise noted, Friday, GTRX, Punch, Sunday, 7:30 pm to 1 am, Rick Ross, jazz piano, saxophone, and vocals. Tuesday 9:30 pm to 11:30 pm, Levon's.

Candelabra, 832 Garrent Avenue, Pacific Beach, 858-483-6550, Friday, Glimans, rock.

Manny's Rodeo, at the Catamaran Hotel, 3909 Mission Boulevard, Mission Beach, 858-488-1081. Friday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday, 7:30 pm to 1 am, Rick Ross, jazz piano, saxophone, and vocals. Sunday 9:30 pm to 11:30 pm, Manny's Rodeo.

Pacific Beach Bar & Grill, 360 Garrent Avenue, Pacific Beach, 858-722-7278. Club Trenzas, call club for information.

Shooters Bar and Grill, Rabbitoh Hotel, 3209 Mission Bay Drive, La Jolla, 858-453-5520. Thursday, Saturday, and Saturday, Jack Pollock, piano, Wednesday, live jazz and blues.

The Tavern, 1200 Garrent Avenue, Pacific Beach, 858-482-3736. Monday, Hurricane Jenny, rock, Tuesday, 10 pm, Woxba Bar, acoustic.

Victoria Station Pub, 315 South Highway 101, Solana Beach, 858-481-1950. Saturday, 7 pm to 10 pm, Geese in the Bag, folk, Celtic.

Mocha Marketplace, 1020 West San Marion Boulevard, San Marion, 760-744-2112. Thursday, 5:30 pm to 10:30 pm, Bob Karen, contemporary.

Neiman's Bar and Grill, 300 Carlsbad Village Drive, Carlsbad, 760-729-4133. Thursday, Vision Arts, Friday, 420 Band, Saturday, club call for information.

The Rainforest, 755 Rainforest Drive, Carlsbad, 760-931-1122. Friday, 6 pm to 10 pm, Steel Wave, contemporary.

Randi Bernardo Inn, 17500 Bernardo Oaks Drive, Rancho Bernardo, 832-687-8505. Saturday, 7 pm to 10 pm, Donna Fennell & Company East, jazz.

Surf N'Saddle, 123 West Plaza Street (Lorenza Santa Fe and Highway 101), Solana Beach, 858-755-9474. Thursday, open mike, Friday and Saturday, Powderhouse, rock.

Tomiko Bar & Grill, 87 Encinitas Boulevard, Encinitas, 760-633-5858. Friday, 7 pm, Andy Villese-Boss, Brazilian jazz.

Victoria Station Pub, 315 South Highway 101, Solana Beach, 858-481-1950. Saturday, 7 pm to 10 pm, Geese in the Bag, folk, Celtic.

San Diego Reader Calendar
MUSIC SCENE
and Monday, 7 pm to 11 pm, Dick Matson, piano and vocals.

La Costa Coffee Roasting Co., 1065 El Camino Real, Suite 200, La Costa, 760-438-8160. Music hours are from 7 pm to 10 pm. Friday, Bruce Koehler, folk, Saturday, Lowery, folk.

Martini Ranch, 465 South Coast Highway (at "D" Street, Encinitas, 760-943-9101. Call club for information.

McCabe's Beach Club, 1145 South Treetop, Oceanside, 760-439-6646. Call club for information.


Miracles Cafe, 1923 San Elijo Avenue, Cardiff, 760-439-7924, Saturday, 7:30 pm to 10:30 pm, John Foltz, folk.

Online Club Coupons!

The following nightclubs have valuable coupons in the Music Section of the Reader's website. 

Cajns. indicates North County.

Blind Melons $2 for 1 cover
Brick By Brick $2 for 1 admission
California Express VIP Card $2 off admission
Cannibal Bar $1/2 off regular cover
Club Hollywood $2 free comedy tickets
Croce's $5 free cover with dinner
Dirk's Nightclub $1 for 1 cover
Dream Street 4th & B $2 for 1 cover
El Forno Bistro $1 hour free pool
Jolt'n Joe's $2 free cover with dinner
Juke Joint Cafe $2 free cover with dinner
La Costa Champions Lounge $1/2 price admission
Martini Ranch $2 for 1 cover
McCabe's Beach Club $2 off admission
Moondoggies $1 cover
Neiman's $2 for 1 cover
P.B. Bar & Grill $2 for 1 cover
Patrons II $2 for 1 cover
Second Wind Navajo $2 for 1 cover
Sevilla $2 for 1 cover
Sham Rocks Shack $2 for 1 cover
Tio Leo's club admission $2 for 1 cover
Tunami Beach Club $2 off VIP admission
Winstons $2 for 1 cover

San Diego Reader Coupons also available at sdinside.com

San Diego Reader - January 3, 2002

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Feeding Frenzy

Right after college, newly married, I moved into a classic cheap, cramped apartment in Manhattan’s Little Italy, the kind with a lidded clawfoot bathtub in the kitchen facing the front door. We stuck it there because the building’s owner, who didn’t speak English, would let us keep it for free. Antoinette, lived in the apartment right across the hall, with her husband who occupied apartments next door and upstairs. Short, vigorous, and plump but not fat (unlike her ancient dog, the aptly named Chubby), with jet-black hair and black penciled eyebrows shooting diagonally upward, Antoinette was willing, able, and downright eager to teach me about Italian food. She was a heartfelt practitioner of abbondanza, the Italian art of the overloaded table. Occasionally she’d invite us over for dinner and then send us home with days’ worth of delicious left-over lasagna. More often, she’d just bring goodies across the hall for us to have a “taste”—a tureen of “pasta farro” on a cold winter evening, a foot-long hot sausage and hot pepper hero if one of us had a cold, or a football team’s worth of spaghetti with meaty tomato “gravy” (rota bolognese) because “I made too much — here, help me use it up.”

At Firenze, the style of Italian cooking is more cosmopolitan and Old World than Antoinette’s second-generation Neapolitan-American, but there, too, they clearly believe in abbondanza. A single order of lasagna, for instance, made its way around our table of five, and — too delicious for a scrap of it to be wasted — the rest came home with me to make four more servings. The menu itself is cornucopian, with its entire choice of 18 (count ‘em, 18!) pastas, a dozen seafood dishes, and a dozen meat and poultry choices, representing every region of Italy, albeit with a tilt toward the north. So daunting a number of selections is workable here because many of the pastas are beautifully simple — in the authentic Italian manner, they ring changes on flavors of combinations of quickly sautéed vegetables, mushrooms, and cheeses, with perhaps a bit of smoked meat for flavor.

Don’t begin to imagine, though, that Firenze is just some check-boardedtablecloth Mamma Mia joint. It’s big, beautiful, and gracious, with windows overlooking the open countryside to the south. The soundproofed dining room, in cool, light neutral colors, decorated with fresco-style scenes of Florence and bouquets of fresh flowers. Tables are dressed in white linens and set well apart, so even on a busy night you can hear your own party’s conversation, not other people’s. Lovelier yet is the back patio, bright by day and lantern-lit at night, a quintessentially romantic spot with stanchion heaters, umbrella shading, and a handsome gurgling fountain — the perfect place for a “getting-serious” date. Because the muted sound level encourages conversation, Firenze proved the ideal site for the first face-to-face evening with my Encinitas gourmet pen pal, Tom and Alma, and a second rendezvous with my new friend Jennifer from Solana Beach.

The first hint of Firenze’s quality lay in the table crutons of rich green Piancone extra-virgin olive oil as a dip for the crusty bread. Extra-virgin on the table has become a commonplace, but how often does it have such an intense, pure-olive flavor? A bowl of shrimp bisque was verification that this would be a special meal. Creamy but not cloyingly so, with a rich seafood flavor, a touch of cognac, and plenty of tender minced shrimp lending both texture and flavor, it was as fine a shrimp bisque as I could imagine — actually the best I remember tasting. The Antipasto Misto (mixed appetizer platter) proved to be a giant sampler of pleasing flavors, showcasing how good Italian cooks make it fun to eat your veggies. Zucchini and mushrooms were baked with a stuffing of bread crumbs and herbs; there were also grilled zucchini and eggplant slices, roasted bell peppers, and a little insalata caprese of sliced tomato and buffalo mozzarella. And just in case we were really hungry, the platter included a sampling of Italian deli-meat slices (coppa, salami, prosciutto). At the center of the tray was a mound of light, sweet eggplant caponata. Now that’s what I call an antipasto!

Another spin on caponata appeared in Melanzane Napolitano — chopped eggplant with sun-dried tomatoes, capers, a sprinkle of goat cheese, and intensely sweet minced onion, making a nice spread for bread. And if fried calamari has become a cliché, when it’s this good, you remember what made it so popular. Firenze’s breadings is not only light, it’s richly flavorful, and the squid rings were so tenderly cooked that they stayed plant even after they cooled. They arrived with a slightly piquant marinara sauce dip (which, with

Firenze
★★½ (Very Good to Excellent)
West Village Center, 162 South Rancho Santa Fe Road, Encinitas 92036-944-9900; www.firenzerestaurant.com
HOURS: Monday-Saturday 11:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Sunday 6:30-9:00 p.m.
PRICES: Appetizers $5.50–$14; pastas $10–$18; entrées $16 (sage pudding, eggplant dish) – $27 (cioppino, filet mignon), average $20. Lunch menu $8–$16 until 3:30 p.m.
CUISINE AND WINE: Multiregional authentic Italian cuisine. Interesting California and Italian wine list, with the more indulgent bottles ("Super-Tuscans") priced more reasonably than at comparable restaurants. Half-price wine specials Monday nights.
NEED TO KNOW: Location is in the same mall as Harvest Ranch Market, at southeast end of Encinitas just north of Rancho Santa Fe. (See website or call for directions.) Quiet, comfortable, fairly casual. Vegetarian heaven with two dozen meatless selections. Entire menu available for takeout. Heated, sheltered patio-dining available. Reservations strongly urged.

Ratings reflect the reviewer’s reaction to food, ambiance, and service with price taken into consideration. Menu listings and prices are subject to change.

Hundreds of past reviews are available online from the Reader at www.sdreader.com.

the turn of the millennium, suddenly seems to have replaced aioli as the universal squid dip.). In contrast to all these pleasures, our final appetizer was disappointing. Clams casino, overcooked baked clams stuffed with bread crumbs, had tough and very salty meats swamped in dry, coarsely seasoned crumbs. About that lasagna: In Italy, this version of layered pasta is called "lasagna acciaccate"—"hunter-style" due to the presence of wild mushrooms (and perhaps the abundance of meat, too). It’s protein mania
on a plate, a large square at least two inches high, with a com-plex, interest-holding stuffing of minced veal, beef, and chicken, plus parmesan, mozzarella, tangy ricotta, and shiitake mushrooms (which lend a richer, wilder taste than button mushrooms). The layers are soaked in a light tomato "aurora" sauce. Although it takes a great exertion of willpower to stop eating it, I dare anybody to finish the whole thing. Another "stuffed" item that we all loved was melanzane rollatini, egg-plant rolled around ricotta, pine nuts, herbs, and bread crumbs, topped with mozzarella and tomato sauce. Those sweet pine nuts hoisted it to cloud nine.

One of the specials that evening was a twist on veal val-dostana — very tender veal scallopini with spinach and melted cheese in a suave, light cream sauce, wholly sensual and comforting. It came with tomato-sauced penne and the standard "CCC" vegetable medley — car-rots, calabash (zucchini), and crucifers (broccoli or cauliflower). I can just hear the TV ad: "Seven out of ten Encinitas chefs pre-scribe Triple C Vegi-Mix," since, during ten recent dinners there, that's precisely how often we found it on our plates. At Firenze, at least, the veggies were al dente. The medley also turned up accompanying a grilled rack of tiny baby lamb ribs, brushed with olive oil and herbs, accompa-nied by fragrant garlic-saffron mashed potatoes.

Another special was a tureen of sea bass served over linguini, topped with a compelling, powerful mixture of sun-dried tomatoes, bell peppers, and herbs with olive oil. As an extra "for the table," we enjoyed a bowl of soft-firm, almost pili-fish risotto abun-dantly topped with sweet fried garlic slivers that spread the garlic flavor throughout. All risotto is made from short-grain rice, and there's a lot of debate as to its proper texture (rang-ing from hard-at-the-center to gooey). Firenze's chef is from Milan, where risotto was prob-ably invented, and this struck me as an ideal version. The secret, I learned later, is use of prized and pricey imported Carnaroli rice — its unusual firmness allows it to be cooked all the way to the core without turning mushy or soggy.

We had eaten so richly and well that I was regarding a dessert course with dread. Luck-ily, I would have some help in that department: "I look for-ward to dessert; it's the best part of the meal for me," said Alma. Just three of Firenze's desserts are made in-house — tiramisu, crème brûlée, and the filling for the cannoli shells. The remainder come from a baked-goods supplier in L.A. We tried a sample from each source. The cannoli had good crisp cookie-crusts, but their filling was so sweet and goopy, we could feel our teeth decay- ing on the spot. A coconut cake was dry in both the crust and in the coconut shreds of the frosting. Alma didn't care for either one, and neither did the rest of us.

But dessert is almost beside the point of an Italian meal. In fact, when my neighbor Antionette had a dinner party, if she served any pastry at all, she brought it out a good hour or two after the main course was finished — time for sitting around talking, relaxing, drinking the last of the wine, and then some fruit and cheese and another bottle of wine. And a meal at Firenze feels equally relaxed. You're really out in the countryside here. The sur-roundings are lovely. The food is delicious. The conversation is up to you. And the prices for food and wine are quite reasonable, especially given the laden doggie bags you'll probably take home.

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ABOUT THE CHEF
"I came here from Milan on a student visa in 1966," says Chef Italo Peveri. "I went to high school here to learn English, and I worked for my brother Giulio at his restaurant, Giulio's, in Pacific Beach. In 1970, I was made a partner at the restau-rant... But because of the location and the decline in the economy, in 1993 we had to close down." (Giulio's has since reopened in Old Town as Jack and Giulio's — Jack is Giulio's son.) "I went to look for a job. First I worked for Tuscany Restaurant in La Costa, and then the owners of Firenze made me a better offer. This place opened in March '95, and I started here about two months later.

"The owners of Firenze are American, and they like the menu to cover all of Italy—a little bit of the north, the center, and the south. But being from the north, I grow up close to Emilia-Romana, which is the best region for food, of course. We have a long menu, and every day we make two or three specials. I don't have any specific thing I cook all the time, I just use my head, and they usually come out very nice." Peveri's particular favorite "specialties" are veal Valdostana and osso buco Milanese (braised veal shank), which he makes whenever he can find good ingredients for it.

He obtains dry pastas and cheeses from Italy, and since there's not enough room in the kitchen to roll out fresh pastas, the ravioli arrive frozen from a company in the East. Peveri has a close working relationship with an Italian-owned local produce company. "They have very nice produce," he says. "But I'd really like to have a place to grow our own. If we were a little bit more out in the country, we could plant vegeta-bles, like in Europe, where some restaurants have enough land to grow everything they serve."
Candle Fetish

"That candle wall in the patio takes me 35 minutes just to light all of them."

Gimmie shelter! It's raining pitchforks! I'm sloshing along University in Hillcrest near Third when I spot a big brown cross. It's tied to a cactus that shoots up over a fence beyond a wooden deck patio. A tree grows through the planks, among dripping tables and chairs and umbrellas. A bunch of stone angels lead you in toward this rusty sign: "The Abbey."

The patio separates a small building on the left and a big Swiss-cheese affair on the right. I dash into the small one, order a coffee ($1.25, free refills), grab a menu, and run across the patio into a dark-wood room with a fireplace, a church pew, hanging ivy, metal chalices, black iron sconces, stone churns, and candles, above the fireplace, on the sideboard, even — looks like — climbing an entire wall outside the window. What's next, hooded monks?

Instead, this attorney guy, Bar, sits happily munching on a plate of French toast and reading the New York Times. Gal comes in with a big coffee in her hand, yapping away to no one in particular. Ah. Headset cell phone. Another couple sips taking back cups of tea. Each has their own teapot.

I grab a chair. Little waterfalls form a curtain outside at the roof overhang. A figure comes hurrying in through it. Kevin, the manager. He shakes himself off like a cat and drops a menu on the table. "Still have breakfast?" I ask. It's middy. I've spent the whole morning helping my buddy Frankie clean up his Section 8 apartment for his annual government inspection. I'm drained, cold, and hungry. I need some protein. "Mmm. Must say, this house-blend coffee tastes great." "Sure," says Kevin. "Egg dishes all day." "That's good, because my eyes have landed on this unusual-sounding breakfast dish. Chicken and eggs. "Grilled chicken breast with two eggs any style. An Abbey Favorite! "$7.95."

Little steep for me, but as Kevin points out, it's beaucoup protein: chicken, egg whites, if I want, and fruit. Plus, if you need your carb fix, there's fries or toast. "It's the most popular dish up at the Abbey in Hollywood!"

"The Abbey in Hollywood?"

"It's our sister restaurant. Except we've only been open seven months. They've been going 13 years. It's a coffee shop, restaurant, bar, club. It's hot. I was up there the other day, and Christina Aguilara was there. Madonna goes. Everybody!"

"So this is a franchise!"

"No, no. Zapher Dajani, our owner, is friends with their owners. It's the same idea, similar food. But it's not a franchise. Decided yet?"

So now I have to do a quick scan. I could have the "classic egg breakfast," eggs with fruit, "homemade" fries, or toast. They cost from $3.55 (one egg) to $3.95 (three eggs). Or "Heavenly" French toast (Hawaiian bread dipped in vanilla and cinnamon, with strawberries, $6.50). Or buttermilk hotcakes ($3.75, plus 75 cents each to add things like blackberries, bananas, chocolate chips). Or a bowl of granola and fruit ($4.50). Or, oh gosh, "Three-Egg Scramble" ($5.75 for an egg mix-up with two items from a long list that includes sliced turkey, bacon bits, mushroom, feta cheese).

But my mind can't stop seeing Christina Aguilara getting her all-protein chicken-and-egg fix up there in L.A. So even though it's $7.95, I go for it. It comes on a big china plate. The sautéed chicken breast chunks are delish, even if it's a shock to have them as breakfast. Kevin brings me a little bowl of their "famous raspberry vinaigrette." It's mostly used on their lunch and dinner salads (such as "Big Mike's Salad" — baby mixed greens, apples, strawberries, blue cheese, $7.95), but I'm finding it pretty good with the breakfast chicken.

So I chomp down, feeling warmer by the minute. And fuller.

But there's one thing I have to know. "What's with the candle fetish?" I ask Kevin. "Oh man," he says. "You haven't lived! We light 250 candles every night. That candle wall in the patio takes me 35 minutes just to light all of them. But once they're burning, it's magic out there. Sometimes, if it's someone's birthday, we just light up candles to form initials. Sometimes people want to paint something personal on a candle glass. So we have paints for them to do that too."

"People are more formal at night," says Bar, the attorney. "More dressed up. It's this old house, and the candlelight does it."

"Course these dressed-up folk are paying more for their dinner entrees. Like, $14.95 for blackened ala tuna, New Orleans style (though you get half a pound of fish), or $10.50 for teriyaki chicken breast. But the good news is the breakfasts go all day, and so do the sandwiches. Most of them, like the low-fat beef burger ($6.95), don't cost more than eight bucks. My chicken-and-egg plate fills me up. Kevin says this house dates to 1910. It has good vibes. Now I can't wait to come back with Carla when the fire's roaring, to sit in the pew and down a cocktail together. Then go out and eat under the candle wall."


Type of Food: American and international

Prices: Breakfast eggs with fries, fruit, or toast, $3.55 (one egg), $3.95 (three eggs); buttermilk hotcakes, $3.75 (fillers, e.g., blueberries, chocolate chips, 75 cents extra); chicken and eggs (grilled chicken breast with two eggs any style, fries, fruit) $7.95; "Chef William" chicken sandwich, $6.45 (half), $8.75 (full); turkey burger, $5.95; penne with turkey, basil, pine nuts, $8.95

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A new concept in wine pricing.

We at Cuvee feel that excessive restaurant wine pricing often precludes diners from being able to enjoy the ultimate culinary experience of matching a great wine with their meal, so we've decided to do things differently. All wines on our list are priced at cost, and an $8 corkage fee will be added to wines consumed in the restaurant. This is the same fee charged whether you bring wine in or buy it here. Additionally, all our wines are available for purchase to take home.

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As the winemakers of the great chateaux of Bordeaux have always known, some grape varietals work better when blended with others. We feel that these cuves often bring out the best of each of the individual grapes much like the pairing of wine and food tends to highlight the finer nuances of each partner. Thus you will find that our list contains a lot of blended wines — cuves, if you will — and the list will continue to grow as we find more exceptional food-oriented wine. Each of our wines has been hand-selected by Chef Chuck Samuelson and Sommelier Roderick Michener to complement the eclectic cuisine of Cuvee. If you can't find something to match your meal, your server can show you the way.

Chef Chuck Samuelson
1000 Brats

"I can sit in my own backyard with a lawn chair and a bottle of wine. I don't have to go to Bob's house."

Three years ago, I interviewed Tracy Foote, who was then serving as chair of the San Diego chapter of Wine Brats, an organization "devoted to getting people, particularly the under-35 crowd, interested in wine." Foote then 34, described the chapter as a group of around 50 people (about half of whom would attend any given event) that mostly got together at each other's homes to eat, drink, and talk about the wines they had brought. "Everybody brings a side dish of food," she said. Sometimes a wine rep would come and give a speech. The chapter's personality sounded homely and pleasant, a tasting group for people new to wine. It certainly fit with the Wine Brats' goal of making wine less intimidating — there is safety in numbers when you're all just getting started, and the atmosphere was casual. What it did not fit with were the accounts I read of Wine Brats in other cities, such as New York and Los Angeles. There, chapters would hold wine raves: enormous catered wine tastings complete with live music, dancing, and an occasional fashion show. Wine was presented as hip and exciting, a proper party beverage.

About a year later, Foote had her second child and decided that chairing the San Diego Wine Brats was more than she cared to do at the moment. She asked the national chapter of Wine Brats to start looking for another San Diego chapter head.

National called Anne Dierickx. Dierickx — cafe owner, landlord, lawyer, judge — had been a member of the San Diego chapter for five years and had yet to attend a San Diego event. "I traveled a lot for work," she explains, "and I used to go to events in other cities. I'd go to the Chicago wine rave, the New York wine rave, San Francisco..." The San Diego version of Wine Brats was not the version that had aroused her interest. "I never seemed to be here when the events were [going on]. I'd get an e-mail saying, 'You're going to meet at Bob's house; bring a lawn chair and a bottle of wine.' I'm, like, 'I can sit in my own backyard with a lawn chair and a bottle of wine."

Dierickx had discovered Wine Brats through an encounter with one of the group's founders, John Sebastiani of Sebastiani wines. "I met him up in Sonoma through his mother. She and I were talking food." (Dierickx has an undergraduate degree in hotel and restaurant management, and Sebastiani was opening Viansa, a restaurant/winery/merchandise store.) "She's, like, 'Oh, let me give you Grandma Sebastiani's cookbook'; and we just hit it off that way."

Soon thereafter, she read an article about Wine Brats and decided to join. "I was, like, 'Hey, I know them,' and the concept sounded great: introducing different wines to people in a setting that isn't highbrow — classical music. Don't get me wrong, I love classical music; I go to the symphony all the time. But that is not my demographic." Dierickx is 34; she guesses that I don't have to go to Bob's house — not that there's anything wrong with Bob."

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most of the chapter's members are between 21 and 40.

Dierickx says that "part of wine tasting to me is the people you meet and the adventures you have from meeting them. I've got some really good friends that I have acquired from Wine Brats. It's a great cross section; they come from all walks of life. We have people who are waiters and waitresses, we have construction people, we have people who are lawyers, doctors, consultants... We have people who were born here, the East Coast, people who are foreign born. It's a whole gamut; wine brings people together from all walks of life. Oh my, I sound like some commercial."

That broad social spectrum was lacking in the extant San Diego incarnation. Foote, says Dierickx, "was running [Wine Brats] with a small-membership mentality. It's a great, intimate way to learn about wine — you taste mine, I taste yours. But it can be hit or miss. It's time consuming, and it can be a disappointment. And since it's usually in somebody's home, as a lawyer, I have questions of liability. Apparently, National, which is based in Santa Rosa, had its own concerns about the SoCal homebodies. Before they called Anne, [National] was talking about how San Diego was struggling — being such a big city and having a small-membership base."

When she has a mind to, Dierickx radiates an air of formidable competency, and this is her demeanor when national called. "I said, 'We will not survive with a small-membership mentality.' I was, like, 'I need a full board. I need to make sure I have a webmaster [who can handle credit card payments], because I'm not going to take the uncertainty of promising a venue a month of dollars and not having people show up, or having to worry about how many tickets are going to sell at the door.' National put up a call to anybody [in San Diego] who had ever expressed interest in Wine Brats. They asked some very detailed questions — 'Why do you like wine? etc. — and they had very detailed job descriptions. I had eight really solid people show up; it's amazing how it filtered out."

Amazing, indeed. The board now consists of the chair, cochair, webmaster, logistics director, treasurer, secretary, event planner, education head, and public relations. Membership has broken a thousand and continues to grow. The San Diego Wine Brats have been selling out their monthly events for over a year now, sometimes the day tickets go on sale. By the time you read this, they will most likely have sold out their January event, which is scheduled for the eighth at Lions Pasta in Pacific Beach, but you can always check www.winebrats.org (then click on San Diego) to see if any remain. "It's going to be California wines that are Italian varietals. We have Trinchero and BV signed up so far as sponsors; we may get a couple more. Our education head will come in and look at the concept we've set up and decide what to present — we may have a pamphlet on appellations vs. varietal, things like that." Lions Pasta will provide appetizers designed to complement the featured wines.

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JUANITA’S TACO SHOP EXOTIC TEPATITLAN 290 North Coast Highway 101, Encinitas, 760-943-9612; also in Vista at 248 Main St., 760-758-4531. Enticing aromas of fresh tortillas and fragrant frigols greet you at a very busy little taqueria, where the food’s cooked in the style of Tepatilán, a small city near Guadalajara. Its local specialty is cornitas — which Juanita’s does up (by the plate or by the pound) as tender, nearly-gravy-shredded, served with fresh, cilantro-laden mild tomato salad. Standard wraps are fine, too, and the beans taste as good as they smell. $5.50, which takes off, with shredded meat, onions, mild chilies, beans, sour cream, shredded cheese, and garnish. The main fare is a rice and bean combo, with a side of chips and salsa. Open daily, Monday to Friday. — R.F. (901)

Pamplemousse Grille 514 Via de la Valle, Del Mar, 760-729-9090. The newly opened seafood restaurant offers exquisite, creative cooking. The menu changes frequently and includes fresh crab salad with avocado and tomato coulis, white fish served any style, mushroom soup, and a watermelon gazpacho, served as a cold soup over fresh corn, and topped with grilled salmon. Tentative times are 3 to 11 p.m. daily. — N.W. (901)

San Diego California Food Week 2012

If you have a vast choice of wood-fired pizzas here, including many vegetarian options. Salads are similar and available as half-orders. Same menu lunch and dinner. Continuous Lunch Daily, 12-2, Open daily, 12-2, 782 Pearl Street, La Jolla, 858-459-5222; 770 El Encanto, Open Daily, 12-2, 9200 Paseo de la Plaza, La Jolla, 858-258-5688; 8650 Genoa Street, Santa Verde, 858-488-1992; 1253 Camino del Mar, 858-399-4832; 9220 Camino de la Reina, Mission Valley, 858-505-3333.

Star of India 1820 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach, 858-459-3055; also 3860 Valley Center Drive, Del Mar, 858-792-1111; and 423 F Street, Gaslamp, 858-234-6800. It’s the lunch buffet that can lead you by the nose into Indian (and here, specifically Punjabi) food. Pick among specialties like vegetable pakora — a batch of veggie dipped in chickpea batter and fried, or a nice mix of saag with potatoes, chicken curry masala, and maybe the first cooked spinach you’ve ever loved, palak paneer, or garlic, a plate of yellow, yellow is your eye in pastel, and a plate of yellow, in your face, against a backdrop under a sky-blue cupola. Ask owner Rakesh Rana’s former tour operator’s culture and health benefits. Seven days. Inexpensive to moderate. — E.R. (1101)
The Encinitas Café 531 South Coast Highway 101, Encinitas, 760-632-0919. This American café serves breakfast from opening to closing, with egg dishes, biscuits, and gravy for breakfast; sandwiches and salads for lunch; and American entrées for dinner. Fast, excellent service. Open daily, three meals a day, under $10. — L.W. (901)

Il Fornaiu di Cucina Italiana 1555 Camino Del Mar, Del Mar Plaza, 760-755-8876. If Il Fornaiu offers a stunning, unlooked over view and its outdoor dining is gorgeous. The grilled items tend to be savory, but the stuffed foccacia, angel-hair pasta, yuca, and salads are quite hearty. Everything is available. Grilled is popular. Lunch and dinner daily. Another location at Coronado Ferry Landing, 1347-4511. Moderate to low. — E.W.

Juana’s Taco Shop Served as Tapa 296 North Coast Highway 101, Encinitas, 760-943-9612. The food is hot, spicy, and full of flavor. The tortillas are thin, and the beans taste as good as they smell. $5.50, which takes off, with shredded meat, onions, mild chilies, beans, sour cream, shredded cheese, and garnish. The main fare is a rice and bean combo, with a side of chips and salsa. Open daily, Monday to Friday. — R.F. (901)

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Calendar

Rostin’s Baja Bistro 4014 Randy Road, Bonita, 619-477-3537. At the birthplace of San Diego’s Rostin’s Baja Bistro restaurant chain, the decor is Puerta Negra (the black door). All palm frond tarts, green wood-dirt bar support poles with green painted iguanas climbing them, signs on the ceiling joints like “Viva Bona!” and “Work is for people who don’t want it.” The menu’s big draw is the “Big Baja Bistro” stuffed with slippers lobster tails, marinated chicken, grilled corned sausages, and Baja-style dressing) plus beans, rice, tortillas, and a Carter salad. And wraps are great. Try the Chinese chicken wrap: grilled chicken, salad greens, crispy noodles, scallions, orange pieces, and oriented dressing in a “cilantro tostilla.” Open seven days. Friday happy hour free buffet 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Inexpensive to moderate, Other locations: 310 Fifth Avenue, Galisoan, 619-224-6312; 900 Twiggs, Old Town, 619-220-0050; 1020 West San Marco Boulevard, San Marcos, 760-744-7550, 258 Harbor Street, Coronado, 619-437-6671. — E.R. (901)

Sammy’s California Wood Fire Pizza 4890 San Bernardo Avenue. You have a variety of wood-fired pizzas here, including many vegetarian options. Salads are similar and available as half-orders. Same menu lunch and dinner. Continuous Lunch Daily, 12-2, Pearl Street, La Jolla, 858-459-5222; 770 Encanto, Open Daily, 12-2, 9200 Paseo de la Plaza, La Jolla, 858-258-5688; 8650 Genoa Street, Santa Verde, 858-488-1992; 1253 Camino del Mar, 858-399-4832; 9220 Camino de la Reina, Mission Valley, 858-505-3333.

Star of India 1820 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach, 858-459-3055; also 3860 Valley Center Drive, Del Mar, 858-792-1111; and 423 F Street, Gaslamp, 858-234-6800. It’s the lunch

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MANHATTAN OF LA Jolla 7768 Via Avenue, Empress Hotel, 858-859-0170. If you're searching for a restaurant that offers the best of both worlds: Italian and Japanese cuisine - all in one! Order from our extensive menu and enjoy delicious food. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Moderate. — E.W.

COME ON IN! 1030 Torrey Pines Road, 858-350-6103. Delightful 30-seat restaurant in mini-mall serves excellent Italian food. Soup, salad, Soho's famous breakfast, lunch, and dinner. The dinners are best with first-rate soups, pasta dishes, fresh fish. Try the daily fresh fish or gnocchi in Bolognese sauce. Or select nightly soup plus salad. Open all day Tuesday through Sunday, Inexpensive. — E.W. (1100)

GEORGES AT THE COVE 1350 Prospect Street, 858-454-4244. The all-excellent George's, with its first-rate fish and meat, boasts three dining levels on its ocean-view site. The first level is the fine dining room with full menu and gourmet lunch and dinners. Above is the Cafe, and on top is the Terrace, all three containing 100-200 baby nymphs. The Cafe and Terrace offer full-service, casual meals, light meals for lunch, extensive menu for dinner. The Ocean View Room offers high quality California regional cuisine, with higher food prices. We highly recommend this place, as it is a great place to celebrate with unique menus. The dinner menu is available from opening to closing. It is an open restaurant with natural Chinese foods. Inexpensive. — E.W.

P.C. CRANG'S CHINA BISTRO 6724 La Jolla Village Drive, 858-458-3993. The decor is great and they serve an extensive menu of Chinese foods. Open daily. Inexpensive to moderate. — E.W.

HARRYS CAFE SHOP 7454 Girard Avenue, 858-458-7381. This landmark restaurant in La Jolla is the place to go for food. It is a great place to go for food. The food is served from opening to closing. The food is wonderful and the atmosphere is friendly. Open daily. Moderate. — E.W.

LA JOLLA |

ALFONSO'S OF THE LOCCA 1251 Prospect Street, 858-454-2232. This Spanish tapas bar provides a great and festive atmosphere. The tapas bar is delightful and so are the appetizers. Same menu lunch and dinner except for breakfast. Moderate to expensive. — E.W.

LA TERRAZZA 808 Girard Avenue, 858-458-9730. This is a great place to go for dinner. The food is excellent and the atmosphere is great. The service is friendly and the prices are moderate. — E.W.

SHABU SHABU JIN SANG 7641 La Jolla, 858-454-3445. Shabu shabu is a dish of Japanese cuisine in which the ingredients are cooked in boiling water and served. A great choice for a dinner. Moderate. — E.W.
**DOWNTOWN**

**ACQUA AL 2 322 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp District, 619-230-0382, www.acqua2.com.** Despite its moniker, this isn't a seafood trattoria, but a near-foods restaurant in a restaurant in Florence that winsous cheeks by excusing the standard Florentine menu, while maintaining Tuscan purity of style. Chef-owner Martin Gonzales trained there, and serves as charming host of the local outpost. Best bets are the vegetarian pasta and rice dishes made with aromatic porcini mushrooms. The tasting of five pastas may sound tempting, but they're chef's choice — and he tends to choose the dullest ones. "Tast- ing" of salads, cheeses and desserts are also offered. Mains are rather plain. Moderate (pastas) to expensive. — E.W. (1/98)

**PARADISO 374 West Washington Street, Mission Hills, 619-260-0333.** China, Pakistan, Algeria, Morocco, Et cetera — the 3rd parallel. This new ethnic-blend restaurant in Mission Hills is a hit for their shrewd, thoughtful creative. It's not just "fusion food." Try the mango and shrimp appetizer, one of the best I've ever eaten. Entrées like grilled salmon atop lobster tabbouleh or steak strips over mashed potato and corn salsa are a testament that chef Amiko Gobbin, of Cafe Jagome fame, thinks with her mouth. — M.N. (10/99)

**TRATTORIA POSTINO 142 University Avenue, Hillcrest, 619-294-6955.** Sure to be one of your favorite restaurants, not only for hearty Italian food but also for loving atmosphere. Pasta dishes plenty; salads and appetizers. A treat. Try seashells, salmon, any pasta. Lunch Monday through Friday; dinner nightly. Moderate to expensive. — E.W. (10/99)

**THE VEGETARIAN ZONE 249 Fifth Avenue, Hillcrest, 619-288-7202.** The Zone's motto is "harmony with the earth." So sorry — no meat, no bleached white flour, white or brown sugar, or iceberg lettuce. On the other hand, you can be sure you want it — free from chemical preservatives or dyes." Spinach mushroom lasagna and sesame mock chicken are — surprise! — great. Even desserts can be yummy, including a three-layer cobbler cake and a coconut pudding. Inexpensive. — E.B. (1/98)

**BAYOU BAR AND GRILL 329 Market Street [at Third Street], 619-466-8747.** Bayou has the most expensive (and expensive) Louisiana-style menu in the Gaslamp. Their best dishes are terrific — for instance, their red beans and rice (the washday treat) is the area's sole authentic version, monty and with a rich, deep heat. Shrimp and crab dishes, too, as do seafood pastas and a huge pork chop with cane syrup anxiety. Don't worry, though, too many dishes are faux-Paul Prud- homme, with incoherent spices at times, too much cayenne added too late in the cooking to cozy up to other flavors. Desserts are frankly, fabulously - revisionist, including pancan pie and bread pudding half as heavy and good as their Creole models. Reser- vations advisable. Moderate to expensive. — N.W. (3/91)

**CANELAS 416 Third Avenue, Gaslamp, 619-702-4255.** Don't look for tika on here. Chef Carlos Barcenas specializes in "la nueva cocina Mexicana," a luxurious, inventive update of traditional Mexican fare, combining French techniques and Latin ingredients into a sophisticated fusion. One can never get tired of its dishes before but will want to taste again. In a romantic Spanish-style dining room with extremely gracious service, you'll find a menu that em- phasizes seafood, including jumbo prawns framed with three tequila, sea bass with hibiscus salsa, and a signature dish of luscious stuffed Maine lobster. Meat lovers will also enjoy sev- eral dishes, including a thick real crab chop with concurrent update of tra- ditional mole sauce. Reservations ad- vised, slightly pricey. Expensive. — N.W. (11/91)

**DOSBEE's 9056 Broadway Circle, 619-231-4771.** This reputable downtown restaurant offers classic and comfort food for people who enjoy eating well. The food is good, often very good, with chicken liver mousse pâté, Mediterranean blue mussels, cobb salad, and, when available, the crude but virtuous soft-shell crab. Their soups, such as brownies and bananas Foster sliced, are hefty, lovely, and cheap. Bring a date to the upstairs dining room. Dosbee's is a true, its confidence impressive. Moderate to expensive. — M.N. (10/98)

**GEI LAI SEN HAKKA SEAFOOD RESTAURANT 1061 12th Avenue (at C Street), downtown, 619-239-5479.** Across the street from City College, you'll encounter a split personality. The front provides superb Hakka dishes, a style developed in Malaysia, and popularly eaten by people from northwestern China, now residents of the mainly south China coast. The bad twin dishes out glorious cantonese-rid- dles six rice for starving students. But it's easy to tell which twin is which: "chef recommends spiced plates," the hot pots that taste like home cooking (best ordered by four or more), the grease- less fried rice, the noodles (especially "house special rice noodles"), and the whole steamed fish of-the-day are pal- pable hits. And if you really want to know what the fuss about Hakka is all about, try the spiced plate stuffed tofu, those deep-fried crisp rectangles with a pork meatball inserted in each tender green pepper, and then served with roasted marshmallows, and may just change your mind about bean curd. Open brunch through dinner daily; Pleasant service, very casual, mainly inexpensi- ve. — N.W. (3/91)

**GRAND CENTRAL CAFE/EMCA 500 West Broadway, 619-234-2223. A nice Broadway surprise — who'd expect the "500" to have terrific meals? But Grand Central trees hard. The breakfasts are big and filling, and the lunch chili with salad and cheese torte is a tasty bargain. Sit in the vintage coworker room, with leather booths, coleslaw, soup, or salad. Plus you can look down on Broadway and check when your bus comes. Breakfast/Lunch/Weekend, breakfast.
Final Four

Image, whatever Andre Agassi might say, isn’t everything.

One of my ready answers to the popular new question of how life has changed since September 11 would be that I am now more cautious and vigilant about my use of the word “hate.” As much as I might deplore or despise or detest The Majestic or Moulin Rouge or 15 Minutes, I would not wish to incinerate anyone who worked on them. It is well to keep things in perspective. I believe I have always been careful to avoid the “H” word in print. The solitary time I can remember using it, as a semi-joke in response to a French film called Hate, it showed up in the form of a blurb (“I hated it”) on the marquee of the long-gone Guild theater, whose management had taken it in the right spirit and run with it.

It of course would be lovely (I would just love it!) if as a New Year’s resolution I could pledge to emphasize only the positive in movies over the next twelve months. For all kinds of practical reasons, however, I can ill afford to be writing about movies only every four to six weeks. I can pledge no more than to try to do better, though I am sure that Frank Darabont and Baz Luhrmann and John Herzfeld would have pledged no less before they directed The Majestic and Moulin Rouge and 15 Minutes, respectively. In any event, this is the traditional time of year — the end of one, the beginning of another — for emphasizing the positive, even when the ritual of rounding up a Top Ten fails it short.

The best American film of the past year is no contest, Terry Zwigoff’s Ghost World, not too much as a job of filmmaking (a bit rough and ragged), but as a job of cultural and human observation — feet-on-the-ground, well-balanced, true-to-life, for all its oddness and marginalism. In light of the number of American films that are all technique and no life, no truth, no balance, no feet, no ground, it’s a highly favorable trade-off. I was pleased to see that without any input from me it took the top prize from the San Diego film critics’ society. That, like the film itself, was somehow a little less alienating.

Better than the best American film was the Vietnamese one, Tran Anh Hung’s The Vertical Ray of the Sun. A significant percentage of the people I spoke to on the subject seemed to think that this was even better than his Scent of Green Papaya. I wouldn’t go that far (held back, perhaps, by an unreasoning fondness for studio filmmaking in general, and for the particular project of re-creating antebellum Vietnam on a French sound stage), but the difference was nothing to fight about. The film had the pulse of life — nice and slow and steady — and it had the beauty of life as well: important properties in a film about life’s inescapable failings. They let you know that the filmmaker knows what he is talking about.

In the Mood for Love, in addition to the pulse and beauty of life, had an ingenious visual strategy and a fluid, almost flawless execution of it. The remembrance of an illicit romance in Hong Kong in the early Sixties is Wong Kar-wai’s most complete piece of work to date, possibly brought to that point by complementing his own regular cinematographer, the sprightly Christopher Doyle, with Hou Hsiao-hsien’s

The best of the best, alas, was Peter Delpont's Felice Felice. I say "alas" because I can be no happier about it than you are when you must resort to a shot played but once at the San Diego International Film Festival: a Dutch film, set in fin de siecle Japan, that formulates a fertile metaphor whereby still photography equates to memory and permanence while the incipient cinema equates to life and change. I can pay it one of my highest tributes: it haunts me. This despite the fact that I was able to see it, unlike the three aforementioned, only once. Without a commercial release in the U.S., it is a bad bet to be made available even on video. When I was vacationing last spring in Amsterdam, I was excided to find it (in the European PAL format) among the very limited selection of videos for sale at the celebrated cinemateque in Vondel Park, and I struck up a conversation with the youthful clerk in hopes of encountering some local pride over a world-class sample of home-grown cinema. He hadn't seen it, didn't recall that it received much of a showing, wasn't really all that interested. Ah, well. I carry a still photo of it in my memory.

Also-rans: Christopher Nolan's backwards tour de force, Memento, which required though did not quite repay a second viewing; Alejandro Amenabar's intense and atmospheric ghost story, The Others, the trick end- ing of which didn't require a second viewing; James Ivory's The Golden Bowl, rich, dense, thematically resonant, however weary we all may be of Masterpiece Theatre movies; Terence Davies's The House of Mirth, another Masterpiece Theater movie, a little less rich, etc., a little more wearying, but lovely to look at; Marc Singer's Dark Days, an intimate, eye-opening, and humanizing documentary portrait, in gritty black-and-white, of homeless squatters in a New York subway tunnel; the Coen brothers' The Man Who Wasn't There, in creamier black-and-white, a period James Cain pastiche, well-versed, well-crafted, but spread a little thin (flying saucers! fortune-telling! Beethoven!) and a little long. David Mamet's Heist, with its cracking dialogue if not cracking suspense or cracking logic (though even its shortcomings look taller when set beside Ocean's Eleven, Bandits, The Score, Swordfish, what-have-you); Jonathan Glazer's Sexy Beast, a British heist film whose dialogue failed to crackle only when the dialect was incomprehensible; Dominik Moll's gently simmering psychological thriller, With a Friend Like Harry; Agnès Jaoui's smart, compassionate, and pointedly tasteful social comedy, The Taste of Others; and lastly, a late arrival, Daniel Thompson's very French, very worldly, very tenderhearted yet unassuming Christmas comedy, La Büche.

Which brings us now to the acting awards from the anti-social and un-democratic film critics... Best Actress! With all due respect to Sissy Spacek in In the Bedroom and Nicole Kidman in The Others (among others), I cast my lot with someone I have not noticed getting any support elsewhere, Kate Beckinsale in The Golden Bowl. (Neither helped nor hurt by her additional appearance as Pearl Harbor and Serendipity.) Henry James's Maggie Verver is an authentically great role, and not only is Beckinsale up to...
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David Ansen, NEWSWEEK

Peter Travers, The Hollywood List, ROLLING STONE
homemade audio tapes of the film music of the late Georges Delerue, a pre-Christmas gift from the world’s foremost Delerue fan, Bill Richardson. (I concede him the top spot—I’ll match anyone for second place.) Nowadays when I drive around town I no longer listen to the country station, wondering whatever became of Don Williams. I no longer listen to Jim Rome on sports-talk radio hammering away with equal vehemence on every pinhead topic. I no longer listen to twenty-four-hour news for breaking bulletins as to the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden. I listen to nothing but Delerue. (If only the movies could tell the stories of Delerue’s music!) Put the cassette in every car in America, and no more road rage.

**MOVIE LISTINGS**

All reviews are by Duncan Shepherd. Priorities are indicated by one to five stars and antipriorities by the black spot. Unrated movies are for new unreviewed. Thousands of past reviews sorted alphabetically, by year of release and by rating, are available online at SanDiegoReader.com.

**The Affairs of the Necklace**

Skulduggery in and around the court of Louis XVI, based on fact, with interpretive license. So stuffy and nifty a costume piece (“How skillfully you play the role. Yet even you cannot mask such imperceptible loneliness”) that it approaches parody. When Christopher Walken turns up in the part of Cagnotto, the union is sealed. (And the Cardinal’s red cushion is surely meant to evoke Monica Lewinsky’s famous remark about “Presidential knickers.”) Even evocation, too. It can’t help but have an overreaching director, Charles Shyer, whose specialty has been contemporary light comedy: *Baby Boom, Father of the Bride, Love Trouble*. One of the things that seems to be parodied is the notion of a classy encore for a recent Academy Award winner, namely Hilary Swank of *Boys Don’t Cry*. She was more believable (if not a lot more) as a man than as an 18th-century French courtier, Jonathan Pryce, Joely Richardson, Simon Baker, Adrien Brody. 2001.

**Horton Plaza 1 & 4**

**All**—Will Smith’s impression of the self-proclaimed “Greatest,” aka Cassius Marcellus Clay. For entertainment purposes, it can’t touch Billy Crystal’s impression of him. (Though, for those same purposes, there can be no quibbling with Jon Voight’s Howard Cosell a ghost-on-noose as phony as the hairpiece.) The hallucinogenic half-hour skin through the prime of his life, from the first Litton fight through the Foreman affair of the third Frazier fight, the “Thrilla in Manilla,” worthy of an entire movie unto itself, is processed through Michael Mann’s cinematic Mismaster: desaturated color, gilded color, frosted color, blue-ringed color. Stadilistan, uni-lady cam, bob-and-ware cam, fair-to-a-buttery cam. These stylistic pretensions, coupled with the historical-sociological-cultural-epical pretensions, damn what might have been an agreeable stroll down Memory Lane in the company of one of the great sports figures of the 20th Century. Possibly, yes, the greatest. With Jamie Foxx, Jeffrey Wright, Ron Silver, Jada Pinkett Smith. 2001.

**Carmel Mountain: Chula Vista 10:**

**Carmel Mountain: San Diego’s Riches, Most Luscious, Satisfying Entertainment:**

**Downtown San Diego: Horton Plaza 1 & 4:**

**Golden Globe Nominations**

**BEST PICTURE**

“THE PARTY OF THE YEAR: ONE OF THE YEAR’S BEST FILMS.”

Peter Travers, Rolling Stone.

**Gosford Park**

**Robert Altman’s Best, Which Is to Say, One of Film’s Best:**

Joel Siegel, Good Morning America.

**This Holiday Season’s Richest, Most Luscious, Satisfying Entertainment:**

“An Oscar-Worthy Whodunit?”

Moveline.

**WINNER**

**Best Director—Robert Altman**

**Best Supporting Actor—Jeremy Irons**

**Best Supporting Actress—Juliette Stevenson**

**Best Screenplay—Julian Fellowes**

**Best Cinematography—Bernard Knowles**

**Best Editing**

**Best Art, Set Decoration**

**Best Production Design**

**Best Costume Design**

**Best Original Score**

**Best Original Song**

**Best Music, Original Score**

**Best Director:**

Robert Altman

**Best Supporting Actor:**

Jeremy Irons

**Best Supporting Actress:**

Juliette Stevenson

**Best Screenplay:**

Julian Fellowes

**Best Cinematography:**

Bernard Knowles

**Best Editing:**

**Best Art, Set Decoration:**

**Best Production Design:**

**Best Costume Design:**

**Best Original Score:**

**Best Original Song:**

**Best Music, Original Score:**

**Amélie**—Cutey art-house item looks at the world (at Paris, more precisely) through the primrose-colored glasses of Jean Pierre Jeunet: a delayed-meeting romance à la *And Now My Love, Sleepless in Seattle,* et al., and a fashionably juggling act of fate, chance, coincidence, et cetera. The dementedly winsome heroine (Audrey Tautou), prone to conspiratorial glances at the camera, and egged on by a waggish narrator, is a self-denying do-gooder whose secret mission seems to be the spiritual enlightenment of others, often by the most obvious means: reprogramming a speed-dial button from “Mother” to “Psychiatric Helpline.” The boundless, bounding invocation tends to be grounded, however, by the air of effortlessness. The best of it — the broad omniscient view of humanity combined with an eye for random trivial detail — was done better, and funny, in Janet McMenemy’s apprentice work, *Passionless Moments,* and...
Calendar

MOVIES

at about one-tenth the length. With Mathieu Kassovitz, 2001.
※ (HILLCREST CINEMAS; LA JOLLA VILLAGE)

A Beautiful Mind — Lauded biography of the Nobel Prize-winning mathematician, and madman, John Forbes Nash, Jr. It’s his madness, of course, and not his math, that makes him a viable screen subject, and director Ron Howard nurtures it with care. (And with more taste and restraint than are his custom.) But between the West Virginia accent and the nebbish introduction, much of what he says — or rather, what an emaciated Russell Crowe says — is lost in transmission. With Jennifer Connelly, Ed Harris, Christopher Plummer, P. Bellamy, 2001.
※ (CARMEL MOUNTAIN; ENCINITAS 8; FASHION VALLEY 18; FLOWER HILL 4; GALAXY 6; GROSSMONT CENTER; HILLCREST CENTER 7; HORTON PLAZA 14; LA COSTA 6; LA JOLLA 12; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; PEARLY 10; RANCHO DEL REY 16; TOWN SQUARE 14)

Behind Enemy Lines — Contemporary war story about a U.S. Navy flier downed in the demilitarized zone of Bosnia Herzegovina, the posse of Serbs hot on his heels, and the rescue effort thwarted by a NATO bobsled team of divided loyalties. (Opportunity, there, to reprise the wasteful Vietnam refrain about taking the gloves off and untying one hand from behind the back.) All in all, it’s a good case study, no better or worse than numberless others, of the American (or the Hollywood) Way: the lack of interest in what the NATO posse-b-th calls "the Big Picture," the total focus instead on what we must call the Little Picture, the individual, the hero, the star, the center of the universe — even if it’s only Owen Wilson and not, say, Matt Damon. There is one truly creepy sequence in which the flier’s mates on the aircraft carrier (Gene Hackman in command) watch a satellite thermal image of the posse closing in on the flier’s prone body, an image that fails to show, in its bare outlines, that the flier is submerged in a muddy mass grave.

Though survival details are minimal (food, shelter, and such), the movie is a tolerably old-fashioned chase thriller, all the way to its cavalry-to-the-rescue climax. Tolerably, that is, provided you can tolerate the modish photographic gimmicks of a skipping, sliding, swivelling camera, and the overall complexion of ice-locked blue, and the inflated, slowed-down, drawn-out action. Directed by John Moore. 2001.
※ (DEL MAR HIGHLANDS 8; FASHION VALLEY 18; HORTON PLAZA 14; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; RANCHO DEL REY 16)

The Devil’s Backbone — Ghost story from Mexican filmmaker Guillermo del Toro (Cronos, Mimica), set in the Spanish Civil War at an ad hoc orphanage for the children of slain Loyaltists (identified in the subtitles as “Lefiites,” to cut through the mists of ancient history). Cerebral, somber, sure-footed, and creepy (highly evocative image of an unexploded bomb standing in the courtyard like a sculpture, nose in the dirt), but not all scary, a bit static and overlong, with a pretty passive (if imaginatively and tastefully visualized) ghost. Eduardo Noriega, Federico Luppi, Marisa Paredes. 2001.
※ (HILLCREST CINEMAS)

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In the Bedroom — A dealing-with-tragedy movie (a summer romantic idyll turned violent) with dangerous tendencies toward a Lifetime Channel original. But first-time director Todd Field proves himself a true director, causing in his omissions, his obfuscations, his attention to off moments, his focus on marginal details: the family photos in the D.A.'s office, the jingling of the coins in the D.A.'s pocket during an important conference on the street. He can also be a trickle of pedantic: the military action figure given as a birthday present by a hot-tempered father, or the bedtime reading of The Wycherly to supplement the Wycherly-esque landscape of the film. (It's set in Maine, the heart of Wycherly country.) Field, of course, was already known as an actor (Baby in Paradise, Eye, Wide Shut, etc.), and it is thus hardly surprising that he should strive to carve out human-sized roles for which his cast — Tom Wilkinson, Siyah Spachs, Maria Tomei, Nick Stahl, Richard Masur, William Wise — would be gratefully grateful. Spachs, alone of them, brings to that rare subspecies of actor who never seems to be acting, and who thus never seems to exhaust or recycle her repertoire, and who thus never wears out her welcome. For her particular role, the viewer can thus be as grateful as she is. 2001. * (WILLOUGHBY CINEMAS; JALIJA VILLAGE)

Jimmy Neutron: Boy Genius — Animated children's fantasy with the voices of Martin Short and Patrick Stewart, directed by John Davis. (CARMEL MOUNTAIN; CHULA VISTA 10; CINEMA 6: DEL MAR HIGHLANDS 8; ENCINITAS 8; FASHION VALLEY 18; GALAXY 6; GROSSMONT TROLLEY; HAZARD CENTER 7; LA JOLLA 12; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; RAMONA TWIN; RANCHO DEL REY 16; SANTÉE DRIVE IN; SOUTH BAY DRIVE IN; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14)

Joe Somebody — Nothing much. A white-collar cog becomes a sudden celebrity when he challenges the company bully to a rematch. Occasion for sitcom moralizing ca. 1999. With Tim Allen, Julie Bowen, Hercules Panettiere, Kelly Lynch, Patrick Warburton, and Jim Belushi directed by John Pasquin. 2001. * (CARMEL MOUNTAIN; CHULA VISTA 10; DEL MAR HIGHLANDS 8; ENCINITAS 8; FASHION VALLEY 18; GROSSMONT TROLLEY; HAZARD CENTER 7; LA JOLLA 12; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; PONAY 10; RANCHO DEL REY 16; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14)

Kate and Leopold — Time-travel romance (or in the words of the white-kid Copacabana who makes it happen, "a 0-pretzel of kinesic, inevitability") uniting a Type A Manhattan career woman and a 19th-century British duke, whom tumbles through a time portal in the present day. The matching of Meg Ryan — tossing around and peering through a grass-haircut hairstyle — with Hugh Jackman almost transforms it into an older-woman-younger-man thing, to boot, but that only underscores the needlessly swoon-worthy manner of it. (All that perk, dinky, dizzy, dotty stuff of Ryan's has doubtless gotten a little old. It got there a little ahead of its time here.) The woman's chosen career, market research, sanctions a satirical dig at modern filmmaking practices — "People you work with your teeth!" — fumes the movie's actual director, James Mangold, in a cameo. "You're sucking the life out of American cinema!" — but this comes ill from a rigove which itself is pure manipulation and massacre. Liev Schreiber, Brett Meyer, Natasha Lyonne. 2001. * (CARMEL MOUNTAIN; CINEMA 6: ENCINITAS 8; FASHION VALLEY 18; FLOWER HILL 4; GROSSMONT CENTER; HARBOR DRIVE IN; HORTON PLaza 14; LA JOLLA 12; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; PONAY 10; RANCHO DEL REY 16; SANTÉE DRIVE IN; SOUTH BAY DRIVE IN; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14)

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring — Dr. Tolkien's home-cooked myth. First course only. All manner of visual invention, photographic trickery, computer magic, etc., cannot alter what is in essence an overblown bedtime story. They can only blow it up bigger. And the burden of it is more or less trilogy than epic. The knowledge that these three hours are just a third of it. Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen, Ian Holm, Viggo Mortensen, Sean Astin, Liv Tyler, Cate Blanchett, directed by Peter Jackson. 2001. * (CARMEL MOUNTAIN; CHULA VISTA 10; CINEMA 6: DEL MAR HIGHLANDS 8; ENCINITAS 8; FASHION VALLEY 18; GALAXY 6; GROSSMONT TROLLEY; HAZARD CENTER 7; LA JOLLA 12; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; RAMONA TWIN; RANCHO DEL REY 16; SANTÉE DRIVE IN; SOUTH BAY DRIVE IN; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14)

The Majestie — An apolitical blacklisted screenwriter (Jim Carrey, pining after the Oscar that got away) hits the road to nowhere, drives off a bridge into the river, knocks his head, and wakes up on the beach with amnesia, right outside a California town where he happens to be a dead ringer for a WWIII casualty — son of the local theater owner — whose body happened never to be found. Talk about convenient! After that, it's a soggy dog through lost-love trickery, postwar flag-waving, anti-McCarthy poetry, nostalgia for small towns and old movies and neon. Sort of a chopped salad (hint: The Conquering Hero, The Return of Martin Guerre, Guilty by Suspicion, Cinema Paradiso, and explicitly The Life of Emile Zola). The man with two false fronts — neither a commie nor a war hero — is buried in false sentiment. Director Frank Darabont's only degree of restraint (there's no quota on nose-to-the-screen closeups) is to cut it half an hour shorter than the three hours of his Green Mile With Martin Landau, Laurie Holden, David Ogden Stiers, James Whitmore, Bob Balaban, Ron Rifkin. 2001. * (CARMEL MOUNTAIN; FASHION VALLEY 18; FLOWER HILL 4; GROSSMONT CENTER; GROSSMONT TROLLEY; LA COSTA 6; LEUCADIA 18; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; PONAY 10; RANCHO DEL REY 16; SANTÉE DRIVE IN; SOUTH BAY DRIVE IN; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14)

O Brother, Where Art Thou? The Coen brothers film to dismiss. That's not to say it's not good, certainly not to say it's not even as good as their first, Blind Sandwich, where there could be no expectations and so no disappointment. The brothers have not suddenly lost their touch. They do for Billy Bob Thornton what they did before for George Clooney in...
these filmmakers pass for sensitivity, enables the babe-chasing hero (Jack Black, a servile Joe Blow) to see the inner beauty of the people around him. After he has spent a short time in a stalled elevator with "that TV garb guy," Tony Robbins (as himself). This hocus-pocus, rather than opening any doors to issues of sexual politics, much less any doors to sensitivity, opens a door only to issues of internal logic. Robbins, in order not to overcomplicate or redress the topic, proves to have a nose for the size and range of the hero's notion of outer beauty. In most cases, it looks exactly like the superhero templates, calendar girls, starslet, and tranniques he was chasing at the outset, regardless of whether the outer person more closely resembles a horse or a hippo. (Doesn't anyone's inner beauty have any chinks in it? Doesn't anyone have any inner hideousness?) His sense of touch apparently can't tip him off to the true contours of the outer person. "(The brain sees what the heart wants it to feel), but an article of clothing that appears to him as a size 4 will be revealed, when removed, to be all its tentlike splendor. This doesn't tip him off, either. The hero is sometimes unable to see the inner beauty of men as well (Q-types), but prior acquaintances in his life, from his pudgy best bud to the brunette hottie across the hall, look just the same as before. At one point, and only one, it is suggested that the apple of his eye (Gwyneth Paltrow, a smousy sort of beauty) is herself capable of seeing inner beauty without the help of Tony Robbins, although this seems to mean that she has no idea of the actual age of a pristine co-worker. Possible complications are explored no further than the doorknob. "The Shipping News." 2001.

**NORTON PLAZA 54**

**The Shipping News.** From the E. Annie Proulx novel about a widower named Q务le who returns with his daughter Bunny to his Newfoundland roots, and becomes (among other things) the ace reporter on a local rag called The Gummy Bird. A tall tale, a dark tale, a droll tale, arch, sardonic, grotesque, gaudy, absurd, odd, occult, unnatural loaded, in short, with the hallmark of contemporary Serious Fiction, Kevin Spacey (acting as a half-wit), Cate Blanchett (acting as a scream tart), Judi Dench (acting with crusty), and Julianne Moore (acting with an accent) invest with some of the traits of Serious Cinema as well. Sample: the hero's aunt shows up unannounced on the day of his wife's accidental death, close on the heels of his parents' double suicide, and she fills his father's her own brother's ashes, replacing them in the urn with ordinary fireplace ashes, so that she can take them home in a plastic bag, dump them down the outhouse potty, and pin on them. (She has her reasons, it turns out. They involve revenge for incest. Laura Linney, the earthy director, is the one who also made *The Cider House Rules* a thematic pattern.)

**GALSLAMP 15: LA JOLLA VILLAGE: MISSION VALLEY 20.**

**Spy Game.** Last day at the office of a retiring Company man, or CIA agent to you laymen, Robert Redford. He has just learned that his prize protege, Brad Pitt, has gotten himself arrested on an unauthorized mission in China, and is scheduled for execution in twenty-four hours. His superiors, mindful of delicate trade negotiations, seem willing to look the other way. The main area of interest in this so-called "game" (an indicator of Smiley cynicism instead of Bond idealism) is the limitation of the playing field to CIA headquarters: the long-distance string-pulling, the circumvention of official channels, the concealment of activities from the higher-ups, the whole cat and mouse chase through the bureaucratic labyrinth.

That's not to say the movie observes the classical unities of time (twenty-four hours), place (CIA headquarters), and action (the covert rescue operation). It's to say it could have observed them. What weakness this area of interest what shots holes in the three unities is the flashback structure that gives rise to a kind of covert highlight reel on the protagonist (as his mentor selectively fills in his bones on the deep background). The highlights, while naturally low in suspense, provide some action for action's sake. Or action, anyway, for the trailer's sake. Action for the sake of the trailer's sake. The highlights fail, however, to supply any reason why the old-timer would go to such lengths to bail out his understudy (when he had expressly told him, under similar circumstances, that he wouldn't). We are forced to fall back on the physical likehood of Redford to Pitt, and the fact that Pitt had in essence already played Redford in *A River Runs Through It* filling speculation on a sort of familial blood tie or at least maybe a fraternal bond between fellow native idiols. Stephen Dillane, Marianne Jean-Baptiste, Catherine McCormack; directed by Tony Scott. **2001.**

**LA JOLLA 12.**

**Vanilla Sky.** Cameron Crowe follows up his most "personal" work, the semi-autobiographical *Almost Famous*, with the uneventful Hollywood remake of an art-house import, Alejandro Amenabar's *Science Fiction and a Tennis Elbow*; *Open Your Eyes*. The most personal ingredient here, aside from the selection of idols on the soundtrack, appears to be the last letter worn by the intermittently disfigured Tom Cruise, looking in us uncannily like the horseface writer-director: a rather literal enactment of a storyteller's desire to live vicariously through his glamorous, gorgeous, girl getting her. (The star and director had worked together before on *Jerry Maguire.*) Still and always a crowd-pleaser above all, Cruise is at some pains to elucidate the obscurities the commentary and mood-setting pop songs, illustrative cutaways to help explain and emphasize continual repetition to allow slowpokes to keep pace, much elucidating. (How does Penelope Cruz, reprising her role from the Spanish original, feel about her first kiss from Tom? Perhaps there's a clue in her bewitching up and down on the couch after his departure, her squalling like a teenager at a Beatles concert, her running-in-place at sprint speed.) At bottom — and at the root of Hollywood's ongoing plunder of European cinema this is for people who need Tom Cruise and no subtlety in order to sit through a foreign film. Cameron Diaz, Jason Lee, Kurt Russell. **2001.**

**CABO MOUNTAIN: OLAH VISTA 10; FASHION VALLEY 18; FLOWER HILL 4; GROSSMONT CENTER: HAZARD CENTER 7; HORTON PLAZA 14; LA COSTA 6; MISSION VALLEY 12; LA PALOMA: MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; PALM SPRINGS 24; PARKSVILLE PLAZA 18; RANCHO DEL REY 15; SWEETWATER 9; TOWN SQUARE 14.**

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Write your ad below, listing the item for sale first, followed by its description (including price) and ending with the phone number. Each phone number counts as one word; ads over 25 words will be edited. Refer to the Table of Contents to determine the classified category you want. If you are unsure, the appropriate category will be assigned. No cancellations accepted. No refunds.

NAME
DAYTIME PHONE

CATEGORY
SIGNATURE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

This form is for $6 ad only.

EXP. DATE

NAME

CARD NUMBER

EXP. DATE

CARD NUMBER

EXP. DATE

CARD NUMBER

EXP. DATE

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EXP. DATE

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North County Reader January 3, 2002 113
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February 27, 2002

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1402 Farm & Ranch Maintenance & Operations
1403 Floral Design
1404 Horticulture
1407 Landscape Construction
1408 Landscape Maintenance
1411 Nursery Operations

ANIMAL CARE/VETERINARY ASSISTANT
1419 Veterinary Assistant/Animal Care
1419 Veterinary Receptionist

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1436 Auto Engine Performance/Emission Control
1433 Auto Engine Performance/Suspension/Steering/Brakes
1443 Auto Quick Service Technician
1433 Auto Suspension/Suspension/Steering/Brakes
1435 Auto Technology
1435 Auto Transmission/Drive Trains/Axles
1575 Safety, Energy & Trans. Tech/Electric Vehicle

CABINETMAKING/WOODWORKING
1455 Cabinetmaking
1455 Furniture Manufacturing/Finishing

COMMERCIAL CLEANING
1510 Commercial Cleaning

COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY
1492 Business/Computer Applications
1509 CISCO Network Academy
1515 Computer Applications
1530 Computer I & II Design
1647 Computerized Graphic Design
1732 Computer Repair/Networkers Services
1320 Digital Arts
1520 Multimedia Production
1533 Networking Technology (Info Tech and Networking)
1590 Web Master Maintenance & Security
1508 Web Page Design

CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGY
1701 Air Conditioning/Heating/Refrigeration
1336 Building Maintenance & Repair
1463 Cabinetmaking
1537 Construction Electrician
1536 Construction/General
1531 Masonry
1541 Plumbing
1548 Stagehand Technician

COSMETOLOGY
1545 Cosmetology
1545 Manicuring

CULINARY ARTS
1582 Culinary Arts/Chef Training
1586 Food Service & Culinary Arts
1587 Culinary Arts/Chef Training
1586 Food Service & Culinary Arts

DIESEL TECHNOLOGY
1530 Diesel Technology

DRAFTING/COMPUTER AIDED
1562 Drafting/Computer Aided

EDUCATION/CHILD CARE
1501 Child Care Occupations
1502 Group Home Training

ELECTRONICS
1572 Electronics Repair/Networkers Services
1569 Electronics Assembly & Technology
1572 Electronics Technician

ENGINE REPAIR
1567 Engine Repair/Industrial
1567 Engine Repair/Marine
1567 Engine Repair/Small & Motorcycle

FASHION DESIGN/PRODUCTION
1579 Fashion Production

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1462 Financial Services/Security

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1567 Printing/Graphics Technology
1532 Screen Printing
1532 Screen Printing

HOSPITALITY/TOURISM
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1510 Interior Design & Sales
1510 Upholstery

INTERNATIONAL TRADE
1510 International Trade

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1603 High Performance Manufacturing Technology (Waterfront)
1709 Plastic/Electric
1571 Robotics/Flexible Manufacturing Systems
1569 Welding/Metal Fabrication

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1690 Maritime Services

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1658 Fashion Merchandising
1480 Insurance Services
1581 Supermarket Operations
1661 Retail Economics
1661 Sales and Merchandising/Marketing
1732 Virtual Enterprise

MEDICAL/DENTAL
1608 Dental Assistant/RDA Eligible
1613 Medical Assistant/Clinical Laboratory
1613 Medical Assistant/Clinical Laboratory
1613 Medical Assistant/Administrative/Clinical
1622 Medical Assistant
1483 Medical Office
1483 Medical Office/Insurance Billing

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Palomar Community College (PC)
1140 West Mission Road #A-136, San Marcos, 760-744-1500

Ramona High School (R)
1401 Hanson Lane, Ramona, 760-797-4055

San Marcos District Office (SM)
1 Civic Center Drive, Ste. 300, San Marcos, 760-752-1272

Valleymont-Pauma Unified (VC)
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Sweetwater Union High School District (S)
Culinary Arts Center, 1353 2nd Avenue, Chula Vista • 619-691-5611

EAST COUNTY AREA
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8800 Grossmont College Drive, El Cajon • 619-644-7550

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3305 Buckman Springs Road, Pine Valley, 619-473-8601 x309

METRO AREA
San Diego City Schools (M)
11000 SW 3rd Avenue, San Diego, 619-535-0313

San Diego City College (CC)
8193 Health Science Center, 2645 Imperial Avenue, San Diego, 619-388-6851

North County Area
Carlsbad High School (CA)
3557 Monroe Street, Carlsbad 760-439-5738
OFF THE CUFF by Sue Greenberg

Anything you didn't do last year that you plan to do this year?

Cara Stookey
Sixth Grader
Ramona

I wish I would have spent more time with my family.

Kathy Stookey
More
Ramona

Probably shared Jesus with more people. It's an ongoing thing.

Brett Rose
Owner, Home's Cinnamon Rolls
Mission Beach

More involved with my kids' school stuff. I didn't get a chance to do as much because I was busy running my business, but next year I'm going to make more time for the kids, no matter what.

Vincent Chavez
Handyman
City Heights

Got more in shape. I didn't get around to it because I was lazy and busy. Hopefully this year I'll get to the gym. I have a membership, so I just have to make the time to be dedicated to it.

Aaron Lenke
Department Store Manager
Encinitas

More fishing. I like Lake Dixon up in North County. It's very peaceful. I'd like to do a little more rest and relaxation this year.
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THE READER PUZZLE
by David Levinson Wilk

Across
1. Flight controller?
2. In flight
3. Act on, an advice
4. Carpet layer's calculation
5. Actress Esther
6. Bridge toll unit
7. Sleepy person's comment
8. Tooth with a brown crown
9. Clickable image
10. Lose hope
11. Bridge strap
12. Floss followers
13. Recite part of the Greek alphabet
14. Give accolades to
15. Schleps
16. "... girl? (waiting room)
17. Worse than annoy
18. Parent's choice early on, or what you're doing to 20-, 26-, 28-, 49-, 51- and 56- across
19. Cleans a blackboard, say
20. Fever
21. Nebraska city
22. Hardly critique "Sweetest Taboo" singer
23. Finish a tango with the god of war
24. Big name in rental trucks
25. Grandson of Adam
26. Desert that are like, totally awesome
27. Delta deposit
28. Vocale
29. Transportation on the slopes
30. Only one
31. Enough to what one's lips
32. "... how!"
33. Pretty soon
34. "Bowing for Lefty" playwright
35. It has its share of problems

Down
1. Route
2. It may be money in the bank: Abbr.
3. Unhandled
4. Form of nonviolence
5. Second Amendment subject
6. Aerial maneuver
7. Newer
8. Pizzazz
9. "... Haute, Ind.
10. Bob, e.g.
11. "... Although"
12. Menance of the Plaza Hotel
13. Menance of the funny pages
14. Winding road shape
15. Deny and span
16. Correct: Prefix
17. "Que"
18. Boy or girl lead-in
19. Abu Dhabi leader
20. Lady of Spain
21. Dept, store sizes
22. German river
23. "Okay! Okay!" in Oxaca
24. First, second or reverse
25. It's heard at the ballpark
26. Cry of shock
27. Hardly gelled
28. One who gets what's coming
29. Southern Ukraine city
30. Subordinate
31. Famed Harlem theater
32. Quicken
33. Opposite of post-
34. Muse of lyric poetry
35. Dieter's lunch
36. Two tablets, maybe
37. That's all right?
38. The month of March
39. Cry to a shepherd
40. Long-distance letters
41. Show of team spirit

RULES OF THE GAME
1. The prize for solving the Reader Puzzle will be a Reader T-shirt.
2. All entries in the Reader Puzzle contest must be received by the Reader (addressed to Reader Puzzle, P.O. Box 830, San Diego, CA 92112-0830) by 9:00 a.m., Wednesday, six days following the issue date.
3. All entries must be accompanied by your name and address.
4. Enterprises of the Reader and their immediate families are not eligible.
5. In the event of disputes or ties, decisions of the judges will be final and arbitrary. We've only got five prizes each week to give away, so if there are more than five winners, we'll have a lottery.
6. All answers must be entered in the space allowed on the puzzle page. And please, no phone calls or trips to our office.

Solution to and winners of the Reader Puzzle for 12/20/81.

Of the 133 entries, 91 were correct.

The winners are:
1. Gary Blochak, San Diego
2. Don Tagge, San Marcos
3. Marge Weber, San Diego
4. Marilyn Contreras, Lemon Grove
5. Peter Garside, San Diego

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Free Online Placement: Ads submitted online receive e-mail responses and voice mail responses. Tell more about yourself and upload a photo, too! These features are free. Online placement deadline: 7 am, Saturday.

Music Of The Heart

I have come across a wonderful single, 55, financially secure, excellent dancer, beautiful, caring, honest, loves theater, music, travel, meaningful relationship. (11/17/00)

DOCTOR'S DILEMMA. 36, handsome, fun-loving, intelligent, single, seeks smart, young, lovely, cultured, intelligent, single, for a relationship. (11/17/00)

ITALIAN, 42, ROMANTIC, sincere, honest, good looks, seeks for what life has to offer, including a relationship and maybe marriage. Enjoy travel, music, romantic dining, movies and beach walk. Class, 1969, 233-9709.

NICE LOOKING, 35, blonde, brown hair, serious Italian, warm, charming, and intelligent single, seeks someone same. Open to all ages, races. (11/17/00)

HANDSOME, ATHLETIC 37, single, wants to date single, warm, honest, well-built, kind, respectful, seeks a down-to-earth woman with side 23-35. (11/17/00)

BALANCED, UNCOMMITTED, educated, fun, athletic, serious, warm, kind, seeks someone who will make me feel about the same. No games. (11/17/00)

MISSING YOU. 34, 6'2", dark, handsome, funny, nice, kind, very attractive. (11/17/00)

I AM A MEXICAN LADY between 35 and 40's, looking for someone to share my life with. We can have a marriage or maybe just a friends relationship. A little friendly help. I can give you a message. (11/17/00)

ATHLETIC, TALL, EXECUTIVE, 42, independent, strong, seeks a goodlooking, professional, smart, Mid- west values. Seeks compatible chemical engineer. Looking for a relationship. (11/17/00)

REAL NICE GUY, 59, EAST County, hike, surf, like good music, likes to talk, good sense of humor, is outgoing, kind, smart. (11/17/00)

Free More Placement Options: Can't get online? Fill the form below and mail or fax it to us. If faxing, please photocopy first. Fax/mail deadline: 7 am, Saturday.

Meet your match! Use the form below to place your free, 2-week Reader Matches Ad and get your free Voice Mailbox.

OPTIONAL HEADLINE: 20 characters per line including spaces; the first initial of each word is capitalized; abbreviations and unusual punctuation will not be accepted; the cost of line is $12. Continue on a separate sheet if necessary.

FREE AD DEADLINE: 7 am Saturday
Mail: Reader Matches, P.O. Box 8803, San Diego, CA 92116 Fax (619) 235-7907
Online: SanDiegoReader.com
LATE DEADLINE: 5 pm Tuesday
Fax: (619) 235-7907 Phone: (619) 235-8200
Walk-in: 1703 India St. (at Date St.) downtown

MATCHES are available for any ... of the opposite sex. Ads containing explicit or implicit sexual/erotic material will be rejected. Ads containing the word "babe" shall be seen as being unsuitable. Young people will be permitted. No dating services, singles clubs or commercial businesses may advertise in this section. The San Diego Reader reserves the right to reject any advertisement or to refuse an ad we believe may not be suitable.

We must have the following information. Please print.
Name
Address
City Zip
Phone (day) Phone (evening)

To receive e-mail responses, simply provide your address below. (Don't worry, your e-mail address will not be revealed.)
E-mail:
Choose One: □ Woman seeking a man □ Shared interests □ Man seeking a woman

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Headlines: $12 each line
First 25 words of printed ad: $12 each line
Additional words: $1.20 each word
Late fee (walk-in fee): $20
TOTAL: $50

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• Web ready
• Vibrates
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Back to back, the mercenary, Krusk, and the priest, Jozan, swing their weapons against the slow-witted wraiths that shambled from the mist. The two humans were on the go, their blades had spattered upon the rocks at their feet. Nearly exhausted, the cleric wielded his ax at the animated corpses, severing bone and rotted sinew, his forearms trembling with the strain. He prayed for the strength to cast a spell against the heinous servants of the Wyrm.

Jozan, initiate in the cult of the god Heironymous, turned his head to speak to his unlikely comrade-in-arms, the barbarian Krusk, from the frozen wastes to the north in Cimmeria. "I hope you are paid well, soldier. I would have thought no kingdom could hold coin enough in its coffers to join the Wyrm and his minions in open battle."

"Coin enough, priest." The half-orc, however, rasped in a voice like stinging gravel in a cave. "For you I pray you win favor in the eyes of your god of valor." The barbarian's words came through the misted breath and he blinked sweat, ichor, and blood from his eyes as he swung his broadsword in heroic arcs.

"It is neither for favor nor valor I fight, nor for orc, dwarf, human... not even god..." Before he could finish his revelation, the reason that brought him to these wastes, Jozan was silenced by horror.

From the mists rose a reptilian head, white-colored and tinged with the sickly color of severed nightmare. The eyes of the Wyrm were polished coals, black diamonds that burned in the light around them. The creature fixed the men with the dead gaze of undiluted evil.

These are the events unfolding in my mind's eye as I watch the players at a card table at Game Empire last Friday night. I probably have several things wrong, but you could spend years studying the finer points of Dungeons and Dragons. Many do.

The players are young, in their 20s mostly, and intense. At one table, the above action is taking place at the behest of godlike masters, some with complex dilemmas. Characters' fates are dictated by dice and scribbled pencil markings on lined paper.

D&D is only one of many RPGs — role-playing games — in progress this weekend eve. Twenty-one-year-old Arthur Cookman, for example, is engaged with James Stewart, 28, in a game of Mekton, a science fiction, future technology-based premise with Japanese animation roots. Cookman is partial to the D&D module, "The Apocalypse." The last entry is from the copyright realm of White Wolf: World of Darkness from Mind's Eye Theater. Cookman is bespectacled, earnestly informative, and not a little goofy in his burglary-fed jester's cap, complete with bells. "I also like to play Ascension, that's from the World of Darkness too. Magic: The Gathering is another. He also mentions Wraith, the Oblivion and Vampire Masquerade.

Stewart and Cookman involve themselves with game jargon and trade-subsidy fine points until they beg to speak English. "Okay, World of Darkness, Cookman explains, "is, like, think contemporary reality with a gothic horror touch. There are vampires and werewolves and normal humans, but the normal humans don't know about them. They're not supposed to.

"They don't want to know about it," Stewart clarifies.

"Think of it as this," Cookman says, "there's just this normal old Joe who, out of the blue, saw a werewolf. The normal Joe will go into a screaming rage and run away.

"Their minds can't handle it," Stewart nods with sympathetic resignation.

"That's a little it could cast a pall over things," I agreed. I had heard that a single game can go on for days, even years, and this is so. My guess is that it may depend on the nature of the character one is putting through paces, how compelling one's alter ego might be. "Describe one of your current characters, I ask.

"I like to play Maltavians," he says, "they're off-the-wall vampires — bokers."

"Uh... As opposed to rational vampires?"

"Ohh... yes. As a werewolf, I like to play Glass Walkers. It's a werewolf tribe that lives within cities. My Maltavian character is a multiple personality. He's got three different personalities. One is his core personality, Bob."

"What's Bob's?"

"He's a normal Joe except he comes out at night, goes to vampire meetings, does vampire stuff. The other one is John. John thinks he's a Brujah, a big, fightersque type that gets pissed and smashes things. The third personality is that of a six-year-old child. I call him Danny. He cycles through the other personalities when something is triggered."

"Uh huh."

"Danny's kind of a prankster. He's actually 300 years old — vampire years."

"Right. I am leafing through the D&D primer, looking at possibilities for characters: druids, elves, dwarves, orcs and half-orcs, half-elves, paladins, rangers, gnomes. Meanwhile, I am checking out the finely painted, fantasy/action/science fiction characters, monsters, and machines in the display cabinet. These include everything from dragons and futuristic battle-leviathans to 19th-century-looking British troops armed with proton blasters, or something, to be pitted against high-tech Zulu warriors in some space-opera recreation of the battle of Roark's Defin in the Boer War. Mmmm... I'm thinking albinos zuulu paladin, maybe half-elf or dwarf with supernatural powers, but hampered by manic-depression in his eternal war against chaos. No, too obvious, it must have been done."

"You know how a 6-year-old acts," Cookman is still talking about Danny, the 300-year-old 6-year-old cracked vampire prankster. "He does one thing one day and completely forgets whatever he did the day before so he's always...like...everything's always new to him."

"Whatever," I say, turning pages in the player's handbook. "Say, if you had a guy who was half-orc and half-dwarf, could he be a dorc?" I'm pretty much ignored.

"I'm kind of into the werewolf tribes called Stargazers," Stewart tells me. "They tend to be contemplative and into the martial arts."

"Of course," My attention is back on the next table. It seems the Wyrm has pretty much eaten the cleric and we may never know his motivation. Krusk will be no help for the next thousand years or so, as he is under the spell of the Wyrm's sorcerer who has rendered him catatonic except for full moons, during which time he can speak, but only lyrics to Gilbert and Sullivan songs. His crooning rune blade of doom will sing harmony, naturally.

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* Danny's kind of a prankster. He's actually 300 years old — vampire years. * Right. I am leafing through the D&D primer, looking at possibilities for characters: druids, elves, dwarves, orcs and half-orcs, half-elves, paladins, rangers, gnomes. Meanwhile, I am checking out the finely painted, fantasy/action/science fiction characters, monsters, and machines in the display cabinet. These include everything from dragons and futuristic battle-leviathans to 19th-century-looking British troops armed with proton blasters, or something, to be pitted against high-tech Zulu warriors in some space-opera recreation of the battle of Roark's Defin in the Boer War. Mmmm... I'm thinking albinos zuulu paladin, maybe half-elf or dwarf with supernatural powers, but hampered by manic-depression in his eternal war against chaos. No, too obvious, it must have been done. * You know how a 6-year-old acts," Cookman is still talking about Danny, the 300-year-old 6-year-old cracked vampire prankster. "He does one thing one day and completely forgets whatever he did the day before so he's always...like...everything's always new to him." * Whatever," I say, turning pages in the player's handbook. "Say, if you had a guy who was half-orc and half-dwarf, could he be a dorc?" I'm pretty much ignored. * I'm kind of into the werewolf tribes called Stargazers," Stewart tells me. "They tend to be contemplative and into the martial arts."

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Best Buys

-EVE KELLY

A wafer iron was not among the flood of gifts that poured upon me and my husband Patrick at our wedding reception. I took this as a sign that making waffles from scratch was not to be included among my domestic duties. (Who's going to iron, anyway?) At the years have rolled by and the children have accumulated, I have come to believe that the waffle iron (both toasting and waffling) has become a quintessential appliance, a conversation-starter, and a way to bond with your children.

The other morning, however, my culinary plan revealed a weak spot. My two-and-a-half-year-old actually pushed his morning waffle (complete with syrup) aside after one bite, preferring to munch on the accompanying sliced pear. I sized up the box that had contained the waffle mix and thought, "I could do better than this." I did, and the results were delicious!

I trembled at the thought of the chaos that might ensue on New Year's morning, but we were ready. We had made homemade waffles to the glee of my younger diners. So, I set off on an ultimate waffle quest. Six grocery stores later, my freezer was packed with brightly colored waffle boxes, all stuffed with dimpled, baker-breakfast sandwiches.

Our own stomachs were getting heavy by this point, but we soldiered on — for kids.

Later that evening, Patrick and I began our taste-testing. We began with the health food store varieties, in hopes of discovering a waffle that possessed the coveted mix of flavor and nutrition. I fired up the toaster oven; Patrick fried the bacon. Whiffs of vanilla curled into our noses as we opened the package of Vons All Natural Mini-Waffles ($2.65 for 7.5 oz. — eight sets of four tiny waffles). Sunshine Organic Market and Vans All Natural Belgian Waffles ($2.39 for 7.5 oz. — four waffles, Whole Foods). We toasted our mouthfuls through the light crust of the exter- nior and into the syrupy sponge cake interior of the Belgian. Patrick and I were delighted in the crêpe-dough texture and rich flavor. The smaller size of the mini-waffles made them tend more toward cracker crunchi- ness, but they retained their rich flavor of their Belgian cousins. Patrick thought they would be ideal vehicles for berries or whipped cream (or both). Both waffles were钙ium-enriched.

The first thing that struck our noses about the next two sampling — Whole Kids Organic Old-Fashioned Waffles ($1.99 for 8 oz. — six waffles, Whole Foods) and Henry's Buttermilk Waffles ($1.34 for 8 oz. — eight waffles), Henry's — was wheatiness. With Henry's, a pleasing sweetness was the front of the tongue. Whole Kids was soon drowned out by the buckwheat flavor of the finish, and the whole experience was hampered by a dry texture. Whole Foods waffles, on the other hand, integrated the wheat flour with a mild touch. The texture was similar to that of the Belgian, reminding us once again of crepes. Trader Joe's Whole Wheat Blueberry Waffles ($1.69 for 11 oz. — eight waffles, Trader Joe's) dodged the wheat bul- let — blueberries dominated both nose and tongue. But while the waffle maintained a moderate crisp- ness outside, the soggy, doughy middle tended to make you stick to the edges.

Our own stomachs were getting heavy by this point, but we soldiered on — for the kids — toward the conventional grocery-store offer- ings. Patrick grimaced as he pulled out a rectangular waffle from the Pillsbury Hung- ry Jacks' Buttermilk Waffles ($2.69 for 19 oz. — 16 waffles, Vons). "These feel like wet sponges." Once they were toasted, they felt like dry sponges in our mouths, boasting a yeasty flavor to boot. We went from bad to worse with the Aunt Jemima Buttermilk Waffles ($2.18 for 12.5 oz. — 10 waffles, Food 4 Less). Their sickly white pallor foreshadowed their resistance to browning. They smelled of corn syrup but were void of even that flavor. They taste like styrofoam pancakes, muttered Patrick as he choked a bite down.

We sought refuge in a waffle not produced by a brand known primarily for its syrup (as opposed to Aunt Jemima) — Kellogg's Eggo Organic Whole-Grain Waffles ($2.49 for 12.3 oz. — 10 waffles, Vons). Patrick rendered his judgment: "Eggo is a good middle-of-the-road waffle — not offensive, not gourmet, with a decent crunch and a crispy, moist center."

The Eggo knockoff — the aforementioned Vons store brand ($1.92 for 12.5 oz. — 16 waffles, Vons) — surpassed Eggo in the flavor department; it was sweeter and creamier. But it was clear why my son had pushed it away: the interior was as soggy as a river-bottom, even though I toasted it twice as long as the Eggo.

Last, we sampled the surprise bargain best buy of the night: Heritage Farm Home- style Waffles ($1.28 for 12.3 oz. — 10 waffles, Food 4 Less). Their hearty crunch and light, airy interior got raves, and we knew their sweetness would win them a place in our kids' hearts. Our top pick of the night was the Vans waffle (both Belgian and mini), followed by Whole Foods' Whole Kids waffles and Her- itage Farm.

I was so enamored with the flavor of the Vans waffles that I called the company office in Torrance. I spoke with Marketing Director Peter Seitz. "Vans waffles started as a retail concept in Redondo Beach," Seitz informed me. "The "All Natural" part of the name means that the waffles contain no artificial preservatives or ingredients, though calcium is added to some. "Flavor profile is very impor- tant to us," explained Seitz, "but the goal of our company's goals is to make a quality, nutritious product that is also good-tasting. Calcium is good for everybody, like women fighting osteoporosis, and it's a key issue also with kids. Sometimes, you try to take those calcium pills...I mean, those are big critters."

When all was said and done, I still wanted to come in a home without a waffle iron.
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The Pulling Problem

I often see articles in newspapers and magazines about working women who feel pulled in too many directions. Their bosses want them to spend more time at work. Their kids want them to spend more time attending class parties and soccer games. Their husbands want them to spend time in the evenings and on weekends. And the women's career would, could like some time for themselves.

I don't work outside the home. But I'm not unsympathetic to this pulling problem. Most mornings, I start out the day with a set of goals hanging somewhere above my sleepy head.

(1) To pay enough attention to my five children to ensure each one gets what he or she needs, both physically and psychologically.

(2) To make sure my husband doesn't feel completely neglected.

(3) To keep my house from being declared a health hazard.

To eat at least one bite of warm food without someone calling out, "Mommy, could you come please with me to the bathroom?" I'm not always successful.

Two weeks before Christmas, I had a lot to do before I could sit down and enjoy gifts placed on the counter and asked, "Can I have my medicine now?"

I poured the sticky, purple liquid into a dosage cup and handed it to her. Angela held it to her mouth, just as the supplement I'd been giving her, reached her lips, she coughed. Purple goo splashed onto the tile floor. "I'm sorry," Angela cried.

"That's okay," I told her. I used a wet rag to wipe up the medicine. A large, sticky circle remained in spite of my best efforts. I glanced at the clock. It was time to put on shoes and brush her hair. I called out.

Angela sat listlessly in the car while I drove to school and then dropped Lucy at preschool. When we got home, she curled up on the couch. "Can we watch something on PBS?" Johnny asked.

"Sure," I answered.

While I cleaned up the breakfast dishes, made the beds, put away the previous day's laundry and started a new load, Johnny and Angela watched Clifford and Cat in the house. "What's he?" he asked and pointed to a stuffed bear on Rebecca's bed.

"That's a bear," I told him. "Can you say 'bear'?

He hesitated. "Dat," he said.

"No, no 'dat.' Bear.

"Dat," Ben said and laughed.

I love you, guys," I told them. For now, the floor could wait.