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BREAKING NEWS

Hypocrisy, Inc.  When it comes to his beloved Chargers, billionaire Alex Spanos doesn’t mind seeking and receiving special privileges nobody but an NFL owner could get out of local government. That’s exemplified by his hiring of Mark Fabiani to make the rounds of the county’s smaller cities in search of a friendly jurisdiction that will ante up free land, rezonings, fee waivers, tax rebates, naming rights, and whatever other manner of concessions the Spanos team says are required to build a new football stadium. So it’s more than a bit ironic that the developer’s representatives have been berating the city of Stockton for doing the owner of a downtown movie theater a big favor by shielding it from the competitive onslaught of a mega shopping center.

The story begins back in 1999, when the Stockton City Council amended its general plan to prohibit the construction of multi-screen movie theaters anywhere within the city limits except in the downtown redevelopment area. City fathers had shelled out a lot of the citizenry’s tax money for the $300 million redevelopment project and wanted to guarantee the success of its crown jewel, the 16-screen City Centre Cinemas, which, it seems, is currently about the only reason the area’s denizens venture into downtown Stockton after business hours. “That Cineplex is doing well because half their customers come from north of March Lane,” city redevelopment director Steve Pinkerton recently told the Stockton Record. If those people went somewhere else, he observed, “We would be below the threshold that makes that Cineplex profitable.”

Enter Stockton resident and benefactor Spanos, seeking to erect a rival 16-plex in his new retail center. His emisaries implored the City to lift the ban on new multiplexes, using the laissez-faire argument that no matter how important the downtown theater is to the well-being of the redevelopment project, municipalities shouldn’t be in the business of doing special favors for developers. Dean Plassaras, a Spanos consultant, had a quick response to those who fear that the City’s downtown redevelopment area will collapse if Spanos is allowed to build the new complex: “Outsiders, they judge us very sternly,” he told the Record. “They’re not going to sit down and hear the story...of one neighborhood’s special needs...They are going to say, ‘You have a special ordinance restricting us? Why did you do that?”

Last week the city council sided with Spanos, voting to clear the way for the movie complex.

Switching  San Diego school board member Mitzi Lee, who in June filed papers declaring her intent to run next year for the District 5 city council seat being vacated by termed-out Brian Mainschein, has dropped out of that race, saying that an impending school district budget crunch and the arrival of a new superintendent require her continued presence on the board of education. Lee’s departure from the council battle in favor of a board reelection bid appears to be another big break for Fifth District contender and fellow Republican Carl DeMaio, the self-styled good-government maven who has been raking up big money and endorsements, including that of the county’s Republican Central Committee. The committee’s endorsement will allow members of the local GOP to funnel all the funds they can raise into an independent campaign on behalf of DeMaio, using the state’s so-called member communications exemption from the city’s $270-a-person lid on individual contributions to council candidates. Some familiar names from San Diego campaigns past are making appearances in the GOP’s presidential deity. They include pollster Dick Dresser, a one-time Roger Hedgecock stalwart currently working for Mike Huckabee, and Ken Ritz, who is advising the ill-fated mayoral campaign of Dick Carlson against Hedgecock.

Foibles  Hold on to your checkbook: an employee of the City-owned San Diego Convention Center is enabling local groups asking for participants to join a new Convention Center Expansion Task Force to help drum up public support for growing the downtown’s massive convention center even bigger. The current structure blocks the waterfront for almost a half-mile...Mission Valley environmentalist who’s been battling a big office building proposal there, says somebody hacked his website last week, erasing everything on it: “I had an easy-to-guess password, which in retrospect was dumb.”...Sempra Energy and San Diego–based United Domestic Workers of America each contributed $5000 to the California Community Empowerment Foundation at the behest of state Democratic senator Mark Ridley-Thomas, the foundation’s chairman. According to a blurb on its website, the group “strategically drives public policy discussions in California with independent and reliable analysis which includes synthesized reporting from the Days of Dialogue (DOD) and Empowerment Congress programs.”

A Million Here, A Million There...

On November 14 of last year, the Securities and Exchange Commission, after probing the City of San Diego’s deliberate concealment of ugly financial facts in its bond filings, concluded that “The City through its officials, acted with scienter...That means San Diego acted with the intent to deceive, manipulate, or defraud. It committed willful securities violations. It did not simply act recklessly.” The agency noted that in its bond prospectuses, the City had failed to reveal the intentional underfunding of its pension plan that would result in an unfunded liability of $2 billion by 2009. Its annual pension contribution would quadruple by 2009, and the City would need new sources of revenue. “The City through certain of its officials, knew that its disclosures were misleading,” said the federal commission.

You would think City financial officials would be chastened. One has to wonder. At this year’s April 19 city council meeting, officials were boasting about how the pension system’s unfunded liability had been reduced by more than $390 million because of several factors, one of which was an improvement in the stock market. Councilmember Donna Frye noticed that one reduction was for $22.8 million because of “proper treatment of IRS benefit limitations.” She asked Jay Goldstone, the City’s head bean counter, what that was all about. Well, a lot of San Diego retirees and potential retirees will receive benefits so fat that they exceed Internal Revenue Code Section 415 limits for the City’s pension plan. These include, for example, top-level bureaucrats who retire with an annual payment that is more than 100 percent of their yearly working years’ pay.

Because the IRS sets limits on the amount a retiree may receive from a 401(a) pension plan such as the City’s, the obligation to pay benefits that exceed IRS Section 415 limits has to be shifted from the pension system to a separate pension fund, called the Preservation of Benefits Plan. That money will come from the City’s ailing general fund. Frye asked Goldstone how much the City would have to ante up to the fund in the current year. Oh, said Goldstone, he had budgeted half a million dollars. After the April council meeting, she wrote a memo to Goldstone asking for more information on this general fund obligation. Goldstone responded in September but never told Frye that in February, two months before the April city council meeting, the pension folks had informed her that the City would need new sources of revenue. "They’re not going to sit down and hear the story...of one neighborhood’s special needs...They are going to say, ‘You have a special ordinance restricting us? Why did you do that?’ “
Cabbages and Monarchs

By Ernie Grimm

The definition of “easy to get to” changes depending on what side of the border you’re on. In the United States, if you had to drive on a rutted dirt road to get to someplace, you wouldn’t call that place easy to get to. In Mexico, the phrase apparently is used more loosely. Otherwise, Verónica Palafox wouldn’t call that place easy to get to someplace, you wouldn’t call that place easy to get to. In Mexico, the phrase apparently is used more loosely. Otherwise, Verónica Palafox wouldn’t call that place easy to get to.

From San Ysidro, you make your way to Playas de Tijuana, go south down the toll road 15 miles or so, then turn northeast up the Boulevard 2000, a brand-new four-lane divided highway that runs between Rosarito and eastern Tijuana. (It’s called the Boulevard 2000 highway that runs between Rosarito and eastern Tijuana. (It’s called the Boulevard 2000 highway that runs between Rosarito and eastern Tijuana. (It’s called the Boulevard 2000 highway that runs between Rosarito and eastern Tijuana. It didn’t open until 2007.) After about a dozen scenic miles through chaparral ranch country, you see hand-painted signs for “mariposas,” which means butterflies. Turn right, ease around the giant pulley, and travel up a smooth, sandy road for about a mile. Then the sand gives way to hard dirt littered with thousands of softball- and volleyball-sized stones. Deep ruts running perpendicular to the direction of travel cause your car to bounce up and down and occasionally bottom out on a crest. When you think your oil pan will rupture on the next stone, a narrow ranch road splits off to the right between two lines of towering eucalyptus trees. A half mile up this road and you’ll see what looks like a greenhouse, but instead of plastic or glass, black sun-filtering netting covers the steel-tube frame.

Inside this 15-by-15-foot enclosure, potted plants grow everywhere. On a table in the center stands a nasturtium. Its light green stems contrast with its darker, round leaves.

Palafox, a petite 33-year-old dressed in designer jeans, magenta sweater, and oversized sunglasses, turns over one of the leaves. On the underside near one edge lie what look like 12 grains of saffron rice. “These are eggs,” she explains, “of the cloudless sulphur butterfly. It’s a yellow butterfly we raise here.”

Palafox swivels her head and scans the enclosure. “Ah,” she says, “here’s one.” Against one wall, a two-and-a-half-inch yellow butterfly stands on a pointy-leaved cassia plant. It holds its wings together straight above its body, revealing two silver dots and several black markings under each wing. “This is one of the species we raise, along with monarch butterflies and a white butterfly native to Baja California called Pieris rapae,”

No Pieris rapae — known in the United States as cabbage white butterflies — are in the enclosure today. “Another part of our business is doing butterfly releases,” Ceron, a clean-cut 32-year-old stylishly dressed in jeans and a tan corduroy jacket, explains. “And we’ve done quite a few lately. So we’re out of white butterflies right now. We do the releases at weddings, quinceañeras.”

Funerals?

“Well,” Ceron suppresses a chuckle, “we can’t do funerals because we don’t get enough lead time. We need a few weeks’ time to produce enough butterflies for a release. You don’t get that with funerals. So most of our business is weddings.”

“We release them as the bride walks out of the church,” Palafox explains. “There’s a legend in Mexico that butterflies at a wedding bring good fortune to the bride and groom. Sometimes the father of the bride, sometimes the priest, reads the legend as we release the butterflies.”

It’s Palafox’s turn, when she’s asked if the released butterflies return home like pigeons, to suppress a chuckle. “No,” she answers, “they just continue their life cycle in the wild. The white butterfly lives for 15 days. And sometimes we release monarch butterflies, which live 30 days.”

Against the back wall of the enclosure opposite the door grows a vine with thick, hand-sized leaves. One blossom, as big as a salad plate, grows on the vine. Its ten outer petals are purple tipped with white, as are its two layers of spiky inner petals. “All of our visitors ask about that plant,” Palafox says. “It’s called passion flower. It is very beautiful.”

An archive of City Lights stories can now be searched on the Internet at www.SanDiegoReader.com
A million here
continued from page 6

him that this year’s obligation was estimated to be $639,000. Now, says Frye, it’s at least that much and possibly more than $1 million. And she did not get that information from Goldstone. She had to track it down herself.

She had also requested the information from David Wescoe, chief executive officer of the pension system, who, similarly, had failed to disclose what the officials knew back in February. She took him to task in a letter, and he wrote back that he didn’t like her tone.

The $22.8 million relates to future retirement payments to employees currently on the payroll. But there is also $8.2 million that has already been paid from the pension system in excess of Internal Revenue Code Section 415 limits. That sum has gone to 102 mainly high-ranking retired bureaucrats. The payments include $213,000 between 2005 and 2007 to former city attorney Casey Gwinn, $201,506 to former deputy city manager Bruce Herring, and $376,830 to former assistant police chief Keith Enerson. Herring was formerly on the board of the San Diego City Employees’ Retirement System (SDCERS), and Enerson had once been its president. That $8.2 million will likely become a City liability also.

In a letter to Councilmember Scott Peters, Wescoe referred to the $8.2 million as “a modest sum,” points out Frye. After all, pooh-poohed Wescoe, it was less than 1 percent of their total pension debt. “To me, it’s an arrogant statement and reflects a cavalier attitude about the public’s money,” says Frye. “We sit here at council meetings trying to cobble together $50,000 to fund basic services, and then I see a memo that essentially says, ‘What is $8 million? Well, that $8 million would help pay for a fire helicopter, brush management, sidewalk and pothole repairs, or community plan updates.’

Then there is the deferred retirement option plan, known as DROP. It is double-dipping at its worst. Employees at the average age of 53 say they will retire in five years. They continue drawing their salaries. At the same time, 90 percent of their highest one-year salary is plopped into their personal retirement kitty, growing at 8 percent a year and adjusted for cost of living. So they retire not only with a monthly annuity payment, but also a fat lump sum. And that pot of gold comes even though they enjoy considerably higher salaries and benefits than workers in the private sector.

On November 2, Frye wrote a memo to the City administration, noting that on July 14, 2006, the Internal Revenue Service had written to the pension system (in response to a letter from a pension system attorney) suggesting that it obtain a private letter ruling regarding these DROP benefits. The IRS sent a second letter February 13 of this year, suggesting the same thing. The pension system flatly says it won’t request a private letter ruling from the IRS, and the City has not answered Frye’s letter. So she wrote another memo December 7 requesting that Peters docket the matter for a city council meeting. “Has anyone ever determined if we have tax status under DROP?” asks Frye. “We need to ask the IRS if DROP complies with all the applicable provisions of the Internal Revenue Service code. SDCERS tells me it is not aware of the IRS questioning the legality of the DROP program. That is like saying the sewage out of Point Loma is safe even though we have never tested it for viruses.”

City Attorney Mike Aguirre recently learned that the City’s outside auditor neglected to state in the newly completed 2005 financial report that the 102 retired bureaucrats had received the $8.2 million in defiance of IRS regulations. Aguirre wrote to the auditing firm, Macias Gini & O’Connell, noting that it had said in the transmittal letter for the report that the amount of the excess payments was unknown. But the firm, which also represents SDCERS, had been aware of the information for two months, Aguirre stated.

On December 5, Goldstone says he would attach a cover letter in the financial statements that will include the information. “SDCERS has illegally paid out benefits in excess of Section 415 limits from the pension plan, but at the time, the system was managed by people who have been terminated,” said Goldstone. “Nevertheless, this was wrong. SDCERS’ new management recognized the errors.”

The upshot: on December 7 the Union-Tribune wrote a silly story, moaning that Macias Gini & O’Connell was afraid Aguirre might sue it. This could impact the timing and costs of future audits. In both the story and a sillier editorial the next day, the newspaper heaped all the blame on Aguirre for insisting that the disclosure be correct. Does anyone remember that the SEC, said last year that the City committed willful securities violations?
CITI LIGHTS

A million here

continued from page 8

violations? It seems the message has already been forgotten by the City administration and its toady, the Union Tribune.

But on December 13, Goldstone relented. He said he would open up the 2005 audit and include the information Aguirre and Frey wanted.

Cabbages monarchs

continued from page 7

ful, but it’s also needed to raise a butterfly called the Gulf fritillary. It’s an orange butterfly like the monarch but smaller. A lot of people ask, ‘Is that plant plastic?’ We say, ‘No, it’s not plastic. It’s real.’ In fact, at first we didn’t sell the plants here. But we were explaining to people about the larvae and eggs on the certain plants. And they were asking, ‘Would you sell us this plant?’ So we started selling the plants too.”

About 100 yards across dusty ranch land — nine acres of which Cerón and Palafox rent for the butterfly operation — lies Le Papillon’s larger butterfly enclosure. This one’s about 50 feet long, 20 feet wide. Other than the gravel path, which makes an oval circuit through the enclosure, every inch inside is covered in flowering plants — lantana, margarita, geranium, bougainvillea, and more.

“The plants are for the nectar,” Cerón explains. “Butterflies will eat nectar from almost any plant.”

“We also cut slices of apple for them to eat,” Palafox adds. Twenty-five or 30 orange-and-black monarch butterflies flutter around, sometimes alighting on the plants, sometimes on the netting, and sometimes on the plate of apple slices that sits on a stand in one corner. The ten humanas in the building stand mute and watch the winged insects fly about. There’s something hypnotic about the silent fluttering. Their flight paths are never straight, and they look as if a light breeze would knock them to the ground. But they’re harder than they appear. Monarch butterflies migrate from Canada to central Mexico every year.

“We usually have a lot more butterflies in here,” Palafox says, “but, as my husband said, ‘we’ve done a lot of releases lately.’

How do you catch them?” Like this.” Cerón approaches a butterfly sitting on the net. It flies away when it reaches for it. He approaches another, reaches out, and gently pinches the wings together between his thumb and forefingers. The creature’s six legs and two antennae wriggle in protest to this treatment. Cerón releases it and smiles as he watches its irregular flight to a nearby orange-flowered lantana. “That’s how you catch them.”

“But we don’t catch them for wedding releases,” Palafox says. “The ones we release we raise in containers. They go from eggs to caterpillars to butterflies all in the container. And when they’re two or three days old we release them. If we don’t need them for weddings or quinceañeras, we release them in here.”

On its opening weekend, in mid-November, Le Papillon had 500 visitors, though not all were paying customers. “We invited a lot of people,” Palafox explains. The plan for Palafox and Cerón — who work day jobs in management at two of Tijuana’s maquiladoras — is to attract school field trips. “We pay a company that does marketing to the schools. There is no way we could go to every school to pitch this. But the company we work with has contacts with over 1000 schools. So they print a brochure that they send to all of their schools. They bring busloads of kids, and we get two dollars per kid.”

In addition to field trips, the couple hopes to attract Tijuana’s city dwellers for a day in the country. They plan to build a playground for kids. And they’re working on permits to import more exotic species of butterflies. They charge $30 pesos (about $3) per visitor. “The idea is that families will be able to come and spend the whole day with us,” Cerón says. “Kids love it here. In T1, we don’t have a lot of parks and play spaces, and the houses are very small. Here, we have butterflies and room to run. It’s a very safe place to play — except for the rattlesnakes.”
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**The Mess We Have**

Joe Deegan’s story about the lack of restrooms for trolley riders (“Pressing Need,” “City Lights,” December 13) presents an opportunity for some entrepreneurial spirit to make a killing at peddling. I know there are cities where private companies put up public restrooms, garlanded with adverts and designed for easy cleaning. The ads pay for the service, or they have coin slots, which tend to keep the riffraff out. San Diego Metropolitan Transit should try that. Or, if you’re a guy, “truckers bombs” work well. Wide-mouthed sports drinks, like Gatorade, are easier to use than litter soda bottles.

But it’s a damn shame that just adds to the shame of one of the worst-planned “rapid transit” systems in the world. I complained about this years ago when the Tijuana trolley was in the planning stages — it should have been elevated over all major intersections, or it should have been run up the center divide of the freeways. The rides should have been kept cheap. I’ve ridden the subways in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and London, UK — they’re so much better planned and operated than the mess we have in San Diego.

Dale Jennings via email

Buffett Built

I am Don Bauder’s biggest fan. He is the Upton Sinclair (a true muckraker) of San Diego, and we are fortunate to have him (the Union-Tribune’s loss). His philosophy should be, “If you can’t say anything ‘bad’ about anyone, don’t say anything at all.” So why write about Charles Brandes (“Brandes Defies Market,” ”City Lights,” December 13)! Ho-hum! No-one “badder” to write about?

He goes on to say “Buffett built a company, Berkshire Hathaway, that takes positions in stocks that he believes have intrinsic values the market has overlooked.” Actually, having been born and raised in Providence, Rhode Island, I know that Berkshire Hathaway was founded there in the 1800s as a textile manufacturing company by the Chace family, who to this day are one of the largest shareholders of Berkshire Hathaway stock. They owned mills from the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts to Hathaway, Rhode Island, hence the name.

When textiles moved south, another Providence company, Textron, also began in the textile business and, under the tutelage of Royal Little, was to become the first “conglomerate”; that is, a company whose sole purpose is to own other companies (Bell Helicopter, Cessna, etc.). Mr. Callaway of golf fame was formerly of Textron but couldn’t convince them the golf industry had a future.

Mr. Buffett built Berkshire Hathaway into a conglomerate.

Lee J. Juskalian

Encinitas

Don Bauder responds: I don’t disagree. What we’re haggling about is the word “built.” The company was founded long before Buffett was born. Buffett built it into the behemoth it is today.

**Comments from Reader Website**

**Blurt**

**Published December 12**

**Posted by Lemac on 12/13/07, 2:50 p.m.**

I’m not knocking Jay Allen Sanford’s writing, what I am saying is that I’ve seen plenty of really great local shows come to San Diego and never see a write up on them, which suprises me. Instead, I get reviews of shows from when I was a tot or not born (which, from time to time can be interesting, for sure, but I hear those from mom and pop too) OR what the buffet line was at Gwen Stefani’s concert tour. Would just like to see more current shows/music/artists get recognized.

**Music Review**

**Published December 12**

**Posted by John Paul Osborn on 12/15/07, 8:15 a.m.**

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BeadingBox

By Patrick Daugherty

New England Patriots vs. Tiger Woods

Remember when the Patriots were the baddest team in the NFL? They’d come to your town, cram small children on their way to the goal line, run up the score until it was 63 to 9, throw a 60-yard pass for a touchdown with three seconds left in the fourth quarter, avert at your women, deride your manhood, and stride off the field looking like an SS-Panzer-Generalkommando victory parade. Let’s face it, North America was seared with fear.

The New England Patriots are unbeatable, guaranteed to go 16 and 0 in the regular season, then 2-0 through the playoffs, then win Super Bowl XXLI and finish at 19-0. Nobody has seen anything like this since television went to 500 channels.

The one possible upset to the Pats is the Pats, who have been trying to lose for the past month. No, I don’t mean plotting, scheming, or paying a coach to videotape the 3-11 New York Jets at practice hoping to steal pointers on how to lose. That would be wrong. Besides, they’re already done that.

No, the real upset is that weird thing that happens in sports, otherwise known as, “playing down to the level of your opponent.” There’s a tug, a tidal, primordial force that causes human beings to group together. If you’re a much better tennis player than Tom, and you start practicing with him, pretty soon you’re going to be only a little better than Tom. And, conversely, the quickest way to improve your tennis is to play against someone who is much better than you. If you’ve played one-on-one sports — table tennis, pool, squash — you know what I mean.

Back to the Patriots… The Pats haven’t covered the spread in three out of the past four weeks. They could have lost three of those games, and should have lost two.


The Jets, a 3-10 team going in, played the Pats straight up in the second half.

Week 14, Pittsburgh at New England. The spread is 12 points. Pats win 34 to 13. Cover.

Week 13, New England at Baltimore. The spread is 21.5 points. Pats win 27 to 24. Do not cover.


New England is at home against Miami on Sunday and will win that one. But, New England’s next game, their last game, the one on December 29, on the road against the New York Giants, that one could be interesting.

The Giants have lost three in a row, their last defeat, 22-10, was at home against the Redskins. To make it worse, four-time Pro Bowl tight end Jeremy Shockey acquired a broken left fibula during the contest and is out for the season. And then there is the Eli Manning problem and the Tom Coughlin problem.

Here’s the deal: The Pats are in the postseason, have earned a bye week and home-field advantage throughout the playoffs. The Giants will make the playoffs on Sunday if they win or tie Buffalo or if Washington and New Orleans lose or tie.

Buffalo (7-7) is out of the playoffs but has a good chance of beating New York on Sunday. They beat Washington two weeks ago. Washington plays Minnesota away and is the dog by 6 1/2 points. I don’t expect them to win, but you never know. New Orleans plays Philly at home and the Eagles could win that one.

We want this to go easy because if it does, that will set up the 15-0 Pats going for a perfect season vs. the 9-6 Giants needing a win to make the playoffs.

There is the pressure of losing week after week, but that’s nothing compared to the pressure of winning week after week. Which brings us to golf and Tiger Woods. Stay with me. It’s not that Tiger wins so much or has won at all. It’s that he’s still (11 years plus since turning pro) so far out in front of everybody else.

On Sunday, Woods won the Target World Challenge, the last tournament of 2007, for the fourth time. He shot 22 under par. Second place, seven shots back, was this year’s Masters champion Zach Johnson. Woods hasn’t played golf since September 30.

Eighth-place finisher Colin Montgomerie wrapped it up: “Doesn’t help us, does it? If he took a bloody year off, it wouldn’t help.”

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San Diego Reader December 20, 2007 7
“Are you headed to Ballroom 20?” I asked a woman as she strode through the Convention Center foyer.

She needled me, assessing, “What’s in Ballroom 20?”

“A Muslim woman is addressing a delegation of Jews.”

“Oh, Are you with the conference?”

“No, I’m press.”

She warmed up after that, and I suppose her caution was understandable. Here was a guy with no ID and a black bag asking about Islamic Society of North America president Dr. Ingrid Mattson’s address to the Union for Reform Judaism Biennial Convention on the importance of Muslim-Jewish dialogue. A sensitive subject — the sort of thing that might provoke a strong reaction from either side.

Mattson’s address came as a sort of bookend to the one given last August by union president Rabbi Eric Yoffie at ISNA’s annual convention in Chicago. In that speech, Yoffie had said, “To all those who desire God’s name by using religion to justify killing and terror, let us say together, ‘Enough. No one honors God if they do not honor the image of God in every human being. No one gets to heaven by creating hell on earth.’” Yoffie praised ISNA’s denunciation of terror and violence, but said that “our task is not done until the message is truly heard and others in the world join you.... Surely, here in America, as Muslim and Jew, we have a unique opportunity to reclaim our common heritage and to find the common path. Brothers and sisters, let us begin.”

Yoffie received a standing ovation, but not everyone was thrilled. In his Shabbat sermon the day before Mattson’s address, Rabbi Yoffie had told the conventioners that “in the broader Jewish community, we have heard many loud voices of reaction, including the suggestion that we reconsider because of the need to maintain ‘the unity of the community.’ Let it be plainly said: this is nonsense.... We have had quite enough of the shrill voices who profess to speak in our name and who use the slogan of ‘unity’ to impose their views on the moderate majority.... Some Jews, we know, have made common cause with fundamentalist preachers who describe Muslim Americans in near-Satanic terms. But if these Jews are not protecting such attacks with all the power at their disposal, they should be ashamed of themselves.... Jews have never taught hatred as an answer to hatred, and we will not begin now.”

Singer Dan Nichols opened Sunday’s plenary session with a couple of modern folk songs, starting with a low, thrilling, minor-key chant over acoustic guitar work that was sharp to the point of being fierce. Then he shifted to spoken word: “I saw the posters at the Golden Union Camp! I saw the posters in the lobby of Temple Shir Shalom in West Bloomfield Michigan, Michigan! In Jerusalem at 4 p.m. But I wasn’t prepared for what Jerusalem would sound like at four in the afternoon! I turned to my tour guide and I said, ‘What is that?’ and he said, ‘It’s the call to prayer!’ And I said, ‘It doesn’t sound like the Baruchu to me!’ And he said, ‘Dan, those are mosques, all over town....’ And I stood there for the very first time... hearing that sound in 360 swirl, and I was inspired. It touched me. Maybe we have things to share; maybe we have things to learn....”

To that end, the President’s Message Committee was putting before the convention a draft resolution on Jewish-Muslim dialogue, which had as its principal goal the approval of an effort to promote “a new program....Children of Abrahams: Muslims and Jews in Conversation.” The program was “based on building relationships through mutual understanding...including a structured dialogue guide.” The goal was for individual Jewish communities to partner with individual Muslim communities. “There exists in our community a profound ignorance about Islam,” read the resolution’s preamble, “along with a real desire to learn about what....motivates Muslims today.”

Statements were taken, pro and con. A Jewish doctor who worked in “the heart of Arab London” spoke in favor of the resolution, saying that “Islamophobia...steeps our entire world,” and that “there are huge numbers of Muslims...that are moderates.”

But it wasn’t all friendly rhetoric. A rather August gentleman to my left shook his head as he read the first sentence: “We live in a world in which religion is manipulated to justify the most horrific acts, a world in which Islamic extremists constitute a profound threat.” (Though it was followed by, “For some, this is a reason to flee from dialogue, but in fact the opposite is true.”) And a speaker from a Jewish congregation in Fountain Valley said that he liked “the very large bulk of this thing,” but objected to the line, “When we are killing each other in the name of God, sensible religious people have an obligation to do something about it.”

“I’m aware that one side is killing the other in the name of God,” he said, “but not vice versa.”

“Oh, come on,” said the fellow to my left with apparent frustration, but there was a smattering of applause, and the speaker continued. “I was in Israel all spring. I visited the blockhouse on the Lebanese border, where Israeli troops are doing what they must to defend Israel. I heard no animosity toward Muslims...except from the standpoint of, ‘We need to defend our homeland.’ I think this is a totally asymmetric situation.... If you’d care to say, ‘When there is killing in the name of God,’ that’s a true statement. But we are not ‘killing each other in the name of God.’” More applause followed, stronger now.

Rabbi Yoffie took the podium and responded: “I think the point is a valid point. The wording was more of a rhetorical device than an effort at political analysis.... I would accept an amendment that says, ‘When killing is carried out in the name of God.’” No one raised a hand in opposition, and the motion carried.

Next week: Mattson’s speech.

— Matthew Lickona

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Best Buys

2008 is almost upon us, and the Kelly household is going to party. And party for many reasons: new babies, new engagements, new pets, and new friends.

We haven’t thrown a New Year’s Eve bash in a few years. The disco ball needs a dusting; noisemakers need to be bought, as does the champagne. For the champagne, I need to get some recommendations before blindly buying.

First call went out to Matt Francke, owner of San Diego Wine Company. We started with terminology. “The difference between sparkling wine and champagne is that when you call something champagne, it literally has to come from the Champagne region of France,” Francke explained. “Everything else is called sparkling wine.”

Nonvintage on the bottle means that “there is no particular year that all the grapes were picked that are going into that bottling. The grapes could have been picked from a number of different years, and normally they are current vintages, current years like ’06, ’07, maybe back to ’04 but most likely not.”

And with regard to brut, or extra dry, “that refers to a kind of dryness level. Brut is considered dry. Wine is fermented dry, meaning there is no residual sugar. So the wine should not be sweet; it can still be fruity but won’t be sweet. Extra dry is another designation that you see on Prosecco or even another sparkling wine or champagne. Extra dry means there is a little bit of residual sugar or sweetness.” Other designations: demi-sec and sec—being on the sweetest end and brut on the dry end.

What makes the sparkling wine sparkling? “When it comes to méthod champenois, or champagne method, a term meaning the wine is made imitating the way people in Champagne make their wines, the main difference is that the secondary fermentation that takes place in the bottle, as opposed to another method where they can do it in large vats. Each bottle of wine gets its own secondary fermentation, more of an individual attention.”

I’m looking for some value buys; recommendations in the $10 range, $15 range, and over $20 range. In the $10 range.

“One of our favorites is from Italy,” Francke said. “It is a nonvintage brut called Prosecco; the producer is Puntoevirgola, an amazing value [$7.99 a bottle].” Another bottom-dollar sparkling wine suggestion: Stonelake nonvintage Brut from southeastern Australia [$6.99].

I also have a Pinot Noir Sparkling Brut from Spain called Segura Viudas [$6.99]; they call that bottling Arias. And being that it is a Pinot Noir, it is going look like a rose and have a beautiful cherry-red color to it. It is dry, not sweet. Sometimes when people think rose, they think sweet, but it is not sweet at all, it is dry.

For someone loyal to California, “We have the Gloria Ferrer Brut sparkling wine [$10.95], definitely one of the best values of sparkling wines from California.”

Any good values in the $10 to $15 range?

If you are looking at under-tens in sparkling wines and champagnes, you’re looking for something that is quaffable.”

“We carry the Lucien Albrecht nonvintage Brut Rose; its designation is Crement d’Alsace [$13.95]. ‘Crement’ meaning it’s a little bit lusher, richer style and ‘d’Alsace’ meaning from Alsace. In my opinion, it drinks like a good $25 bottle from Champagne.”

And Francke’s over $20 value recommendation: the Piper Heidsieck nonvintage Brut from Champagne [$21.95]. “According to legend, Champagne is where sparkling wine originated,” Matt Tremble, store manager at the Mission Valley Beverages & More, told me. “You will see sparkling wines that are non champagnes that use the method champenoise, a term to indicate that it is not just the $4 headache method of production, it is the actual French method.”

And the $4 headache method of production: “It is called bulk process. There are a lot of unfermented sugars; it’s not naturally carbonated, and that is where your cheap sparkling wines got the reputation for giving people headaches.”

Tremble says there are a few wines outside of Champagne, France, that can use the name champagne. “Korbel uses the word champagne on their bottle; they got grandfathered in on that. The French sued Korbel when they started using that name. But because the French had never copyrighted the name, they lost the fight against Korbel and a couple of other sparkling-wine houses. And those houses ended up getting grandfathered in and were allowed to use the term California champagne.”

As for recommendations: “Under $10, in my opinion, the best values right now are coming out of Spain,” said Tremble. “There is one called Cristalino Brut that is very tasty [$7.99].”

“The best things going in the $10 to $15 range are coming out of California. Some of your old-world sparkling and champagne houses set up shop here in California. One is produced by the French company Moet & Chandon, who make actual champagne, including but not limited to Dom Perignon. By far their most popular is their Chandon Brut [$16.99]. It’s definitely a more high-end taste. You’ll find more complexities in it than you will in your under-tens. If you are looking at under-tens in sparkling wines and champagnes, you’re looking for something that is quaffable, that doesn’t have any flaws to it — if it’s supposed to be sweet, it isn’t overly sweet. It isn’t excessively effervescent or hardly effervescent at all. There’s balance between the acidity and the alcohol. When you get up into that teens’ range in sparkling wines, you start getting some reasonable nuances, subtleties to it.”

And what if you want the genuine article, straight from Champagne?

“There is really nothing coming out of Champagne right now that is much under $30. It’s always been pricier stuff as compared to the non-champagne designation, and also the exchange rate right now is atrocious.”
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San Diego Reader December 20, 2007 21
My first inclination that something was wrong came just after the man did a little hop-skip-and-a-jump and then stepped back as if to bow to the lady before him. I didn’t have to wait long. An announcement was made for the 20 or so guests to go back downstairs and help themselves to the buffet. I was standing to the side, speaking with Nina, when I felt an elbow at my back and stepped forward. When a second offending nudge followed, I interrupted Nina and said, “We need to move, I can’t have someone pushing on me like this.” As if on cue, the man in the festive dunce cap, who turned out to be the source of the back jabs, came around to face me. Unsteady on his feet, he leaned in too close and blathered, “You know these are called temples,” then lunged for my red-and-black Converse sneakers red to round out his festive attire. At a glance, he appeared to be a distinguished gentleman with a playful pinch of panache.

My first inclination that something was wrong came just after the man did a little hop-skip-and-a-jump and then stepped back as if to bow to the lady before him.

“Hey! How about you don’t touch me!” I snapped, taking a step back. He continued to ramble about temples and eye-wear, to which I said, “Great, sounds good, whatever it is you’re saying. I’m going over there.” I rolled my eyes at Nina and put some space between myself and the inebriate.

From a few feet away, I watched the disaster unfold as the guy tried to negotiate the buffet table. First, he knocked all of the plastic knives onto the floor. Then he grabbed the long serrated bread knife and stabbed at a loaf. I couldn’t keep myself from intervening. “Hey, you — the last person in here who should be holding a knife — there’s a big basket of bread already sliced right in front of you.” After missing a...
few times, the man finally seized onto a slice and slurred a thank you. I gritted as he confronted the butter and then watched him stumble to a seat, after which I quickly collected my food and hustled to the opposite end of the building where I parked myself on a couch with David’s sister Michelle. David sat on a chair across from us, and everyone began to eat.

I thought the worst was over. I thought that once I was away from that guy everything would be fine. I took a bite of my food, but it turned to dirt in my mouth and I spit it out of here, over and over. “Are you okay?” It was David. I hadn’t heard the words, but the question was written all over his face. I shook my head, left to right.

I heard Michelle as if we were underwater, “I’ve never seen you look so flushed before, Barb. Your face is beet red. Are you hot?” My eyes widened, my jaw remained clenched. Without saying a word, I stood and walked through the dining room, down the back stairs, and into the gallery storeroom, where I could be alone with my thoughts, the first of which was, What the hell is wrong with you? I wondered if I was having some kind of allergic reaction to the food and then remembered I hadn’t swallowed my first bite. My body seemed to be under attack, but if that were the case, where was my attacker? I’d heard of “panic attacks,” but I always thought that was when someone freaked out over some irrational fear.

My evening had been wonderful, full of great conversation and incredible compliments to my man — what was there to be afraid of? I breathed deeply, savoring the solitude. Once I relaxed, I decided to go back upstairs, but the mere thought of rejoining the party caused me to double over in pain as my insides twisted in protest, and I felt the blood rushing back to my face. Suddenly, the image of the man in the Santa hat popped into my head. I noted that his appearance at the gathering had coincided with the onset of my discomfort. But why? Why would some drunk guy upset me to the point of needing to hide in a storeroom in order to breathe? Neither of my parents was an alcoholic. As I thought about it more, I realized it wasn’t the alcohol on his breath that had disturbed me — it was his behavior, his sloppiness, his apparent inability to control himself.

Maybe I had been afraid of something after all. Maybe seeing that man reminded my nerves of the one dread I have above all fear of losing control.
Matthew: The last time my father visited, I learned what seemed a remarkable thing: all three of his best friends in high school were Jewish. He grew up in Poughkeepsie, an hour from New York City by train. But I grew up four hours north of Poughkeepsie, and what a difference a few hours’ drive can make. I remember only one kid from my high school whom everybody knew as Jewish: his name was Ben, he played tennis and the violin, and he put up with an awful lot of abuse from his circle of friends. He’d make a joke, and one of them would say something like, “Shut up, Jew.” I don’t think his friends actually cared about his being Jewish — it was just an easy, stupid shot. For a long time, I couldn’t understand how he took it the way he did. Finally, I decided that it must be that these were his friends — where else was he going to go? So he learned to swallow it. It probably helped that they weren’t really serious. As for me, I was friends with a half-Jew in elementary school, but his mother was Catholic, so you can bet he celebrated Christmas like the rest of us.

Gideon: It’s interesting that the place you decided to start was with the Jews, your father’s friends, your own friend. Christmas has to start with the Jews, I guess, no matter where you start. It was Jews who were killed by Herod and Jews who were chased into Egypt by him, pregnant with the future, and Jews whose testimony later became the Christmas story. But though in my childhood I would sometimes help neighbors decorate their Christmas trees with tinsel — we would never have had one and never felt deprived: “That’s what they do, not what we do” — in later years much of the holiday involved explaining over and over that
Hanukkah had nothing to do with Christmas; it was just an accident that it came at the same time of year, and it was not the most important Jewish holiday by a long shot. I didn’t know at the time that the Christmas celebrations we all know were more or less the invention of 18th-century Germany and 19th-century England (and Charles Dickens), while Hanukkah had been celebrated more or less the same way for over a thousand years. When I was a child, Christmas was the world, Hanukkah only at home.

The name-calling you described was painful to hear, but your adult understanding of Ben’s having no choice was touching. For a good bit of my childhood I was like Ben. We lived in Reseda, in the San Fernando Valley of L.A., when the tracts were just being built. Almost all my neighbors were non-Jews except during one short period. Christmas was everywhere; Hanukkah, Passover, Rosh Hashanah we found privately at the synagogue or at my grandparents’ or my great aunt and uncle’s in L.A. The exceptional period occurred in the year or two during which my next-door neighbors were my friend Mark and his family. I call him my friend because we had both the neighborhood and being Jewish in common. We went horseback riding in Griffith Park on our birthdays (I still have a picture, him on a horse several hands taller than mine), and we would do what today kids call “just hanging out.” He was twice as big as I was and once socked a kid in the mouth on the playground who was making some nasty comment about the Jews. To me he was a hero, like the Maccabees of the Hanukkah story. But he moved away, and there I was again, alone among the gentiles.

a child, Christmas was the world, Hanukkah only at home.
Matthew: Jews on horseback! That doesn't fit with what I learned from Roth's Portnoy, marveling at a guy who "played polo (yes, games from on top of a horse!) on Sunday afternoons…" It's a complicated world.

We learned Hanukkah songs in elementary school about spinning the dreidel and dancing the hora, but I had no idea what any of it meant. I didn't know why you lit candles on the menorah. I didn't know why you lit candles on the menorah. And I had attended the readings of the Old Testament. I did not know what any of it meant. I didn't know why you lit candles on the menorah. But Hanukkah just seemed like a pitiful Christmas wannabe: "See, we have decorations!" Yeah, but what a menorah compared to the complete transformation of a house that Christmas not merely makes possible, but invites — even demands? "See, we have presents!" One present for eight nights! Sad, really. Check out the orgy of delight a Christian gets on Christmas morning, when half the joy is the sheer scope of it: so many presents for so many people, and all at once. "See, we have traditions!" Hello? Christmas carols? Stockings? Specials on television? Christmas trees? We even had a literature of Christmas: "The Boy Who Laughed at Santa Claus." "A Visit from St. Nicholas." Emmet Otter’s Jug-Band Christmas. A Christmas Carol. A Child’s Christmas in Wales." "The Gift of the Magi." And on and on. It wasn't that I gloated over Christmas's rout of Hanukkah. It's that I really didn't give it much thought beyond "It's not the real thing!"

Gideon: There's no doubt that Christmas beat Hanukkah in amount of public activity surrounding it and the quantity and size of presents. On the other hand, Hanukkah lasted longer. We got chocolate coins and other little gifts every night for eight days, and we got to eat potato pancakes, fried in oil, which I loved far more than anything in the fruitcake or candy cane line. This didn't make me feel superior or luckier; neither did I feel deprived. Christians love sweets; Jews love salt — as it seemed to me then. "That's just the way it was."

Matthew: Wait a second — Jews love salt, while Christians love sweets? That's clearly the way it is. It wasn't exactly square with what I remember from Jackie Mason: "After the show, the gentiles will say to each other, 'Let's get a drink.' The Jews will say, 'You want to go for a piece of cake? '" And the pastry counter at D.Z. Akin's is nothing short of heart-stopping (or maybe heart-stopping). For me, eating at Christmas was less about candy and more about Christmas dinner, which often meant beef tenderloin with bérarnaise sauce, which I'm just now realizing isn't kosher, mixing dairy and meat the way it does. But it's funny you mention potato pancakes. I was in Extraordinary Desserts up in Hillcrest, picking up some strudel and chocolate brioche, and I spied this little book from children's author Lemony Snicket: The Latke Who Couldn’t Stop Screaming: A Christmas Story. Except it's not exactly a Christmas story — it's a story about a latke who escapes his Jewish home (a home "regarded with suspicion," thanks to its lack of Christmas lights), only to find that he's not exactly understood by the outside (read: Christian) world. "I'm something completely different!" he screams — to no avail.

Gideon: I concede on the sweets and salt. I knew it was a narrow view. But I was just a kid. And yes, Jackie Mason has a routine about Jews eating cake — but it's coffee cake, not the food-coloring-dyed icing-topped candy-scook. Cool kind. What Jackie Mason really said about telling a Jew from a gentile was this: "I'll tell you who's a Jew and who's a gentile. You can always tell a Jew and a gentile. After the show tonight, what will every gentile say? Go for a drink? Drink! Have a drink? Drink! What'll every Jew say? Did you eat yet?" Jackie Mason I know by heart.

And you're also right about horses. As an old lunch line went, "What's a Jew doing on a horse?" Though Mark was braver than I, we both, true to the genes, knew nothing from horses — except that the thing Southern Californian boys did to celebrate a birthday in the '50s was to go horse-
back riding in Griffith Park, by which was meant going and coming along a dusty, familiar, fenced trail on the back of an old jade who knew the drill by heart. I’ve learned a little more about horses since (also on the farm of my teacher), but not enough to convert.

The real difference in our experience is that when you were young, you didn’t give Hanukkah much thought. Christmas was the real deal, and Hanukkah was not much in evidence and required little of your attention. For me there was no such luxury, because Christmas, of course, was everywhere, inescapable. Inevitable Christmas carol Muzak in the stores, Santa Claus putting in an appearance somehow on every one of my favorite TV comedy shows, and all those lights on the houses and reindeer in the front.

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Christian: Christmas is simply exhausting and inspires no small amount of dread.

Because we thought we were damned. We knew God better than that. And you’re right that an issue was not made of the differences on Christmas by our neighbors. It was we who knew that we shouldn’t be fracturing with those who believed “the birthday boy was God.” From our point of view, that would be sending the wrong message to one another, and to God.

Since then, having learned that Christmas was really about Incarnation and Salvation, as you say, I have tried my best to teach post—“there is no Santa Claus” kids in my classes that there really is a Santa Claus. The love embodied in the parental and fraternal and childlike joy of giving and receiving on Christmas is Santa Claus, and anyone who doesn’t believe in that spirit is a goner. Incidentally, Santa has also proven very useful to me in trying to explain Shakespeare’s inherited theory of the four humors: Santa being a classic example of the sanguine complexion or temperament—red-faced, shaggy, and jovial (the other three being the phlegmatic, the melancholic, and the choleric).

Matthew: Take your point about Christmas culture’s relatively recent foundations compared to Hanukkah, but I’m happy to quibble. Christmas trees, according to the legend I heard recited by Garrison Keillor, were invented by Martin Luther in the early 16th Century and are supposed to symbolize the fusion of heaven and earth at the Incarnation — the lights on the tree standing in for the stars among the branches. (Makes you wonder if the icons, for all their hatred of graven images, were somehow haunted by the desire for sensible reminders of the spiritual world.) Starlight amid branches — how restrained, how tasteful.

Could almost be a Martha Stewart cover. Not so, the Lickona family trees. There was in my family a good bit of Irish restraint, but our trees were positively baroque — laden, crammed, balanced only in the sense that there was an equal distribution of excess. We always got something tall enough to scrape our ten-foot ceiling and broad enough to fill the bay window in the living room, trudging up a snow-covered hill to pick out the perfect specimen, sawing it down, hauling it out, and paying the tree farmer a dollar a foot. Small-town folk that we were, we had never heard of tree nets, so the monster rode on top of our car in all its wide-bottomed glory and had to be negotiated through the front door with supreme care and suppressed curses. Dad spent a couple of hours anchoring the trunk to the wall with a pair of guy wires to keep it straight, and then it was time for decorating. Oddly enough, the musical accompaniment I remember best was an
album of carols sung by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir. Mormon we weren’t.

I can’t resist the urge to reel off a list of adornments — if only because it’s amazing to me how well I remember them, some 15 years after my last tree-trimming session in New York. This is straight from the top of my head: first, the strands of glass cranberries. Then the white lights. Then the colored lights — they blinked. Then the giant, mid-century colored lights that didn’t blink. Then the tinsel. And on to the decorations, starting with the basic balls in various colors, then the glass teardrops from the ’40s, the homemade Play-Doh jobs that my brother and I had made, the home-made Stitch N’ Stuff angels my mother had made, the tin figures from Mother Goose, angels of all shapes and sizes, on and on and on.

And finally and most gloriously, the ever-expanding array of “special” ornaments, a new one each year. A hugely maned lion, recalling the time Mom read C.S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia aloud to me. A glass heart, drilled with gold, that my mother bought in Dubrovnik during our pilgrimage to Yugoslavia. A hand-painted glass ball covered with butterflies from the year my mother’s mother died (and thereby hangs a tale). A terra-cotta angel from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, recalling our two years in that city. There must be something like 30 of them now, and they made for a potent introduction to nostalgia — the family history dangling from the branches. I remember sitting in the living room after midnight, back during my junior year of college, the room lit only by the twinkling from the newly finished tree — and marveling at the sight. It isn’t often that I can just sit and look at one thing for any great length of time — I’m afraid I’m something of a modern soul in that regard. But
on that night, 15 years ago, I enjoyed something approaching contemplation.

On with the quibbling, even though you probably know a lot of this: St. Nicholas, of course, dates back to the 4th Century, and gift giving in his honor (including stockings stuffed with goodies) has been going on for some time, though not necessarily on Christmas. As for us, Mom sewed our stockings and embroidered our names across the part that folded over, up at the top. I still have mine. St. Francis developed the first crèche way back in the 13th Century. Laying it out was always the highlight of the house decorating, which usually took place well before the tree decorating. (That sometimes waited until Christmas Eve.) The great white Christmas tree candle that never seemed to melt, the wreath on the door, the whimsical ceramic figurines, the tinsel around the spindles of the stair banister — all these were dressing. But the crèche set signified — as much by what was left out as by what was put in. Angels, animals, shepherds, wise

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- You receive $250 for three study visits.
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To learn more about this study, please call Ritchken & First M.D.’s Donna Perez at: 858-292-0108 ext. 207

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and Dad, a present from Santa, and a present from each set of grandparents — minimum. Somehow, we always end up with a sort of group present for the lot of them, and one or two extra goodies that sneak in from the side.

So much for the children: then there are presents to be bought for each parent, for aunts and uncles, for friends, for siblings and their spouses, and for siblings’ children. Everything has to be picked out, shopped for, ordered, wrapped, shipped... Christmas is simply exhausting and inspires no small amount of dread. Even Christmas Eve Mass is a chore — it’s packed, it runs long, and the children aren’t used to sitting still in church during the late afternoon. You don’t go to such an event to pray; you go to manage. (We used to sit in the Church to be a time of spiritual preparation for Christ’s arrival, perfectly inverted into a riot of stuff and activity, all in the name of love.

“So what’s the problem, Matthew? If you don’t like the water in the cultural swamp, step out. Become a Christian who would mean putting Mass up against present opening, and who wants to fight that battle? What child could love a God who delayed that supreme Christmas joy?)

Advent, intended by the Church to be a time of spiritual preparation for Christ’s arrival, is perfectly inverted into a riot of stuff and activity, all in the name of love.

Tired of the weight? A Type II diabetic?
Are you:
- Between 18 and 70 years of age?
- A non-smoker for at least 3 months?
- Currently suffering from obesity?

If you answered yes to all these questions and are available for study-related visits for a year, you may be eligible for our investigational drug research study. If eligible, you will receive medical evaluations, including blood tests and electrocardiograms, nutritional counseling, investigational medication treatment, and visits to the clinic at no charge.

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Not sleeping?
Are you:
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- Having trouble staying asleep through the night?
- Between 18 and 64 years of age? • In overall good health?

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(619) 688-6565 See our website: www.ari-inc.com

Sadness, low energy, trouble sleeping, can’t concentrate...
Depression – have your symptoms returned?
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- In overall good health?
- A non-smoker for at least 3 months?

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For more information about this study, please contact:
(619) 688-6565 or visit us online at: www.ari-inc.com

Is your Schizophrenia medication making you heavy?
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- Have not been hospitalized for schizophrenia in the past 3 months

Those who qualify will receive study-related procedures, such as physical exams, laboratory tests, and study medication.

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Avoiding the scale?
Are you:
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- In overall good health?
- Currently suffering from obesity?
- A non-smoker for at least 3 months
- Available for study-related visits for 24 weeks?

If you answered yes to all these questions, you may be eligible for our investigational drug research study. If eligible, you will receive medical evaluations, including blood tests and electrocardiograms, nutritional and lifestyle education, investigational medication treatment, and visits to the clinic at no charge.

For more information about this study, please contact:
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6386 Alvarado Court, Suite 301, San Diego

Anxiety?
If you are troubled by worries, tenseness, difficulty sleeping or concentrating, you may be eligible for free treatment as part of a clinical trial of a computerized treatment program for generalized anxiety disorder at the San Diego State University Psychology Department.
Center for Understanding and Treating Anxiety
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huddles at Christmas. The Christmas season lasts for 12 days on the Church calendar, starting on December 25. Why not wait until the 26th to do your shopping? The kids will gripe for a while, but they'll learn that being Christian doesn't always dovetail with the way of the world — even when the world is celebrating Christ. There are advantages in belonging to a religion that informs the culture, but there are disadvantages as well — one of them being that the culture tends to turn around and inform the religion. Come away and be ye separate.

“And deny my children the Christmas joys that I recall from my own childhood? Break the chain of tradition? Are you joking?”

But enough about me. I would love to hear more about how being with your teacher at Christmas helped you discover what it meant spiritually to be a Christian, and even what it meant spiritually to be a Jew. And I was struck by your line about how she let Jews be Jews and Hindus be Hindus and Buddhists be Buddhists. On the one hand, there is undoubtedly great wisdom in this. I think I get something of what you mean when you say that all true paths lead to the center, and the older I get, the more I understand that we have much to learn from one another. But the Christian is still burdened with Christ’s command to “go out and teach all nations.” Evangelization is part of what it means to follow Christ. In one sense, the Christian is not allowed to huddle at Christmas — he has to go out and try to win it back. I wonder if this isn’t part of the reason why Christmas got so far into the culture in the first place.

Gideon: Your complaint about the commercialization and worldliness of the way Christmas is now celebrated is of course well merited. I don’t think Schulz did, or anyone else should, blame that on the Jews, even though elevator-music favorites of the season were written by Jews: Irving Berlin, “White Christmas”; Johnny Marks (music) and his brother-in-law Robert L. May (lyrics), “Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer”; and Jule Styne (music) and Sammy Cahn (lyrics), “Let It Snow.” I am as repulsed as you by the commodification of everything in our age, religious holidays and faith among the rest. (We Jews see it in the ridiculously inflated prices we pay for packaged foods marked “kosher for Passover” before that holiday.)

For me, the reality of Christmas, opened to me at first by my great teacher Mary, was once and for all redeemed from secularism and commercialization by visiting my friends and hers, the poet Philip
Do you or a loved one have trouble sleeping?

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Thompson and his wife, in New York City during Christmas vacations from graduate school. First of all, their apart-
ment was magnificently adorned with the most marvelous works of art from around the world. And by marvelous I
don’t mean scary protests against life and the world (like Munch’s Scream plastered on every college student’s
don room wall), or abstract expressionist nonsense of the kind debunked in Tom Wolfe’s Painted Word, or sen-
timental art that pretends the world is just fine, or trendy stuff of any sort. I mean moving and beau-
tiful works that make visible the invisible spir-
its of love, devotion, and adoration of the mar-
velous works of God’s creation. Think Hamlet’s
“What a piece of work is a man” or Rosalind’s
Forest of Arden. Four-
teenth-century angels in
the form of candlehold-
ers, a sunburst with the
smiling face of the sun in
the center, a Renaissance
Spanish varguelo, a
 ceramic elephant from
China, a medieval
monastic refectory table,
and a Mexican painted-
clay crèche. At Christmas
tree was added, deco-
rated with the most
beautiful of ornaments.

But each year we
would leave this tiny
museum of treasures and
go across town to see the
Christmas tree at the
Metropolitan Museum
of Art. It was a two-story
tree standing in the cen-
tral gallery, covered with
foot-high painted terra-
cotta images of angels from Renaissance Flo-
rence. At the foot of the
tree, spread out all
around it, was the most
phenomenal crèche in
the world, a hundred
people and animals, ox,
ass, cows, sheep, shep-
herds, three magi, and
the Holy Family all mov-
ing in as one, focusing
their attention and imi-
tated motion toward the
cradle and the child
themselves. The face of every
figure was unique, per-
fectly idealized in the
Florentine Renaissance
way, like a Botticelli
painting, and filled with
wonder, awe, and love.
The total effect was as of
a sweeping whoosh of
invisible singing angels
and a world full of flesh-
and-blood beings all
pouring love and spirit
and wondering awe in
toward the center of their
own and the world’s
attention. Philip wrote a
poem about it called
“Crèche Figures” (avail-
able in my published edi-
tion of his works, Dusk
and Dawn: Poems and
Prose of Philip Thompson,
available from me at
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“...With roots in earth/ Shines all before them/ Where the birth/ Calls bodies to/ An angel consort/ And the Word/ In weakness brings/ Cloud and fire/ Of alien wings.”

Philip was called, by a mutual friend, the truest Christian she knew, and she was right. A great poet, a hilarious wit, a savage satirist, brought up in a secular home, he had come to religion as a response to reading the Creation section of Milton’s _Paradise Lost_, went on to study deeply in the works of Augustine, Aquinas, Joachim of Flora, and particularly Bonaventure, and was the clearest and most upright Christian thinker about God, and the most moving embodied voice of Christian love, that I have ever had the good fortune to know personally. His wife, now his widow, is perhaps the best secondary-school teacher of art in the country (a fact recognized by Harvard University in a letter to her school that praised the artistic preparation of students in her program). The two of them so celebrated Christmas and so included me in their joy without preconditions of any kind except friendship, that I have ever after loved Christmas for their sakes and, as much as a Jew can, as they did. If all the world’s Christians loved God and the world’s Muslims loved Allah as the Thompsons loved the meaning of Christmas, the Jews would have nothing to fear from anti-Semitism.

Yes, Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father but through Me.” But I would like to ally myself with Dante, the greatest Christian poet of all time. When he reaches the sphere of Jupiter in _Paradiso_ and sees the eagle of Justice, formed by the stars that are, in the vision, the souls of the great just rulers of the world, he finally asks the question that has been burning in his heart: “A man is born on the bank of the Indus, and none is there to speak, or read, or write of Christ, and all his desires and doings are good, so far as human reason sees, without sin in life or speech. He dies unbaptized and without faith. Where is this justice that condemns him? Where is his fault if he does not believe?” (Translation by John D. Sinclair.) In other words, how can God damn the righteous Hindu, or the unbaptized infant for that matter, neither of whom could have turned his will to Christ?

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four parts: (1) Justice is created and defined by God; how could God not then be just, whatever He does? (2) Man cannot possibly understand the mystery of the divine Justice, for being a created being, and mortal, he can see only in part. (3) None comes to God but through Christ, but many who cry out “Christ, Christ” (but don’t really mean it) will be farther from God on the Day of Judgment than many who don’t know of Christ at all. Christians had better look to their own souls before they worry too much about those of the righteous Hindu. And finally, (4) Look! Here in heaven are the virtuous Roman Emperor Trajan and the virtuous Trojan Ripheus, mentioned in a single verse of Virgil’s Aeneid, both of whom lived before Christ. “How can this be?” shouts Dante. The Eagle’s answer is that both have been given the mysterious opportunity to choose Christ, Ripheus in a vision, and Trajan through a temporary resurrection won by St. Gregory, whose prayer that Trajan be returned to life long enough to hear the gospel preached was answered. In this way Dante the poet instructs us in humility before the mystery of God’s judgment of souls. Yes, the Christian bears the burden of carrying the good news to the people of the world. But he had better do so in humility and love and not in know-it-all arrogance.

The Jews, too, are burdened by God with a mission. It is not, however, to convert everyone to Judaism. Nor, as the ignorant or the malicious will maintain, is the concept of the “chosen people” a sign of arrogance. This people is chosen to be the unenviable witness to the world that God exists, is One, is the Creator, Preserver, and Judge of all, and commands all to justice, kindness, and truth. We don’t say you have to believe all that we believe in order to be saved. Not even all of us believe all of it. We say only that there is God and that not you nor we nor anything in the world is to be worshipped but only He. And to my mind, Christianity is God’s way of getting that message across to those who were not going to get it any other way. So I say, let Christians celebrate Christmas and mean it; thus will they, the Jews, and all the world be the better.

Matthew: Before I respond, I need to note that I just watched the trailer online for What
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Would Jesus Buy?, a Super Size Me-style indictment of America’s materialistic excess at Christmastime. A film like that needs a foil, of course, something to represent the other side. It might have been interesting to dig up the huddlers — people like you and the Thompsons, or Christian diehards who treated Advent like Advent and didn’t celebrate until Christmas. People who prepared for Christmas by meditating on the darkness that preceded the Light: “Long lay the world/ In sin and sorrow pining...” Interesting to think, in a post-Christian culture, of caroling as a form of evangelization. But I don’t carol, and the only carolers who have ever come to my door performed as a teen jazz choir. Sort of a “Let me entertain you” vibe. And that’s what the movie went for — they found a poofy-haired preacher willing to march into the malls and tell people that stuff was taking over their lives. Well and good. But when the message comes from a dude in a white suit with a megaphone who’s trying to exercise a Wal-Mart sign, is anybody supposed to take it seriously? It strikes me as a touch fatalistic — as if the triumph of stuff at Christmas were inevitable, like death. Complaint is understandable but childish. The best we can do is joke about it to ease the pain. But then, I haven’t seen the movie.

Your account of Santa matches almost exactly the one my mother gave to me when I confronted her with my toy Millennium Falcon — supposedly from Santa but with a mailing label addressed to my parents still affixed to the box. Looking back, it strikes me as a triumph on her part. In many ways, the sign had long ago eclipsed the thing signed — presents pointing to the Divine Gift, extravagant gift giving pointing to the generosity of true charity. (It should be noted that in complaining about excess, I’m not necessarily complaining about extravagance, because that, too, can signify — the extravagant love of the Father in John 3:16. “For God so loved the world...” “The Gift of the Magi” is a story of extravagant gifts, and that’s part of its glory.) But when my mother invoked the spirit of Santa Claus, suddenly the sign became a sign again, pointing to love as the real thing. Santa became like those works of art you mentioned, “making visible the invisible spirits of love, devotion, and adora-
tion.” It’s part of why I’ve been willing to tell the Santa story to my own children.

The Thompsons sound like remarkable people; I’m grateful for the story and happy that you were able to experience Christmas with them, to understand its virtues and attractions through their witness. (And I do think it’s a witness, even — perhaps especially — if they didn’t mean it to be so.)

To paraphrase you, if all the world’s non-Christians knew people who loved God and neighbor as the Thompsons did, then they would have nothing to fear from Christmas on the Prado. I remember the furor over Terence McNally’s play Corpus Christi, in which, among other things, the Christ figure was presented as gay. One fellow, commenting on the Christian protesters across the street from the theater, said something along the lines of, “Why do they protest our art? Why don’t they just go make their own? You don’t like this Jesus? Write your own play!” I remember thinking, “He must be joking. There just aren’t that many Christian playwrights. And even if there were, how many people would go see such a thing?” (Passion plays, which don’t so much explore the faith as they depict it, seem like something else entirely.)

These days, I’m slightly more sympathetic. “Why do you protest our religious festival? Why don’t you just go and make your own? You don’t like our Christmas on the Prado? Why not hold Solstice on the Prado?” To which I can hear the other side replying, “You must be joking. There just aren’t that many devout pagans. And even if there were, it’s not like we have a canon of carols, or Solstice cookies, or centuries-old cultural tradi-

Christmas and mean it; thus will they, the Jews, and all the world be the better,” then I’m willing to come back with Chesterton’s “If a thing is worth doing, it’s worth doing badly.” I don’t imagine that Christianity is going to take back Christmas from the world. And I think we both know that your experience with the Thompsons — their intelligence, their aesthetics, their liberality in the best sense of the word — is always going to be the exception, not the rule. Mass culture is just that, and mass culture is at the mall, not the Met. But I’ll still...
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tributes to the healing and completion of the world and the coming of the Messiah. Believing that the Messiah has already come, Christians find the location of the perfecting not in the world but in the individual soul. But can the preaching of the gospel be practiced effectively by one who lives in despair about making the world a better place?

“Why don’t you just go make your own?” is a perfectly reasonable sentiment, except that it isn’t possible, as anyone who tries must eventually discover. “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Psalms 127:1). I had a great Catholic teacher who fostered the following interpretation of the much-debated phrase “me antistenai” in the gospel of your namesake, Matthew (5:39): “I will not take up an anti-position. I will not define myself by what I am against but rather by what I am for.” Many a rabbinc sermon has embraced the same principle, exhorting the congregations to turn the energy they expend on worry about what the goyim are doing toward becoming better Jews.

Yes, as you say, “The Christian is still burdened with Christ’s command to ‘go out and teach all nations.’ “ And the Jews are commanded to “be a light unto the gentiles.” If the difference is that you must preach and convert and we must be holy and testify, the similarity is that both relations to the world locate the ground of reality not in nature or in self but in God. Sharing that, why should we quibble about differences in form? God obviously wants both or we wouldn’t both be here.

That is why I wanted this conversation not to be a fight between the Christians and the Jews. And by golly, it has not been. Because you and I, in our respective ways, make the effort to remember that God is the center and we the circumference. Knowing that, we will not waste time and spirit in fighting over the empty spaces between the spokes of that wheel along which, at various angles, all are converging, if they are really moving at all, toward the One. God has room, and His own reasons for making that room, for both our spokes and others too. The Incarnation inside Christmas, the divine spark inside the Hanukkah flame, and the Brahman-reality behind the righteous Hindu — all are God’s way of revealing to us that God is, though our images of Him are not God.

So, if I may paraphrase Dante, is the turning wheel of the world diversely formed as we rotate through the mystery of time, gravitating by the union of grace and our own wills toward the absolute will that wills it so. — Matthew Lickona and Gideon Rappaport
There’s something about the hour before dawn at the pier. Out there in the dark, all you can feel is the ocean rollers hitting the long pylons beneath your feet, coming in to land after rolling their way across — who knows? — maybe the entire Pacific. Looking west, black nothing.

No sea, no sky, and in the predawn fog, no stars. Just one thing in to land after rolling their way across — who knows? — maybe the entire Pacific. Looking west, black nothing.

There’s something about the hour before dawn at the pier. You hold onto the rail fast, even though it’s as cold as death. You try not to sway when each unseen roller below you strikes the pier.

A kind of vertigo hits you at the sense of movement. It troubles your inner ear — and your inner sense of wellbeing. It makes you want to react, to pitch yourself forward. It would be so easy to let go, to give in, to fly into the night, the ocean, the void…

“Ay! Huli!”

The words come from 20 feet away. You try not to sway when each unseen roller below you strikes the pier.

“A catch! I have a big catch, countrymen!”

A whole string of words follows. It sounds like Tagalog, the Philippine language. “May na huli akong! Malaki kabayan!” It’s not until later that I’m told this means something like, “A catch! I have a big catch, countrymen!”

A little buzz of voices ripples out. The man who called out the first word, “huli!” — catch! — is shouting as he fights a mighty battle with an unseen force from below.

I move along the rail toward the sounds. One word keeps coming up: “pating!” — shark.

The voices rise to yells when the line screams out and the pole seems to leap from the man’s hands. Suddenly it’s slack. Silence. Then shouts. They must be telling him to wind in. He starts frantically reeling, and there’s another jerk. He fiddles to release the catch on his reel, but the line

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twangs taut. He yells. In the graying light I see the silhouette of a knife blade swiping. The fisherman falls back. The end of his line dangles uselessly from his straight rod.

For the first time he sees me. “Too big,” he says in English. “Too big.”

This fall morning, months later, in broad daylight, I.B. pier looks more prosaic. The waves are as huge as they were on that summer night. They sweep along like logs under a carpet, sending a shudder through the pier’s timbers. And I hear those words again.

“Ay! Huli!”

Except this time it’s an old woman in a huge, wide-brimmed straw hat held down by a scarf tied under her chin. She’s just tall enough to see over the wooden railing. She reeds in her line from the gray waters 20 feet below and brings up a five-inch perch, wiggling over the rail. She releases the hook out of its mouth and tosses it to fling in a white plastic bucket on top of a half-dozen other diamond shapes gasping away.

She catches the swinging line, leans over to the lower rail she’d been using to chop up mussel meat. She stabs a piece onto each of the two hooks, then drops it over the edge and swings it back out into the surf.

This is one of those fresh, foggy, cool mornings that brings you. Life is worth living. The pier is busy with fishing people, mostly Filipinos. They haul out their grocery carts filled with plastic buckets and pipes (to hold their rods vertically) and head for their favorite spots. Local drunkards lean over the rails contemplating life, lifted after the day’s first beer. Down in the water the waves are immense, ocean-sized. Surfers ride in under the pier, despite the sign telling them to keep 150 feet away. “Back off!”

one fisherman yells down to them. He wants to toss his line.

The beach end of the pier is the end to be on right now. It’s a rising tide, and the old lady says that’s when the anchovies come seeking food around the pier legs, and the mackerel are coming in after them. And the blue-topped bonitas are following the warm waters in to feed on the mackerel. And the sand crabs are coming in with the tide to eat the detritus collected on the bottom.

“You can just about live without ever visiting a supermarket from what you can catch on this pier.”

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Anglos. “Perch have a good set of teeth on them. They can nibble through those shells, no problem. So when you eat a perch, you’re getting two meals for the price of one.”

David Dubert knows about food values: he’s lean, short, muscled, 52, and runs a Pizza Hut not far north of here. Today, as on most of his off-days, he’s strolling down the pier with a brown-bag beer in hand.

He’s so mad that I.B. authorities are about to make this illegal, he’s considering leaving town — after 40 years.

But mostly he’s mad that more people don’t live the pier life as fully as the Filipinos do. “I’ve been fishing off the pier for all this time,” he says, “I’ve seen fish get fewer and most Americans give up on them. But not these people. I’ll tell you, it was these wonderful, generous people — the Filipinos — who taught me everything I know about saltwater fishing. I came from the Great Lakes. Freshwater fisherman. These people, they know the life that’s going on underneath, what the fish are doing, who’s eating who. Just look up here, 80 percent Filipino! That’s because they use this pier. This is not sport for them, this is food-hunting. You can just about live without ever visiting a supermarket from what you can catch on this pier. The fresh air, the quiet — this is a social center, but see! Most of them are old. They were brought up in the Philippines, on the fish they had there. They had to learn a whole new ball game here. And I got it all from them. Others could learn from them, too.”

A man walks by and tosses his Crown Cola can into a trash bin. He takes a few steps, then turns back. He reaches down for the can.

“Sorry, Honorata, I forgot.”

The little lady who’s been catching the perch laughs as he leans down and puts his can into one of the three buckets she has on her cart.

“Nothing wasted, right?”

Honorata Asilo Magsino, known to everyone by her Tagalog name, Ailing Atang, has been fishing right on this spot for 13 years. She’s 79, and before 1982, she was in a wheelchair. She couldn’t go anywhere on her own. She was depressed, stuck at home — and home wasn’t
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grandchildren are with her so her daughter can work. Together they usually catch enough to make a couple of meals. One of her favorites is pinakbet.

Pinakbet
Chop up eggplant, bitter melon, squash, okra, oriental beans (string beans), and add sliced onions and garlic.

Toss into skillet with bit of oil, salt, and pepper.
Slice (any) fish, cook ten minutes.
Add bago-ong (fish or shrimp sauce).

Eat with rice.

Rita says she didn’t actually start fishing till she came to the States. But she has a fishing background. “We lived over the sea. In a stilt house, a nipa hut. Poor people mostly live on the coast. They can’t afford land, so they live out over the water,” she says. “I never fished. The men did that, from boats, with nets. But I ate fish. Breakfast, lunch, dinner. We had a garden plot on the land behind. We grew vegetables, poultry, kept goats and a cow.

“Sometimes the only thing we bought was rice. Fish was every day. Meat was for special occasions.”

Not far away a young Filipino boy is hauling on a rope. I look over. He has a four-fluke grappling hook down at water level. He swings it against one of the pier’s pylons. It scrunches into a colony of black mussels and rips off a clump of the smaller, younger ones on top.

“See?” says David. “Free bait. It’s the same for anchovies. Anchovies make great bait or great food. People here taught me what they call ‘The Lucky Joe.’ They set seven to eight tiny hooks on a very fine line, put a small weight at the end, and tie tiny feathers to each hook.

No bait, you drop the line in just below the surface, where the anchovies swim, and just keep that line moving up and down. Pretty soon you’ll be catching eight at a time. Catch about 300 and you’ve got a great meal. Just break their heads off…”

“No…” says Rita firmly. “You Americans don’t like fish heads, but that’s the best part of them! My grandmother always told me you get smarter if you eat the head. Because that’s where the brain is. At my home, when the fish came on the table everybody wanted the head.

“Any size fish, it was the tail nobody wanted. You just take the head and suck out the eyes. The eyes! They taste great, and they’re full of protein, too.”

David shakes his head. “Can’t do it,” he says.

“But I can,” says David’s Filipina wife, Laura, who has turned up.

“Or you can put them with what we call debriding,” says Laura. Debriding Fry fish. Boil water.

Add onions, eggplant, bitter melon.
Add jute leaves, horse radish leaves (buy from Filipinos at our local stores in National City or Chula Vista).

Fry fish.

Add onions, eggplant, bitter melon.
Add jute leaves, horse radish leaves (buy from Filipinos in National City or Chula Vista),
Mix in two tablespoons of fish sauce (bago-ong).

Fry fish on top.

Eat with rice.

A boy and his dad come up with a brown paper bag. Dad tips an angry, brown-red fish onto the deck.

“What is it?” he asks.

“Well it’s better than nothing,” says David. “My whole hand hurt. It lasted hours. Last time they had to bring the ambulance.”

“You’ve got to be real careful,” says Rita. “But if you cut the two spines off behind its eyes, you can eat it. But they take a long time to die.”

The father pushes the bag back around the fish and takes it away. On the other side of the pier, an Anglo man has a crossbow with a fishing line attached. He’s trying to unravel the line so it doesn’t take him with it when he shoots it out. Nearby, fishing on her own, lifting and lowering her line by hand with hypnotic regularity, Serafia Castillo, who says she’s 66, is catching anchovies for drying and sending to her relatives in Arizona. “Best time for the bigger ones,” she says, “is when the tide is coming in, when the moon is full.”

She rubs her tummy, “I can’t eat mackerel or barracuda anymore. My body’s no good. My stomach gets tight when I eat mackerel. I found it harder and harder to move. So I have stopped eating oily fish. Now I eat other fish that swim at the top, like perch. I think I feel a little better.”

“Knowing where to catch what, that’s the thing,” says David. “You’ve got top-swimmers, bottom-swimmers, and scavengers. It depends on the time of year — and June, July, August are the best months because the waters are warmer. What
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you have to decide before you put your hook in which you’re going for — top, bottom, or scavenger.”

I.B.’s top-water fish are anchovies, sardine, perch, queenfish, Spanish mackerel, and bonita. The bottom-fish that come around the pier are croaker, sculpin, sand bass, a few small catfish, halibut, the occasional lobster, and crabs.

“They love it, and I give them to the neighbors,” says Al Gil, a middle-aged Filipino I find halfway out on the pier. “I come across Al next to the water, looking around, expecting to find some anchovies. He takes it off the hook. It bounces once on the rail and he yells after it. “Those ones are kind of pretty looking,” he says. “Fishy aftertaste. Not bad.”

A couple of days later I happen to be in Ocean Beach. I can’t resist moseying out on its concrete pier to see if the story is the same here. “Peas. I use peas for bait,” says Al Gil, a middle-aged Filipino I find halfway out on the pier. The atmosphere’s different here than in I.B. The ocean is more...roistering. There’s more arching surf, smashing in front of cliffs near the beach, and the place is crisscrossed with pelicans making low cruises right over your head in dignified, determined lines of 12. In the water, ranks of surfers, of course, and regular clumps of sea lions bouncing out of the water, looking around, then confidently rolling back under.

On this pier there seem to be more Koreans and Vietnamese fishermen than Filipinos. And more nonfishermen with hard liquor bottles lounging in the postfog sunshine giggling at the “Crime Watch” column from the Union-Tribune.

I came across Al next to where a Filipino family of three was fishing, the son dropping a large parachute net in between his parents, catching bait, hauling up maybe a dozen anchovies in each lift. His bucket was already half full.

The peas must be working; Al has three or four perch in a plastic shopping bag. “I give them to the neighbors,” he says. “They love it, and I feel good. We Filipinos, we don’t like processed food. We like it fresh. Vegetables, fish...” He’s hauling up a fish, a queenfish, about six inches long. But it slips as he takes it off the hook. It bounces once on the rail and dives down to smack into the water.

“Have a great life!” Al yells after it.

“Those ones are kind of strong-tasting anyway,” he says. “Fishy aftertaste. Not
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End of Document
that that’s a problem. What we do is, first we cut them right down here.” He draws a line down my backbone. “I put in garlic and ginger and salt and pepper. Then I put the fish in some vinegar and the whole thing goes into the fridge for 30 minutes, and that fishy aftertaste and smell goes away.”

We stand leaning on the rail, watching the sea lions cavort. I can’t help feeling it’s not just the fish that bring me, I find it a kind of bridge with the ocean. “I think a lot do it’s not just the fish that bring cavort. I can’t help feeling rail, watching the sea lions and that fishy aftertaste and the fish in some vinegar and I put in garlic and ginger and a line down my backbone. “If I went home tomorrow, I’d pray together and thank the Lord for the nice, long noodles ready. “And then we have a different and you go from house to house eating chicken, fish, eggs. And then there’s the mangoes, of the fresh Philippines. At night some- stands up straight. “But for tors here,” he says. Then he looks like a man who might need it. “It’s good, great for medicine and doc- tors here,” he says. Then he stands up straight. “But for happiness — there! The Philippines. At night sometimes I think of the smell of the mangoes, of the fresh pandan in the morning. The pandan man comes around the streets at 4:00 a.m. on his bicycle with a big, shiny, covered can at the back. He hoists his hooker and calls out, ‘Pandec!’ and the pan- dec — round bread — is still hot. Fresh! It’s great with eggs. And then there’s salawat. A great breakfast drink!”

Salawat. Heat water. Cut up and squeeze ging- er root into the boiling water.

Add brown sugar. Great for soothing throat, smooth- ing out voice in morning. “And then we have a cigarette!” Al says, laughing. “If I went home tomorrow, my children would all be there. They would take their papa straight home. We’d sit down to a big round table, and they’d serve up my favorite dish: baked bass.”

Baked Bass. Clean a sea bass. Steam in clay pot. Splash on mayonnaise, tomatoes, onions, garlic. Steam a little more to absorb flavors. Serve with rice. “And of course we’d have pancit — noodles. On any occasion — like Christmas, birthdays, homecomings — we must have noodles because they symbolize long life. Every home must have nice, long noodles ready. “We’d pray together and thank the Lord for the food — and I’d know I could stay there till I died. They wouldn’t send me anywhere. That’s our way. And the fes- tas, when each house on a street cooks something dif- ferent and you go from house to house eating chicken, fish, fruits, Yes, I think of these things. This country is very advanced, but some things it lacks. I miss them.”

* * *

“I would go back, too,” says Laura, a few days later in L.B. “If we have enough money, we’ll go, to stay over there. It’s a nice living over there. Very nice life, as long as you have enough money. That’s what I told David. My fam- ily has a cottage near the sea. The only problem is, David would want to fish.”

Problem? “I won’t let him go fish- ing if we go over there. It’s embarrassing! There’s no American people doing things like that back home. My brother won’t let him. He’s putting me down if he does something like that. Fish- ing? There are no Ameri- cans going fishing over there! Only Filipino people.” — Bill Manson

Originally published in the Reader on November 30, 1995
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A Night on Mars

Enthusiasts of the Red Planet

‘Mars has a lot of lava tubes from when it was geologically active. You can go in there, spray plastic on the walls to make it airtight, and you’ve got a house,’ says Gerry Williams, co-founder of the Mars Society’s San Diego chapter. ‘The Mars Society is an international organization of space advocates who want to see people living and working on Mars,’ Williams explains.

Williams has hosted ‘Mars Movie Night’ once a month since November 2001, when he screened Total Recall for the Mars enthusiasts. On Friday, December 21, he will show Postcards from the Future, a 15-minute movie about an engineer who sends video postcards to his wife on Earth over a span of 20 years while he is stationed on the moon.

‘I choked up at the end, which is pretty rare for me,’ says Williams. ‘It was very believable and, pardon the expression, very down-to-earth. The biggest thing that was missing is that right now we do not have the political will to (embark on such a mission).’

Williams says the timeline of the film is unrealistic. ‘We won’t see a guy going to Mars probably have been on Mars by 1985.’

Using current technology, there is a 1-in-25 chance that the space shuttle will explode during launch. ‘I would take that chance,’ says Williams. ‘There are a couple of us in the Mars Society, especially the older folks, who say they would go to Mars on a one-way trip, knowing they’d never come back.’ For others, the dream of Mars does not involve risk: ‘One member is a lawyer, and he said he’d love to go to Mars, but after they developed it a little bit and he could stay in a four-star hotel.’

Williams believes that privatization of space exploration is the fastest way to get humans on our sister planet. ‘There’s the joke of the $600 toilet seat. The government has so much bureaucracy and infrastructure that to put a toilet seat in an aircraft carrier — in the end, the cost is about $600. Whereas if you contract it out, a private company could just run to Home Depot and buy a toilet seat and install it for much less.’

‘At least 20 different companies are planning on launching their own private rocket ship in the next three years.’

Jim Benson, who helped build the engines for Burt Rattan’s SpaceshipOne (the first privately funded aircraft to achieve orbital flight and be able to supply the tourism business and is planning on building that ship so it can eventually achieve orbital flight and be able to supply and crew the space stations.)

According to Williams, Benson also hopes to capture an asteroid and lay claim to it. ‘You could have more nickel in that asteroid than is being used on Earth right now,’ says Williams. ‘Once you start tapping into the resources that are out there, there’s pretty much unlimited potential. Here on Earth we’re worried about running out of oil, a biological by-product. If they were able to prove there was oil on Mars, we’d probably be there tomorrow.’

Barbarella

Mars Movie Night: Postcards from the Future and Tom and Jerry Blast Off to Mars (a feature-length cartoon)
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OUTDOORS

Cowles Mountain Solstice Sunrise Hikes to Kumeyaay solstice site and summit of San Diego's highest peak planned by Mission Trails Regional Park trail guides on Thursday and Saturday, December 20 and 22. Free hikes start at 6 a.m. at Cowles Mountain staging area (corner Navajo Road and Golfcrest Drive). 619-668-3281. (SAN CARLOS)

Cowles Mountain Winter Solstice Hike — strenuous adventure hosted by San Diego Natural History Museum, Friday, December 21, starts at 6 a.m. near north-east corner of Golfcrest Drive and Navajo Road. Participants ascend Cowles Mountain in near-darkness to watch sunrise on first day of winter at Kumeyaay solstice observatory about halfway up mountain. Free. 619-255-0203. (SAN CARLOS)

Winter Solstice, the moment when the sun reaches its southernmost point on the celestial sphere, occurs this year at 10:08 p.m., Friday, December 21. This event signals the beginning of winter in the Northern Hemisphere and the beginning of summer in the Southern Hemisphere. With only about ten hours of daylight, San Diego must endure its darkest and gloomiest nights this week and next. During the day, the sun struggles to an altitude of only 34 degrees (as seen from San Diego), then quickly sinks toward the horizon.

Exceptionally High and Low Tides are set to occur on several days in late December. These tides coincide with the full moon, and also with the winter solstice. Two factors that influence the tidal extremes. Peak high tides of nearly 7 feet will occur on Saturday, December 22, at 6:57 a.m.; and on Tuesday, December 25, at 9:16 a.m. If any strong winter storm happens to arrive from the west during these peak tides, some flooding of low-lying coastal areas around San Diego is likely. Several exceptionally low tides will also occur within the same string of dates. On December 22 the tide falls to -1.6 feet at 2:14 p.m. December 23 (3 p.m.) and December 24 (3:45 p.m.) feature 2007's lowest tides of all: -1.8 feet. On Christmas Day, the tide reaches a low of -1.6 feet at 4:29 p.m. Any of these low-tide occasions are perfect for exploring marine life in the tidepool areas along San Diego County's coastline.

Mistletoes in Sycamore Trees — how did it get there, and why? Find out during guided nature hike Saturday, December 22, starting at 8:30 a.m. at Kumeyaay Lake campground entrance station (Two Father Junipero Serra Trail). Free. 619-668-3281. (SAN CARLOS)

Audubon Society Bird Walk in Tecolote Canyon on Saturday, December 22, 9 a.m., at Tecolote Nature Center (3180 Tecolote Road). Free. Bring binoculars and drinking water. 858-581-9944. (CARMEN)

Trail Repair Work in Paso Pichaco continues in Cajon Valley and Rancho State Park on Saturday, December 22, 9 a.m. Bring work shoes, gloves, hat, water, snack. Group gathers at Paso Pichaco campground maintenance area behind fire department building. Free. Registration: 858-278-3280. (CUYAMACA RANCHO STATE FARM)

Enjoy the Rippling San Diego River, chirping birds, scented flora during guided nature walks through oak groves and native chaparral on Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday, December 22, 23, and 26, 9:30 a.m., in Mission Trails Regional Park (One Father Junipero Serra Trail). Free. 619-668-3281. (SAN CARLOS)

Hotel Lobbies and Last-Minute Shopping feature in Walkabout jaunt planned Saturday, December 22, starting at 11 a.m. at Fourth Avenue and E Street entrance to Horton Plaza. Casual— moderate-pace walk, followed by optional lunch. Bring money. 619-231-7463. (CUYAMACA)

December’s Full Moon, named the “cold moon,” “oak moon,”

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Some conditions may apply.
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619.216.8416 | SkyDiveSanDiego.com

PHOTO BY MATT LEWIS.

San Diego Reader December 20, 2007
The hike up Hot Spring Canyon is arguably the most beautiful canyon trek in the Santa Ana Mountains, and supremely arduous to boot. The goal is a magnificent 140-foot-high waterfall, the highest by far in Orange County. Being in excellent physical condition, having considerable experience in country travel over rugged terrain, and possessing good judgment are absolutely necessary before attempting to reach the falls or return on time and without mishap. You must be cautious, patient, agile, strong, and determined. Hazards include slippery rocks (some concealed by leaf litter), prickly vegetation, and forests of poison oak. Long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, and sturdy boots are musts.

December might be a good time to attempt this hike, but if the peak of the rainy season comes later, there won’t be much water cascading over the falls or flowing down the creek. Wildflowers and new leaves in early spring add to the canyon’s beauty, but then the ubiquitous poison oak bushes and vines are sporting fresh, vivid leaves, and rattlesnakes are emerging from their winter burrows. Fair-weather days in January through February are probably best. Be sure to start very early in the morning to take advantage of the limited daylight hours. A portion of this route unavoidably passes through an inholding of private land in the Cleveland National Forest — the Lazy W Ranch, a church camp. You must ask for permission to hike through the property in advance. Contact the church camp: P.O. Box 579, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92677; 949-728-0141; say-warnicht.org. The caretaker may ask that you inform someone of your safe return on your way out.

Parking is not allowed at the church camp and is limited near the camp’s entrance, so leave your car at the trailhead for the San Juan Trail, 0.8 mile north of Ortega Highway (and about ten miles east of San Juan Capistrano). Walk 0.6 mile north to the church camp entrance, then continue another 0.3 mile past several buildings. Stay close to the Hot Spring Canyon Stream and continue up an old roadbed flanked on both sides by huge, spreading coast live oak trees.

By 1.5 miles (from your car), the route deteriorates to little more than a wildlife approach did. The creek bubbles alongside, with scattered sycamores and alders growing from the granite-bouldered banks. At 2.0 miles, the canyon makes a decided turn to the northeast. From this point on, dark brownish and grayish metamorphic rocks gradually replace the granites, and the canyon becomes considerably narrower. Progress becomes much slower. You must choose between battling thickets of willow, sage, wild blackberry, and poison oak on the banks, or rock-hopping and slithering through the creek while dodging nettles and elder branches. Here and there the creek may disappear under porous sands for brief stretches.

At 3.4 miles (1820 feet), the creek slides over a series of granite slabs and collects in limpid pools almost perennially shaded by an overhanging south wall. Just beyond, the canyon broadens, and a usually wet tributary comes in on the right. At 4.1 miles (1090 feet), another usually wet tributary joins on the left; a 70-foot waterfall with a scant flow lies immediately up this tributary from the main canyon. By now, it should be possible to glimpse, just 200 yards ahead, the top of a sheer headwall. From the lip, water plunges some 140 feet down two distinct tiers. Boulder-hopping will get you to the base of a much smaller fall (a moss-covered 20-foot Jenny) just below the bottom of the big one. Further progress up the canyon is possible only by some dicky hand-and-toe climbing. Don’t linger long. The trip back down the canyon, owing to fatigue, may take just as much time as your approach did.

This article contains information about a publicly owned recreation or wilderness area. Trails and paths are not necessarily marked. Conditions can change rapidly. Hikers should be properly equipped and have safety and navigational skills. The Reader and Jerry Schad assume no responsibility for any adverse experience.

LOCAL EVENTS

DANCE

Clara, the Sugarplum Fairy, Mice, and Toy Soldiers — California Ballet presents The Nutcracker with Tchaikovsky’s score performed by San Diego Youth Symphony at San Diego Civic Theatre (110 Third Avenue). Cast of 160 includes children 4–14 years old, professionals in the “starring” roles, all dancing to Maxine Mahon’s choreography.

Curtain rises at 7 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, December 20 and 21; 2:30 and 8 p.m. on Saturday, December 22, and 1 and 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, December 23. Tickets: $35–$80 for adults, $10 for children older than two. Required reservations: 858-534-7336.

The Planet Mars lies at opposition to the sun on Monday, December 24. This means that planet Earth lies on a line almost exactly between the sun and Mars. Look for this gleaming, noticeably red planet over the eastern horizon between the sun sets on the afternoon of Sunday, December 23. The moon’s night-tastic night will take it nearly to the zenith of the sky by midnight, and then down to a setting position over the ocean by dawn on Monday morning.

Tideooping for All! Naturalist from Birch Aquarium at Scripps leads an exploration at Swami’s Beach on Sunday, December 23, 1:45–3:45 p.m. $10 for adults, $8 for children older than two. Required reservations: 858-354-7336.

HOLIDAY CANYON FAVORITES Hike — take moderately paced loop hike with naturalist Linda King to Canyon’s Crossing and waterfall in Palaquitos Canyon Preserve, Sunday, December 23, 7:45 a.m. to 12 noon. 5 miles round-trip. Bring water, wear hiking boots. More information: 858-342-8856.

FILM

“Postcards from the Future” — Alan Chan’s 2007 “epic” short screens for Mars Movie Night, Friday, December 21, 7 p.m., in studio 106 of Art Union Building (1323 Broadway). Also on tap: Tom and Jerry: Blast Off to Mars (2005), Flyingiss, Die Mice Man (1950), and a Duck Dodgers cartoon. Free Reservations: 619-723-3456. (GOLDEN HILL)

Steve Buscemi Directed and acts in Interview (2007), co-starring Sienna Miller. The film — adapted from a 2003 film by Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh — is shown on Wednesday, December 26, 6:30 p.m., for Film Forum at San Diego Public Library (820 E Street). Free. 619-236-3800. (DOWNTOWN)

ROMANTIC MOUNTAIN GETAWAY

Overnight price for two people Sunday-Friday: 1 night, breakfast for 2 $129
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Live Oak Springs Resort 37820 Old Highway 80 (60 minutes east of downtown San Diego, 2 miles south of I-8) 619-766-4288 • www.liveoaksprings.com

Curtain rises at 7 p.m. on Friday, December 22, and 1 and 5 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets: $36 general, $18 children. 619-294-7311.

Ballets Showcase with Jasmine, Shallmar, Massiah, and Annamarie, live music by Middle Earth Ensemble, Thursday, December 20, 8 p.m., Claire de Lace Coffee Lounge (2960 University Avenue). Donation: $5. 619-688-9731. (POWAY)

Viennese Waltz Mixer, vintage dance lesson, Friday, December 21, 7:30 p.m., in room 207 of Casa del Mar. Open dancing, 8:30–9:45 p.m. All ages and abilities. Partnership not required. Donation: $1. 619-583-9956. (MIRAMAR)

USA Dance Ballroom Party with wide variety of music, Saturday, December 22, at Synergy Dance Zone (7480 Miramar Road). Ballroom, Latin, swing, salsa, more. Lessons at 7 p.m., dancing from 8–11 p.m. All ages, ability levels, singles, couples. Casual dress. $7. 619-766-5224. Fourth Saturday each month. (MIRAMAR)

Dances from San Francisco’s Kolo Festival presented by Kim Hoho, Saturday, December 22, 7:30–10:30 p.m., at Folk Dance Center (4049 10th Street). All-event program follows teaching session. $6. 619-281-5656. (NORTH PARK)

Flight Path makes music, Martha Wild calls for contradance on Saturday, December 22, 8 p.m., at Trinity United Methodist Church (3030 Thorn Street). Beginners’ dance workshop: 7:30 p.m. $7. Wear soft-soled shoes. Optional potluck supper at 6:30 p.m. (bring food to share). 619-594-6428. (NORTH PARK)

Holiday Dance planned by San Diego English Country Dancers with calling by Janet on Friday, December 23, 6–9 p.m., at Jean Hart Academy of Dance (Oak Knoll Plaza, 12227 Power Road). Free. 619-858-9731. (POWAY)

LOCAL EVENTS

A GUIDE TO UNEXPECTED SAN DIEGO AND BEYOND | BY JERRY SCHAD
LECTURES

Gallery Talk led by Dave Stevenson of Niki Charitable Art Foundation, in conjunction with “Niki de Saint Phalle: A Spiritual Path” exhibition, on Thursday, December 20, 2 p.m., at California Center for the Arts Museum, Escondido (340 North Escondido Boulevard). Included in museum admission. 760-839-4120.

“How to Get in the Zone and Stay in the Zone” explained by Walter Holtschi, Thursday, December 27, 6 p.m., at Sacred Pathway Bookstore (300 Carlsbad Village Drive, suite 103). “Feel better, play better, perform better.” Free. 760-729-2434. (CARLSBAD)

IN PERSON

Ring in the Holidays! Community festival of music continues daily through Sunday, December 23, 7 p.m., at Latter-Day Saints Temple (7474 Charmant Drive). Bell choirs, Hispanic choirs, deaf choir, operatic and instrumental performances, harps, youth choirs, much more! Free. 858-277-7798. (UNIVERSITY CITY)

“Thoroughly Modern Millie” presented by actors of San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts. Curtain rises at 7 p.m. on Thursday and Friday, December 20 and 21, and 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 22. $18 general. Find campus at 2425 Dusk Drive. 619-475-8556. (PARADISE HILLS)

“A Christmas Carol” is presented by Kinney Productions through December 23 at Julian Town Hall (2129 Main Street). Curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with 1 p.m. matinee on Sunday, December 23. Tickets: $10 general, $6 for those 12 and younger. 760-765-1857, 760-765-1688. (JULIAN)

“A Christmas Carol” is presented by Kinney Productions through December 25 at Julian Town Hall (2129 Main Street). Curtain rises at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, with 1 p.m. matinee on Sunday, December 23. Tickets: $10 general, $6 for those 12 and younger. 760-765-1857, 760-765-1688. (JULIAN)

Jaden Needs Our Help

Jaden was born on June 25, 2007, as what we thought was a very healthy baby boy. At 3 months, Jaden was having difficulty with digesting his food. Upon taking him to his pediatrician, Jaden was thought to have Acid Reflux. It wasn’t until two months later that we found out that Jaden has a fatal disease called Krabbes.

Currently, Jaden is in North Carolina awaiting treatment at Duke University. However, Jaden can’t receive the medical treatment he needs without our help.

Jaden will need extensive medical treatments to help with the pain of this terrible disease. As we race forward with hope for a cure, help us keep baby Jaden at the forefront of the medical doctors who may be able to give him life.

Without your donations, we can’t help Jaden.

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Without your donations, we can’t help Jaden.

Savingjaden.com

Christmas at First United Methodist Church of San Diego

Christmas Eve Candlelight
5 p.m.
Christmas Pageant with the Children’s Choirs
7 p.m.
Lessons and Carols, The Contemporary Singers
Dr. Jim Standiford
9 p.m.
Lessons and Carols, The Chancel Choir
Dr. Jim Standiford
11 p.m.
Communion, Carols and the Christmas Story,
The Chancel Choir, Water’s Edge Music Team
Rev. Molly Vetter
Robert Plumpert, organ
Denmarre McGill, principal flute of the
San Diego Symphony, at 7, 9 & 11 p.m.

Christmas Day
11 a.m.
Family Communion Worship, The Chancel Choir
Rev. Elbert Kim

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Robert Plumpert, Organist

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Without your donations, we can’t help Jaden.

Savingjaden.com
What’s That You’re Writing?

NAME: AMY WALLEN | AGE: 44 | OCCUPATION: AUTHOR/WRITING INSTRUCTOR
NEIGHBORHOOD: SOUTH PARK | WHERE INTERVIEWED: THE URBAN GRIND COFFEEHOUSE

What’s the name of your book?
“Moon Pies and Movie Stars.”

Tell me about it.
It’s about the owner of a six-lane bowling alley in Devine, Texas, and she spots her runaway daughter on a Butler Maid commercial. So she sets off for Hollywood with her wild and crazy sister and the mother-in-law of the daughter. The daughter left behind two kids, so they’re out there to find her and make her own up to her responsibilities. It’s a journey — like a road trip. They get in a Winnebago and head out West. It’s 1976. They stop in Arizona and end up having to stay at a swingers’ motel. Then they get to Hollywood, and it’s ’76, so it’s Hollywood at its worst, run-down and grubby. They’re staying at one of those by-the-hour motels, and they don’t have a clue. They think that they’re staying in this fabulous place. And they meet all different kinds of people, learn lots of new things, and get on The Price Is Right, which is really exciting for them. The sister that goes along with them, her dream has always been to meet Bob Barker. She thinks Bob Barker is really sexy.

The woman who owns the motel is from Texas, so they think they’ve hit this great place to stay, but she’s married to a black man, and it’s all new to them. The mother-in-law is pretty snarky, so she’s kind of annoying. I had a lot of fun writing it.

What made you write it?
“I had gone to one of [San Diego Writers, Ink executive director] Judy Reeves’s writing marathons, and she had put out these pictures as props. And one of them was a picture of a woman with a menu behind her, and she’s talking on the phone. My grandmother lived in Bracketville, Texas, which is down on the border, and she owned a honky-tonk. I started writing, sort of from my grandmother’s voice, of this woman on the phone talking to her sister. And it just kind of came from that character. It came from my grandmother’s inspiration, but the characters weren’t anything like [her]; she never owned a bowling alley or anything. But she was just really independent like that. Loralva, the sister, she’s a little bit more like my grand- mother, more of that wild air. So I took the women characters and [drew up] this montage of all the women I had known growing up, all the women that I knew in Texas when I went down on a visit. I write more from character than from plot.”

Do you have a favorite passage?
“Probably The Price Is Right scene is the most fun. I actually wrote 12 drafts of the novel, and that’s the one scene in the whole book that I never really changed after I wrote it the first time. It’s a big scene. To prepare for writing it, I watched the show for three weeks to get a feel for who was on it, how it worked. And the first week I was watching it, I was rolling my eyes and thinking, I can’t believe I have to do this. The second week I was getting into it with them, and then the third week when they were winning I found myself crying because I realized this is their dream. I was really excited for them.”

Why should someone read this?
“Because it’s funny. And it does have some poignant moments. I like to write stuff that has a little heart in it, and I also think that humor does come from a deeper place inside. There’s usually some kind of hurt. There are a lot of serious aspects — the daughter they’re going to look for left behind two kids, and she’s been abandoned herself. She wasn’t actually the main character’s real daughter, so there’s a lot of stuff that comes out. Why would somebody do this to their kids when it’s been done to them, that kind of thing.”

Tell me about your writing habits.
“I try to always start in the morning so I can get it done, and so I don’t feel like I’m waiting all day to get to it and then never get around to it. Depending on where I am in the story, or how things have been going, I’ll do two to four hours. I try not to write much more than that because you get a little...it’s exhausting. I write daily. It’s like practicing the piano: if you don’t do it every day, the muscle gets weak. I do it on my laptop and I write longhand too. I like this combination, depending on what I’m doing. It’s easier to carry a pad and a paper than a computer.”

Is writing your primary job?
“I teach too. I teach novel-writing courses at USD. I just finished a Novel 1, a beginner writing class, then in the winter quarter of January I’m starting a Novel 2, more advanced writing.”

What are your relationships like?
“I live with another writer. You have to be really independent people, because writers tend to just go off into their hole and disappear — and then come back out, and everything’s great. Also, when the writer’s not writing, they can get kind of grumpy and out of sorts.”

Do you talk to your friends about your writing?
“Yes, they ask a lot. The conversation with [non-writers] goes a little differently than with writer friends, because with writer friends you don’t have to explain as much. [With writers,] I might talk more specifics, like, ‘I’m having trouble with a character, what do you think I should do?’ whereas with the non-writer friend I would just say it was going well or not well.”

Park Boulevard). $10: 619-230-1900 (BALBOA PARK)

Guitar Sounds Christmas Concert
with Peter Pupping Band, Friday, December 21, 8 p.m., at Bethlehem Lutheran Church (925 Balour Drive). Enjoy Christmas music in traditional and Latin styles, a bit of Celtic and classical music, jazz arrangements of some favorite Christmas songs; band will also play music from their upcoming 2008 release Sea Journey. $25. 760-943-0755. (EXTREME)

“Ghana Christmas Party” with Ghanaian and African music planned by Ghana Association of San Diego, Saturday, December 22, 7 p.m., at WorldBeat Center (2100 Park Boulevard). Donations. Free. 619-230-1900 (BALBOA PARK)

Dastgâh Jam with Dornob Collective, Saturday December 22, 7:30 p.m., at Pierre’s (1404 Fifth Avenue). Guest artists with rhythm section. Free. 619-727-4700. (DOWNTOWN)

Christmas Eve Concert by Peter Sprague and guests, Monday, December 24, 1-4 p.m., in village amphitheatre in front of L’Auberge Del Mar (1540 Camino del Mar). Neighborhood eateries

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Disney’s “High School Musical” hits stage, December 26–30, at San Diego Civic Theatre (1100 Third Avenue). Production features cast of 34 performers, including San Diego actors Ellen Harvey and Chandra Lee Schwartz, live orchestra, “includes all of the favorite characters and songs from the movie, plus two new songs written especially for the stage.”

Performances begin at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday, with 2 p.m. matinees on Thursday and Saturday, and 1 and 6:30 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets: $19–$102, available through Ticketmaster (619-220-TIXX). (DOWNTOWN)

“A Night of Comedy” stand-up comedy show with entertainment by Mal Hall, Mario Mann, Joe Charles, Matt Knost, and Robert Lauriere on Thursday, December 27, 7:30, 9:30 p.m., and 11:30 p.m. at Quality Stadium. Tickets: $45–$55. (MIDTOWN)

SeaWorld Auditions

Come and audition to be part of the San Diego SeaWorld's “High School Musical” production. Register today at SeaWorld San Diego. Please arrive promptly at 4:00 p.m. for detailed information regarding audition requirements, visit SeaWorld SanDiegoAuditions.com

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Singers/Actors: Please arrive promptly at 4:00 p.m. Prepare and perform a one- to two-minute musical piece that demonstrates your vocal ability.

All applicants must be at least 18 years old. Please bring a recent photo and resume. Don’t miss this chance to be part of a new Sesame Street stage show at SeaWorld San Diego.

For detailed information regarding audition requirements, visit SeaWorldSanDiegoAuditions.com

Or call our Audition Hotline: (619) 226-3607

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All That Sparkles Around the World — toast the upcoming year and taste sparkling wines on Wednesday, December 26, 5 p.m., at Wineries and Brasserie (9550 University Avenue). Free.

WILL Russia’s Reemergence Stabilize the Global Balance of Power? Find out when P&R Discussion Group meets, Thursday, December 27, 7 p.m., at Other Side Coffee House (4096 30th Street). Free. 619-370-1027, nmrmedia.com

Snapshot of an Era: "Groovin’ to the ’70s" — exhibition exploring the genesis of the university campus and development of San Diego during the New Deal continues through May 2008, in Special Collections Reading Room, University Archives, and Donor Hall of San Diego State University’s Love Library (5300 Campanile Drive). Exhibit uses archival photographs, institutional records, memorabilia, other primary resources to highlight impact of various New Deal programs on the physical campus environment, student life during the 1930s. Free. 619-594-6791.

“Groovin’ to the ’70s” is theme for Big Bay Balloon Parade boasting floats, marching bands, drill teams, and enormous balloons on Thursday, December 27. Parade begins at 10 a.m. on North Harbor Drive (along Embarcadero), proceeds to Seaport Village. Free for spectators. After parade, activities continue at Broadway Pier with games, entertainment, at annual Amtrak Family Festival. Free admission. 619-238-5808, cosmetic treas.com

San Diego Holiday Celebration slated for Thursday, December 27, in Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theater, Jack and the Beanstalk performed by Big Joe Productions, December 26–30. Shows begin at 10 and 11:30 a.m. Wednesday–Friday and at 11 a.m., 1, and 2:30 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday (additional performances December 26–28 at 1 p.m.). Find theater at 2130 Pan American Place. Admission: $3 for children, $4 seniors, $5 general. 619-344-9203, baldobin.com

Learn About Hospital Point Critters when Birch Aquarium at Scripps hosts Tidepooling for Tots led by aquarium naturalist, Friday, December 27, 12:30–2 p.m. Free. $10 per adult, $8 per child. Required reservations: 619-534-7306. (SANDIA)

Family Festival Holiday Pops! Enjoy the season musically when San Diego Symphony led by Matthew Garbutt is joined by San Diego Civic Youth Ballet and San Diego Master Chorale for concert on Sunday, December 23, 2 p.m. in Copley Symphony Hall (750 B Street). Also on tap: visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus. Tickets: $15, $25 general, $10 for kids. Reservations: 619-239-0804. (DOWNTOWN)

Tots and Tales interactive story time for preschoolers with animal stories, crafts, live animals on Thursday, December 27, 10:30 a.m., at San Diego Humane Society and SPCA (5500 Gaines Street). Donation: $3 per child. Required reservations: 619-243-3432. (LINDA VISTA)

MUSEUMS

Bancroft Ranch House Museum houses indigenous Indian artifacts and memorabilia of early settlers in the area, run by the Spring Valley Historical Society. The home, built in 1863, was registered as a National Historic Landmark in 1962 and is on a spot where Kumeyaay Indians camped more than 1000 years ago. The tour includes a large collection of artifacts from prehistoric times to the modern day. $10 per adult, $8 per child. Reservations: 619-243-3432. (LINDA VISTA)

Feeling the Heat: The Climate Challenge examines science behind climate change. "Art of Deception" explores undressing camouflage. "Wonders of Water" waterplay area includes three interactive stations. The Lyme and Howard Robbins Shark Reef Exhibit features a 13,000-gallon shark tank with black tip, white tip, bamboo, and wolfsharks. The aquarium is located at 2300 Expedition Way (off North Torrey Pines Road, south of La Jolla Shoreline Drive). 619-394-7003 x2. (LA JOLLA)

Barona Cultural Center and Museum is located at 1095 Barona Road; 619-443-7003 x2. (LAKESIDE)


Flying Leatherneck Museum, dedicated to the Marine Corps who provided air support, from the propeller-driven fighters and bombers of the 1940s to the modern jets and helicopters currently in use. Static displays of a variety of aircraft, static displays of a variety of aircraft.

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Duke Kahanamoku in early 1900s to Tom Blake in 1920s to Tom Anderson in early 1980s. The museum features surf art and memorabilia — such as surfboards and clothing — of local legends Phil Edwards, John “LJ,” Richards, and Peter Johnson, and Duke Kahanamoku. The museum is located at 223 North Coast Highway, 760-721-6787. (OCEANAIRE)

Chula Vista Nature Center, an interactive living museum devoted to the endangered Southern California coastal wetlands, located in Sweetwater Marsh National Wildlife Refuge. Visitors can use a Bioscanner to view animals macroscopically, use a Wintoscope for views of microscopic organisms found in the “Sweatwater Soup,” and interact with computerized videos exploring how tides affect the bay in the “Moons, Tides, and the San Diego Bay” exhibit. Pet sharks and rays in the David A. Wergeland Shark and Ray Experience, see burrowing owls and migratory birds, and enjoy the xerophytic gardens. Visitors meet at a shuttle bus at the Bayfront E Street Torrey Station or at the center’s parking lot at the foot of E Street and Bay Boulevard. 619-409-5903, cosmea.com

Coronado Museum of History and Art, “The Joy of Toys. Antique Treasures,” on display through Sunday, February 3, includes variety of antique toys, furniture, vintage collectibles, comics, Pinhe’s Pools “40-Acre Woods,” more. Ongoing exhibits explore the overall history of Coronado, Navy and Army, Tent City, and the Hotel del Coronado. Find the museum at 1100 Orange Avenue. 619-435-7242. (CORONADO)

SAN DIEGO SPORTS LEAGUES

SOFTBALL — Men’s, Women’s & Coed
BASKETBALL — Women’s only
VOLLEYBALL — Coed only

Team Registration Only • Dec. 15-Jan. 17
619-584-GAME or
www.sandiesportsleagues.com

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Flying Leatherneck Museum, dedicated to the Marine Corps who provided air support, from the propeller-driven fighters and bombers of the 1940s to the modern jets and helicopters currently in use. Static displays of a variety of aircraft, static displays of a variety of aircraft.

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We accept Visa and MasterCard.
The past 100 years of American music and music making are highlighted at the museum, with over 450 vintage instruments, hundreds of audio and video clips, and an interactive stage. Find the museum at 5790 Armanda Drive, 760-438-5996. (CARLSBAD)

Olaf Wieghorst Museum displays paintings and prints by Olaf Wieghorst and features exhibits of other artists’ American West art. Adjacent to museum is courthouse with cactus gardens. 20 x 20-foot reproduction of Wieghorst’s painting Navajos at Castle Creek, and original restored home. The museum is located at 131 Rea Avenue, 619-590-3431. (CARLSBAD)

Ramona Pioneer Historical Society and Guy B. Woodward Museum is a complex of historical buildings, including the Verlaque House (the only Western adobe home of French provincial design still in existence), wagons, antique exhibits, and artifacts. There is a cowboy bunk house, women’s clothing and accessories from 1700 to 1800, a ranch blacksmith shop and tack room. Find it all at 643 Main Street, 760-789-7644. (RAMONA)

San Diego Aerospace Museum, the technological advancements made in aircraft propulsion over the
“P-51 Mustang” celebrates the legendary Air Force fighter used during both World War II and Korea. The museum’s Mustang is painted in the red-tail livery of the Tuskegee Airmen, who distinguished themselves flying bomber escort and ground attack missions during World War II.

The museum offers exhibits of over 65 aircraft — including an RQ-1 Predator UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle) on indefinite loan from the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, which “saw action over the Balkans in the late 1990s”; a replica of Spirit of St. Louis, a Fokker Skourie (or Fokker Eindecker E-III); a World War I Spad VII, flight deck of the USS Yorktown; and a Lockheed Blackbird supersonic plane — 1400 scale models, 10,000 aviation-related items, and memorabilia from Montgolfier hot-air-balloon era to Space Age, along with an International Aerospace Hall of Fame.

The museum is located in the Ford Building in the Palafoxia area 619-234-8291. (BALBOA PARK)
**CLASSICAL**

**HOLIDAY EVENTS**

**Holiday Pops!** Enjoy the season musicality when San Diego Sym- phony led by Matthew Garbett is joined by Mariachi Champana Nava, soprano Monica Abrego, San Diego Civic Youth Ballet, and San Diego Master Chorale for concerts through December 22. The program includes new Hanákpec piece composed by Marvin Ham- lisch. Concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 20, 8 p.m. on Friday, December 21, and 2 p.m. on Saturday, December 22. Box 85803, San Diego CA 92186. For info or tickets call 619-881-2401. You may also submit information online at SanDiegoReader.com by clicking on the events section.

**CLASSICAL MUSIC**

**ART LISTINGS**

Events that are underlined occur after December 27.

**How to send us your listings:** 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 precise address where it is to be held (including neighborhood), a contact phone number, and a phone number (including area code) for public information to READER CLASSICAL MUSIC, Box 85803, San Diego CA 92186. Or fax 619-881-2401. You may also submit information online at SanDiegoReader.com by clicking on the events section.

**GALLERIES**

“The Antarctic Peninsula” and “Reflections” — imagery from two expeditions the Ordover may be viewed through Sunday, January 13, at Ordover Gallery (444 South Cedros Avenue, studio 172). Reception slated for Thursday, December 20, 6 p.m. In addition, see work by Len Abadia, Sharon An- thony, John D. Clark, Donna Cosentino, Peter Fay, Art Myers, Lisa Ross, Jennifer Sarconi, Tom O’ Scott, Josh Wolf, and Lisa Smith. 687-221-1122. (SOLANA BEACH)

“The Best...” opens Thursday, December 20, 7 p.m., at Sanctuary (143 South Cedros Avenue). See new paintings, sculpture by Or- ange County-based artist Jeff Farth, paintings and photography by Akia Keneko and Tony Greene. Live music will by Helene and Vladimir, jewelry by Mia Wax. Admission fee of $5 or a $1 donation to benefit local food banks. 670-487-1337. (SOLANA BEACH)

**ART MUSEUMS**

**California Center for the Arts, Museum,** “Rituality” features contemporary works from ten la- rge artists alongside traditional artists from Africa, Native North America, the Pacific Is- lands. Exhibition examines role of ritual in exploration of ident- ity, creation of community, con- traction of power, as mediated and expressed through art. Niko de Saint Phalle: A Spiri- tual Path” offers a closer look at de Saint Phalle’s spiritual jour- ney, her interpretation of tradi- tional tarot cards. “Is the tarot path only a game of cards, or is there a philosophy behind it?” Fifty-five individual paint- ings by Teresa Villegas are gath- ered in “La Loteria: An Explo- ration of Mexico.” Artwork draws upon Mexican traditions, historical figures, food, popular culture.

“The Poetics of Myth” features a series of bas-relief terra- cotta panels by Brad Birdthul, focusing “on the creation of modern myths and archetypes.” Each of these exhibits continues through Sunday, January 27.

**Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, Downtown, “Robert Irwin: Primaries and Secondaries” is “the largest exhibi- tion of renowned artist...” Ir- win’s work since 1993.” Exhibit features five new installation tra- ditions and contemporary paper folding, exhibition honors ac- claimed local paper folded au- thor, teacher Floremko Temko. Find the museum at 153 West Grand Avenue. 760-735-3535. (ESCONDIDO)

Mingel International Mu- seum — North County, “Pa- per Expanded,” exhibition made up of “Crowning Glory — From Paper Bag Hats by Moses” and “Origami — The Art of Pa- per Folding” from Mingel’s per- manent collection continues through Saturday, December 29. For “Crowning Glory,” Moses created more than 350 hats from paper bag, sold to many mer- chants in his Hawaiian neigh- borhood. “Origami” boasts nearly 100 origami-related tradi- tional and contemporary paper folding, exhibition honors ac- claimed local paper folded au- thor, teacher Floremko Temko. Find the museum at 153 West Grand Avenue. 760-735-3535. (ESCONDIDO)

Mingel International Museum, “Politics in America: Expanding Tra- ditions” surveys more than 200 works, spanning a period of nearly 200 years. Handcrafted furniture, ceramics, fiber and textiles, bak- ketry, glass, wood, jewelry, metal- work are showcased. Closes Sun- day, January 27.

Also on view “American Viewing Stones: Natural Art in an Asian Tradition,” Chinese connoisseurs began using large stones to decorate gardens, courtyards during the Han Dyn- asty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). “Scholar’s Rocks” is English name most commonly used for these items. American viewing stone collecting began with first- and second-generation Japanese Americans who continued tradi- tions of bonsai and suikinkutsu.

“Woodblock Prints in the Style of the Ten Bamboo Studio” are likely from a 19th-Century Chinese edition of Tratise on Calligraphy and Painting of the Ten Bamboo Studio. Prints are noteworthy for technique of block printing using multiple blocks. Both exhibits close on Sunday, December 16.

Museums from past to present: one following the landscape and parallel tracks of artistic experimenta- tion: one following the landscape and other figurative art. It examines how these differ- ent paths both progressed to- wards abstraction. Close to 30 works are on view, including Bouguereau’s Young Shepherds and pieces by Monet, Toulouse- Lautrec, Renoir, Degas, others. “Lyric Visions from Nezami’s Quintet” includes more than 20 paintings created for or inspired by Nezami’s “texts,” among the most celebrated and influential poetic works in all of Persian liter- ature. Paintings range from 15th to 20th Centuries. Closes Sunday, January 27.


“Image Makers and Rule Breakers: French Art, 1860- 1960,” continuing through Sun- day, January 29, highlights mus- eum’s depth in mid-19th- through mid-20th-Century French painting and sculpture. Exhibition “presents two paral- lel tracks of artistic experimenta- tion one following the landscape tradition and the other figurative art. It examines how these differ- ent paths both progressed to- wards abstraction.”

**SAN DIEGO • DEC 19-20, 2007**


Permanent collection in- cludes European old master paintings, 18th- and 19th-Century American paintings, and Russian icons. “Saint Bartholomew,” the only Rem- brandt painting on public display in San Diego, is featured. 619-239-5348. (BALBOA PARK)

**Santa Fe Opera, Santa Fe, N.M., presents opera “Nixon in China” by John Adams, directed by Pierre-Laurent Aimard and conducted by James Conlon, November 30-December 16. For information, call 505-599-1905.”**
**Theater Listings**

Theater listings and commentary are by Jeff Smith. Information is accurate according to material given to 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.

**Amahl and the Night Visitors**
Lyric Opera of San Diego presents Gian Carlo Menotti’s holiday opera about the three kings and the crippled boy who wants to bring a gift to Bethlehem. STEPHEN AND MARY BIRCH NORTH PARK THEATRE, UNIVERSITY AVENUE AT 29TH STREET, NORTH PARK, THROUGH DECEMBER 23; THURSDAY AT 7:30 P.M., FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M., SUNDAY AT 7:00 P.M. 619-337-1525.

**A Christmas Carol**
Kinsey Productions continues its “Julian holiday tradition” with Don Windom’s adaptation of Dickens’s popular story. Scott Kinney directed. JULIAN TOWN HALL, 2129 MARK STREET, JULIAN, THROUGH DECEMBER 23; FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 7:30 P.M. MATINEES SUNDAY AT 2:00 P.M. 760-765-1688.

**A Christmas Carol**
North Coast Repertory Theatre presents a new version (by Jacqueline Paul) of the popular Dickens story. Joe Powers directed. NORTH COAST REPERTORY THEATRE, 2880 LOVE SANTA FE DRIVE, SOLANA BEACH, THROUGH DECEMBER 30, PLUS FRIDAYS AND SATURDAYS, AT 8:00 P.M. SATURDAY AT 7:30 P.M. 760-753-6251.

**How the Grinch Stole Christmas**
The Old Globe presents its holiday show, about the Green Meanie and hapless Whoville. The tenth anniversary production includes three new songs. OLD GLOBE THEATRE, SIMON EDMISON CENTRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, 1100 BALBOA PARK, THROUGH DECEMBER 30; WEDNESDAY THROUGH SUNDAY AT 7:30 P.M. FOR MATINEE SCHEDULE, CALL 619-234-5623.

**It’s a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play**
In Cygnet Theatre’s holiday show, you not only watch the familiar story of George Bailey, you also watch how it’s made in a 1947 radio studio: announcers, flashing applause signs, even a commercial for Lux soap. A change happens toward the end, however. The fiction trumps the fact. As George undergoes an existentialist identity crisis, the actors become the characters, the story steps forward, and how it’s being made disappears. Along the way, the show’s a treat, especially Scott Paulson’s inventive sounds—like a popped top but for an opening parachute, or a flicked ice cream scoop for crickets. Directed by Sean Murray, wearing Jeanne Reilly’s wide-body, double-breasted suit and lighter-than-air dresses, the cast performs in the hyper-acting style of the period. As George, Tom Andrew has the antsy “shoot the works” style down pat. His performance recalls Jimmy Stewart’s in the movie, true. But the bigger crime would be if it didn’t. Melissa Fernandes, Veronica Murphy, and Brenda Dodge sing (and flash those cinemaScope post-WWII smiles) beautifully. They do a spunky commercial for “Lux Toilet Cake” that’s both spot on and a hoot.

**Joey and Maria’s Comedy Italian Wedding**
Joey and Maria tie the knot in "not-so-ordinary interactive dinner theater." HOLIDAY INN ON THE BAY, 1235 NORTH BEACH STREET, JULIAN, THROUGH DECEMBER 30. FRI. THROUGH SAT. AT 8:00 P.M. 760-776-6278.

**Irving Berlin’s White Christmas**
Welk Resort Theatre presents the San Diego premiere of a new musical based on the melodies of the 1954 movie, including “Blue Skies,” “Happy Holidays,” and the title song. Jon Engel and directed and choreographed. WELK RESORT THEATRE, THROUGH DECEMBER 30; TUESDAY, THURSDAY, AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M., FRIDAY THROUGH THURSDAY, SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 1:45 P.M. 760-776-3444.
Lamb’s Players Festival of Christmas

Now in its 30th year, Lamb’s Players annual holiday show has a new script by Kerry Meads, a diverse group of stranded travelers celebrate the season with stories and songs. LAMBS PLAYERS THEATRE, 1142 ORANGE AVENUE, CORONADO, THROUGH DECEMBER 20; TUESDAY THROUGH THURSDAY AT 7:30 P.M., FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M.; MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 3:00 P.M. 619-544-1000.

National Comedy Theatre 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 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”). 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 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 impromptu. Teams wear uniforms and compete on AstroTurf. Using suggestions from the audience, they play “Emotional Symmetry,” “Blind Line,” and “Freeze Tag,” with judges awarding points to the best scenes. Klunkers and groaners get booed; quick wit rewarded (one of the most refreshing parts of the contest: people acknowledge failure, abundantly, then forget it). It makes for a lively, often funny evening. And Gary Kramer is one talented comedian. Worth a try.

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La Pastorela de la Raza Teatro Mascara Magica stages its 17th annual (and very popular) holiday show, in which Lucifer (played by a group of stranded travelers) celebrates the season with stories and songs. He joins her neighborhood posada on Christmas Eve. LAMBERT’S PLAYERS THEATRE, 1142 ORANGE AVENUE, CORONADO, THROUGH DECEMBER 20; TUESDAY THROUGH THURSDAY AT 7:30 P.M., FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M.; MATINEE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 3:00 P.M. 619-544-1000.

La Posada Magica: The Magical Journey Hispanic Arts Theatre presents the San Diego debut of a musical play (“performed in English with a Latin beat”) about a young girl who joins her neighborhood posada on Christmas Eve. LYECEUM THEATRE, 79 HORTON PLAZA, DOWNTOWN, THROUGH DECEMBER 23; FRIDAY AND SATURDAY AT 8:00 P.M. MAYFAIR SATURDAY AND SUNDAY AT 3:00 P.M. 619-554-4200.

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Joel’s divorce cast such a negative reflection on a clan program to succeed. So when the extended family comes for Christmas, after a year apart, all hell pretty much breaks loose. Then, in a leap even red-nosed reindeers wouldn’t attempt to trot when sober, they come back together and enjoy some late-evening holiday pie. The lep’s a whipper. And the world-premiere script, by Ann Chini and Tom Zobair, raises as many questions as it answers and needs stronger dramatic arcs and builds. Joshua Everett Johnson, one of the best actors around, has directed the best actors around, has directions as it answers and needs genuine emotions also expose earth-shaking tirade), to ground this gives his cast chances to succeed. So when the extended truth. This gives his cast chances to succeed. So when the extended

San Diego Theatresports: The Funhouse
A cross between improvisational comedy and Family Feud. The Funhouse combines improv with competitive scene-making, with the audience awarding points to the winning team. Purists might balk at the audacity of comparisons used in this format, but the “game show,” on Fridays, is a bright light. The 90-minute evening of different bits. The winner gets a banana, the loser a “forfeit.” Some attempts went nowhere (improv is tough). I did it in my, as hindsight reveals, cloying touch. Others made amazing twists and turns. The group has more hits than misses, and their guru, Keith Johnstone, wrote one of the very best books I’ve read about making theater. They put his pearls to good use. Their motto “Remember, when it’s not funny, it’s art.”

Worth a try.

The Funhouse is at 2222 El Cajon Boulevard (between 58th and 59th), 1017 Col., Saturday through Thursday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. 619-586-0206.

Triple Express: A Highly Cofounded Comedy
Hugh Buttnerman’s done his house at the Triple Express Coffee-

San Diego House of Spare Rib 15th and C Streets, Downtown 320 Eleventh Ave., Downtown

Tradies of Christmas
For its 15th anniversary “holiday spectacular,” Christian Community Theater has added ten new musical numbers. EAST COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER, 213 EAST MAIN STREET, EL CAJON, THURSDAY THROUGH DECEMBER 23; THURSDAY THROUGH SATURDAY AT 7:00 P.M. SUNDAY AT 6:00 P.M. MARCH 25; SATURDAY AND SUNDAY at 2:00 P.M. 619-586-0206.

house 20 years to the day. While patrons sip a house blend — "Grape," "Scandinavian Blizard, " or "Mojiko Canoa Moscha" — Hugh plays ’70s tunes on the piano. He and his companions, here to celebrate Hugh’s anniversary, got stuck in the ‘70s. The trio used to be Maxwell, Butternutt, and Bean, a comedy group that never went far. They’re “losers,” they admit, but not “ordinary” ones. And hey, their reunion could help them face scoring issues from their

LAMBS' FESTIVAL OF CHRISTMAS
An Exciting New Sound for Christmas
This new script by Kerry Moxys includes beautiful blend of new original music and traditional tunes, That’s the news.

THEATRE DIRECTORY

LAMBS PLAYERS THEATRE
619-437-0600
1142 ORANGE AVENUE, CORONADO

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A cross between improvisational comedy and Family Feud. The Funhouse combines improv with competitive scene-making, with the audience awarding points to the winning team. Purists might balk at the audacity of comparisons used in this format, but the “game show,” on Fridays, is a bright light. The 90-minute evening of different bits. The winner gets a banana, the loser a “forfeit.” Some attempts went nowhere (improv is tough). I did it in my, as hindsight reveals, cloying touch. Others made amazing twists and turns. The group has more hits than misses, and their guru, Keith Johnstone, wrote one of the very best books I’ve read about making theater. They put his pearls to good use. Their motto “Remember, when it’s not funny, it’s art.”

Worth a try.

The Funhouse is at 2222 El Cajon Boulevard (between 58th and 59th), 1017 Col., Saturday through Thursday at 7:00 p.m., Saturday and Sunday at 2:00 p.m. 619-586-0206.

Triple Express: A Highly Cofounded Comedy
Hugh Buttnerman’s done his house at the Triple Express Coffee-
The First Rocket Man
When Ike Turner died at his San Marcos home on the morning of December 12, his band was in the next room setting up to play. It was to be a surprise gig, but Ike wasn’t expecting to join in. He was too sick for that, says Kevin Cooper, his bassist of 12 years. The idea was to bring together the musicians from Ike’s recent Grammy Award–winning album and perform for the ailing bandleader. “We were gonna start playing,” says Cooper, “and then have him come out, and maybe he’d start giving some orders like he usually did.”

Cooper laughs a little when he says this. A large part of the reunion, Cooper says, was Ann Thomas’s idea. Thomas, a former Ikette, was married to Turner in 1981. Cooper says she had been staying with him at the house, helping to care for him. “Ike had called her to come and be with him because he trusted her a lot.” Thomas

Ike Turner’s body was in the next room setting up to play. It was to be a surprise gig, but Ike wasn’t expecting to join in. He was too sick for that, says Kevin Cooper, his bassist of 12 years. The idea was to bring together the musicians from Ike’s recent Grammy Award–winning album and perform for the ailing bandleader. “We were gonna start playing,” says Cooper, “and then have him come out, and maybe he’d start giving some orders like he usually did.”

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Fed the band breakfast when they arrived after 10 a.m. “She told Billy [Ray] to get his drums and set up, and then she went into Ike’s room. She sat Ike up on the bed and told him everybody was here. She came out for some reason. And then, when she went back in to get him, he had fallen back on the bed. That’s when we heard the screaming.”

Cooper called 911. “A girl named Fiona, I believe her name is, who has been taking care of Ike on and off for the last several months, feeding him and giving him his medicine, she started giving him CPR, pushing on his chest.” Cooper says the 911 operator instructed him to get Turner’s body off the bed and onto the floor. “Fiona and Ann Thomas did that, and they still tried to revive him, you know, pushing on his chest. The operator was walking me through how to give CPR. I was translating what she was saying to me to Fiona and Ann. And then the paramedics arrived. They began their whole procedure of trying to revive him, which seemed like it just took forever. It seemed like an hour. Cooper says the paramedics finally stopped CPR and pronounced Ike Turner dead. In the days before his death, Turner had been preparing to record another CD with his band. “He had just invested over $50,000 in his recording studio, which is complete automated,” says Cooper. “He had just revamped the whole thing to make a new record. He just never got up the energy.” Cooper says that Turner suffered from chronic emphysema.

“No one talked to Ike that morning except Anne Thomas. Her story to me was ‘There is No Secret What God Can Do.’ That hymn, that is the last song that Ike Turner heard.” — Dave Good
out at the radio station. Because it was our show, a couple military wives came up to our ‘street team’ and told us their husbands were in the military and they thought it was disrespectful.” A concert attendee says Gabel did have a valid political point to make because the Marines were there as much to recruit as they were to collect toys.

“Certainly they were recruiting,” says Manning. “Just as they use video games to recruit, they have figured out a way to tap into the youth market.”

— Ken Leighton

**Only So Much Coke**

Drummer Sharie Hall, 31, says she and her three bandmates in Unloaded share 29 years of “clean time.” They all met in recovery and have been a band for two years. She admits they have used “...heroin, meth, cocaine, pot, crack, booz, VCR head cleaner, jet fuel, nitrous oxide,...”

She says she and her punk/goth/metal bandmates “...are emotional roller coasters. Sometimes we want to kill each other in practice.” Recently, lead singer Amy Norfleet relapsed. “She hit her first real rock bottom 30 days ago,” says Hall. “She was driving in Riverside, and she was pulled over. She spent the night in jail. She had six years of sobriety before that.”

“We told her we were dismantling the band unless she does 90-90 — that’s 90 meetings in 90 days... We told her if we had to cancel shows, we’d cancel shows. And we did. We canceled shows at the Jumping Turtle and at Kadan.”

Norfleet has been going to her meetings, and the band has resumed practicing. When they play, Hall says Unloaded can bring a crowd.

“Our friends come in and pack the place. But on the nights we play, the places we play don’t make that much money. Half the audience is in recovery,”

“You can only drink so much Coke,” says bassist Alan Stewart.

The rehab experience does not dominate Unloaded’s lyrics.

“Real recovering people don’t preach,” says Stewart. “Rehab sucks. (Celebrities) go to a posh rehab. The rehab we went to is hard.”

They say they wouldn’t mind having a drinker in their band.

“We’d be open to having a guitarist who is a normal drinker,” says Hall. “But the four of us are so close. We know we’re addicts.”

Both Hall and Stewart say they have no problem playing in bars.

“I could see how people could relapse by playing at bars,” says Stewart. “But if I wasn’t 100 percent in recovery I wouldn’t do it.”

Unloaded appears Saturday, December 22, at Brick by Brick.

— Ken Leighton

**Why It’s Called a University**

San Diego fans of international underground rock were excited for the December 5 Ché Café performance by Damo Suzuki. The Japanese singer is best known as vocalist for German prog group Can, which set the standard for experimental “krautrock” in the early ’70s. The diminutive 57-year-old Suzuki now tours the world playing with different bands or assemblages of sympathetic musicians — no rehearsal, pure improv.

Creating a different sort of excitement at UCSD was the bomb threat that had been called in to the La Jolla campus earlier that day. Members of the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force combed the grounds. A suspicious device was dismantled at the Leichtag Biomedical Research Building. The feds later determined that the device was not a bomb and the call was a hoax.

(Recently fired former UC San Diego lab technician Timothy Byron Kalka, 50, was taken into custody on December 9. He pleaded not guilty the next day to a federal charge of providing false information.)

“Oh, seeing the FBI at the Ché was a bit alarming,”

said Sam Lopez, who performs solo under the name Zsa Zsa Gabor but was part of a special version of SD noise act Riververb, which opened for Suzuki. “I was one of the first ones there, and as I was entering the back door of the Ché, I saw this gray Ford sedan pull up in the parking lot. At first I thought that it must have been the patches, flight jackets, and closely cropped hair that did it....

“That night was kind of weird, too, because a residing professor was handling out extra credit to students who attended the show. So there were kids there who wouldn’t normally be into that style of music, milling around, scratching their heads, going, ‘What the hell is this?’”

[Suzuki] is such a quiet guy, but when he gets onstage, he’s a wailing madman.”

In the weeks preceding the show, Kill Me Tomorrow’s Dan Wise, who played guitar for Suzuki, said, “When I returned home from tour, I...had received an email advertising the show, and I was listed in the backing band lineup... I guess I had to do it. The unorganized aspect of it made me nervous. I thought it was going to be a train wreck, it turned out amazing.”

— David Stampone

**Mr. Brown, Still Out of Town**

James Brown died Christmas day. Greyboy Allstars saxophonist/singer Karl Denson played with Mr. Brown five years ago —

“...I guess I had to do it. The unorganized aspect of it made me nervous. I thought it was going to be a train wreck, it turned out amazing.”

— David Stampone
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Thursday 20
Bassist Sami Yaffa (Hanoi Rocks, New York Dolls) brings punk pulse to Mad Juanas’ gypsy-folk with heavy-handed guitar play, Dark chamber; Karen Guy’s voodoo voice and their eight-piece orchestra drags a mash of Eastern European tradition, Balkan beats, flamenco rhythms — through NYC 70s protopunk. Imagine if the Velvets had come up in the dark-arts Bayou instead of Warhol’s side-screened factory. Check out Juanas of 66 disc Acoustic Voodoo; it isn’t Berul’s indie-sans or Dresden Dolls cabaret, this is rollicking trad fare. Mad Juanas sets up their "Gypsy Hotel" at Bar Pink Elephant. Recommend you check in early as they should sell the modest North Park room.... Psych-folke Fantastic Magic will follow the Citizen Video short-film premiere at Whistle Stop. Grab a copy of the Fantastick’s Witch Choir and hop on the up-and-coming trio’s broken carousel.... Get Back Loreta gets back to Beauty Bar. The 2007 SDMA winners (Best Pop Album for Beggars and Locket, Jose Sinatra, and Alley Stewart.... Funk-n-jazz act Greyboy Allstars (feat. Karl Denson) are touring new SCI Fidelity disc What Happened to Television? through Belly Up before taking it national. African drum show Leon Mobility and Da Lion open. Gone but not forgotten: The Count Basie Orchestra settles in at Anthology for a three-night stint through Sunday. If there’s an old-school jazz-n-blues lover on your Christmas list, can’t beat the Hall of Famers’ 17 Grammys.... Rolling Stones Dirty Sweet will deliver their groomed stage show to Casbah Friday and Saturday nights. The rock-n-roll throwbacks won two SDMAs this year for Best Bassist Sami Yaffa (Hanoi Rocks, New York Dolls) brings punk pulse to Mad Juanas’ gypsy-folk with heavy-handed guitar play, Dark chamber; Karen Guy’s voodoo voice and their eight-piece orchestra drags a mash of Eastern European tradition, Balkan beats, flamenco rhythms — through NYC 70s protopunk. Imagine if the Velvets had come up in the dark-arts Bayou instead of Warhol’s side-screened factory. Check out Juanas of 66 disc Acoustic Voodoo; it isn’t Berul’s indie-sans or Dresden Dolls cabaret, this is rollicking trad fare. Mad Juanas sets up their "Gypsy Hotel" at Bar Pink Elephant. Recommend you check in early as they should sell the modest North Park room.... Psych-folke Fantastic Magic will follow the Citizen Video short-film premiere at Whistle Stop. Grab a copy of the Fantastick’s Witch Choir and hop on the up-and-coming trio’s broken carousel.... Get Back Loreta gets back to Beauty Bar. The 2007 SDMA winners (Best Pop Album for Beggars and Locket, Jose Sinatra, and Alley Stewart.... Funk-n-jazz act Greyboy Allstars (feat. Karl Denson) are touring new SCI Fidelity disc What Happened to Television? through Belly Up before taking it national. African drum show Leon Mobility and Da Lion open. Gone but not forgotten: The Count Basie Orchestra settles in at Anthology for a three-night stint through Sunday. If there’s an old-school jazz-n-blues lover on your Christmas list, can’t beat the Hall of Famers’ 17 Grammys.... Rolling Stones Dirty Sweet will deliver their groomed stage show to Casbah Friday and Saturday nights. The rock-n-roll throwbacks won two SDMAs this year for Best

Friday 21
Heeereee! Papa’s got a brand new bag! Hearing good-to-great things about James Brown tribute Supabadd, who bring the godfather’s funk to Wintons Friday night. The dozen-plus players feature San Diego luminaries Elijah Emanuel, Latanya Locket, Joe Shratla, and Alby Stewart.... Funk-n-jazz act Greyboy Allstars (feat. Karl Denson) are touring new SCI Fidelity disc What Happened to Television? through Belly Up before taking it national. African drum show Leon Mobility and Da Lion open. Gone but not forgotten: The Count Basie Orchestra settles in at Anthology for a three-night stint through Sunday. If there’s an old-school jazz-n-blues lover on your Christmas list, can’t beat the Hall of Famers’ 17 Grammys.... Rolling Stones Dirty Sweet will deliver their groomed stage show to Casbah Friday and Saturday nights. The rock-n-roll throwbacks won two SDMAs this year for Best Bassist Sami Yaffa (Hanoi Rocks, New York Dolls) brings punk pulse to Mad Juanas’ gypsy-folk with heavy-handed guitar play, Dark chamber; Karen Guy’s voodoo voice and their eight-piece orchestra drags a mash of Eastern European tradition, Balkan beats, flamenco rhythms — through NYC 70s protopunk. Imagine if the Velvets had come up in the dark-arts Bayou instead of Warhol’s side-screened factory. Check out Juanas of 66 disc Acoustic Voodoo; it isn’t Berul’s indie-sans or Dresden Dolls cabaret, this is rollicking trad fare. Mad Juanas sets up their "Gypsy Hotel" at Bar Pink Elephant. Recommend you check in early as they should sell the modest North Park room.... Psych-folke Fantastic Magic will follow the Citizen Video short-film premiere at Whistle Stop. Grab a copy of the Fantastick’s Witch Choir and hop on the up-and-coming trio’s broken carousel.... Get Back Loreta gets back to Beauty Bar. The 2007 SDMA winners (Best Pop Album for Beggars and Locket, Jose Sinatra, and Alley Stewart.... Funk-n-jazz act Greyboy Allstars (feat. Karl Denson) are touring new SCI Fidelity disc What Happened to Television? through Belly Up before taking it national. African drum show Leon Mobility and Da Lion open. Gone but not forgotten: The Count Basie Orchestra settles in at Anthology for a three-night stint through Sunday. If there’s an old-school jazz-n-blues lover on your Christmas list, can’t beat the Hall of Famers’ 17 Grammys.... Rolling Stones Dirty Sweet will deliver their groomed stage show to Casbah Friday and Saturday nights. The rock-n-roll throwbacks won two SDMAs this year for Best

Saturday 22
It’s a very punky Christmas... San Dago’s hardcore heroes Shot Out Hoods bring the blam to Brick Sunday night. The straight-edge punk quartet resurfaces for “Christmas Special” sets, including Fling, Unloaded, and Authentic Sellout.... Placenta rapcore band Kottommouth Kings floats Cloud Nine (their ninth) over House of Blues. The Kings split the bill with San Dago’s hardcore heroes Shot Out Hoods bring the blam to Brick Sunday night. The straight-edge punk quartet resurfaces for “Christmas Special” sets, including Fling, Unloaded, and Authentic Sellout.... Placenta rapcore band Kottommouth Kings floats Cloud Nine (their ninth) over House of Blues. The Kings split the bill with

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*Jaime Valle
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*HOT ROD LINCOLN
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10p-2a*

*DAVID PATRONE
DEC 21
8p-11p*
Paul Has Contributed the Most

“A pop song today will not be like a pop song 50 years from now.”

Steven Ybarra is a Texas-born Carlsbad resident who began studying music when he was three. He was the front man for 34Below, which released five CDs and toured nearly every state in the country. After 1000 shows and years of climbing the rock and roll ladder, Ybarra suffered encephalitis, an acute inflammation of the brain commonly caused by a viral infection. Ybarra could no longer meet the physical demands of touring and performing and had to quit 34Below. Since 2005 he has been writing and recording new material and performing as a solo act at various venues around San Diego.

FAVORITE BAND OF ALL TIME?
“If I have to pick one, it’d be U2. This band has been a trailblazer in modern rock and pop culture.”

FAVORITE DEAD CELEBRITY?
“Elvis. It’s amazing how much one individual could affect and change the entertainment industry in just a short period of time. Between movies, songs, and concerts, he seriously influenced pop culture.”

WHAT BEATLE?
“Paul has contributed the most to pop music, overall. I know John was talented — and if he were alive today he may have had as decorated a career as Paul — but Paul was the most versatile, creating songs with Michael Jackson and Wings and still thriving in his solo career in his 60s.”

THREE MOMENTS THAT SUCKED...
1. “When I had meningitis and I had to get a spinal tap.”
2. “When my car was stolen — inside were my two guitars, one of them the first I ever bought, and my computer with all my music and contacts.”
3. “When my car was stolen — inside were my two guitars, one of them the first I ever bought, and my computer with all my music and contacts.”

FAVORITE LIVE CELEBRITY?
“I really do appreciate what Joel Osteen has done with his church in Houston. It is one of the biggest, and educated about music and therefore not as Nicholson said, “It’s easy to be victorious over anything we believe by faith will happen.”

WHERE DO YOU SEE MUSIC GOING IN THE 21ST CENTURY?
“We will encounter more and more dissonance. A pop song today will not be like a pop song 50 years from now. The public will be more involved and educated about music and therefore not as impressed with the cadences that we know today. It will lose its simplicity even more than it has and become more complex.”

WORST JOBS?
1. I used to have to clean beaten-down rental apartments after tenants would leave, and they would not clean up after themselves. It was disgusting.
2. Worked as a laborer in construction.
3. I was once a chauffeur for a crooked limo company.

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21
Michele Lundeen & Blues Streak
“The Queen of Steam”

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22
Family Style
“Blues, Soul, Rock & Roll”

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Blues Invaders

Monday, Dec. 24
Christmas Eve Closed

Christmas Night
Shelle Blue

Wednesday, Dec. 26
Len Rainey & the Midnight Players

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MIRA MESA

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JAY J
Erick Diaz Dustin Brown

Info/Details available at: realivzetribe.com

Friday 12.28
The Crystal Method (DJ SET)

Daniel Santos DJ IDeaL

Presale tickets available at giantclub.com
realivzetribe.com

NEXT WEEKEND

Saturday 12.29
Foundation

Jeff Carroll Sean Wilson

Info/Details available at realivzetribe.com

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**THIS WEEK’S CONCERTS**

**THURSDAY**
Venice: Belly Up Tavern, Thursday, December 20, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.

**FRIDAY**
Shiny Toy Guns: House of Blues, Friday, December 21, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.
The Count Basie Orchestra: Anthology, Friday, December 21, 1337 India Street, San Diego. 619-595-0300.

**SATURDAY**
The Kottonmouth Kings: House of Blues, Saturday, December 22, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.
Peter White: Spreckels Theatre, Saturday, December 22, 121 Broadway, downtown. 619-235-9500.
The Count Basie Orchestra: Anthology, Saturday, December 22, 1337 India Street, San Diego. 619-595-0300.

**SUNDAY**
The Count Basie Orchestra: Anthology, Sunday, December 23, 1337 India Street, San Diego. 619-595-0300.

**UPCOMING CONCERTS**

**DECEMBER**
K-Ci and JoJo: Viejas Casino DreamCatcher Show Room, Friday, December 28, 5000 Willows Road, Alpine. 619-445-5400.

**NEW YEAR’S ROCKER EVE!**

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MONDAY, DECEMBER 31
TWO SEATINGS
5:30pm – 8:30pm
Anthology House Band
Amuse + 3 course prix fixe menu
9:00pm – 1:00am
Anthology House Band/ Lee Rocker
Amuse + 4 course prix fixe menu

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DETROIT UNDERGROUND 1/04
MICHAEL WARD 1/05
ROD PIAZZA & The Mighty Flyers 1/11
CHRIS HILLMAN 1/12
CHUCHITO VALDES 1/18
STANLEY CLARKE 1/25 & 26
RAUL MALO *Special Engagement 2/3 & 4

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All shows subject to change.

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 30**
Cracker and Camper Van Beethoven: Belly Up Tavern, Sunday, December 29, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.

**THE COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA**
San Diego, Sunday, December 21, 1337 India Street, San Diego. 619-595-0300.
**JANUARY**

- The Circle Jerks: House of Blues, Friday, January 5, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.
- David Lindley: Belly Up Tavern, Wednesday, January 9, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
- Xavier Rudd: House of Blues, Friday, January 11, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.

**The Blue Man Group**

- Twista: Cannery, Wednesday, January 16, 3150 Ocean Front Walk, Mission Beach. 838-390-1790.

- Ben Kennedy: House of Blues, Thursday, January 17, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.
- Cross Canadian Ragweed: Belly Up Tavern, Thursday, January 17, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
- Pat Green: 4th & B, Friday, January 18, 143 B Street, San Diego. 619-251-4543.
- Dilated Peoples: Belly Up Tavern, Friday, January 18, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.

- Social Distortion: House of Blues, Friday through Sunday, January 18, 19, and 20, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.
- Ryan Adams: Spreckels Theatre, Saturday, January 19, 121 Broadway, downtown. 619-233-9900.
- Steve Poltz: Belly Up Tavern, Thursday, January 24, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
- Pepper: Cannery, Friday, January 25, 3150 Ocean Front Walk, Mission Beach. 838-408-1780.
- Ozomatli: Belly Up Tavern, Friday and Saturday, January 25 and 26, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
- Molotov: House of Blues, Tuesday, January 29, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.

**FEBRUARY**

- Los Lobos: Belly Up Tavern, Saturday, February 2, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
- Los Amigos Invisibles and $15$: House of Blues, Friday, February 8, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.
- The Wallflowers: Viejas Casino DreamCatcher Show Room, Saturday, February 9, 5000 Willows Road, Alpine. 619-445-5480.
- Rhett Miller: Belly Up Tavern, Sunday, February 10, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
- Jill Scott: Copaiba Symphony Hall, Wednesday, February 13, 1245 Seventh Avenue, downtown. 619-225-8884.
- The Editors and Hot Hot Heat: House of Blues, Wednesday, February 13, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.

**FEBRUARY 2008**

- Los Lobos: Belly Up Tavern, Saturday, February 2, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
- Los Amigos Invisibles and $15$: House of Blues, Friday, February 8, 1055 Fifth Avenue, Gaslamp. 619-299-2583.
- The Wallflowers: Viejas Casino DreamCatcher Show Room, Saturday, February 9, 5000 Willows Road, Alpine. 619-445-5480.
- Rhett Miller: Belly Up Tavern, Sunday, February 10, 143 South Cedros Avenue, Solana Beach. 858-481-8140.
Monday, December 31st 2007

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charissa@thinroom.com
thinroom.com onyxroom.com
Bar Leucadian, 1542 North Coast Highway 101, Leucadia. 760-753-2094. Friday and Saturday, live classic/pop rock.

The Calpyso Cafe, 379 North Highway 101, Escondido. 760-632-8252. Thursday, Dixie Music, reggae; Friday, Polka; Saturday, Triple Shot, House, Monday, John Bennett and Friends; Wednesday, Lousa Llena, Latin.

Cane’s, 1105 Ocean Front Walk, Mission Beach. 858-484-1780. Thursday, 8 p.m.; Blue Sky monday, Marquis Island; April 22, and Joe Knight; alternative/rock/metal; Friday, 8 p.m.; Konservy and Slover, rock; Saturday, Growth of 8; hip-hop/electronic genres.

Dreamstreet, 2228 Bacon Street, Ocean Beach. 619-222-8311. Thursday, Urban Liquid Gel Dance, hip-hop; Friday, Deeply Broken, Bluejay, Tyme, Tuck., and the Vignee Mirror Band, hip-hop; Saturday, Four Hours and Fighting for Sheriff, rock, Sunday, reggae music; Wednesday, live rock/alternative.

E Street Cafe, 128 E Street, Encinitas. 760-230-2036. Music is acousticfolk unless otherwise noted. Thursday, 7-9 p.m.; Joe, contemporary jazz.

The Flame, 3035 Park Boulevard, Hillcrest. 619-295-4163. Winter Break Jam. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.; 21 and up. No cover. 4696 30th Street, North Park. 619-640-2500.

The Flame: Second Saturday of the month, alternative gothic and industrial with DJs Robin Roth, Adam, and Didkmid. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.; 21 and up. 3780 Park Boulevard, Hillcrest. 619-295-4163.

Inferno Young Adult Nightclub: Fridays and Saturdays, DJ Kool T spins Top 40, dance, Sundays, Live Rock n’ Roll featuring DJ Eclypse. Wednesday, guest DJ spin hip-hop, R&B, and reggaeton. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.; 21 and up. 775 Metcalf Street, Escondido. 760-741-1271.

Kadan: First Saturday of the month, Brother’s Night, live electronic, crunk, and glitch hop. 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.; 21 and up. No cover. 4065 30th Street, North Park. 619-540-2560.

The Kava Lounge: First Saturday of the month, Acoustic underground dance music with DJs Robin Roth and Tom King. No cover. 2012 Kettner Boulevard, Middletown. 619-540-0913.

Static Lounge: Fourth Friday of the month, Club Pop Nite, electic, 70s, and indie with DJ Groundfloor and Edge-tone. 634 Broadway (between Sixth and Seventh Avenue), downtown. 619-546-1809.

Tie Lee’s: Thursdays, ryde dance with DJ Gator Boy. 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. 3502 Napa Street, Moorpark District. 619-542-1482.

Whiskey Girl: Fridays and Saturdays, DJ Marc Thrasher mixes music videos. Sunday, Top Spot Sundays, DJ Famous Dave mixes video requests. Mondays, Music Monday, DJ Marc Thrasher mixes 70s and 80s videos. Tuesdays and Wednesdays, DJ Famous Dave mixes music videos. 9 p.m.; 21 and up. 305 Fifth Avenue, downtown. 619-236-1016.

The Whistle Stop: Second Friday of the month, Pete Golfer Stripped, live bands with DJ Robin Roth spinning electic, indie, and 70s. 2220 Fim Street (corner of 30th and Juniper), South Park. 619-296-6794.

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DANCE

If you would like to include your DJ event, e-mail sell@edwards.com or submit a listing online at SanDiegoReader.com by clicking on the music section. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday, the week prior to publication. The listings are free.

Air Conditioned: Wednesdays, Club Vogue, Steve West and DJ 90s the 90s, Thursdays, Too Cool for School, old-skool hip-hop, and 90s. Fridays, rare grooves, funk, and disco. Saturdays, Cocktail Party, dance in your lamplight days and Sundays, guest DJ night. Mondays, hip-hop, funk, and soul with DJ DJ 1979. Thursdays, Big Jive, Chill, dream pop blues. 4653 30th Street, North Park. 619-701-1811.

Brass Rail: Third Thursday of the month, Pussy Galore, live bands with DJ Robin Roth spinning electic, indie, and 90s. Second Friday of the month, Club Fashion Week, fashion show and discotheque. Fourth Friday of the month, Sabber, old-skool ‘80s, goth, and industrial with DJs Atom, Liquid Grey, and guests. 3786 Fifth Avenue, Hillcrest. 619-236-2223.

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CLUBS BY AREA

If you wish to submit a listing, call 619-231-3000, ext. 408, eight days or by 3 p.m. Friday, the week prior to publication. To send weekly or monthly publications, fax to 760-780-1399 or mail to Reader Music Scene, P.O. Box 8500, San Diego CA 92138-0003. You may also submit information online at SanDiegoReader.com by clicking on the music section.

BEACHES

Bahia Resort Hotel, 999 West Mission Bay Drive, Mission Beach. 619-235-3000, ext. 20, or through the Internet. Open daily by 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Visit our Web site at OURBEACH.COM. Surfboard, bodyboard, boogie board, fishing tackle, and scuba gear. A day pass is $45.00. Parking is free. The lodge at Torrey Pines, 1149 N. Torrey Pines Road, La Jolla. 619-235-4231. Grill: Friday and Saturday, 6-9 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Mike Nelson, solo jazz guitar.

Manhattan Restaurant (at the Empress Hotel), 7755 First Avenue, La Jolla. 858-459-0700. Thursday, 8 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., Tales and Friends, jazz. Saturday, 9 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., the Tokel Jazz Quartet.

710 Beach Club (formerly Blind Melon), 710 Garnet Avenue, Pacific Beach. 619-483-7844. Thursday, Tine and Abe’s, rock. Friday, One Deep, reggae. Saturday, Stoner and Orgonia, reggae.

Anthology, Downtown. 3299 Holiday Court, La Jolla. (continued)

Buzz Campbell, Hot Rod Lincoln, Year-Long Disaster, Winstons, blues.

Turquoise Cafe, Turquoise Street, Pacific Beach, blues.

the Good Stuff, downtown. 619-595-0300. Friday, Saturday, eclectic/world music. Monday, 9 p.m., Latin jazz. Sunday, Latin. 619-222-6822. Thursday, 9 p.m., rock. Tuesday, eclectic/world music. Saturday, Latin jazz. Sunday, Latin. 619-595-0123. Thursday, 6:30 p.m. to 11 p.m., blues.

Clubs

SAN DIEGO

Albie’s Beef Inn, 3210 Hotel Circle North, San Diego. 858-512-1121. Friday, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., Saturday, 7 p.m. to Tuesday, 6:30 p.m., David Twomey/Steve piano/bar.


Whiskey Girl, 650 Fifth Avenue, downtown. 619-220-1634. Thursday, DJ Marc Thacker, Friday and Saturday, DJ Mac Thacker, Sunday, DJ Famous Dave. Monday, Amazing Showdowns with DJ. Thursday, DJ Famous Dave. Wednesday, the Stompers, a Dance Matthews Band tribute, popcorn, and DJ Famous Dave.

Count Basie died in a Florida hospital in 1984, almost 50 years after forming his first group in 1935 from the leaving of Bonnie Moten’s big band. So, what’s left of the Basie Orchestra today? After winning 16 Grammys, critics call him an institution, but his band has never really stopped performing. Under different leaders, the Basie legacy has survived the boneyard of big bands with a blend of wizened veterans and new, younger players. It’s old music made fresh, and it rips — just how the Count would have wanted it.

COUNT BASIE ORCHESTRA, Anthology, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, December 21-23, 619-695-0300. $21 to $63.
SAN DIEGO
(continued)

Epencentre, 8400 Mira Mesa Boulevard, Mira Mesa. 858-271-4800. Friday, 7 p.m., Variety Show; Saturday, 6:30 p.m., Comedy Show; Sunday, 6:30 p.m., Sensory Friendly Comedy Show.

Humphrey’s, 1106 Washington Street, San Diego. 619-224-5577. Backstage Lounge: Thursday, 10:30 p.m., DJ Roy Lelli; Sunday, 7:30 p.m., DJ John Phillips. Bar. Wednesday, 9 p.m., Latin Night; Thursday, 9 p.m., Variety Show; Friday, 8 p.m., Comedy Show; Saturday, 8 p.m., Stand-up Comedy. Jewels Lounge: Sunday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Monday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Tuesday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Wednesday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Thursday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Friday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Saturday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show.

The Imperial House, 3515 Adams Avenue, San Diego. 619-232-3057. Friday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Saturday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Sunday, 7 p.m., Comedy Show; Monday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Tuesday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Wednesday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Thursday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Friday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show; Saturday, 9 p.m., Comedy Show.

JP’s Pub, 10904 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, Clairemont. 858-578-2574. Friday and Saturday, 10 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., Karaoke.

The Imperial House, 1205 Kalmia Street, San Diego. 619-234-3525. Friday and Saturday, 7:30 p.m. to 11:30 p.m., Rick Cory, pop standard/Top 40 party.

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2 Dance Floors • 3 Full Bars • Live Flamenco Dancers
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Hennessey’s Flying Elephant Pub and Grill, 805 Tamarack Avenue, Carlsbad. 760-672-8106. Wednesday 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., for Wood and the Country Boys, acoustic rock/blues.

The Inn at Rancho Santa Fe, 7951 Lince de la Casa, Rancho Santa Fe, 858-770-1131. Thursday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Jerry Melick, jazz/everyday piano.

J.J. Landers’ Irish Pub, 125 Main Street, Fallbrook. 760-731-0839. Thursday, 8:30 p.m., For the Far Guy, acoustic rock. Friday, 8:30 p.m., The Money Band and Swing, acoustic rock. Saturday, 8:30 p.m., Broker Lee, Irish folk. Thursday, Tom Lee, acoustic rock. Wednesday, 8:30 p.m., For the Far Guy, acoustic rock.

The Jumping Turtle, 1600 Capistrano Road, San Clemente. 760-441-7779. Thursday, Mylo, a Shattered Heart, Daddio Kroeger, and Dub Factor, rock/alternative/punk/rock. Friday, Anastasym, Six Seasons, the Drapes Against the World, Project Out of Bounds, the Horror Kats, and Better Luck Next Time.

Z-Bop, 214 East Grand Avenue, Escondido. 760-441-9333. Thursday, 8:30 p.m., The Band in Against the World, Project Out of Bounds, the Horror Kats, and Better Luck Next Time.

Neighborhood Bar”, 4 Regulation Pool Tables $2.75 Wells 8:30 pm The Band in Against the World, Project Out of Bounds, the Horror Kats, and Better Luck Next Time.

The Flying Bridge, 1105 North Coast Highway, Oceanside. 760-722-1151. Sunday, 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., The Bleeding Irish, “Your Friendly Neighborhood Bar” 1542 N. Coast Highway Leucada - 760-753-2094

Happy Hour 4-7 pm daily $2.75 Wells $2.50 Beer of the Month 4 Regulation Pool Tables Shuffleboard • Darts • Golf Monday Pool Tournament 8:30 pm

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20

Rockin' Johnny White presents
BLUE SKY BLONDE • MOSQUITO HEAD
AGENT 22 • JEN KNIGHT

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21

KEMISTRY featuring members from
Sprung Monkey

LOVER
BRONK
DOUG THE BUTCHER

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 22

Rockhill & Company present
GROUCH & ELIGH
OF THE LIVING LEGENDS

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27

Brazilian Pre-NYE Party with
NaCalifia

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 28

40 OUNCES (Sublime Tribute)
A CONCRETE PROJECT

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29

MONSTERS OF ROCK
Merry Christmas, Closed

MONDAY, JANUARY 1

NEW YEAR'S EVE

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4

SOMETHING NEW

SATURDAY, JANUARY 6

Brazilian Pre-NYE Party

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10

CANOBSS - MNYIYC
TAINTED SOCIETY • DISCORD
TWELVE TWENTY

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12

THE BLOODY HOLLIES
GET BACK LORETTA
FONDO • DEMASIADO

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 17

TWISTA

FRIDAY, JANUARY 25

Rooftop Restaurant & Premier Music Venue
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CALENDAR

SOUTH BAY/CORONADO

Buon Giorno Restaurant, 4110 Bonita Road, Bonita. 619-475-2660. Thursday, Piano Flow, piano jazz. Saturday, Midnite and One Thousand Eyes, jazz.

The Butcher Shop, 376 Broadway, Chula Vista. 619-425-9440. Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, classic rock. Saturday, McP’s Irish Pub and Grill, 3456 Orange Avenue, Coronado. 619-435-6611.

Eyes, 4 p.m., Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, 9 p.m. to midnight, Tony Lasley, harpist.

Toni Valdez, midnight, Saturday, and Sunday, 9 p.m. to midnight, Toni Valdez, guitar.


Jazz, 3:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Steve Brewer, acoustic.

The Butcher Shop, 1550 Orange Avenue, Coronado. 619-435-6611.

Bands

ALTERNATIVE

Better Luck Next Time: The Jumping Turtle

The Blackbirds: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

Blue Sky Blonde: Cisco

Buckfast Superbee: The Casbah

The China Clippers: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

The Common Loon: Winston’s

The Dajjal Persona: Epicentre

Deadlines Revenge: The Jumping Turtle

The Diana Death Band: Tower Bar

The Drapes: The Jumping Turtle

Endure the Fall: Soma

Failure to Focus: Soma

First Wave Hello: The Casbah

Flash Lump Eaters: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

Flirting with Failure: Brick By Brick

The Horror Katz: The Jumping Turtle

Hungover Tomorrow: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

The Laymen: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

Melissa and the Monkey Bites: Surf N’Saddle

Moving Units: House of Blues

Murgan the Mystic: Lotus’s Coffee House

Nuclear Tomorrow: Winstons

Numsula: Lotus’s Coffee House

Reeve Oliver: The Casbah

Tim Raldo and the Fibby: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

The Quonset Huts: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

The Resemblances: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

Samo: Lotus’s Coffee House

Scar’d Sandy: The Kraken

She Said Sever: Soma

Shiny Toy Gun: House of Blues

Greyboy Allstars play the Belly Up Tavern tomorrow, December 21

I took this girl out on a few dates and things seemed to go really well. And, it got to that point where you aren’t sure if you’re a couple or not. All indications were that she was into me. I wake up and log onto my computer and there’d be emails from her. I’d get text messages from her on my phone. Occasionally, I’d walk out to my car and see a little note that said, “I’m thinking about you.” All that sweet stuff woman do, but not so much that it was stalkish.

So, we go to see the Greyboy Allstars, and she acted really weird that night. The old cliché excuses about having to wake up early in the morning for a meeting at work. We ended up leaving after the opening band, before they even hit the stage.

The following weekend I was going to be in L.A. and saw that the Greyboy Allstars were playing at a venue up there. I jokingly called her and said we had a chance to catch them in L.A. There was silence on the other end of the phone. I laughed and told her I was joking.

The third attempt we made to see them, she said she had a migraine. I didn’t doubt that she had a migraine, but in an attempt to be humorous, I said, “I think you just don’t like that band.” She screamed at me, saying that I was accusing her of lying. I told her I was just trying to be funny, and she slammed the phone down.

I never heard from her again. I emailed twice. The first time I asked how her head was feeling. She didn’t respond. A few days later, I just typed some lyrics from one of the Greyboy Allstars’ songs. I still haven’t heard back from her, and that was five years ago.

I may see the Greyboy Allstars in concert again, but I may never bring a date. I don’t want to jinx it.

THE COMEDY STORE

Friday & Saturday December 21 & 22 • 8 & 10:30 pm

$80 per person includes:

DINNER
DANCING
CHAMPAGNE

Featuring

SEAN KELLY

CHIP FRANKLIN

Heard Mornings on 1000 AM

For Reservations Call
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Friday & Saturday December 21 & 22 • 8 & 10:30 pm

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The Comedy Palace

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$80 per person includes:

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CHAMPAGNE

Featuring

SEAN KELLY

CHIP FRANKLIN

Heard Mornings on 1000 AM

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Sammy Shore

From Bow to Law and Beyond

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Featuring Al Madrigal, Kirk Fox, and Vicki Barbolak

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Must be 21 – All shows 2-drink minimum

Dr. Mike Kovatos

Station: KSOS/Jazz

Shift: 11:00 PM TO 2:00 AM

Tim Raldo and the Fibby: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

The Resemblances: O’Connell’s Pub and Nightclub

Samo: Lotus’s Coffee House

Scar’d Sandy: The Kraken

She Said Sever: Soma

Shiny Toy Gun: House of Blues

The Shot Out Hoodie: Brick By Brick

The Strangers & Me: The Casbah

The 25th Hour: Epicentre

The Underclassmen: Winstons

Unloaded: Brick By Brick

Vortex Data: Surf N’Saddle
ROCK
Against the World: The Jumping Turtle
Agent 22: Canes
Astra: The Casbah
Authentic Sellout: Brick By Brick
Axzy: Soma
Benediction: The Jumping Turtle
 Burning the Masses: Epicentre
Buzz Campbell: The Casbah
Canals Madrid: Epicentre
The Chi Club: Tiki House, Winstons
The Crudit Union: Ocean House
Crossroads: Carvers
Datarock: House of Blues
The Day Sets Fire: Soma
Desert Diamonds: The Casbah
Dirty Sweet: The Casbah
Electric Soul: Tio Leo’s (Mira Mesa)
Etched in Red: The Kraken
Fear the Fat Guy: Tom Giblin’s Irish Pub and Restaurant, J.J. Lander’s Irish Pub
Fighting for Nineveh: Dreamstreet
Fing: Brick By Brick
Fleetwood Max!: Ocean House
Flowerthief: Lestat’s Coffee House
Forever Days Forgotten: Soma
40 Oz. to Freedom: Martini Ranch (Gaslamp)
Fuzz Huzzi: Dreamstreet
Mike Gardner: North Bar Sports and Spirits, Mas Fina Cantina, Cheers
The Good Stuff: Tiki House
In Fear and Faith: Soma
The Karl Marx Band: Humphrey’s
Kemistry: Canes
Kentucky 6 Gun: Soma
Los Warcones: The Casbah
The Money Band: J.J. Landers’ Irish Pub
Viva Santana: Humphrey’s
Year-Long Disaster: The Casbah
Zone 4: Dick’s Ninety, Don’s Cocktail Lounge

POP / TOP 40
Scott Carter and the New Breed Band: Coyote Bar and Grill
Kenny Eng: Lestat’s Coffee House
First Class Fiction: Borders Books and Music (Casbah)
The Flock of 80’s: Henry’s Pub

JAZZ / BIG BAND
Joseph Angelastra: El Street Cafe

The Count Basie Orchestra: Anthology
John Bennett and Friends: The Colpy Café
Tom Bishop: Rancho Bernardo Inn
Jeff Blum: Miami Grille (UTC)
Ray Briz: Hotel del Coronado
Jesse Davis: Humphrey’s
Aubrey Fay: Humphrey’s
Donnie Finnell and Company
East: Bar’s 221

San Diego Reader, December 20, 2007
Holidays at óle

Monday, December 24
Slow-Roasted
Christmas Eve
Prime Rib $9.95
Starting at 5 pm

Tuesday, December 25
10 am-2 pm
Starting at 2 pm: Live Maine
Christmas Day
Brunch Lobster $11.95
Open at 10 am
Served with saffron rice
Starting at noon

Turkey Dinner $11.95
Traditional roasted turkey, mashed potatoes & gravy, homemade sage stuffing, candied yams, sweet corn & carrots, and cranberry sauce

Celebrate Your Birthday Wednesday, December 26
Free Prime Rib Dinner
If you were born in December, show your ID and enjoy a free Prime Rib Dinner! Begins at 5 pm.
Reservations, purchase and photo ID required. Not valid with any other offers or Happy Hour.

Monday, December 31 • Prix Fixe Dinner Menu 5-11 pm
New Year’s Eve 2008
$100 per person
*Does not include tax or gratuity.

Additional $50 for Nightclub, Open Bar.

Starting at noon:
Our traditional Turkey Dinner $11.95
Traditional roasted turkey, mashed potatoes & gravy, homemade sage stuffing, candied yams, sweet corn & carrots, and cranberry sauce

Holiday Bowl
Arizona State vs. Texas – December 27

Holiday Schedule
Dec. 22
Pete White
Dec. 22
The Cure June 3

Dec. 23
Joel Osteen Jan. 4

Dec. 24
Garrison Keillor Jan. 7

Dec. 25
Blue Man Group Jan. 11

Dec. 26
Mixed Martial Arts Jan. 12

Dec. 27
Ryan Adams Jan. 19

Dec. 28
Lewis Black Feb. 1

Dec. 29
Jill Scott Feb. 13

Dec. 30
Foo Fighters March 3

Dec. 31
George Lopez March 15

WWE Smackdown
Staples Center, January 25, 26
Garth Brooks

Chargers Games
Denver Dec. 24

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dele's, 2R & VICTORY WINE/LIFE PRESENTS
FRIDAY NIGHT SHACKEDOWN
THE SHACKEDOWN BREAKDOWN
FEATURING THE WORLDWIDE & OFFICIAL S.D. CHARGERS DJ:
DJ RAGE
WITH DJ DUBZ, IMPACT, DJ MAHIESTIK & DJ TEKNIKS
SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMANCE BY
ASHLEY ROBLES
MYSPACE.COM/ASHLEYROBLES
$5 LONG ISLANDS & VODKA ROCKSTARS ’TIL 1:00AM
$3 KAMIKAZES & BOTTLE BEERS ALL NIGHT
HOSTED BY ROB ZOODY OF CLUB DEVATE & ZXR
AND “THE-KNIFE OF THE NINHOODS & VICTORY”
FOR VIP & MORE INFO:
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DECO’S & CLIMAX SD PRESENTS
SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE
3RD ANNUAL X-MAS PARTY
FEATURING 90’S & 00’S & DJ MARLINO
ALONG WITH THE BEAUTIFUL
LISA KAI & LILY NGUYEN
MIDNIGHT GIVEAWAY DP DRINKS, PRIZES & CASH
SKYY 90 VODKA OPEN HOSTED BAR
FROM 9-1:00AM | RSVP EMAIL: 90CLIMAXSD.COM
FOR GUESTLIST REQUEST VISIT WWW.CLIMAXSD.COM

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RESTAURANT HOURS
8PM-MIDNIGHT FRIDAYS & SATURDAYS
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 21
DECO’S X-VENTURE PRESENTS
FRIDAY NIGHT SHACKEDOWN
THE SHACKEDOWN BREAKDOWN
FEATURING THE WORLDWIDE & OFFICIAL S.D. CHARGERS DJ:
DJ RAGE
WITH DJ DUBZ, IMPACT, DJ MAHIESTIK & DJ TEKNIKS
SPECIAL GUEST PERFORMANCE BY
ASHLEY ROBLES
MYSPACE.COM/ASHLEYROBLES
$100 per person"
JAZZ / BIG BAND
(continued)
One Thousand Eyes:
Buon Giorno Restaurant
Dan Papaila:
The Lodge at Torrey Pines
The Prince of Piano:
The Westgate Hotel
Rick Ross:
La Valencia Hotel
Sambajazz:
Carne Restaurant
Doug Strock:
E Street Cafe
The Tokell Jazz Quartet:
Meditation Restaurant
Vintage Vegas:
Martini’s Above Fourth
Doug Walker:
South Park Bar and Grill
Larry Whitt:
Jack’s Restaurant
Willowald:
American Legion Post 330
Z-Bop:
The Flying Bridge, Espana
Franco Z.:
Tommy’s Italian Restaurant
Mikan Zlatkovich:
Dizzy’s
REGGAE / SKA
The Awah Band:
Winstons
The Dub Factory:
The Jumping Turtle
Elijah Emanuel and the Revelations:
Winstons
Lloyd Hemmings:
Winstons
One Drop:
710 Beach Club
Organika:
710 Beach Club

Online Club Coupons
at SDReader.com
Here’s a sample of the great deals available!

2-for-1 admission
Before 9 pm only. Excludes national acts and special events. Offer expires December 31, 2007. Expiration dates are renewed the last week of each month. Coupon not valid on holidays.

Brick By Brick
Live music and cocktails. Must be 21 with valid ID.

2nd drink $1
Buy 1 drink, get 2nd drink of equal or lesser value for $1. Offer expires December 31, 2007. Expiration dates are renewed the last week of each month. Coupon not valid on holidays.

U-31
Cocktail Lounge. Coming soon: live bands and DJs.

The Aero Club
Free WiFi
Brick By Brick
2 for 1 admission
CA Express VIP Card
Free card
In Cahoots
2 for 1 cover
Lucky 7 Match
$5 off speed dating
Martini Ranch
Free appetizers

U-31
2nd drink $1

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REEVE OLIVER
SATISFACTION
SAY VINYL

FRIDAY • DECEMBER 21
DIRTY SWEET
THE PRAYERS
ASTRA

SUNDAY • DECEMBER 23
DOORS 7 PM • FREE FOOD
LIVE RADIO BROADCAST

SUNDAY • DECEMBER 30

THURSDAY • JANUARY 10
DWARVES

FRIDAY • JANUARY 11
GREG LASWELL

SATURDAY • JANUARY 12
THE BLACK HEART
PROCESSION
**REGGAE / SKA**

Action Andy and His Haunted Honky-Tonkers: The Cabin
The Band in Black: Honeyway's Tavern (Cathedral), Honeyway's Tavern (10th)
Mike Britt: O'Connell's Pub and Nightclub
The California Rangers: McCabe's Beach Club
Cash'd Out: Belly Up Tavern
The Deere Johns: Belly Up Tavern
Kerri Depart: Lottan's Coffee House
The Honky Tonk Kings: Cheers
Hot Rod Lincoln: The Cabin
Shoestring Strap: Winstons
The Sundance Band: Reggae Inn

**ACOUSTIC / FOLK**
Matthew Blake: Java Jones
The Bleeding Irish: Honeyway's Tavern (Younts)
Tom Boyer: Sardine Books and Music (Carlsbad Mountain)
Steve Brewer: McP's Irish Pub and Grill
Karim Carson: Java Jones
Issac Cheeng: Lottan's Coffee House
The Clockan Boys: R. O'Sullivan's
The Clay Colton Band: Tom Giblin's Irish Pub and Restaurant
Tony Cummings: Tom Giblin's Irish Pub and Restaurant, R. O'Sullivan's
Hate Dennis: & O'Sullivan's
4-Way Street: McP's Irish Pub and Grill
Gonzalez Gonzales: Hotel del Coronado
Craig House: R. O'Sullivan's

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Free Wi-Fi • DAILY HAPPY HOUR 4-7 PM • No Cover
Power Hour 4-5 pm — $2 U-Call-Its • $1 off drinks till 7 pm

**Thursday 12/20**
Urban Legend
Christmas Get Down

**Friday 12/21**
Proof Of Life Radio
Diego Brown
Richashay
Tims

**4-9 pm Happy Hour**

**The OB Drum Circle**
**Vintage Monster Band**

**Sunday 12/23**

**Club Kingston**

**Saturday 12/22**

> Defamation League
> This Side Up
> Fuzz Huzzi

**Monday 12/24**

New Year's Eve

**Saturday 12/29**

> Media Lab
> Time Is The Enemy
> Outlift

**Sunday 12/30**

**Club Kingston**

> Eek-A-Mouse

**Monday 12/31**

**Reasonable Noise or Naivety, join us for the last party of 2007 and the FIRST PARTY OF 2008!**

**Three Venues of Enticement:**

MAIN STAGE - SUPERELY with special guests ROCKSTARZ
DOWNTOWN LOUNGE - CRUSH / DJ Blaze with 15 WEST
STARBRIGHT LOFT - "ACID JAZZ LOUNGE"

$25 per person pre-sale (ends Dec. 30) Tickets also can be purchased at the restaurant the day of the event, starting at $35. TICKETS ARE LIMITED. Please check with your server for details and to make your reservation today.

Start your evening with a New Year's Eve Dinner reservation from 4pm - 8pm and get 1/2 off on your admission.

**Now Booking:** Every genre. Call Billy or Drew: 619-232-8131. www.myspace.com/kidsism

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**Now Booking:** Every genre. Call Billy or Drew: 619-232-8131. www.myspace.com/kidsism
New Year’s Eve Party – December 31
2 Great Bands • 2 Clubs • 1 Cover
Food • Party Favors • Champagne Toast
6 One 9 (Santee) & Stone Wolf (Navajo)

Navajo
8515 Navajo Road • 619-465-1730
(Albertsons shopping plaza at Navajo & Lake Murray)
Friday & Saturday, December 21 & 22 • 9 pm
Classic Rock

Nemesis
Upcoming: Thursday, December 27 • 5 pm to midnight
Science Fiction

Santee
8528 Magnolia Avenue • 619-596-8350
(Corner of Prospect & Magnolia)
Friday & Saturday, December 21 & 22 • 9 pm
Classic Rock

Stone Wolf
Sunday, December 23
Humans Invented Violence
Black Ambulance • Rituals in Pain

Pool Tables • Dart Boards • Hot Spot & Lotto • Free Parking • Free WiFi Access
ACOUSTIC / FOLK
Tommy Price: McP’s Irish Pub and Grill
Primetide: The Book Works/Patterson’s Café
Gary Selig: Galley at the Marina
Skelpin: Harney Stone Pub
Michael Tierman: Belly Up Tavern
The Wrong Treasures: Lestat’s Coffee House
Brenda Xu: Lestat’s Coffee House

BLUES / SOUL
Ayanna and the Exiles: Patrick’s II
Big Blue Cat: The Broken
Blue Rockit: 39’s Pub, Dick’s Last Resort
The Blues Invaders: Pal Joey’s, Patrick’s II
The Blues Pharaohs: Coyote Bar and Grill
D.A. and the Hitmen: Tiki House
Faradays: Galley at the Marina
Family Style: Patrick’s II
Federal Funk: Humphrey’s Eatery
The Fremonts: The Lady Lounge
Lady Dottie and the Diamonds: Tiki House, Haney’s Pub, Tower Bar
Laney Lockett: Winstons

The Greyboy Allstars: Belly Up Tavern
Nathan James: Coyote Bar and Grill
Jumpstart: Island Sports and Sports
Lady Dottie and the Diamonds: Tiki House, Haney’s Pub, Tower Bar
Latanya Lockett: Winstons
Michele Lundeen and Blues Streaks: Patrick’s II
The Mississippi Mudsharks: Tiki House
The Post 310 Blues Band: American Legion Post 310
The Roman Spring: Tower Bar
Ruby and the Red Hots: Humphrey’s

Shelie Blue: Patrick’s II
The Stilettos: McP’s Irish Pub and Grill, Haney’s Pub
Supabad: Winstons
Theo and the Zedeco Patrol: Coyote Bar and Grill
Tony Valadez: Galley at the Marina
Billy Watson: Cayote Bar and Grill
Joe Wood and the Lonly Ones: R. O’Sullivan’s, Hanks’s Flying Elephant Pub and Grill

RAP / HIP-HOP
Diego Brown: Dreamstreet
Ricashay: Dreamstreet
Tech: Dreamstreet
Time: Dreamstreet
Urban Legend Get Down: Dreamstreet
The Vintage Monster Band: Dreamstreet

EVERYTHING ELSE
Tom Barabas: G5-Georges on Fifth
Ray Correa: The Butcher Shop
Julio de la Huerta: The Westgate Hotel

The Lemonade Stand: McP’s Irish Pub and Grill

12.31.07
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SUNDAYS
OPEN 8 AM FOR BOWL GAMES & D’LAST
$2 DRAFT BEERS 7 PM – CLOSE
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San Diego, CA 92101

The Local
San Diego Reader December 20, 2007
Examples of our work:

Blood alcohol level:
- 0.12: NOT GUILTY
- 0.13: NOT GUILTY
- 0.15: NOT GUILTY
- 0.16: NOT GUILTY
- 0.17: OVERTURNED
- 0.21: OVERTURNED

Avoid court! Keep your license!
Speak with a lawyer now. Free consultation with a lawyer who will represent you in court.

Karen Giorgio: The Westgate Hotel
Grouch n’ Eligh: ’Canes
John Cain: Shooters Bar and Grill, Bahia Resort Hotel
The Kottonmouth Kings: House of Blues
Luna Llena: The Calypso Café
OPM: House of Blues
Orquesta Guarare: Sevills
Faith Page: The Westgate Hotel
Palis: The Calypso Café
The Prayers: The Casbah
Soljars: House of Blues
Starcrossed: The Casbah
Subnoize: House of Blues

San Diego Reader December 20, 2007 101
When I was a kid my mom complained about Christmas starting earlier each year. It wasn’t because she was Jewish. We had a Christmas tree and a menorah. I think she felt that it was that much longer she’d have to listen to us beg for the toys we wanted.

I don’t complain about Christmas starting earlier, but this is the first year I was invited to Christmas parties the first week in December.

The first one I went to was at the Art Academy of San Diego in East Village on December 7. It was the same night I was going to see the Doors (or remaining two members) at the House of Blues, so I had to get to the bash when it started at 6 p.m.

Sarah was setting things up as I walked in. She was near a board that read, “Have you been naughty or nice?” There was a variety of presents, and Sarah told me to pick one. I got a Twix bar, and she said, “You’ve been nice.” Another guy got a small bottle of liquor. She said that he’d been naughty. I saw one woman peeking before making her pick.

A few of the presents had shots of whiskey. Sarah’s husband said, “I think she got the idea for this when we were at Burning Man. They had this thing called ‘Drinko Plinko,’ like that Price Is Right game. You drank where the thing lands.”

“I don’t want to be known as the snowflake guy.”

I grabbed a Milky Way out of another present and headed over to a guy who was teaching people how to make snowflakes. I heard a woman say that her friend is from Brazil and had never made a snowflake before.

When I snapped a photo of the guy showing others how to make snowflakes, he turned his back on me and continued. I heard him say as I walked away, “I don’t want to be known as the snowflake guy.”

I thought they did a good job decorating the place, which was about 15,000 square feet. They had lights hanging low from the ceiling. I was talking to an employee who was wearing a Santa hat, and she said, “It’s sometimes hard with all the junk we have over there.” I replied, “Uh, you aren’t talking about the art some of the students did, are you?” She said, “Well...”

As I was walking around the gallery looking at the artwork, I slipped on a wheelchair ramp. Someone said, “Are you sure you didn’t drink a shot from the naughty board?” I said, “I think the wheelchair ramp is going to put someone in a wheelchair.”

I looked at a catalog and saw that the school taught drawing, painting, sculpture, and a variety of other techniques. My date, who I had picked up from work, said she was hungry. “We can’t be the first to eat,” I suggested. “The party just started.”

When we saw another couple grab plates, she said, “Hey, I think people are starting to eat.” As we opened up one of the pasta dishes, a guy said, “Oh, so we’re opening that up now.” My date looked at him and said, “We’re starting a trend. It’s time to eat.”

When we sat down, we were across from a guy that owned half the paintings and sculptures in the gallery. I got a bit bored listening to him talk about art but enjoyed talking to his wife about movies. She said, “I don’t go to movies anymore. Spending $9 is too much for New Year’s Eve 2008

Five-Course Dinner Buffet
3 seatings: 6:30 pm, 8:30 pm and 9 pm
Pre-sale tix $55 pp, $65 pp after Dec. 28
NYE VIP Lounge Rooms
Call to book your private party room now!

Club Cover $20 prepaid, $30 night of
Late-night sushi/NYE celebration. Call for info.

Book your Dinner Package, VIP Room Package or Club Entrance today! Space is going fast!!

INCAHOOTS
New Year’s Eve Celebration
MON. DEC. 31 2007
Advance Tickets Available Now
$15 Advance Cover Charge
$20 Advance Cover & Dinner Buffet Combo
$2.50 YOU-CALL-IT DRINKS 6-8 PM
5373 Mission Center Rd, San Diego, Ca. 619-291-1184 www.incahoots.com

New York’s Eve 2008

NYE VIP Lounge Rooms
Call to book your private party room now!

Club Cover $20 prepaid, $30 night of
Late-night sushi/NYE celebration. Call for info.

Book your Dinner Package, VIP Room Package or Club Entrance today! Space is going fast!!

Visions
restaurant & lounge
555 Market Street Gaslamp (Corner of Market & 6th)
619.501.4772 | Private parties available — Call for details
me.” I told her I didn’t mind that as much as talking or cell phones in the theater.

We spent half an hour discussing One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest.

Then she told me about her trip to Argentina, where, she said, for under $30 a couple could get a meal of incredible steaks and wine. She said, “I’m from Texas, so I know good steak. And the cows in Argentina are grass-fed, and there’s no fat in the meat.” Her husband heard this and said, “It is not marbled.” I wasn’t sure what he meant, but all the talk was making me crave a steak. In the end, I settled for the salad and pasta I had on my plate.

Someone complained about the desserts. I had a cupcake and a few cookies and was stoked. A woman grabbed a cream puff and thought it was a mini roll. When she pushed it aside, my date leaned toward me and said, “I want to take it off her plate. They didn’t have any more up there. I just don’t know her well enough to do that.”

A girl who just graduated from a nursing school in Ohio was sitting at our table. When I asked her why she chose to move there, she said she wanted to experience the seasons and that she had grown up here. She told me that they got married at the museum field trip. I soon realized that she wasn’t in school and that I could do whatever I wanted. I walked back out, grabbed a shot of tequila, and talked with Sarah again.

As I was finishing a bottle of green tea, a guy said to me that he couldn’t believe anyone would drink the tea. A student had brought cases of it a long time ago, and the guy thought it was probably bad by now. My date laughed, but I looked at the bottle, thought about it, and continued drinking. It couldn’t be any worse for me than that tequila was.

Crash your party? Call 619-235-3000 x421 and leave an invitation for Josh Board.

Columns archived at SanDiegoReader.com
The decor is modern brasserie, with black-and-white tile floors, shiny black tabletops, sparkling chandeliers. It’s not Art Deco but subtly hints at that style and level of sophistication. A pleasant ambience, and service, with price taken into consideration. Menu listings and prices are subject to change.

Go to SanDiegoReader.com to find hundreds of past reviews.

Oddly, three out of four choices revealed near-monochromatic color schemes, as though filmed in the sepia of an old-time movie. In an entree of jumbo scallops, the thick orbs were lightly seared (barely browned, their centers translucent) and came with white truffle risotto, caramelized onion sauce, and fried Maui-onion rings. I didn’t really love this combination, but I respected it. I might have enjoyed it more if anything on the plate were a color other than beige-to-tan; my taste buds as well as my eyes craved something green and fresh. A thick chipotle-barbecued pork chop (cooked to 135˚ Fahrenheit, just as I specified) was smoky not just from the sauce, but all through the meat. It had been cold-smoked in the kitchen, coming by its “barbecue” designation honestly. The chop was gorgeously, tragically fatty around the edges and

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“San Diego’s premier homegrown and longest-running steakhouse.” – Fodor’s

Rainwater’s
1202 Kettner Boulevard • Downtown San Diego
619-233-5757

San Diego Reader December 20, 2007

Transformer

The Sofia Hotel, 140 West Broadway (next to Greyhound terminal), downtown, 619-702-6309, currantrestaurant.com.

HOURS: Lunch Monday–Friday, 11 a.m.–3:00 p.m.; dinner nightly, 5:30–10:00 p.m.

PRICES: Dinner appetizers, $8–$14; entrees, $16–$32 (most in low $20s); desserts, $7–$10.

CUISINE AND BEVERAGES: Intelligent, original, and even witty California-French “American brasserie” cuisine, with top-quality ingredients in a seasonally changing menu. Interesting international wines at every price point, ample choices by the glass; full bar.

PICK HITS: Oysters on the half-shell; foie gras; escargots; crab salad; duck leg confit; specials.

NEED TO KNOW: Valet parking one block west on Front Street. Cheese sommelier with morel cream is currently the sole semi-vegetarian entree, but vegetable side dishes could make a fine vegan meal.

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

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tender all the way through. Its companions were satisfying Tuscan-style white beans and, in a break from sepias, a wee bit o’ the green, in a beigel of arugula.

Muscovy duck leg confit was the essence of “confit food,” the meat (served on the bone) shreaddy and crisp-surfaced, accompanied by French lentils all poêlé, spinkled with tiny carrot bits. Alongside came two baguette crostini coated with chèvre and currant jam — that is, open-face cream cheese and loose-

CHEF’S CANVAS

Sw Venezuelian.

Myself and one of my mentors, executive chef, we had a test kitchen at Tavern on the Green for six months prior to the opening. We had Russian food consult-

THE FINAL COURSE

“Montage was an unbeliev-

Back at home, the fact that the slow-

chefs from whom I could learn, and that was my education for the next ten years, until I finally had my first opportunity as an executive chef, with the Ritz Carlton in Laguna Niguel, as chef of the dining room. Then I came to San Diego and was offered a position running Anthony’s flagship, Star of the Sea. I was there for six years, but then I was offered the chance to go back to New York as the re-opening chef for the Russian Tea Room in New York City.” (Pflueger served as executive sous-chef at showman Warner’s Restaurant. “I started as a dishwasher, became a prep cook, and then a seafood cook at a little Mexican restaurant. I never really thought of it as a profession, and I ended up going to Vassar College and graduated with a degree in Third World history. I was planning to go to law school after that, but I needed to pay off some ser-

ver the meat (served on the bone) shreaddy and crisp-surfaced, accompanied by French lentils all poêlé, spinkled with tiny carrot bits. Alongside came two baguette crostini coated with chèvre and currant jam — that is, open-face cream cheese and pur-

chefs de cuisine, so my entreé numbers. It did give me the oppor-

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Much Ado About Mutton

“Baa-becue, buddy, baa-becue. People flock to the joint. That’s what I herd.”

We’re talking a little end-of-year showdown.

“San Diego people are afraid — of a dozenish brown tables with those creaky woven-sashes. People sit here,” Hank says. “Sit anywhere. Is this your first lamb brochette?”

I take her hand. “Hey, at $10.99, he should. Okay, it comes in a polystyrene box, but he gets two big squares of it and fresh hot tortillas, and a squeeze of red salsa.

Rodnia explains that my soup is basically the barbacoa. Barbacoa means "leaf." Maybe four feet long, with vicious spikes and a world of difference. The vaporera — it comes out with the flavor of the margarita. With cream cheese and rice, cost $5.99.

She says that traditionally, down in Hidalgo, the barbacoa is slow-cooked in a large cooking pit dug into the ground. That’s impossible here, with health department rules. “So we put the lamb into a spatter — a steamer — instead,” she says.

“And the maguey?” asks Hank.

“Now, see the very thin underskin we can just peel?” says Rodnia. “This we use for another dish, but it is like a broth, a soup, with the lamb organs.”

Hank sighs. “May as well be pig heaven. Uh, make that Mutton Jeff heaven. He gives me a taste of the meat, and it’s so full of flavor you wonder why we bother with beef. But Rodinia says the lamb mixtio has the strongest, maybe most interesting flavors, with that thin maguey skin, and the spices, and again, the slow steaming.

No way I can fit that in now. Even if I had the dinner. But it’s been a blast, one of those days when you discover something you’ve been missing all your life.

“Man,” coo Hank outside. “That place really raised the ba…”

The Place: El Borrego restaurant, 4280 El Cajon Boulevard (not far west of Fairmount), City Heights, 619-218-3355
Type of Food: Mexican
Prices: Breakfast chilaquiles, beans, $6.25; rancheros eggs, $6.25; bean soup, $3.99; lamb broth (with garbanzo beans, rice, and steamed rice). And three rolled tacos filled with lamb meat that’s somehow plenty flavorful, just $5.95.

El Cajon and Fairmount (15); westbound, Eastbound, El Cajon and Van Dyke (1, 1A)
In 1977, Robert Benson published Great Winemakers of California, a series of interviews with the men (and one woman) who were shaping the industry at the dawn of California wine’s Golden Age. He managed to interview Martin Ray — the Orson Welles of the wine world, an outsized personality who had been making Pinot Noir on Mount Eden since the ’30s — shortly before his death. Famous name after famous name — Draper at Ridge, Graft at Chalone, Winiarski at Stag’s Leap, Grigich, Mondavi, Heitz — all there. (And also Brother Timothy at Christopher Brothers, August Sebastiani, Louis Martini, and even Ely Callaway from Temecula — Benson wasn’t just cherry-picking.) The interviews were based on a standard set of questions and heavy on technical details — lots of talk about centrifuges and temperature-controlled fermentation. But Benson wasn’t afraid to let the conversation ramble, and nonotechnical aspects of those chats provide a candid portrait of the industry at the beginning of its ascent.

Some 17 years later, Dennis Schaefer published a sequel of sorts: Vintage Talk: Conversations with California’s New Winemakers. Cab and Chard were still the king and queen and Napa was still the superpower, but still, much had changed. Tim Mondavi had taken over at Mondavi. Randall Graham was making mischief with Rhone varietals at Bonny Doon, while Bob Lindquist was doing the same down in Santa Barbara with Qupé. Jim Clendenen was making hay with Central Coast Pinot Noir, and Joel Peterson was riding the Zinfandel swell at Ravenswood. And the structure was more sophisticated. There was still a lot of technical talk — instead of centrifuges, Schaefer asked about filtration — but the wine press had grown up in the interim, and Schaefer had clearly tailored his interviews for his subjects.

Schaefer’s penultimate interview subject was Adam Tolmach of Ojai Vineyards, and his penultimate question was this: “Do you think we are moving away from an overblown, over-oaked style of wines and moving to stylistic wines more compatible with food?” Tolmach’s reply: “Yes. The earlier California wines tended to be just that way. They were over-extracted, over-oaked, too low in acid, and they had this tremendous character that wasn’t fashioned correctly…It turns out you don’t need incredible ripeness of fruit to make wines with a lot of character. Typically, in California, the wine would be way too ripe, with too much alcohol and almost an excess amount of character… If you pick the grapes at a more reasonable ripeness, you can have all the fruit character that you could ever want without having the excess of alcohol.”

I should note that I am by no means seeking to go after Tolmach here. But the 13 years since that statement was published raise a legitimate question about what he meant by “incredible ripeness” and “excess of alcohol.” Consider Ojai’s Roll Ranch Syrah: in 1996, it offered 13 percent alcohol. Just two years later, that number had jumped to 13.9 percent (and the wine nabbed 91 points from Robert Parker’s Wine Advocate). And in 2004, while it came in at a somewhat tamer 14.5 percent, the wine still earned 94 points from Parker, who called it “stunningly full-bodied, rich, opulent,” and “ripe.”

Tolmach’s wines are hardly unusual in this regard. Ripeness, with its attendant increase in sugar levels — and consequently, alcohol content — has been on the rise all over California for years now. So, I was glad to see that when Bob Heimoff, West Coast editor for Wine Enthusiast magazine, set out to write his own companion to Benson’s book (the newly released New Classic Winemakers of California), he had ripeness on his mind. As he writes in the introduction, “High alcohol is a concern among many writers, sommeliers, restaurateurs, consumers, and even — when they will admit it — growers and winemakers, who worry that the resulting wines are not in balance and may not age.” Where Schaefer asked about filtration and malolactic fermentation, Heimoff would be asking about ripeness, sugar levels — alcohol.

He got a wonderful range of answers; I’ll make note of just a few. Gary Pisoni described Pisoni Pinot Noir by saying, “It’s got mouthfeel! It’s got expansion! I mean, you put one drop in your mouth and it explodes…Our wines are identifiable! They’re showing what the vineyard wants to produce. And that’s what I want: typicite.” Justin Smith at Saxum noted that his wines are between 15.5–15.9 percent alcohol but said, “We have chosen to show respect for the season and let it be what it is. We’re picking at where we think the flavors are…. I’m not super-happy about high alcohol…. but it’s also true that we’re coming off of three of the hottest, driest seasons. Give us another ’98, and they’ll be back down.” Mark Aubert, then at Colgin, explained that “the advent of tannin analysis” led growers to increase hang time for their grapes as they sought ever-more-wonderful phenolic character. Kathy Joseph at Fiddlehead said that as new vineyards mature — there was a lot of replanting after the last phylloxera invasion, during the late ’80s–early ’90s — physiological ripeness might occur at lower sugar levels. And Kent Rosenblum put it on...
the consumer: “The bigger, the badder, the better, the quicker it sells.”

Nobody tied the trend directly to the critics. But when we spoke to Heimoff, he critiqued himself — couldn’t help but observe that “if you travel around and talk to winemakers, you hear it all the time — not necessarily on the record: the ripeness thing is being driven by those two individuals. And people de- 

Michael Laube at two individuals. And people de-

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Christmas Day Buffet at Torreyana Grille
Tuesday, December 25, 2007 • 11:00 am-6:00 pm

Lavish Food Stations:
Fresh Seafood including Shrimp, Crab Claws, Oysters, Clams, Cevice, and Assorted Sushi Platters

Wonderful Variety of Fresh Soups, Salads, and Imported and Domestic Cheeses

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Delicious Entrées such as Halibut with Pommy Wine Cream, Roast Loin of Pork with Sautéd Apples and Brandy Cream

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sister Vicki’s food is just as good. If you want a big start, order the aguacate, a cheese appetizer that comes flaming to your table. And you can’t lose with mezékása, a big oval sampler of déniade (stuffed grape leaves), lokumí (a delicious Greek sausage), spanakó- pita (spinach in filo pastry), tomatoes, cucumbers, tzatziki dip, hummus, feta cheese, and olives. But come for the lamb. It’s wonderfully flavorful, skew- ered in the souvlaki entree (which comes with beans and rice) or as lamb chops. Minousa (bailed eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well too. Or what’s wrong with a simple moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well. Moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well. Moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well. Moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well. Moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well. Moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well. Moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well. Moussaka (baked eggplant, zuc- chini, and ground beef) goes down well.

Inexpensive. — E.B.

Bistro 221 221 East Grand Avenue (near Kalmia), Escondido, 760-737-7398. This gentile bistro — with comfortable chairs and linen-covered tables inside and a shaded patio on the sidewalk — is especially tasty at lunch, with its specialized quesadilllas and a classic burger and fries cooked your way. At dinner simple starter dishes include, steering Florida version of guambo and Maryland crab cakes with minimal filler. The dinner entrees are also the best, including beef tournedos with Gorgonzola and grouper caught just off the Florida shores. A “Louisiana” bread pudding is moister (hence more flavorful) than most of its namesakes. No wheelchair access for restraunts. Free parking behind restaurant. Ordinary wine list. Lunch and dinner Tuesday through Friday; dinner Tuesday through Saturday. Lunch moderate; dinner moderate to high. — N.W.

La Tapatia 349 West Grand Avenue, Escondido, 760-747-8282. Take a walk on the mild side at this family-owned favorite, in business since the 1930s. You’ll find standard Mexican fare in a comfortable dining room, in a very good, a weather, a lovely, Arbor-like stone- front. But it is in the Live Oak woods, and it’s close to your door. And you can’t lose with Grandmas’ place. Okay, it’s not a little old, thatched cottage — it’s a cream- painted wood shed with a gasbore in front. But it is in the Live Oak woods, and it’s close to your door. And you can’t lose with Grandmas’ place. Okay, it’s not a little old, thatched cottage — it’s a cream- painted wood shed with a gasbore in front.

The Wayside Cafe 307 South Main Avenue, Fullerton, 760-723-9631. Loc- als love meeting and eating in this long low-porched building — partly be- cause it all just feels small-town Amer- ica. The place used to be Mahrs’ Serv- ice Station. You can even sit in the old La Jolla 13th floor pent- house, 7955 La Jolla Shores Drive, La Jolla, 858-551-9602. In this oddly cozy penthouse with wide windows facing west, the curtains rise at sunset to re- veal a panorama stretching to the sea. It’s comfortable, attractive, and the for- mal — casual-chic. Here, chef-owner Gaylord Bonk cooks up a creative, so- phisticated, seasonal California-Fusion menu with international flavors seam- lessly integrated, featuring organic veget- ables, wild fish, naturally raised meats and food. With his discerning palate, his fare is unusually delicious. And its healthful, low-carb enjoyment with in- teresting veggies, little starch, minimal cream. Wine list includes some high- end French bargains; good choices by the glass. Full bar. Free parking. Eleva- tors/accessible restrooms same floor. Dietary restrictions accommodated; some kids menu, but child-size plates half-price from regular menu. Reser- vations recommended; Live jazz in lounge most nights after 7 or 8 p.m.; local jazz bands once a month. 3 Meals daily. Expensive. — N.W.

The Marine Room 2000 Spindrift Drive (off Torrey Pines Road), La Jolla, 858-459-7222. High cuisine, high ad- venture, high seas — at only moderately high prices. With chef Bernard Guillaum on top toque, the Ma- rine Room has become the quintessen- tial great San Diego restaurant. The ex- hilarating coastal view meets Cal-French-Pacific Rim cuisine that’s as exuberantly out-front as the waves whacking the windows. Guillaum’s oceanic culinary inventiveness with all- fresh, exotic ingredients makes ev- ery visit a voyage of discovery, and preparations are so elaborate that each listing on his precise menu seems like a whole tasting dinner. Reservations re- quired; slightly dressed but not stuffy. Easiest route: Make a right from west- bound Torrey Pines onto Roseland or Viking and go left on S. Louis, which runs into Spindrift. Wheelchair ramp to the left of front door. Noisy when crowded. Dinner Sunday through Thursday 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. Expensive. — N.W.

Sante Ristorante 7811 Herschel Avenue, La Jolla, 858-454-1315. The name is Italian for “saint,” and the Northern Italian/regional cooking shiners here, especially the fish and seafood dishes. Fresh seafood specials are available every night, in addition to those on the menu. Excellent pasta with mushrooms, ravioli with quail, and lamb chops. Separate room for bar; separate private dining room. Lunch Monday through Saturday, dinner nightly. Enjoyable, but not for the budget. Not to be missed. Moderate (pasta) to expensive. — E.W.

Sushi on the Bay 2374 Girard Avenue, La Jolla, 858-436-1138. (Also at 1923 Calle Barcelona, Encinitas, 760-436-2620.) The sushi high-energy spot — a buoy, salon-like space with a sushi bar in back — draws a lively twenty-something crowd (although older folk will have plenty of company, too). Unlike traditional sushi bars, there’s a vast selection of “rock and roll” — huge, creative party sushi. And they’re fabulous, with sparking fresh seafood and immensely clever combinations. Try, for instance, the shrimp tempura roll, which wraps fried shrimp, crab sticks, daikon sprouts and Japanese mayo in deep-fried salmon skin — the combo would be just as impressive as an appetizer at a top Cal-French restaurant. The Orange Crush is another sublime invention, fresh and crunchy with veggies and to- boko wrapped in sauke venin. Even simple rolls are so well conceived, and the rice so nicely seasoned, you won’t need soy-wasabi dip. No reservations, long waits (in cramped entryway) on weekends. Good sake list. Lunch week- days, dinner nightly, with deep dis- counts for happy hour specials. Moderate. Second (quieter, but with full bar) location at 1923 Calle Barcelona, Carlsbad, 760-436-6261. — N.W.

MISSION VALLEY & THE MESAS

Bali Thai Cafe 407 South Camino del Rio South (dead end, west of Auto Circle and Mission Center Road), San Diego, 619-297-0800. Expect the un- expected! This tiny, unique restaurant splits its menu between three nations with chefs from Indonesia and Thai- land and a chef-owner from Suriname, a former Dutch colony (like Indone- sia) in South America. The Thai menu is stand-out, although the two-cha-thong (shrimp in coconut milk soup) is out- standing and authentic (don’t eat the
staff at the bottom of the bowl), while the tropical Indonesian dishes are so rare locally that culinary adventurers will want to explore such delights as "seafood delight roll," corn fritters, the soothing soto ayam (the Indonesian version of chicken-noodle comfort soup), Balinese fish fillet, and the spicy sambal goreng (shrimp in chili sauce), among others. Short but smart wine list, beer, sake. Easy evening parking. Heated, roofed patio. Large portions. Reserve for weeknights, no reservations accepted for weekends. Lunch and dinner daily. Low moderate. — N.W.

King's Fish House 825 Camino de la Reina (west of Mission Center Drive; Mission Valley, 619-574-1238) (Also at 2015 Birch Road, Chula Vista, 619-591-1900.) To find King's in the mega-mall, go slightly west of Koo Koo Roo and follow the line of cars to the free valet parking. It's a chain, but it's a classy chain, offering fish and seafood of a quality that's well above average, including crustaceans from a live tank and a half-dozen varieties of pristine oysters. Generously-sized entrees come with soup or salad (including a Caesar that's above suspicion) and two hefty side dishes. The lame menu of American-style preparations changes daily to reflect the fresh catch, and includes some rotating regional specialities (e.g., New Orleans, Hawaii, New England). Don't miss the prawn potsticker appetizer, if available, and for dessert, the miraculously light bread pudding. The atmosphere is good-timey (with two patios and a barroom as well as a dining room), the service is enthusiastic, and the management will accommodate special requests if you call ahead. Kiddie menu available. Open daily, lunch and dinner. Moderate. — N.W.

Korea House 6200 Convoy Street, Kearny Mesa, 858-560-0080. Korea House offers floor seating or a table if you want to barbecue your own food. House offers floor seating or a table if you want to barbecue your own food. Don't miss the prawn potsticker appetizer, if available, and for dessert, the miraculously light bread pudding. The atmosphere is good-timey (with two patios and a barroom as well as a dining room), the service is enthusiastic, and the management will accommodate special requests if you call ahead. Kiddie menu available. Open daily, lunch and dinner. Moderate. — N.W.

Nijiya Market 3860 Convoy Street, Kearny Mesa, 858-268-3821. If you're not willing to sacrifice quality for convenience when eating fast food, try this Japanese market in Kearny Mesa. Nijiya Market offers prepared box lunches, or bento, that are pretty to look at, appe- tizing, and a real bargain. I suggest, however, passing by Nijiya's steam trays and heat lamps and going straight to the coolers, where you'll find delicious chicken cutlets, fresh sushi, and chilled noodles, as well as dessert deli-cacies like sweet bread roll filled with sweet bean paste. Inexpensive. — M.N.

Pampas Argentine Grill 6680 Aero Drive (at Montgomery Field), Kearny Mesa, 858-278-3971. The Argentine specialties feature grilled grass-fed beef, including a somewhat Americanized version of the gaucho's great parillada mixta (mixed grill), with a great chorizo but minus any exotic organs. The naturally raised meats are lower fat and lower cholesterol than feed-lot beef but are salted heavily in the kitchen unless you request otherwise. Specify rare or medium-rare, unless you really like medium-well. Lighter fare includes free-range chicken and fresh, well-treated seafood. Beef empanadas are a tasty, authentic starter. Potatoes (fries and mashed) are splendid, salads are exuberant. The full bar features Chilean and Argentine beverages with many af-fordable South American wines by the glass. Park in lot at restaurant's front door, not the back-door lot. Lunch (mainly sandwiches) on weekdays. Dinner nightly except Monday. Entertainment (harp) Friday through Sun-day. Moderate. — N.W.

The Philadelphia Sandwich Co. 3904 Convoy Street (south of Othello), Kearny Mesa, 858-571-0888. This clas-sic lunch counter is a monument to Philly culture, including sports pen-nants, historic photos, and colorful munsters' costumes. The menu is equally devoted to the city's cuisine, especially its two great cul sandwiches: the hoagie and the cheese steak. The mixed-meat hoagie is way more than a hero — its flavor array is similar to (and just as intense as) a New Orleans muf-fuletta. As for the cheese steak, it starts with steak strips, onions and your

Spain this Christmas? Join us at Cafe Sevilla!
3-course Christmas Eve or Christmas Night Dinner $27.95 pp
Starting at 4 pm. Full menu also available.

Five '20 Gift Certificates for only $60! ($100 value)

New Year's Eve Extravaganza

Tapas Bar
6:30 pm 5-course dinner with live guitarist $69* pp
8:30 pm Midnight celebration. 5-course dinner, live flamenco, champagne toast and party favors $129* pp
Main Dining Room Dinner Shows
4:30 pm 5-course dinner and flamenco show $69* pp
7 pm 5-course dinner and flamenco show $99* pp
9:30 pm Flamenco show and midnight celebration. 5-course dinner, show, party favors, champagne toast and access to Club Sevilla $129* pp

Club Sevilla Dinner Show
6:30 pm Show and Dance Party. 5-course dinner, flamenco show, dance party, midnight celebration with champagne toast and party favors $129* pp
Call for reservations.

* Tax, beverage, and 17% gratuity not included. 21+

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¿Dónde has been Naught or Nice, júsame for the last party of 2007 and the FJST PARTY OF 2008?

Three Venues of Enjoyment:
MAIN STAGE - SUPERFLY with special guests ROCKSTAR
DOWNTOWN LOUNGE - CRUSH / DJ Blaze with 15 WEST
STARLIGHT LOFT - "ACID JAZZ LOUNGE"

$25 per person pre-sale (ends Dec. 30). Tickets also can be purchased at the restaurant the day of the event, starting at 535. TICKETS ARE LIMITED. Please check with your server for details and to make your reservation.

San Diego Reader December 20, 2007 111

A HOLIDAY BUFFET YOU'LL LOVE! A Yuletide Setting over looking beautiful Mission Bay. A delightful setting overlooking beautiful Mission Bay. A delicious arrangement of traditional and exotic faire. A gift of family and friends. Celebrate your holiday with a memorable tradition that's sure to become one of your cherished events of the year. Balleen cordially invites you to indulge in a Christmas Day Buffet, then stroll this festive private island's tropical gardens and mile-long white sandy beach. It's a special experience you'll be able to re-open all year long.

Please call 858-490-6363 for reservations or visit ParadisePoint.com

Whether you’ve been Naughty or Nice, join us for the last party of 2007 and the Fjrst Party of 2008!
choice of cheese, and expands from there. Philli novelty may like the sim- ple version with Cheddar but the lushes “Everything” with provolone is more likely to seduce the innocent. “Philip fries” with garlic are the right go-with. The menu also offers Penn- sluscious “Everything” with provolone (tongue in tomatillo sauce), and an excellent Mole Pollo (tender chicken in a spicy chocolaty mole sauce). Fish are also well treated. Grilled must choices, which include a full.recyclerview assortment (serves two), are cut thin and cooked well. Full bar at 1040 Park location. Mexican and U.S. beers at both. Three meals, seven days (closed for luncheon in Chula Vista). Inexpensive. — N.W.

Lefty’s Chicago Pizzeria 3441 30th Street (at North Pacific), 619-295-1720. An eighth-round pizza! That’s what Lefty claims has “king of all pizzas” without his often-crowded little corner pizzeria. Truth is, you can’t help but be drawn, especially at night, to the little ribbon of lights framing the sidewalk canopy with its tables and benches. Lefty is determined to bring the real “Chicago” to San Diego. So of course we’re taking deep-dish pizzas, as well as some thin and crispy. But the ultimate is his “stuffed” pizza, a 14-inch, eighth-pound monster that needs one hour’s “make and bake” time. They also do Chicago hot dog- gers, beautiful brunch, spicy fajis, nyc Italian beef as juju concoction. Or a marvelous number of “uct” and a decent “Lefty’s carbonara” (spaghetti, eggs, bacon, Parmesan), and cream. Open lunch and dinner six days, closed Mondays. — E.B.

Old World Restaurant 3190 30th Street, North Park, 619-238-0586. This is a delight for anyone who loves Northern European food. Their “Great Grub” is German. Gruber is a Homestead Farms corned beef on rye with Swiss cheese, sauerkraut, Thousand Island dressing, and mustard is, as they say, “genuine.” Also, try the sausage plat- ter: grilled bratwurst, kielbasa, sauerkraut, potato salad, spicy mustard, and rye bread. Open for lunch and dinner six days, closed Sunday. Inexpensive. — E.B.

Red Sea Restaurant 471 University Avenue (at Euclid), City Heights, 619-285-9722. You’ll find reliable se- aced (and potentially very spicy) Ethiopian cuisine, served communally on a tray lined with a porous pancake, injera, which looks like an edible dish towel and serves as both an edible spoon and an edible tablecloth. (Use piece of it to scoop up mouthful in your right hand.) The most combination plate here isn’t quite as great as one of the specialties. The knife (spicy beef) taster is very good, the general good (meat cubes in spicy but- ter) is excellent; both are cooked (or not cooked) to your order, and sea- ted to your specifications (if you say “hot,” expect fire). Vegetables are fine, too; the yellow split peas, especially, sing with flavor. Restrooms not wheelchair-accessible. Vegetarian can be friendly on any weekend evening. Open daily. Very inexpensive. — N.W.

Uncle Joe’s Pizzaeria 4911 El Cajon Boulevard, 619-294-2531. The owner’s a retired Navy medic, one of the first women to serve in the Mid- dle East combat zone. She’s named sandwiches for career stops, like “The Recruiter Training Center, Orlando, Florida” (chicken breast, bacon, avocado, provolone cheese, spinach, tomato, and onion) or “North Island Dental Clinic” (turkey, ham, bacon). You can try a main dish like apple eggplant Parmesan or chicken with sunflower mushrooms. Or a marvelous Hamburger (double patty, laugen, plus bread and salad. Coffee! You get a huge French-style coffee and a small coffee-down affair. Your big decision: cut out on the flower-decked local patio or inside among black leather club chairs and a giant, roaring wood stove. Open for lunch and dinner daily until 10 p.m. (until midnight Friday and Saturday). Inexpensive. — E.B.
Lobster Roll…
East Coast Style!
And don’t forget Ipswich clams flown in twice weekly!
Stop by anytime and enjoy our delicious comfort food.
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Closed Christmas Eve at 4 pm.
Reopen Christmas Day at 6 am.

Studio Diner
4701 Ruffin Road, Kearny Mesa • 858-715-6400
www.studiodiner.com • Open 24/7

50% off lunch or dinner
Buy one entree and get second of equal or lesser value at 50% off. Expires 12/30/07.

Once you bring Mom here, she’ll never cook again!
Christmas Eve & Christmas Day
New Year’s Eve & New Year’s Day
Special menu served noon to closing.
Choose from: Sliced turkey with gravy, turkey and baked ham with honey-mustard glaze, or ham only $17.
Kids $10. All white meat $19. Prime rib $19.
Served with: Soup or salad • Bread • Cranberry sauce
Baked sweet potatoes • Mashed potatoes with gravy
Homemade stuffing • Chef’s vegetables • Dessert
Reservations recommended. Regular menu available.

Christmas Dinner on the Bay
Noon-8 pm
Traditional Christmas Dinner ‘17*
Turkey, mashed potatoes & gravy, vegetables, sage stuffing, yams & cranberry. Kids’ turkey dinner available.
Classic Roast Prime Rib ‘24**
Plus featured entrées from our regular dinner menu.
Christmas Eve King Crab ‘11**
1-lb. Alaskan Crab Legs • Also every Monday
Free parking. Reservations required.

New Year’s Eve
Slow-Roasted Prime Rib or Alaskan King Crab Legs ‘19** (plus regular menu items)

New Year’s Day
Our Famous Brunch with *7 Free-Flowing
Champagne & Mimosas 9 am-3 pm

Studio Diner
3231 Mission Blvd.
Mission Beach
858-488-7311
www.bathouserestaurant.com
Outside seating available. Private rooms for banquets, receptions and parties.
*Specials start at 5 pm. Purchase required.

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Free parking. Reservations required.
**Philthy cheese steak**

$5.49

New customers only.

Open daily.

Delivered.

So authentic that we’ve trucked in our meat from South Philly since 1984.

**Alex’s Brown Bag**

San Diego’s King of the Philthy Cheese Steak

2550 Ave. St., Ste. 171 (Between 4th & 5th on Maple)

619-231-2912 • alexbrownbag.com

**Grand Opening Specials (Pitman location only)**

50% off dinner buffet

Every Monday & Tuesday.

**$79 lunch buffet Monday - Friday**

(reduced $9.95)

**10% Indian dinner buffet**

Reg. $13.95 - Hillcrest

Sun.-Wed., 5pm-9pm.

**Free dinner**

Buy 1 entrée and 2 beverages and receive 1 entrée of equal or lesser value free.

**Champagne Brunch**

Saturday and Sunday 11am-3 pm.

(champagne not yet available after the 10th location)

**India Princess**

Grand Opening of our newest location

Miriad

9494 North County Hwy. - 858-566-7246
(just off Pitman Rd. at the little India Plaza)

**Best Thai 2005, 2006 & 2007!**

Sign On San Diego

**50% Off All Dishes!**


Receive 50% off of all dishes.

Dinner only.

Thank you for voting us Best Thai on A-List!

**La Bella Pizza Garden**

373 Third Avenue (at E Street)

619-297-0800 • Fax: 619-297-0299

Closed Monday

**South Bay & Coronado**

Azuara Point

Loews Coronado Resort, 400 Coronado Bay Road (Sil-

ver Strand Boulevard), Coronado, 619-424-0400 • 619-424-4477.

Not just for tourists, but a lovely getaway for lo-

cals, the luxurious dining room with its wraparound windows on the bay is one of the most romantic spots in town - com-

fortable banquette seating, a view out to every table, and an audience that’s quiet and formal. The light, elegant, healthful Mediterranean-

style cuisine (Northern Italy and Southern

France) emphasizes seasonal ingredi-

ents, acclimated and sustainably raised as possible, including herbs and some foods organically grown in the resort

grounds. Combos can be witty and a bit whimsical. An excellent wine list at very reasonable markups is strong on halibut. (If you’re taking dinner with matching wines, speak to the knowledgeable, trustworthy som-

elier. Inexpensive validated valet parking at the porte cochere of the main lobby. Reserve a few nights ahead, as many dishes here are sold out or spe-
cial events. Dinner Tuesday through Sunday.

Philly cheese steak

$5.49

New customers only.

Open daily.

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Dinner only.

Thank you for voting us Best Thai on A-List!
The Manhattan offers a menu especially tasty, as a true "local" spot. This is an ideal place for families, but don't even think of it for a romantic meal out. Dinner daily, lunch daily except Sunday (dinner all day Monday). Modernist. — SB

El Fornaio's defensive architecture walls it off from the Great Unwashed — the tourists wondering around Coronado's Old Ferry Landing — and should only be accessed by those with a need to get into the site to to eave the floor. "Fornaio" means "the baker," after all. Revelers and simpleton fishermen, crowds from 4:30 to midnight daily), big meals, and small plates. The restaurant's name means "the nest" in Spanish, and the amusing indoor-outdoor decor is reminiscent of a matador's framed green cape with his blood still on it. The food's all Spanish, traditional flavors. The creative menu changes daily: quail with garlic sauce (codorniz), glasses; bacalao (cod fish) strips of bacalao, penne alla sorrentina — sfilatino con bistecchina. The menu above the stove too. One of their specialties going, but check the big board — N.W.

The seafood is so fresh you don't really need to worry about the ice; by law, it has to be "crushed". The food's all Spanish, traditional flavors. The creative menu changes daily: quail with garlic sauce (codorniz), glasses; bacalao (cod fish) strips of bacalao, penne alla sorrentina — sfilatino con bistecchina. The menu above the stove too. One of their specialties going, but check the big board — N.W.

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El Fornaio's defensive architecture walls it off from the Great Unwashed — the tourists wondering around Coronado's Old Ferry Landing — and should only be accessed by those with a need to get into the site to to eave the floor. "Fornaio" means "the baker," after all. Revelers and simpleton fishermen, crowds from 4:30 to midnight daily), big meals, and small plates. The restaurant's name means "the nest" in Spanish, and the amusing indoor-outdoor decor is reminiscent of a matador's framed green cape with his blood still on it. The food's all Spanish, traditional flavors. The creative menu changes daily: quail with garlic sauce (codorniz), glasses; bacalao (cod fish) strips of bacalao, penne alla sorrentina — sfilatino con bistecchina. The menu above the stove too. One of their specialties going, but check the big board — N.W.

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## Over 75 Restaurant Coupons at SDReader.com

### Here’s a small sample to whet your appetite!

### Lunch special $8.99
- 1/2-lb. gourmet burger with choice of 3 items mixed into the meat. Includes refillable drink and garlic fries. Offer expires December 31, 2007. Expiration dates are renewed the last week of each month. Coupon not valid on holidays.

### 50% off special rolls
- Buy one roll, get one of equal or lesser value 50% off. Offer expires December 31, 2007. Expiration dates are renewed the last week of each month. Coupon not valid on holidays.

### 50% off entree
- Buy one entree, get second entree of equal or lesser value 50% off. Offer expires December 31, 2007. Expiration dates are renewed the last week of each month. Coupon not valid on holidays.

### 10% off lunch or dinner
- Valid on Monday-Thursday. Good at San Diego location only. Coupon not valid on holidays or with any other offers. Offer expires December 31, 2007. Expiration dates are renewed the last week of each month.

### Restaurants Listed Without Coupon Offers Have Only Menus Online. Restaurants With * Have Multiple Locations. See Online Menu or Coupon for All Locations.

### Pacific Beach, Mission Beach & Ocean Beach

#### Atoll at the Catamaran Hotel
- Coffee House on Broadway
  - Free tapa for lunch
  - Free dinner

#### The Shack Bar & Grill
- 2 For 1 entrée
- Pacific Rotisserie
  - Free entree

#### La Jolla
- Café Milano
  - Free Comedy Store tickets
- Clay's La Jolla
  - Free medium pizza
- La Jolla Brew House
  - Free lunch or dinner entree
- The Shack Bar & Grill
  - Burger, fries & beer $6.95
- Su Casa
  - 20% off entire check

### North County

#### Calypso
- Free appetizer
- A Delight of France
  - Free appetizer or dessert
- Greek Village
  - Free souvlaki

#### Mikko Japanese
- Free smoothie
- Pho Lucky
  - 10% off entire check

#### Portofino's
- Free entrée
- Ross's Pizza
  - Free mini pizza

#### Santa Fe Cafe
- Free vegetarian appetizer

### Uptown & North Park

#### Café Bleu
- Complimentary starter

#### Cay Nhan
- $4.95 Vietnamese dishes

#### Coffee House on Broadway
- Free Mocha Jackson

#### Harar Ethiopian Restaurant
- 50% off dinner

#### Ho Chi Minh City
- $2 off entrée

#### India Princess
- Free dinner
- Lips
  - 50% off dinner

#### Rudy's Free Appetizer at Lunch
- San Filippo's
  - Saturday pizza special
- Seasons 142
  - 1/2 off tapas
- The Wine Encounter
  - Free wine tasting

#### Clairemont, University City, Miramar Rd., Poway, Mira Mesa, Scripps Ranch & Kearny Mesa

#### Boomerangs
- Lunch special $8.99

#### Crazy Sushi & BBQ
- 50% off special rolls

#### Fiore Restorante
- Free appetizer or dessert

#### Monarch
- 50% off plate lunch

#### Max's Island Grind
- 50% off plate lunch

#### Pampas Free empanadas
- RB Sushi
  - 50% off sushi and rolls only

#### Sky Box Sports Grill
- Burger special $7.99
- Studio Diner
  - Free appetizer

#### Thai Cafe
  - $1 off buffet

#### East County & State College

#### Anna's The Family Restaurant
- 50% off second entrée

#### Centifonti's Restaurant
- 50% off entrée

#### Fix Me A Plate Cafe
- 15% off any entrée

#### Greek Town Buffet
- 50% off 2nd dinner buffet

#### Habana Free appetizer
- La Fogata
  - 50% off entrée

#### Shakey's Lunch Buffet $5.49
- Stockdale's
  - 50% off Southern California cuisine

#### Thai Dragon House
- Free Thai entrée

#### Thai Taste
  - 50% off 2nd entrée

#### Windy City Beef
  - 1/2 off menu item

### Midway, Old Town & Mission Valley

#### Ball Park at Old Town
- Second entrée free
- Pizza Bella
  - $1 wine carafe

#### Rockin' Baja Bucket for two $29.95
- Royal Spices Thai Cuisine
  - 20% off receipt

#### Tio Leo's
- Dinner combos $9.49 each*

#### Todai 10% off lunch or dinner

### South Bay & Coronado

#### Lai Thai 50% off entree

### Downtown & Point Loma

#### Alex's Brown Bag
- 2 For 1 breakfast

#### Dublin Square
- $5 Thursdays

#### McCormick & Schmick's Seafood Restaurant
- 2 For 1 lunch or brunch entrée

#### RA Sushi
- Richard Walker's Pancake House
  - $1 off entrée

#### Rock Bottom
- Sienna Restaurant
- Spice Market
- The Shout House

#### Sierra Pacific
- 3-course gourmet dinner $34.95

#### Vision's
- 25% off sushi

#### Xavi's Free appetizer

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Restaurants listed without coupon offers have only menus online. Restaurants with * have multiple locations. See online menu or coupon for all locations.
Across the Universe — Two-and-a-quarter-hour promo for the Beatles without even mentioning them by name. A generous, even overgenerous sampler of their songs (thirty-three of them, by the count in the press notes, leaving aside the numberless others that are quoted from or alluded to) has been re-recorded, or “covered” as they say in the business, by a fictitious cast of characters plunked down against the following backdrop of the Sixties: the war, the draft, the protests, the drugs, the psychedelics, the Sexual Revolution, all that. To link the Beatles with the upheaval makes a certain sense. Unlike, say, the more enduring Rolling Stones or the going-nowhere Dave Clark Five, the Beatles were a group that really did evolve (or, as some would prefer, devolve) swiftly and dramatically, making them a useful weathercock for the winds of change. You are here reminded of their range and their riches; and in new mouths, you hear the songs with new ears. (The tremulous, down-tempo rendition, for example, of “I Wanna Hold Your Hand” by an Asian-American high-school cheerleader, T.V. Carpio, brings the song a new, a re- newed feeling, all by itself almost worth the price of admission.) By the second half, however, the inspiration irreversibly runs out of steam en route to a spluttering climax of “All You Need Is Love.” (Woe, now: yes, yeah, yeah.) Part of the problem is that, as the counterculture gains momentum in the sequence of events, there’s a visible increase in music-video vulgarity, ornamental surrealism, Fellini-esque fantasy, all the elements that go into director Julie Taymor’s fabled “vision.” Another part of the problem may be that the later songs, though that seems to be the way to the Os- car (i.e., Training Day), Crowe on the other hand is a perfectly credible crusader, overcoming no greater obstacles on the road to respectability than his buoyant white sneakers and his unflattering, inexpensive period haircut, framing his face with folded wings. With Chiwetel Ejiofor, Josh Brolin, Lenny Cant, Ruby Dee. 2007.

Alvin and the Chipmunks — Live action plus computer animation, with Jason Lee, directed by Tim Hill.

American Gangster — Formula underworld drama poured into an epic template. Like Jiffy-brand waffle batter spread over an iron the size of a billiard table. “Based on a true story,” it takes, in separate interwoven storylines, the converging upward paths of criminal and cop: the former (Denzel Washington) starting out as the servile driver and bodyguard for the legendary Bumpy Johnson, a big fish in the small pond of Harlem into the late Sixties, then expanding the pond, upon his boss’s death, into an ocean, and the latter (Russell Crowe) working his way up as an undercover narc in New Jersey, studying for the bar in his spare time. Their eventual meeting occurs, and drags on, as something of an anticlimax, after an excitingly staged drug raid from which the ganglord is lucky to be absent. The opposing paths up to that point are smoothly graded and well grazed; and director Ridley Scott, the epitome of slick (Alien, Blade Runner, Thelma and Louise, Gladiator, Black Hawk Down, and so on), moves things along at a tolerable pace, although there’s the distinct impression that even if he knew any shortcuts, he wouldn’t take them. His goal is epic, and he would gladly drag his feet to get there. At two and a half hours plus, he indeed does get there: Washington, to pay him a backhanded compliment, is never quite as credi ble as a thug and through huddle, even though that seems to be the way to the Os car (i.e., Training Day). Crowe on the other hand is a perfectly credible crusader, overcome no greater obstacles on the road to respectability than his buoyant white sneakers and his unflattering, inexpensive period haircut, framing his face with folded wings. With Chiwetel Ejiofor, Josh Brolin, Lenny Cant, Ruby Dee. 2007.

Atonement — British, bookish period piece, from an Ian McEwan novel, about a...
August Rush — Mystical magical musical about the orphaned spawn of an unmarried rock-and-roll and classical cellist, all three reunited through music, under a tent in Central Park, in the boy's twelfth year. Too gooey to be true. And the synthesis of motley forms of music produces ear-strain on top of credulity-strain.

With Freddie Highmore, Keri Russell, Jonathan Rhys Meyers, Terrence Howard, and (as a cow-boy-hatted, soul-patched Fugin for underage street musicians) Robin Williams; directed by Kirsten Sheridan. 2007.

★ CARMEL MOUNTAIN: FASHION VALLEY 18;

GROSSMONT CENTER: LA JOLLA 12; MIRA MESA 18; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; TOWN SQUARE 14

Bee Movie — Cute name, even for an overhyped, presold, mega-budget money-making machine. (The return of Jerry Seinfeld — as leading voice, co-writer, co-producer, and principal drum beater.) Cute is much more than you can say, however, for the spongy, marshmallowy computer-animated honeybees or for the premise that permits them to converse in English at equal volume with humans. The storyline of a rebel bee unceremoniously settled down to his one and only job-for-life has its points of cleverness (e.g., the episode of getting stuck on a tennis ball, ultimately overlaid), and toward the end of it there's a sentiment

ious lesson in ecology, more for grownups than for tots. With the voices of Renée Zellweger, Matthew Broderick, Chris Rock, Patrick Warburton, directed by Simon J. Smith and Steve Hickner. 2007.

★ GASLAMP 15; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; PALM PROMENADE 24

Beowulf — Computer-animated comic-book transcription of the unloved epic of the 8th century. Director Robert Zemeckis goes even further with the motion-capture technique of The Polar Express, taking out the borderline between live action and cartoon, and throwing in 3-D to boot. Wan Wantone, voicing the dragon-slaying hero, has been prettified beyond recognition (unless you recognize him as Sean Bean), but Anthony Hopkins, if not his bare bum, is easily recognizable, as are John Malkovich, Brendan Gleeson, Robin Wright Penn, and Angelina “Fat Lips” Jolie. The novelty — motion capture plus 3-D — wears off eventually but not early. The visual effects are as liberated as any CGI, and are less apt to clash with their surroundings than the CGI in a live-action film. Still, we get plenty of clang and clank from the brutality, the gore, the couch murders (in places approaching the fig-leaf silliness of an Austin Powers spoof), and the sheer bombast. 2007.

★ MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 20; PALM PROMENADE 24

Blade Runner — Two of the more sociologically conscious of cinematic genres — science fiction and the detective story — have been mated to produce a future-generation Los Angeles (A.D. 2019) that looks like Tokyo or Hong Kong gone to seed. The detec-tive work is somewhat scampred, except for a good scene (echoing Antonioni’s Blow-Up) involving a computerized photo scanner and enlarger. And several nostalgic throwbacks to Bogart’s heyday simply misfire: the hard-boiled, first-person narrative (eliminated in the re-released “director’s cut”); the Vantian-blind shadows; the Joan Crawford-haired and fashions on the female lead. The sci-fi elements are more fully elaborated, but aren’t always sure-fire either: the topography of the cities often seems as flat and jumbled as a Cubist painting, and even the tightest of shots is apt to be busied up with reflections, moving lights, colored mist. With Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, and Sean Young; directed by Ridley Scott. 1982.

★ MIRA MESA STADIUM 18 & IMAX

The Bourne Ultimatum — The Bourne absurdum. It isn’t just that Part III in the adventures of the amnesiac superspy adds more ridiculousness. It’s that, at those lengths, the ridiculousness multiplies exponentially. More ridiculousness, that is, and more ridiculousness. (The sentimental soft spots found in Parts I and II are here concentrated in a couple of female, motheroyly, protective, nurturing CIA agents who, alone among their heartless colleagues, are interested in keeping the hero alive.) Paul Greengrass’s frantic visual style — a hand-held camera in the grips of delirium tremens — fosters irritation where it intended excitement. With Matt Damon, Joan Allen, Julia Stiles, David Strathairn, Scott Glenn, and Albert Finney. 2007.

★ GASLAMP 15

Charlie Wilson’s War — Reviewed next issue. With Tom Hanks, Amy Adams, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and Julia Roberts, directed by Mike Nichols.

★ CARMEL MOUNTAIN: OAKLA VISTA 10; ES CONDADO 18; FASHION VALLEY 18; FLOWER HILL 4; GROSSMONT CENTER; HORTON PLAZA 14; LA COSTA 6; LA JOLLA 12; MIRA MESA 18; MISSION MARKETPLACE 13; MISSION VALLEY 7; MISSION VALLEY 20; OCEANSIDE 16; OTAY RANCH 12; PALM PROMENADE 24; PARKWAY PLAZA 18; PERRY 10; RANCHO DEL REY 16; RANCHO SAN DIEGO 15; RIVER VILLAGE 8; SAN MARCOS 18; TOWN SQUARE 14; VISTA VILLAGE (FROM 12/21)

The Darjeeling Limited — One thing to be said for a Wes Anderson film, and it’s no small thing, is that it bears an individual stamp. A stamp as flat as a postage stamp, as emphatic as a rubber stamp. (Wras, wras.) A well-known commodity after Bottle Rocket, Rushmore, The Royal Tenenbaums, The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou, Anderson favors fantastically balanced, nailed-down compositions, the figures pinned to a shallow background like butterfly specimens. Stressing their separateness, he has no intention to hinge his shots together into a smooth and seamless line, but instead doles them out as if on disconnected planes, setting up a clumping rhythm of starts and stops, glazing the screen with the dusted of deadpan, and erecting an invisible wall (invariably even to the occasional uncharacteristic zoom) between the filmmaker and his characters, freakishly faceless people, abject puppets manipulated by a man with little regard for human diversity and volition. The effect — the uhomeness of these humanoid — is often amusing and always distancing. The
danger in the director’s method is that it can be too distancing and therefore not amusing enough. (Since he always clamps a tasteeful muzzle on the audience’s merriment, the standard laugh-meter is an unreliable measure.) If this outing seems a cut above all previous ones, it may be the benefit of a fresh, tangy, a substantial ground against which to display his specimens: thirty-three sometimes brothers who have not spoken to one another in the year since their father’s funeral, now heading out together on a "spiritual journey" in a first-ever class-cleric across India, with the ultimate aim of tracking down their mother (a no-show at the funeral) in a convent at the foot of the Himalayas. In other words, a typical Wes Anderson operation, bringing about the insecure bonding of misaligned oddballs, but in an atypical erotic setting, the better to draw out their oddities. Owen Wilson, Adrien Brody, Jason Schwartzman, Amara Karan, Anjelica Huston, Bill Murray. 2007.

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I’m Not There — Todd Haynes blows another cloud of mist into the mystique of Bob Dylan. The filmmaker, who once enlivened Barbie dolls to tell the Karen Carpenter story, now borrows a gimmick used by Todd Solondz in Bullets & Octopus, employing a rotation of dissimilar actors to play a single role, a multiplication of a gimmick used by Luis Buñuel in That Obscure Object of Desire. Not a gimmick, in other words, exclusive to filmmakers named Todd. The fact that Bob Dylan is a real person and a public figure, about whom we may have our own ideas, further complicates matters, and it is easy to lose track of the subject of the film when we are looking at a prepubescent black boy, Marcus Carl Franklin, hopping freight trains in Depression-period hobo-style, or looking at Richard Gere in grumpy glasses on horseback in the era of the model T, and all the easier when they are masquerading under the aliases of Woody Guthrie and Billy the Kid, respectively. The multifacetedness of him, would presumably be The Point, but that point could have been made more subtly: the dissimilarity of Marcus Carl Franklin and Richard Gere amounts to gross overstatement. Adding to the confusion is a visual patchwork stitched together out of grungy black-and-white, glossy black-and-white, jaundiced color, and peachy color (Edward Lachman, cinematographer), not even counting the diverse cinematic allusions, catch them if you can, to Fellini, Godard, Pickapul: With Christian Bale (who gets the speaking voice, the cadence, just right), Cate Blanchett (comedy or musical), Thelma Adams, US WEEKLY

In the Valley of Elah — A more commendable writing and directing effort from Paul Haggis (writer only on Million Dollar Baby and Flags of Our Fathers, among others) than his hockey Oscar-winner, Crash. More focused, more concentrated, more self-contained, more consistent: an uncomprisingly mournful murder mystery, and strangled antwoord cry, about a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom (remember when?) who goes missing upon his return to Fort Rudd, New Mexico, and who turns up on the outskirts of the base, stabbed, dismembered, and burned beyond recognition. Say what you will about the filmmaker’s political point-making, it never clugs up the unshushed flow of the narrative. and at the same time he shows a true cinematic eye for tacky America’s, the streets, the townscapes, etc., so that whenever we go anywhere on screen — an army barracks, a motel, a public restroom, a strip club, a coffee shop, a “drive-up” bar, a fast-food joint — we can feel we’re really there, really seen it. (The mood lighting of nauseous green and blanched white is a case of whatever wouldn’t be the opposite of gilding the lily — wilting the weed, possibly — and equally unnecessary.) Tommy Lee Jones, as the victim’s father, a retired M. P. and current gruel-banking, who presses the investigation forward when the military looks for an easy way out, has just the right amount of starch in his performance, touchingly repressed. Charlize Theron on the other hand, as the bead-scarred civilian cop who eventually takes an interest, is perhaps more emotional than you want from a cop, but not more glamorous, with mannish attire, no makeup, and her hair parted in the middle, and pulled back as severely as Emily Dickson’s. The rest of the cast has been carefully chosen down to the smallest role, with special mention reserved for Susan Sarandon, Jason Patric, James Frain, Jake McLaughlin, Wes Chatham, Josh Brolin, Barry Corbin, and, nonchalantly topless in her mid-fifties, Frances Fisher. 2007.

The Savages — Illustration, in a sketchy hand, of the Jon Krakauer nonfiction book on Christopher McCandless, a 1990 college graduate, on the doorstep of Harvard Law School, who gave away his tuition fund to Oxfam, obliterated his identity, renamed himself Alexander Supertramp, and swapped the evils of society for the purity of the northern wilderness (“No longer to be poisoned by civilization,” he carved into a wooden shingle at his encampment), where ultimately he starved to death in 1992. It may not sound like much of an idea for a film. It isn’t. A Seventies-style road movie, redolent of Seventies-style disaffection, it has a strong element of travelogue, as our happy-go-lucky hobo rides his aging Daion westward to South Dakota, abandons it at Lake Mead, kayaks down the Colorado River, drifts into Mexico, trains up to L.A., thumbs his way to the Salton Sea, Anita Borge, and Alaska. In that final destination, the traveler veers toward nature documentaty. At nearly two and a half hours, the film feels very, very long, albeit their shoot on relatively incident: the protagonist goes place, he meets people, and then he goes to a place where he won’t meet people, where he will meet only his end, a martyr to something or other. Director Sean Penn unmistakably takes himself very seriously, and takes his protagonist almost reverently, painting him as something of a holy fool (a reader of Tolstoi, even though an eater of meat when he can get it), and offering up this speculative re-creation as nothing less than an endorsement. At the top, he sets the tone with a high-down epigraph from Lord Byron: “I love not man the less, but Nature more” — that one. The kid sister periodically supplies some explanatory narration (“I understand what a cause was done”), and Pearl Jaffé and Eddie Vedder chimes in with a half-dozen or so acoustic songs in sympathy and support. Of the real protagonist’s earnestness and conviction, the film can tell us next to nothing. Of the filmmaker’s, it can tell us much. And

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“THE SAVAGES”

**S** **G** **G** **A** **L** **A** **P** **M** **A** **G** **E**
then it can tell us again. And again. With Emile Hirsch, Marcia Gay Harden, William Hurt, Jena Malone, Vince Vaughn, and Hal Holbrook. 2007.

**Juno** — A slow starter. In the title role of a pregnant Minnesota high-schooler (named after the Roman goddess of marriage, fertility), the dry flat sardonic delivery of Ellen Page, the angelic avenger of Hard Candy, is not easy to warm up to, no matter how much we might try to see it as an adolescent defense mechanism, or how much as humble emulation of Janine Garafalo. And the garishly colorful dialog, from first-time scripter and former stripper Diablo Cody, often tends to push too hard (“Being pregnant makes me pee next to exotic birds”), a neat-freaky suburban couple in the weekly Free Speech. (Ashraf Barhom, in the part, is as likable as he is expendable.)

Peter Berg’s bob-and-weave camerawork, that cliché of immediacy and urgency, is a continual annoyance, and in the climactic action is worse than that. Our inability to follow what’s happening can scarcely convince us it’s actually happening. 2007.

**The Kite Runner** — Marc Forster’s adaptation of the Khadid Homaei novel, revolving around two lifelong Afghan friends.

**Lions for Lambs** — Topics on the table: the war on terror, the lack of a battle plan to wage it, the governmental policy of dis-information, the complicity of the press in all this, the general lowering of journalistic standards, the apathy of the youngger generation, the irony-to-storey of academe, and (if that’s not enough) the responsibility of every individual citizen to get involved, make a difference, act out a slogan. The action in the film, which is to say the talk, talk, talk, takes place in three arenas: the Capitol Hill office of a go-getter GOP senator, entertaining a veteran newsreader in an hour-long one-on-one interview (“My honest effort to keep the press better informed”); a moody Afghan mountainside on which two old college buddies lie wounded and marooned; and the office of their former Poli-Sci professor at “a California university,” where he now, con-

No Country for Old Men 9/11? — comes an FBI response team (Jamie Foxx, the take-charge family man; Jennifer Garner, the token superwoman; Chris Cooper, the token good actor; Jason Bateman, the obligatory wisecracker), to take names and kick ass, but first to burn the ears of the local Saudi investigator with their salty Free Speech. (Ashraf Barhom, in the part, is as likable as he is expendable.)

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San Diego Reader, December 20, 2007, 123
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Mr. Magorium’s Wonder — The once proud Dustin Hoffman, with a prissy lip, bushy eyebrows, shrubby hair, and ice-cream suits, as the centuries-old proprietor of a magic toyshop: crushed under a riot of color and a steamroller of whimsy. With Natalie Portman, Jason Bateman, and Zach Mills; written and directed by Zach Helm. 2007.

NO Country for Old Men — The Coen brothers’ first literary adaptation, from a Cormac McCarthy original, an overflowing bloody pulp thriller, plumped up with folksy first-person social commentary in italics, about a Texas good ole boy who stumbles upon the internecine scene of a drug deal gone bad, makes off with a satchel of cash, and tries to ditch the implacable hired killer (among others) on his trail. Sharing the writing credit as always and sharing the directing credit as they only began to do with The Ladykillers, the brothers were smart to cut down the social commentary — the Decline of Western Civilization as viewed by an aging third-generation man — to a single block of voice-over at the outset (“Some of the old-time sheriffs never even wore a gun”), and to sprinkle any additional such commentary lightly into the dialogue (“Once you quit hearing ‘sir’ and ‘ma’am, the rest is soon to follow”). Without those repeated and repetitive interruptions, the simple pursuit narrative — the killer pursuing the filcher, the lawman pursuing both — unfurls as lean, linear, streamlined, and yet slow, steady, and long, never very deep. And on the Coen’s part, never very inventive. They have followed McCarthy’s blueprint scrupulously, even slavishly, and have bountifully harvested his lip-smacking dialogue; and the major unconventionalities in this mostly conventional thriller are all his. (For better or for worse.) To be sure, the Coens are meticulous technicians, supremely skillful, attentive to the minutest detail. And while the body count climbs numbingly high, the tension in individual set pieces is teased out to an exquisite agony, and with no artificial boost from any background music. (The Coens’ regular composer, Carter Burwell, gets credited for the exist music.) Certainly a personal touch, a personal sense of humor, comes into the local color of cason of gas-station attendant, motel clerk, hotel clerk, trailer-park manager, etc., etc. And perhaps a somewhat unconvincingly human, or at least uncomically delightful, comes into the characterization of the psycho-pathic killer, with his robotic delivery of lines, his tortuous lanter, his gimmicky weapon (a compressed-air tank for blowing locks out of doors and blowing holes in heads), and above all his Ingenhult Humpenidick haircut circa 1972 (hair humor always being big with the Coens). Tommy Lee Jones, Javier Bardem, Josh

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THELMA ADAMS, US WEEKLY

LOU LUMENICK, NEW YORK POST

ANDREW SARRIS, THE NEW YORK OBSERVER

PETER TRAVERS, ROLLING STONE

ROGER EBERT, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

Jack Mathews, New York Daily News

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Robert Wilonsky, The Village Voice

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What was your worst injury?

Jonathan Rogers
Project Manager
Carlsbad

I was in a car that drove off a cliff. We didn't get injured that bad. We hit some black ice and fell 15 feet. The engine on the VW was pushed in a bit. As a kid, we had this toy our parents bought us where you sit and it spins you around. I have four brothers, and we tried to knock each other off it. One knocked out his teeth. I got my neck caught in a tetherball rope. But my worst was in Temecula, riding a mechanical bull at a bar. I got a groin pull and later tried to ride it again. I couldn't walk for two days.

Sarah Rogers
Director of Publicity
Encinitas

My worst injury-happened when I was ten. I grew up in Colorado, so I liked from an early age. I sprained my knee really bad. Oh, there was a time in the summer. We drank four pitchers of beer between three people. I was drunk and bragging about how I never fall or get hurt. I then stepped on the curb and fell into the intersection. I sprained my ankle. And a week later, I sprained my other one. I think I was jinxed that summer from saying I never get injured.

Peter Garcia
Clerk
San Marcos

When I was born, the umbilical cord was wrapped around my neck. Oh, there was a time I was running through the parking lot and hit by a car. I bounced off it. The worst was when my dad was playing softball in Oceanside. I was four and running up and down the bleachers. I was told not to but kept doing it. I fell through and hit my head on the concrete. It split my head open and gave me an inch-and-a-half scar.

Caitlin Connelly
Clerk
Northvale

I broke my wrist once. I would have to say breaking a bone is my worst injury. Me and an old girlfriend were wrestling on the couch. She pulled me off, and I could tell it broke by the way I landed on the ground. I saw that my wrist hurt the other direction. I could just tell by looking at it that it was broken because it was bent sort of in a loop. Just looking at it was gross.

Ken Keating
Gift giver
Hillcrest

I've had a few over the years. Once I tried to avoid an airplane that was flying too low, and I hit my elbow against the side of the skihill. In my first year of this, I wasn't careful about chimneys that still had fires going. But the worst injury was a roof in Jersey that had some melted snow on it. I didn't see it. I did right off the side and broke my leg in two places. It didn't keep me from doing my job that night, though.

Morgan Grant
Party Planner
Hillcrest

It was surfing six months ago. I got so many bruises and cuts and scraps to prove it. I'll never have my career as a leg model, that's for sure! I just recently learned how to surf. And I didn't know how much damage it would be on my body. Especially those fins. They can really cut up and bruise your legs. I used to have really nice legs, too.
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Last week’s place: (clue: Last of our local mountain breed) Bob the dinosaur miniature chums along in the creek bed of Alpine Mobile Home Estates, 2400 Alpine Boulevard, Alpine. Bob is the last of a bunch of dinosaurs roaming, “Dinosaur Land,” a 1962 amusement-park dream of water rides, a volcano-shaped rollercoaster, and restaurants. The project was bankrupted two years ago. (Last week’s winners: Jerome Lipetzky, Ernie Hughes, Megan McClurg, Jamie Edwards, Tim Truesdale)

References: E-mail: jamoe@cox.net. Jay 619-528-4604 or 619-410-2002.

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SurfDIEGO

Name: Pete Lewis
Surf: Windansea
Home: Pacific Beach

At 10:20 a.m., the high tide began backing off at Windansea. surfline.com reported the water temperature at 54 degrees and warned of poor water quality. Waves were not reaching ankle level. It was cold and windy, but seven surfers bobbed on their boards and waited for that rare good wave. As the tide rolled further out, the waves picked up and started picking perfect tubes. The surfers were rewarded for their patience.

“Yesterday’s surf was flat,” said Pete Lewis.

“I was so happy, I don’t think anyone expected it to be any good today. I guess everyone thought the water would be just as bad as yesterday, so hardly anybody came out. Only three guys who came down to actually look at the water get to ride these fun waves.”

Pete rides a longboard and says he feels more at home at La Jolla Shores, but he surfs everywhere in San Diego. He’s been up and down the coast from Central California to Southern Baja, and he’s taken a surf vacation in Hawaii. On this day, he was glad the conditions cleaned up so he could ride with his nephew for a couple hours.

“My nephew’s a senior in high school. He’s from Salt Lake City, and he’s out here looking at colleges.”

When asked about his favorite times during his 40 years of surfing, Pete says, “I’m waiting for the other shoe to drop. It can’t get any better than right now.”

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$500. Share my home, 1

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$49, deposit $49. 1-year

$100/month. 71 square feet. 7.5"

$49, deposit $49. 1-year

$500. Share my home, 1

$600. Share 3 bedroom 2 bath,

$600. Share 3 bedroom 2 bath,

$600. Share 3 bedroom 2 bath,

$600. Share my home, 1

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$700/month. Roommate


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$49, deposit $49. 1-year

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$650/month. Roommate

$650/month. Roommate

$650/month. Roommate

$650/month. Roommate

$4200. $20.00

$30 of any service, $20 of selective

$4200. $20.00

$4200. $20.00

$4200. $20.00

$4200. $20.00
P. Phil Bateman holds a yardstick up to his bumper to show off the clearance of his low-rider, 1939. The previous year, San Diego hosted its first Custom and Hot Rod Show in Balboa Park. About 100 people drove their customized cars into town from all over the state.

— by Robert Mizrachi

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LA JOLLA. 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. $2400, includes all utilities. 150 square ft. 1 parking space. 8125 La Jolla Village Drive. 619-271-6568.

LA JOLLA. 3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms. $2895, includes all utilities. 150 square ft. 1 parking space. 14410 La Jolla Village Drive. 619-276-6568.

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Interesting request. Will assisting you with this task lead to a casual conversation that may eventually form a bond of friendship?

Excellent! In my convivial evanescence, I keep accidentally crushing the heads of all the new friends that I make. Perhaps this time will be different.

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San Diego Reader

Reader

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La Jolla, 4311 Parks Avenue. 619-222-7724. 1 bedroom, 1 bath. $795. Studio. Includes water, gas, electric, cable. 4311 Parks Avenue.


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La Jolla, 5902 Kademian. 619-229-1140. 1 bedroom, 1 bath. $920/up, 1 bedroom. $1220/up, 1 bedroom. $1220/up, 1 bedroom. $1220/up, 1 bedroom. $1220/up. 5902 Kademian.


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La Jolla, 4311 Parks Avenue. 619-222-7724. 1 bedroom, 1 bath. $795. Studio. Includes water, gas, electric, cable. 4311 Parks Avenue.


I was newly divorced and living in California. Getting through that plus having to deal with child support was not going to be an easy task. I met Jean through the Reader's roommate page.

Jean was in her late 50s, a masseuse, and seemed cool and down-to-earth. She owned a townhome in San Marcos and had another long-term renter named Brenda. Brenda was in her 20s and worked as a veterinary assistant.

I interviewed with both of them for the master bedroom that included my own bathroom and a huge walk-in closet and a space in a three-car garage connected to the house. All of this for only $600 a month, and that included utilities.

I got the call three days later that I could move in as soon as I was ready. I jumped at the opportunity, Jean seemed nice enough, always smart about helping with anything. She acted like her grandmother to my four-year-old daughter when she would come over.

Shortly after Christmas I started to notice things about Jean. Brenda and I would often get together and discuss it. I started to notice that Jean never drank water; it was always a glass of juice. It was juice all right — with glass. Jean never drank water; it was always a glass of juice. It was juice all right — with glass. Because...you guessed it, she was drunk.

The most memorable night was this: My (new) fiancée and I were in bed, wearing next to nothing and watching TV. In the middle of the program, Jean entered. "You are so inconsiderate to walk out in the middle of the night — I wanted to avoid a possible Jean drunken tirade. I decided to call the $200 deposit a wash; it was too much trouble to try to find a sober moment with Jean.

A few weeks later I was settled in my new place and received a forwarded letter from Jean. She said that I left doors in her car from my car door hitting hers. I had never parked next to her. She wanted me to pay $120 for the ding repair. She also demanded that I pay a $150 penalty for her having to clean the room I had been staying in. I ignored it and wished there was such a thing as a website listing of "bad roommates." Jean would have been at the top of that list.

Tell us the story of your roommate from hell and we will publish it and pay you ($100 for 500–2000 words).

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PAO Stories — Small-Town Mayors: (1) Mayor Ken Williams resided in Centerport, Ark. (pop. 2146), in November and revealed that he is actually Don Lackey, an Indiana preacher who abandoned his family in 1980 because, he said, satanists had abducted and threatened him and brainwashed him to rub out details of a murder he supposedly knew about. He said his memory returned recently, thanks to truth serum. (2) Mayor Lino Donato of Potec, Texas (pop. 3500), in November said that he would remain in office despite his inability to set foot in city hall. That building is less than 1000 feet from a youth recreation center and therefore off limits to Donato, who was adjudicated a sex offender in October.

Opsi — The Texas Board of Education announced in November that it had made its selections of approved math textbooks for the next school year, even though the group of chosen books contained a total of 109,263 errors. Books of the industry giant Houghton Mifflin accounted for about 86,000. All publishers have guaranteed to correct the errors by the time the books are shipped.

— In October, rescue crews in Pittsburgh freed a woman who had become stuck underneath an SUV in front of another woman’s house. She told police that she suspected her husband was having an affair with a woman who was wandering around to get a better vantage point for spying. She said she inadvertently fell asleep and, when she awoke, she could not crawl out.

Fine Points of the Law — In November, the Food and Drug Administration told Simon Hill Farm of Westbrook, Maine, that it would have to recall all of its eggs because it did not list “egg” as an ingredient on the label. Federal law requires the listing to protect people with egg allergies.

— Jesse Rodriguez, 33, was tried to testify in December in Redwood City, Calif., against the man who ordered him to shoot another to death in 1989, even though triggerman Rodriguez has been, and is, exempt from any prison time.

— Rodriguez was 14 when he killed the man, and state law at the time prohibited authorities from holding him beyond his 25th birthday. Since Rodriguez went on the run after the crime and did not reoffend, the state would have to let him go even if he were tried and convicted.

The Continuing Crisis — The existence of the 50-year-old, ultra-secure computer protocol required for a U.S. president to launch nuclear weapons is well known through newspapers, books, and Hollywood films, but according to papers released by Britain’s National Archives in November, a similarly complex protocol has been in place in this country since 1998. Before that, a person could arm a nuclear bomb by removing two ordinary screws and (according to BBC News) using “an Allen key to select high yield or low yield, air burst or groundburst and other parameters.”

— Vied! (The China Daily Newspaper reported in November that local markets and beauty salons in Guangdong province were selling low-priced hair bands made from used condoms. (2) ”Fires during surgeries a bigger risk than thought,” headlined a November Boston Globe article, citing data from hospitals in Pennsylvania (30 operating rooms a year for the last three years) and Massachusetts.

Creme de la Weird — Mesa, Ariz., police arrested Sebastian Man- cilla, 41, in November after a security camera at Mesa police department store caught him being too subtle in looking up the skirt of a female shopper. According to an Arizona Republic police, citing a police source: “At one time, Mancilla approached the woman from behind and laid down on the floor to look up her skirt. He then got back to his feet and continued to act as if he was shopping.” Mancilla allegedly was with the same woman, dropping to his knees, but to no avial, as the woman walked away.

Send your Weird News to Chuck Shepherd, San Diego Reader, P.O. Box 85803, San Diego, CA 92198 or to WeirdNewsTips@yahoo.com
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PACIFIC BEACH, $1250. Studio, $850/month. Spacious 2 bedroom, 1 bath. Walk to bay. $1350. 2 bedroom, 1 bath. Also 1 bedroom, 1 bath. Walk to bay. $1450. 2 bedroom, 1 bath. Walk to bay. $1595. 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath. Hilltop property. $1600. 2 bedroom, 1 bath. Also 1 bedroom, 1 bath. 858-270-8277. www.delsolpm.com.

PACIFIC BEACH, $1300. 1 bedroom, 1 bath. • Walk to bay • Pool • Parking. $1475. 2 bedroom, 1 bath for $765. 1 bedrooms from $960. 2 bedroom, 2 bath. $1200. 1 bedroom, 1 bath for $745. $1195. 2 bedrooms from $995. 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath, will consider pet with deposit. At owner's expense. $1350. 2 bedroom, 2 bath. Holiday special-Free first month. $1900/month. Agent, 619-692-4121.

PACIFIC BEACH, $1600. 2 bedroom, 1 bath. • Walk to bay • Pool • Parking. $2025. 3 bedroom, 1-1/2 bath. Available 12/15. 1358 Pacific Beach Drive. Del Sol Property Management.


PACIFIC BEACH, $1850. 2 bedroom, 2 bath. • Walk to bay • Pool • Parking. $2650 plus Pets. 1100 Pacific Beach Drive. Del Sol Property Management.

PACIFIC BEACH, $2000. 3 bedroom, 2 bath. • Walk to bay • Pool • Parking. $2900 plus Pets. 1311 Jewett. TPPM, 858-699-3851.

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PACIFIC BEACH, $2650. 4 bedroom, 3 bath. • Walk to bay • Pool • Parking. $2800 plus Pets. 2226 Jewel. TPPM, 858-699-3851.

PACIFIC BEACH, $2700. 4 bedroom, 3 bath. • Walk to bay • Pool • Parking. $3000 plus Pets. 3272 Chalcedony. TPPM, 619-690-6960.

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Thirty Years Ago

DENISE: How about going cruising sometime on ATC?! We can go pick up Mike & Scott, I can dig it!! (Crown Point) Sue.

GIRL ON CYCLE: We shared a smile on 42d & El Cajon Thursday, Dec. 8. How about sharing some more? Reply through Reader.

Off-blue pickup.

VICI: When Jackson Browne was on the late show he was wearing my shoes. Tony.

BEETHOVEN’S FIFTH was based upon the scent of fresh garlic. SFS.

—CASSIDY, December 22, 1977

Twenty-Five Years Ago

Dear Matthew Alice:

I recently went to a Chinese restaurant in Hillcrest which specializes in Mandarin and Szechwan cuisine. I ordered Kung Pao shrimp to go. When I got home I discovered nothing similar to Kung Pao shrimp in the cartoon.

Laws govern submission (abuse must be abided, not squashed or operated) of portions, method of preparation (baked ham must be baked), graphics (your burger must look like its picture on the menu), and so on.

But as Jim Waddell of the state department overheard the show he was wearing my shoes. Tony.

—ERNEST GRIFFITH, December 23, 1992

Fifteen Years Ago

It was almost a year ago exactly that I was sharing an apartment in North Park with a cherubic-looking yet ferretilke little man I didn’t know very well.

Around the first of October, after being roommates for four months and lending him money almost daily, he took my rent money and half of the security deposit — 750 of my favorite dollars all told — and disappeared.

He chose to take a powder on the day after the body of nine-year-old Amanda Gaekze was found in a canyon some 30 yards from our address. He had also left behind blood-soaked towels, Levi’s, and T-shirts, which were later determined to be his own blood, but meantime he had become a suspect in the girl’s killing.

—LOSS OF CONTROL,” John Brizzolara, December 23, 1992

Ten Years Ago

Of course, we’ve heard all this before. We’ve seen the “Jesus is the reason for the season” billboards, heard the reminders that the poor are with us always, not just for the holidays, to the point where we enjoy the prick of guilt.

We feel better if we can admit that it’s all a sham, albeit a fun sham, and go on our merry way as if the mere acknowledgment of the bumbug made it okay. “Ouch, we’re spiritually bankrupt, selfish, and materialistic. Whatever. Isn’t this a darling sweater?”

—WHY WE WROTE STORIES,” Matt Leckona and Erin Grinnon, December 24, 1997

Five Years Ago

I told myself it wouldn’t happen to me. I would never become like the worrywart-ogals in my family, the kind who think of deadly falls whenever a kid climbs a tree or pneumonia whenever someone coughs. But now, a few shades past 30, I found myself in a panic over Christmas-tree fires. I started looking into home extinguishers.

On that score, my meeting with David Burk, division chief fire marshal for La Mesa, didn’t help much. Burk showed me a video of a Christmas-tree fire; the entire tree was engulfed in flames within four to five seconds.

—BEST BIDS, Ivy Kelly, December 19, 2002
REAL ESTATE

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REDEFINING CHAOS THEORY

On a recent trip to Italy, I met an Israeli from Jerusalem whom I asked how many suicide bomb blasts he had witnessed. “CNN is not Israel” was his curt reply.

In that I found an answer to many who ask me if it is true that Nigeria is a very dangerous country. “Is it true that foreigners risk being kidnapped in Nigeria? Is it true that Nigerians are fraudulent?” And on and on. Two Nigerias exist — the media construct and the real one. I live in the latter. I was born there, and that’s where I live and work.

CNN is not Nigeria.

Another friend, an Italian, spent a summer in South Africa, and when we met in Rome, he proudly informed me that he had been to Africa. “No, you haven’t,” I mischievously replied. “What do you mean?” he asked. “Well,” I began, “you have not actually been to Africa. True you have been to South Africa, and perhaps only to the capital, but until you come to Nigeria, my guess is that your African CV will remain incomplete.” I wasn’t joking.

The first thing that hits you at the Lagos International Airport is the heat. Okay, maybe not the heat, but the heat plus humidity...and the noise. You see, my people are noisy, like a man with plenty to say but lacking an attentive audience. As loud as their voices can be, though, the typical Nigerian has a very big heart. Talk to any foreigner who braves the odds to visit Nigeria: they all leave with a deep sense of pain because they must leave a part of their heart behind, having been beneficaries of the warm kindness and hospitality that Nigerians have not actually been to Africa. True you have been to South Africa, and when we met in Rome, he proudly informed me that he had been to Africa. “No, you haven’t,” I mischievously replied. “What do you mean?” he asked. “Well,” I began, “you have not actually been to Africa. True you have been to South Africa, and perhaps only to the capital, but until you come to Nigeria, my guess is that your African CV will remain incomplete.” I wasn’t joking.

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Take the traffic for example. In Nigeria, we call a traffic jam “go-slow” in apparent reference to the speed of vehicles. A friend of mine who, like me, lives and works in Lagos, prefers to call it “go-no!” because in Victoria Island you can sometimes move 500 metres in three hours.

But when Lagos traffic does move, it is a madhouse, and you are lucky to get back home without a scratch or dent on your car.

Driving in traffic, today as many other days, it is raining heavily. From the closed windows of my car, I hear a siren blaring behind me. In the rear-view mirror, I see the black Toyota Hilux van approaching, its headlights on. It is 10:00 a.m. Thursday morning. Of course, he is going nowhere because traffic is choked up all around him. But he drives roughly, pushing and threatening with reckless abandon because the body of his van has reinforced with metal grates that protect it from brushes with other cars. Though every wise driver wants to give way to this fool, it is not easy this time, because the traffic is “go-no!” And so the siren-blaring vehicle is forced to crawl with everyone, but soon he finds an opening, in his possession — the siren.

It seems that bullion vans in Lagos have a separate traffic route. They drive on opposite sides of the road, against oncoming traffic. The drivers of these boxes of death pride themselves on rivaling Michael Schumacher with their dexterity at the wheel, though many have died in the process. Pity, too, that they have taken more lives that are not theirs.

In the final analysis, the chaos in Lagos is only apparent because each of the participants has a mission: he is coming from somewhere and has a destination. Though one is tempted to dismiss them as a mass, behind each of those individuals is a motley crowd of dependents, waiting for his return because on that depends their next meal.

And, finally, when night falls, those same streets are empty, because people have gone home. Home for some is real, while for others it is under a bridge, in that small crevice formed by the bridge joints and the road surface, the so-called “under-bridge.”

It is often said that studying the facade of any house is enough to tell about the inside. This saying cannot apply to Nigeria, however, because Lagos is the entry point for many foreign visitors, its population is a potpourri that does not belong there. Each one has come for a piece of the economic action.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN WAS BORN ON MAY 6, 1954, TO A POOR FAMILY of Central California date farmers. Baby Abraham came out bald as a spoon except for a full beard. His first photographs, grainy black-and-whites, show tiny Abe with a bristly chin line and earnest profile.

It was in his mid teens that the family realized Abe had a medical condition. A country doctor diagnosed Abe with a rare form of gigantism. Abe’s rioting pituitary squeezed abnormally large globus of growth hormone into his bloodstream and the effect was elongated limbs and gargantuan strength. Picking dates, hauling baskets, transporting ladders, and splitting kindling were all easy and natural to Abraham Lincoln. He was a great help around the farm.

At 17, Abe desired to leave the small date farm and enter Professional Wrestling College in Ventura Beach. You can understand his father’s reluctance to let Abe go; he was not only losing a farmhand but also a son. Jedediah, Abe’s father, knew that Abe would eventually regret staying on the farm. And Jedediah placed nothing if not a reasonable man — his name around town was “Reasonable Jedediah Lincoln” — so he blessed Abe’s wish to leave.

Before hopping aboard the flatbed truck of migrant workers heading for the village bus station, Reasonable Jedediah took Abraham by the jacket lapel and said, “Son, remember to always be upstanding, forthright, and honest.” And Jedediah placed his own stovepipe top hat on his towering son Abraham’s head. Jedediah said, “There, that top hat should keep the bird crap off your ears.”

It was his father’s memory and tall black hat that forged the “ Honest Abe” persona outside of the wrestling ring. The fans adored it. But, inside the ring, Abe was a frightening terror.

A wild beast of gnashing teeth, sinewy arms, and a ramrod-strong back that hoisted his head on his towering son Abraham’s head. If some-thing to the sky and flung them into the audience one by one. Honest Abe Lincoln was undefeated in all the land, and townships heralded the arrival of his trademark black tights and suspenders, jaw-line whiskers, and tall hat.

Abraham Lincoln retired as the greatest professional wrestler of all time and became the first inductee into the National Professional Wrestling Hall of Fame in Ventura Beach, a hundred miles or so from a small Central California date farm.

Evel Knouse last week, we’re getting dangerously close to counting the number of people who were sequined jumpshirts for a living, sadly, at zero. Perhaps it is me who should take up the roomy-around-the-calf-but-oddly-tight-in-the-mid-torsio-region, sponged-and-unzipped-to-the-belly-button look. Perhaps it is me.

AMERICAN IDOL REWIND
CW 8:00 P.M.
It only now occurred to me that between the three of the prodigious stars listed above there are about 295 children. I’m guessing there’s a link between fertility and the clingy support of a stretchy, multicolored onion. The crotch region is what I’m talking about. Yes, James Brown’s, Ed Knouse’s, and Ike Turner’s well-wrapped “middle” areas are what is being discussed here. The “bul-ldes of star power,” one might say. It’s worth considering; these fine men’s cupped and swathed “charisma,” as it were. Let’s get it out in the open. Let’s talk about it.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 23
SO YOU MADE A MOVIE
CAS 3:30 P.M.
Since my girlfriend left me last month, my laundry has backed up and I only wear tighty-whities, smudges of grime, and desperation. On my way to the store last week, I was stopped by a camera crew and the director asked, “Hey, did you just get dumped?” and I answered, yes, I had. He said, “Great! We’re shooting a documentary entitled American Loser and the loca-tion is you. Ha ha ha ha!” I glared at him, but he and his friends were already gone. Wow, that guy’s cool. He’s a movie director and he has friends. Sigh.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 24
BBC WORLD NEWS
PBS 6:00 P.M.
My next language campaign is to de-vidify the terms “he who smelt it dealt it” and “slopey seconds.” These are perfectly good phrases that carry with them the stigma of being foul. I’m going to see if I can club Hillary Clinton’s speechwriter on the head, nab his three-by-five cards, and begin my project of reclamation. I’m thinking the “Yucca Mountain nuclear waste” issue is a good jumping-off point for both. TUESDAY, DECEMBER 25 (HO! HO! SWEET STINKIN’ HO!)
ELF
USA 7:00 P.M.
Pinch my nipples and run around the yard. Yee haw! It’s Christmas. Pass me glittery boxes of light-up Wham-O-Dyne Wonder and then gently color my surroundings rose and the photographs of today sepia. It’s Christmas! Bark at the mailman if he brings the wrong pack-ages. I’m going to get so drunk!

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 26
CROWNED: THE MOTHER OF ALL PAGEANTS
CW 8:00 P.M.
Lump my compassion into the dirty snow banks and heaps of discarded pine trees. Tin-sels hangs around my ears and I weep. Ring that bell in my face once more and I’ll suck you in the beak. Is there anything as sad as the day after Christmas? A whole year left. A whole year. I’m going to get drunk.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27
THE OFFICE
NBC 9:00 P.M.
Now what do we do? Hold our breath until New Year’s Eve, I guess. Go into work, but don’t really work. See who can eat the most cookies or watch a full DVD of The Family Guy on his desktop computer without getting caught by middle management. Start a betting pool on who should take up the roomy-around-the-calf-but-oddly-tight-in-the-mid-torsio-region, sponged-and-unzipped-to-the-belly-button look. Perhaps it is me.
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I won’t bore you with why I was in the hospital yet again, but I will tell you I was pretty much kicked out around sundown on a freezing, raining December night. I was given a cab voucher (invalid because the doc didn’t sign it and I had to return to the hospital and seek out an M.D.) to the homeless tent in the parking lot of Petco Park. I had made the mistake of telling the hospital social worker that my apartment status was in question, that I hadn’t paid rent for a while. She saw me off to the homeless tent, I had no choice; either there or no cab voucher. I was brought to the hospital via ambulance with no money, and so there I was. I could have taken a bus token, but I figured a taxi was far preferable.

The rain was serious and the cold was considerable for an older guy in San Diego. I shuddered and clutched myself, getting soaked by 40-degree rain. Before me was a row of ironic beach-type butterfly chairs, all full of California plates. New carpet, seat covers, slant 6 225, 4-speed transmission. Nonsmokers, disinterested in the cold, paid almost $3800/best. 760-277-4070. Running well, $22,500. Douglas, 619-232-6000. A few were asked out by strangers in women’s shoes and bodies, strangers

The wind howled, as the poet once said, like a hammer. The night railed against the bus with very few passengers (who in their right mind would be out on a night like this?) and the driver steered through the gale like a veteran rough-water captain. During the ride, I alternately worried about the state of my apartment — even if I’d be able to get in — and the faces of the men and women outside the tent as they were sent packing. I prayed I was not homeless. That I would not be one of them.

Old guys cut no slack.

Meanwhile, a guy in a vest with a megaphone, like a carnival Barker, was ejaculating ticket numbers — for women first — and two women out of maybe a dozen were assigned beds. Meanwhile, the rain fell at times with a vengeance. The wind howled, as the poet once said, like a hammer.

Possibly a dozen — no, more were waiting for beds. At about ten, everyone was turned away into the rain, mostly to head for bridges under, say, Commercial Street.

The looks on their faces could collectively be characterized as neither disappointed, angry, nor resigned. Most had gone through this routine at one time or another and it was if it was almost expected. Many headed for the trolley stop, heading God-knows-where. I also went to the trolley stop and saw one of the homeless/turned-away women withdraw a few dollars from her wallet. I swallowed too much pride and asked her if she had one more to give her. She did not hesitate.

Of course, dear. Here you go. Generosity from someone with nothing.

Meanwhile, many of the other exiles from the tents were milking around the trolley stopping seeking shelter from the rain and allowing trolley or bus, one after another, to pass. Almost no one had fare for either.

The trolley at least was warm and dry. But I had to get off at City Center on Third Street to catch the #11 bus on First Avenue toward my place on Adams Avenue and hope I could still get in there and there were not, say, new tenants or strangers tearing up the carpet, my bed out in the rain by the Dumpster.

The first #1 I passed me by without slowing and it took nearly an hour for the next one. My dollar was not sufficient without my disabled I.D. card but the bus driver said, “Go ahead, sit down. I’m not a Nazi.”

I can see that, and I’m grateful.

The night rivaled against the bus with very few passengers (who in their right mind would be cut out on a night like this?) and the driver steered through the gale like a veteran rough-water captain.


I was apprehensive about the state of my apartment — even if I’d be able to get in — and the faces of the men and women outside the tent as they were sent packing. I prayed I was not homeless. That I would not be one of them.

Old guys cut no slack.

By John Brizzolara
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