Our readers write!

Home Services Crucial -- Gulf Disaster -- A 50th Anniversary at the Newman Center
Don’t be Fooled by PG&E -- Clean Up, BP -- Gulf Disaster -- Oil Takeover
Tea Party -- Greed and Oil -- End Political Parties
BRT Proponents Have Their Facts Wrong -- Gestapo Epithets
Action Alert: Sleep-Out Protesting Schwarzenegger’s Deadly Cuts
Radical Republicans Doomed -- Zionism
Local Likudnik Nutcases & Group Generalizations
More about Israel -- Stop the Dirty Energy Proposition
PG&E Smart Meters

Editorials

Can Warren Hellman Save Journalism?

By Becky O’Malley
Mon May 17 12:44:00 -0700 2010

It’s an unusual experience to go to a meeting and afterwards read not one but two reasonably accurate reports about what happened there. But since the one I went to on Friday was the latest installment in the ongoing saga of The Future of Journalism, it’s not surprising that at least two accounts were online before two sunsets had passed.

There have been many stories told in various places about what’s happening with Warren Hellman’s media baby, born as the Bay Area News Project but recently rebaptized as the Bay Citizen. I took my little spiral reporter’s notebook to the meeting which they hosted for a few of the Bay Area’s many blogs and online news organs, but I don’t think I can improve on these two renditions.

One is the straight dope on what happened, with just the right edge of snark, written as a blog for SF Weekly by Lois Beckett. It’s surprising to see something so good in the often awful SF Weekly, and it’s even more surprising when you google the writer's gold-plated bio (Exeter, Harvard Crimson, Nieman award, yadda yadda.) The journalism market is in a sorry state indeed if this is the best job she can get.

And the other one’s a satiric column, on the Smirking Chimp site, from Bob Patterson, an old-timer who’s been around more than one block-you’d think there would be a solid job for someone with his experience too, but no more, no how.

I will say that as a person with some business experience I was not one of those whose eyes sparkled when 25 bucks was mentioned as the-let’s just call it an honorarium-for the right to re-publish content on the Bay Citizen site and even in the New York Times.

Bob raised a valid question: “Staff members from both the Berkeleyside and Berkeley Daily Planet websites were present and that brought up an interesting aspect of the new journalism venture: will competitors be comfortable in a co-op group?”

Given the current crash of news reporting in general, it’s hard for us at the Planet to worry about competition. As Berkeley citizens who care a lot about outcomes, we think the more everyone knows about what’s going on, the better off we’ll all be. We appreciate any news-gathering efforts from any source-the more the merrier.

We got into this in the first place because we were tired of nothing but oh-so-quaint Bezerkeley stories in the Chronicle, a phenomenon that has largely disappeared. I myself even enjoy a bit of soft-feature fluff coverage of food and fun, apparently the bread and butter of the Times’ newly launched Bay Area coverage, as long as it’s not All Cutesy All the Time.
In the seven years since we purchased the Planet, real reporting on Berkeley and the urban East Bay has improved dramatically, even in the face of drastic funding cutbacks at what’s left of the major metro dailies. We believe that we contributed to that improvement by setting a new standard, breaking real news stories in our print paper that others copied.

But fifteen years in a small software company trying to deal with the likes of AT&T, Microsoft and Apple gave us a good perspective on how big operations play small creative suppliers off against one another to keep prices down. I was primed for the software marketplace because before we started our company I was a freelance magazine writer, back in the days when the lively magazines which paid writers real money were just winding down. Talk about competition...

The most depressing commentary on journalism today which I’ve seen recently was in Sunday’s New York Times Magazine, a theme issue devoted-like a lot of the contemporary New York Times-to Money. It was called, in fact, The Money Issue.

(Brief digression: why is the New York Times increasingly the bible of Lifestyles of the Rich and Tacky? The wedding write-ups alone are too disgusting to read over breakfast, devoted as they are to ostentatiously displaying the lucrative jobs of both partners and their often multiple parents and step-parents. Vulgar-a word my great-aunt was too polite to use-doesn’t even begin to describe it.)

The issue as a whole was a textbook example of chronicling the price of everything and the value of nothing. The article “Putting a Price on Words,” by Andrew Rice, examines a great number of start-up enterprises aimed at monetarizing—for the benefit of the investors, of course—the work of those who write for Internet outlets. Pay, he reports, is approximately pennies on the dollar: “For instance, Examiner.com, owned by the billionaire Philip Anschutz, has a gigantic audience and a nationwide army of 36,000 localized contributors, or “examiners,” who produce articles on subjects like community news, lifestyle issues and pets, and are paid about 1 cent per page view.”

Quality has nothing to do with it.

Hack writing gigs, paid by the word, are nothing new. I wrote abstracts of research papers for an academic journal about hospital administration in my youth—a younger friend wrote entries for an encyclopedia of religion in the 80s. But don’t confuse that kind of thing with news reporting, a serious profession best practiced by intelligent people able to make a living wage from their endeavors if they need to.

Crumbs from the entrepreneurial table are not enough. Rice quotes one Sam Apple, the person behind one of the more earnest start-ups: “I have a friend who is a behavioral economist,” he said. “He says that if you pay people tiny amounts, it’s worse than not paying them at all.” But Apple admits he’s still paying writers what’s known in the trade as bupkes.

I had only a couple of quibbles with Beckett’s otherwise excellent piece on Bay Citizen. Two color points she missed: the host’s comment, without apparent irony, that rumors that reporters were being paid huge salaries are untrue (the rumors are about huge executive salaries) and the view of luxury gift emporium Gump’s across Post Street through the huge plate glass windows.

We would like to see the Bay Citizen succeed in the goal of bringing lower-case bay area citizens more of the news they need to know. From that perspective, especially since we’re lucky enough not to be supporting a family on the proceeds of our activities these days, we’d even be generous enough to kick back the $25 they offer for any of our pieces which they’d like to use. There was talk at the meeting of some sort of collaboration on stories which were too big for the under-funded small fry to tackle on their own, and I have about 5 of those in my back pocket right now.

Of course, at the moment the Planet is not just underfunded, it’s unfunded, because of our strange tax problems (check Planet archives for lurid details). But it’s interesting that while we are in a period where all of our contributors are working for free (which we hope eventually to change) we’ve been getting excellent pieces from people we could never have afforded to pay what they’re worth.

Even in our least profitable years putting out a print paper with staff reporters and editors making respectable salaries, our losses which were not covered by advertising amounted to less than the non-profit tax-deductible Bay Area News Project’s announced compensation for just one of their many well-paid executives, several of them listed on the Bay Citizen web site as former employees of McKinsey & Company, a fancy global consulting firm. I’m sure there’s a moral in here somewhere, but damned if I know what it is.

P.S. Just as I finished this, I got an email from the SFAppeal online newspaper with a link to their story on the meeting. It’s also quite good and includes some very illuminating comments. For the record, when I wrote those nasty things above about the Chron and the Times, I didn’t know that the Berkeleyside principals were also associated with those publications. Big targets, okay, small targets, no.

Editor’s Back Fence

New Operating Instructions for This Publication

Becky O’Malley
Fri May 14 14:49:00 -0700 2010

Regular readers (now more than 20,000 visitors a week, with almost 600 subscribers) will find this week’s Planet particularly confusing. We’re in a new phase of our experimental process, so please read this carefully and then bear with us during the transition.

From now on, the only “issue date” will be on Tuesdays. That’s the day we have complete events lists ready to post, which will give would-be audience members ten full days of arts and events listing, starting on Wednesday and going through the next two weekends. We’ll “publish” the week’s issue that day. What this means is that when readers type in berkeleydailypost.com they’ll get the “current” issue, the one “published” on the most recent Tuesday.

Then we’ll start adding stories to the “next” issue as they come in. Any time readers want to read these new stories, they can just click on the “next issue” button on the front page of the “current issue”. To get back to square one, click on “current issue”.

If a story is fast breaking and changing fast (the recent student hunger strike, for example), we might also add it to the “current issue” front page, above the original headline and under the red “Extra” heading on the right hand side. As there are new developments, we’ll just add these at the top, while not removing earlier versions. A summary or final version of stories like this will then be posted in the next Tuesday issue.

The Tuesday issue will also be converted to PDFs (graphic pages) which will be posted on the site. These can easily be printed on home printers and will be available in print from Copy Central at Solano and Peralta for a small charge to cover the printing costs. We’re not going to create a printable version on Fridays any more, but each printable Tuesday issue will have the whole preceding week’s content, updated as
was supposed to evaluate the school plan this spring and is in fact obligated by law to do so. The California Education Code says that “The Schoolsite council [which in the case of Berkeley High is currently the SGC] shall annually review the school plan, establish a new budget, and if necessary, make other modifications in the plan to reflect changing needs and priorities.” Consideration of the school plan, said Scott, has been postponed three times and there’s only one scheduled meeting before the end of the school year. “We still could do it,” Scott added, “if we have more meetings.”

Gonzalez did not rule out the possibility of more meetings devoted to examination of the school plan. But she takes exception to the view that the plan has not been subject to scrutiny: “It is a living document. Teachers have been using and revising the plan in their daily work.” Given the funding cuts and many pressures on school staff, Gonzalez doesn’t think it’s a good idea for the SGC to concentrate on the plan right now, “I don’t think it’s a good use of teachers’ time.” But she added, “I understand the concern. If anyone has anything they want to change, they can suggest that.”

The plan is now in its sixth year of implementation, and will receive detailed examination during the official accreditation process next year. That’s another reason, according to Gonzalez, for not spending a lot of time on it now.

Some parent representatives on the SGC disagree. They point out that the aim of the state education code, which requires annual reconsideration of the school plan by the governing council, including its community members, is to make the community an active partner in determining the priorities and the direction of the school. “Our obligation,” said Scott, “is to analyze the plan.” In her view, that is not being done.

Budgetary considerations are relevant to school plan evaluation, and one of the current problems, according to Scott, is that the school administration has not yet presented a budget to the SGC. In her view, the SGC needs that information in order to comply with the Education Code, which explicitly assigns budget approval to the school council.

Test Scores. The education code further stipulates that a school action plan “shall be based on scientifically based research and … be data driven.” Indeed the district has been making an attempt to gather relevant BHS data. Math teacher Jessica Quindel made a presentation to the SGC of results from five standardized tests that have been administered over the past two school years. That data show that Berkeley High students achieve on average substantially higher scores than those achieved by students statewide.

However, there is great variation in levels of student performance both within and between the six small schools at Berkeley High. The district data presented to the SGC over the past year confirms a large achievement gap: the test scores of white and Asian students are, on average, substantially higher than those of African-American and Latino students. Quindel said that “The gap that we experience at Berkeley High is also a statewide gap.” When SAT scores are disaggregated by ethnicity, they show that Berkeley High students in every ethnic group score higher than the state-wide average for that group. For example, African American students at Berkeley High outscore African American students statewide.

Still, the gap between higher and lower achieving students at Berkeley High is a wide one and, according to Gonzales, the school plan has been updated to address the problem. The “20/20 Vision” goals, which seek elimination of the gap by the year 2020, were incorporated into the plan last year.

Following Quindel’s report on test scores, teacher Phil Halpern and other SGC members asked about the practical implications of this information. Since the SAT, for example, presumes to test aptitude, what does it tell us about student achievement? Quindel said that she was only presenting the test score information to the SGC, not interpreting it, although she did comment that the SAT measures achievement as well as aptitude.

The Relevance of the Data. Indeed it is challenging to discern the policy implications of standardized test performance statistics. Given the different educational aims of the six small learning communities, the different skill levels that students bring to these communities when they first enter them, and the fact that many students do not take the standardized tests, the district’s data about tests and scores do not provide strong evidence regarding how well these communities are educating their students.

As well, a case can be made that the push to use standardized tests to evaluate education obscures what really needs to be done. Teachers have often testified that they need smaller class sizes, stronger support systems, and more resources to do their jobs well. Some educators ask: why look for new solutions when the old ones are staring us in the face?
Schools have nevertheless to apportion the meager resources at their disposal as wisely as possible, and to do that they must evaluate program effectiveness. Given that grading policy at Berkeley High is not uniform across the six small learning communities, test scores provide an important measure of how students in each community are doing relative to the other communities and to students at other high schools in California and nationwide. Test data are relevant as well to evaluation of the progress, or lack thereof, made by struggling students and students of color. Additional data can come directly from teachers at Berkeley High. They know from their own experience what works and does not work in the classroom, and the effort to improve education at the school should draw in a systematic way upon their experience.

SGC parent representative Margit Roos-Collins told the Daily Planet that test score results can contribute to program evaluation. She cited as an example the use of longitudinal data that track a cohort of students over time; the California Standards Test (CST) scores achieved by eighth graders could be compared to their subsequent test scores in high school to measure progress. If a program aims to improve performance for a certain category of students — those experiencing difficulties in math, for instance — then a longitudinal study that follows those students specifically could measure the effectiveness of that particular program.

By all accounts, governing a large school like Berkeley High consisting of diverse small learning communities, in an era of severe funding shortfalls, is enormously challenging. Community participation and support are vital. At the next SGC meeting on Tuesday May 25 at 4 PM in the Community Theater, the BUSD Policy Committee will explain its draft for a school site council that will replace the current SGC. Discussion of the school plan will be on the agenda as well. The public is invited to attend.

**Berkeley Today**

*By Riya Bhattacharjee*

**Mon May 17 21:18:00 -0700 2010**

In the news today: Bayer Pharmaceutical’s announcement of a new Innovation Center will not change anything for its Berkeley campus, the Berkeley City Council tonight (Tuesday) will consider an Arizona travel ban and a request for continuation for reconsideration of the Berkeley Iceland landmark designation.

**Bayer to open Innovation Center in Mission Bay**

Bayer’s announcement Tuesday about opening a new Innovation Center in Mission Bay will not change the pharmaceutical company’s operations in Berkeley, company spokesperson Cathy J. Keck Anderson said. The employees moving to the U.S. Innovation Center are currently based in Richmond.

The Innovation Center will introduce a newly formed “Science Hub” for innovation sourcing in the country creating collaborations with academic research scientists and small biotech firms to “realize product development and commercialization of new therapies through partnerships with Bayer.” The U.S. Innovation Center will house Bayer scientists who carry out the company’s hematology research program focused on coagulation factors and the discovery of novel biologic drug candidates.

This is the second time in less than a year that Bayer has decided to invest in the Bay Area. In September, Bayer decided to stay on at its Aquatic Park campus in Berkeley and invest $100 million in Kogenate research in exchange for tax incentives.

**Berkeley City Council to consider Arizona travel ban**

The Berkeley City Council will vote today on whether to denounce the Arizona State Senate Bill 1070 and call for a boycott of the state and businesses based there. The council will also vote on whether to ban all non-essential travel by city employees and officials to Arizona. According to a report from Councilmembers Kriss Worthington, Jesse Arreguin and Darryl Moore, “the bill requires police “when practicable” to detain people they “reasonably suspect” are in the country without authorization; allows the police to charge immigrants with a state crime for not carrying immigration documents; creates a private right of action to sue cities upon belief that the government has a policy or practice that restricts immigration law enforcement; and makes it a crime to stop on a public street to attempt to hire a temporary worker.” The report from the councilmembers warns that the illegal immigration bill will “inevitably lead to racial profiling, jeopardize public safety and create a wedge between law enforcement and ethnic communities.”

**Bayer to revisit large home family daycare fees**

The Berkeley City Council will vote on whether to direct the City Manager to review the business license and zoning regulations related to large, in-home family daycare businesses and return to the council with 1. Defines “large family in-home day cares” as per the state of CA;
2. Establishes a flat rate for an annual business license fee of $150;
3. Exempts large family in-home daycares from paying business license registration, past due fees and any fines accrued prior to January 2010 but requires such fees from January 1, 2010 on;
4. Proactively works with BALDICOA, Bananas, and current providers to develop a method of providing new and existing childcare licensees with information about the city ordinances;
5. Exempts large family in home daycares operating before January 1, 2010 from the requirement to obtain an AUP.

**City Council to consider continuation of Berkeley Island landmark status**

The City Council will also vote on whether to continue the reconsideration of the Berkeley Iceland as a City of Berkeley landmark. Iceland’s owners East Bay Iceland (EBI) are asking for a six month continuation to consider proposals for the site.

After Berkeley Iceland was designated a city landmark in 2007 by the City Council, its owners challenged the decision in court. On Nov. 20, 2009, the California Superior Court of Alameda County passed a judgment that settled the lawsuit.

The settlement requires that the council rescind its 2007 action and hold a new, duly noticed, public hearing to reconsider EBI’s appeal of the landmarking. Although a hearing was originally set for Jan. 19, 2010, a request from Save Berkeley Iceland, the group trying to buy the property, and EBI, the council continued it to May 18, 2010.

On May 4, representatives of EBI requested another continuation during which they will seek proposals to purchase and develop the property and may enter into a contract for sale.

**PG&E Apologizes for Smart Meter Problems, but Some Aren’t Satisfied**

*By Bay City News*

**Thu May 13 09:33:00 -0700 2010**

PG&E on Monday issued an apology along with 45 reports dating back to August 2006 detailing reviews, monitoring, testing, and corrections identified in the company’s SmartMeter program.

“While 99 percent of our SmartMeter devices are installed and working properly, we recognize that even having less than 1 percent of meters with issues is still 50,000 customers, and that’s too many,” said
Helen Burt, senior vice president and chief customer officer of the San Francisco-based utility that serves much of Northern and Central California. “We pledge to address customer service issues better than we have been, more quickly, and more aggressively.”

SmartMeters are advanced utility meters that wirelessly communicate usage information to customers and utility companies. The California Pacific Utilities Commission approved PG&E to install the newer, smarter meters because, they said, the meters would give customers detailed information about their own energy usage, encouraging them to cut down.

But since PG&E began sporadic installation of the SmartMeters throughout the state in November 2006, the CPUC, PG&E, and various consumer advocacy groups have received numerous complaints about overcharging and other concerns.

Specifically, the CPUC said they have received approximately 600 complaints in PG&E’s service area since January 2009, compared to 10 in Edison’s service area in Southern California and 15 in the San Diego Gas and Electric Company’s service area.

As a result of the complaints - many of which came from consumers in the San Joaquin Valley during the summer of 2009 – and pressure from legislators like Senator Dean Florez, D-Shafter, the CPUC launched an investigation into the company in March of this year.

PG&E spokesman Paul Moreno said the company has received roughly 1,000 complaints, and he also confirmed that there have been some 23,000 cases since 2006 in which a piece of equipment called the “gas module” was incorrectly installed, many of which resulted in an incorrect gas bill.

But Moreno said that nearly all of those situations have been rectified with customers and others preempted. He said the company expects all of their customers to have SmartMeters installed by 2012.

“We’re installing about 15,000 per day,” he said.

After issuing their apology on Monday, PG&E outlined some of the steps they are taking to address consumer complaints, including expanding testing, increasing the number of customer service “answer centers” and adding more customer service representatives, among others.

But Mindy Spatt, spokeswoman for the consumer advocacy group The Utility Reform Network, said the company should stop installing the meters altogether until the CPUC has completed their investigation.

The CPUC stated that it nixed the moratorium idea because the number of complaints compared to the total number of installations doesn’t validate it. “There are millions of SmartMeters operating around the globe with no complaints,” it said.

In the meantime, customers like Larry Chang, who is a small business owner in Oakland, have decided to refuse the SmartMeters by posting signage on their meters.

Chang said the company has not provided enough information about the benefits to the customers to warrant the installations. Although the company has touted that the technology will allow customers to track their energy usage, Chang said he would have to buy all new “‘Smart’ appliances if he really wants to use SmartMeters as a personal energy auditing system.

Chang was one of 50 community members in Oakland who agreed to refuse SmartMeter installations in a neighborhood meeting focused on the potential benefits and detriments of the technology held last Tuesday. He plans to keep a sign on his old utility meter that reads “Don’t even think about installing a ‘SmartMeter’ here,” until PG&E caves.

“If I could find a way to get off of PG&E Service, I might very well do that at some point,” said Chang.

**Life and Death on the Arizona Border**

*New America Media, Interview by Sandip Roy*

**Thu May 13 10:18:00 -0700 2010**

Margaret Regan has been covering immigration for over a decade for the Tucson Weekly and other publications. Her book is “The Death of Josseline: Immigration Stories from the Arizona-Mexico Borderlands.” She talked to NAM editor, Sandip Roy.

**Why has Arizona become this laboratory for the anti-illegal immigration movement?**

A big part of the reason is that Arizona has been Ground Zero for immigration for about 10 years now. We have more migrants passing through here and going to other points in the country, and more migrants dying, than in any other border state. And we have a large population of undocumented people living within Arizona – estimated to be anything between 400,000 and 600,000.

**How did Arizona become Ground Zero??**

This goes back to the early ’90s when so many immigrants were pouring in through San Diego and El Paso. It had become a political problem. People were seen pouring through and running across the highway. During the Clinton administration, the decision was made to seal up those borders. The idea was: If they sealed up those urban crossings, they would have taken care of the problem because the territory in between was so forbidding it would be too dangerous for people to try to cross. That territory is Arizona where we have perilous deserts and mountains that rise to 9000 feet. And the idea was that geography would take care of the problem. That didn’t happen. It didn’t take into account the desperation of people. Immigration through Arizona started skyrocketing instead.

**What are the most dramatic ways in which the border has changed??**

One of the most dramatic changes is the hardening of the border. We have seen many, many miles of walls built in between Arizona and Sonora in Mexico. There used to be a little barbed-wire fence. Now you will find big metal walls, 14-16 feet high, extending for miles and miles. In many places, there is stadium lighting. You will see roads next to the walls in places that used to be remote wilderness areas, private ranches and public lands. You have a lot of activity now – Border Patrol going up and down the roads in their SUVs, helicopters, towers.

**You have written that the road the Border Patrol has built along the borders also helped the drug smugglers.**

On the Mexican side they can throw over whatever, and they have a truck waiting and it can speed away. Before, they too were inhibited by the wilderness. Now, they have a nice road.

**As immigration enforcement has tightened, have you seen changes in who is coming??**

There are more women coming. And there are more deaths of women. It used to be a more fluid situation where a husband or father would go up to the U.S. and work seasonally or for a couple of years, but come home for holidays. Now, it’s much harder. So we have more migrants trying to reach their husbands and fathers or mothers. So we have a more vulnerable population crossing the border.

**Who is Josseline, who you use for the title of the book??**

She was a girl who had been left behind in El Salvador with her brother. Her mother was working in L.A. The dad was working in Maryland. When they were 14 and 10, the mother had saved up enough money to bring them across. They were traveling all the way
from El Salvador. The mother had thought she had entrusted the children to people she could rely on.

[The siblings] traveled all the way up through Mexico and crossed over into Arizona. Then they had to cross a very difficult mountainous desert. Up there Josseline got sick. A lot of people get sick drinking infected water because there are cow tanks. She became too sick to continue. The whole group, including the people Josseline’s mother thought she could trust, left her there and dragged the brother away. It’s been reported that the 10-year-old brother begged to stay with his sister and she said, “No, you have to continue on to mom.” The group didn’t get to L.A. till three days later. At that point the brother told the mother and the alarm was raised. Three weeks later a young activist volunteer came across Josseline’s body on the trail.

You said there is a web site that gives the weather forecast and the probability of death alongside the terrain.

That was a University of Arizona project—a collaboration with the Pima County medical examiner. They noticed the number of deaths rose on the days when it was really hot. The association is pretty inescapable. So they calculated this algorithm—you can plug in a temperature and you can see what your odds are for dying. Not that the migrants will have access to this information. But they are doing it for their own purposes and to help activists and Border Patrol realize when the days are the most dangerous. But Josseline died in the winter. People are sometimes surprised how cold Arizona can be. If you are out and it’s wet and the temperature is below freezing, you will be in trouble.

But strangely if you are in a life-threatening situation and the Border Patrol picks you up you can get into the United States.

I have a story in my book about a sort of escape clause. If you are dangerously injured, and you are rescued by Border Patrol—and they do quite a few rescues, they have a whole SWAT team called Borstar—they switch hats. They are rescue people, not law enforcement officials. I participated in a rescue of a Honduran woman who had a life-threatening injury and they never even asked her name. One agent said to me as far as he was concerned she was a bird watcher who broke her leg. The positive view is that they are concentrating on saving people. The critique is that they don’t want to take financial responsibility for critically injured people that they bring to the hospital.

But if you are rescued by Borstar and you are not in a life-threatening situation, it’s different. A woman gave birth in the desert and the child was in danger. The Border Patrol evacuated the child by helicopter. She was brought by ambulance. But after two days, she was discharged from the hospital and booked and arrested.

The new bill SB 1070 got pushed through partly because a rancher got killed along the border. Is there a huge fear of Mexico and the drug war happening there?

Very much so. There is a terrible drug war in Mexico. Our local Mexican town of Nogales has always been a place where people from Tucson would go down for the day. They have all kinds of shops, handicrafts, restaurants. It’s charming. People are afraid of going. The fear is you could be randomly down there and be shot. I fear those shopkeepers down there will lose their livelihood and ironically, we will have more candidates for migrating across the border.

The murder of the rancher was very significant. It seems to have changed the conversation. The ranchers and the people on the border have borne the brunt of this policy for years. They used to be living in a place that was remote, quiet, peaceful. Now they are in the middle of an international crisis—they have Border Patrol all over the place and some of the world’s poorest people crossing their land. They have their houses broken into. People steal food primarily. Ranchers complain migrants cut their fences. Cows will eat anything and they eat discarded plastic water bottles. So they have been at their wit’s end. And the murder of this man, who actually was well-respected and used to give water to migrants, really inflamed the issue.

Border stories blur into each other. Has any story really surprised you?

Marta Garcia was an impoverished woman from Honduras. She had two children. Her husband had disappeared in his efforts to cross into the U.S. She believes that he is dead. She made the decision she would have to make this dangerous journey. She left the kids with the in-laws, rode up by bus, contracted with a coyote. Very often these people are lied to, told this is a very short walk. This is a person who has a little bit of extra weight, was not used to vigorous hiking. The coyote had said it would be a few hours.

After eight hours they are still hiking very rocky trails that are so easy to trip on. You trip on the rocks because you are looking overhead so you won’t crash into the cactus. She fell and broke her femur. She said the coyote was going to shoot her. His idea was to put her out of her misery since she was sure to die out there. And he got out his gun. She pleaded for her life. He finally said, “your choice.”

There she was alone. She was freezing at night. She lay there all night in excruciating pain thinking about her children. With the morning light a Mexican family crossed up the hill to where she was and found her and said, ’we are going to help you.’ They gave up their own chance to get into the United States in order to save Marta’s life.

One of them, a genial fellow named Raul, stayed with her. The rest of the family went out to the road, flagged down the Border Patrol and took them back to Marta Gomez. She was airlifted to Tucson. I was with the group rescuing her and this migrant man, Raul. And I asked him “Why did you do it? Why did you give up your chance to save this woman you don’t even know?” And he said, “I had to. I had to save a human life.”

Berkeley Police Seek Four Suspects in Connection With Recent Robberies

By Bay City News
Fri May 14 16:17:00 -0700 2010

Berkeley police are seeking four suspects believed to be responsible for at least two robberies just south of the University of California at Berkeley campus in the past few weeks.

In both robberies, victims were approached from behind by a group of people who struck them with an unknown object and stole their belongings, according to police.

The first robbery was reported at about midnight April 28 near the intersection of Shattuck Avenue and Center Street. Another was reported at 8:14 p.m. on May 6 in the 2500 block of Benvenue Avenue, police said.

The suspects have been described as a group of two Hispanic or black men and two Hispanic women.

One of the men was described as being in his 20s, about 5 feet 10 inches tall with a thin build, and was wearing a dark shirt and blue jeans. The other man was described as being in his late teens or early 20s, about 5 feet 6 inches tall with a medium-to-heavy build, and was wearing a white T-shirt and dark jeans.

The women are both in their late teens or early 20s and about 5 feet 3 inches tall. One
has a thin build and was wearing a dark jacket and denim jeans, according to police.

Police are advising residents to remain aware of their surroundings. Items like iPods, cell phones and headphones limit awareness, and are also items thieves focus on to steal.

Anyone with information about these robberies are asked to contact the Police Department’s robbery detail at (510) 981-5742 or the non-emergency number at (510) 981-5900. Callers wishing to remain anonymous can call the Bay Area Crime Stoppers tip line at (800) 222-TIPS.

**Lamp Switch Started House Fire**

Dan McMenamin, BCN  
Fri May 14 14:58:00 -0700 2010

A three-alarm fire that destroyed a home and damaged two others in North Berkeley on Thursday afternoon was apparently caused by a faulty lamp switch, an assistant fire chief said today.

The blaze was reported at 12:02 p.m. at a home in the 500 block of San Luis Road, Assistant Fire Chief Sabina Imrie said.

The fire was caused by a malfunction in the lamp switch, and the lamp was surrounded by papers that fueled the fire, Imrie said.

The blaze caused at least $500,000 in structural damage to the home, rendering it uninhabitable. It also caused at least $100,000 in damage to two neighboring homes, according to Imrie.

The owner of the home where the fire started was displaced, along with her sister and their dog. The dog was rescued from the home by a neighbor during the blaze, Imrie said.

The residents in the two neighboring homes were able to return to their houses later Thursday after they were deemed safe and utility services were turned back on in the area, she said.

No residents or firefighters were injured by the blaze.

**Hoeft-Edenfield Convicted of Second-Degree Murder for Stabbing UC Berkeley Student**

Bay City News  
Thu May 13 15:03:00 -0700 2010

Jurors this morning convicted Andrew Hoeft-Edenfield of second-degree murder for the stabbing death of University of California at Berkeley senior Christopher Wootton near campus two years ago.

Wootton was stabbed in a confrontation in the parking lot of a sorority house in the 2400 block of Warring Street at about 2:45 a.m. May 3, 2008.

Jurors announced their verdict after deliberating for the equivalent of three full days.

Yolanda Huang, the defense attorney for Hoeft-Edenfield, 22, told jurors in her closing argument that Wootton’s death “could well have been an accident.”

The stabbing occurred at the end of a drunken shouting match that developed when Hoeft-Edenfield and a group of his friends encountered Wootton and his friends on a street near campus.

Huang admitted that Hoeft-Edenfield, who worked at Jamba Juice in Berkeley and attended Berkeley City College, stabbed Wooton but said he acted in self-defense after he was outnumbered, surrounded, kicked and stomped by Wooton and a large group of Wooton’s friends.

Huang said Hoeft-Edenfield should be acquitted, telling jurors, “It’s time for you to send Mr. Hoeft-Edenfield home to his family and for this to be over.”

But prosecutor Connie Campbell called the idea that the death was an accident “outrageous.”

Campbell said Hoeft-Edenfield intentionally drove his three-and-a-half-inch knife into Wootton’s chest with so much force that it broke a rib and created a gash in Wootton’s heart, causing him to die from blood loss.

The prosecutor alleged that Hoeft-Edenfield and his friends had an opportunity to walk away from the confrontation but that Hoeft-Edenfield escalated the situation.

Wootton, 21, who was from Bellflower in Southern California, was only weeks away from graduating with honors in nuclear engineering. He planned to continue studying nuclear engineering in graduate school at UC Berkeley.

Hoeft-Edenfield bowed his head and put his hand over his head after the jury’s verdict was read and remained seated with his back to jurors when they left court.

He faces a term of at least 15 years to life when he returns to court on June 10 to be sentenced by Alameda County Superior Court Judge Jeffrey Horner.

**UC Berkeley Hunger Strike Ends with Meeting**

Bay City News  
Mon May 17 15:05:00 -0700 2010

Protesters ended a 10-day hunger strike yesterday on the University of California at Berkeley campus during a meeting with the university chancellor and top administrators that both sides called productive.

The protest was in part a response to Arizona’s new immigration law, which allows police to question people they believe to be in the country illegally. On Friday, UC Berkeley Chancellor Robert Birgeneau publicly denounced the law.

That denouncement was one of a number of demands protesters made since beginning the hunger strike last week outside of California Hall.

The group’s other demands included making the UC Berkeley campus into a “sanctuary campus” for students and workers, dropping the charges against the students involved in a protest late last year at Wheeler Hall, revising student code of conduct rules, and bringing back laid-off workers.

Protesters held a rally Tuesday urging Birgeneau to meet with them to address their demands, and the chancellor met the group’s negotiators at 4 p.m. today inside California Hall, said Marco Amaral, a spokesman for the hunger strikers.

UC Berkeley spokeswoman Claire Holmes tonight called the meeting “very productive” and said the university and protesters came to several agreements that will be officially worked out over the next week in a “common statement of understanding.”

Among the agreements, Holmes said the university will expand a task force that looks at issues surrounding undocumented students and workers, will continue to examine the student code of conduct, and will continue to work with labor management to address concerns regarding layoffs.

Holmes said the university would also continue to consider community service as a substitute disciplinary measure for those involved in the protests at Wheeler Hall.

Following the meeting, Amaral said the protesters and the university had found a “middle ground” and he was happy with the outcome, but added, “Our biggest accomplishment was within our community, raising awareness.”

He said fasters broke their strike by eating corn.

On Tuesday, eight of the 15 students and
workers who had been participating in the hunger strike since the beginning started a “dry strike,” meaning they did not eat or drink until it ended today, Amaral said. At least 20 people partook in the strike. Amaral said four were hospitalized, but returned for today’s gathering.

Reader Opinion

Open Letter to UC President Yudof Re: UC Statement on Divestment

Mohammad Talaat, PhD, PE  
Thu May 13 15:51:00-0700 2010

Dear UC President Yudof,

I received your enclosed message and statement, “UC Statement on Divestment,” and was saddened and disappointed. Not because I disagree with your position and the UC Board of Regents’ – that’s human – rather because of the thin rationale and less-than-honest language it employs. Let me elaborate.

Your statement purports to address “two bills put forward for a vote before student organizations within [UC] that call on the University to divest from companies doing business with Israel.” Your statement refers to a policy adopted by the Regents in 2005 where they “stated that a policy of divestment from a foreign government shall be adopted by the University only when the United States government declares that a foreign regime is committing acts of genocide.” This reference is the crux of your response, and its use is disturbing on several levels:

1. The subject in the referenced UC policy is “divestment from a foreign government.” Neither of the two bills referenced in your opening paragraph mentions divestment from the state or government of Israel. The rest of your statement tries to squeeze in the language statements to establish relevance by association, such as “[i]n the current resolutions voted on by UC student organizations, the State of Israel and companies doing business with Israel have been the sole focus.” This is intellectually dishonest, and the policy language you cite as the main reason for your position remains principally irrelevant to your argument.

2. Your statement that the student bills focus on “companies doing business with Israel” is inaccurate and misleading by omission. The two bills focus on companies providing material support and profiting from Israel’s illegal occupation and war crimes in the Palestinian territories. The distinction is vast between companies selling attack helicopters and ones selling oranges to Israel, and it is again intellectually dishonest to phrase your statement as if the two bills you address do not make that distinction.

3. As UC President, academic, educator, and defender of free speech, the policy you mention deserves your questioning, not your support. The notion that a student body or an academic institution can only follow a socially responsible investment policy after the U.S. government has made a finding that acts of genocide are taking place goes against UC legacy and the values of citizen-led democracy and activism. As autonomous actors, universities and independent citizens should have the capacity and duty to influence their government’s policy, free from diplomatic constraints and special interest meddling. Let me remind you that the Board of Regents is not an autonomousactor free
from special interests, since it is composed of unelected political appointees. Instead of echoing unquestioning support to their unreasonable policy, you should be protesting it.

4. The policy you support dictates that, as UC President, you are content reacting to international human rights violations only after the fact, only after genocide - no less - has taken place, and only after the US government has recognized it as such. This is most disturbing. Let me remind you that the official establishment of “genocide” is nearly impossible. The US government is still debating whether or not the Armenian genocide took place. This is an unreasonable, politically motivated, curb on social responsibility.

5. The policy you support dictates that, as UC President, you would not have voted to divest from companies supporting the Nazi occupation of all of Europe and extermination of civilians in death camps prior to a US declaration of war and/or official recognition of genocide; the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and WMD program; and the list goes on. Also, had trade sanctions not been in place, you would have voted not to divest from companies supplying weapons to Hamas or military nuclear technology to the Iranian government. Moreover, you would not have voted to divest from South Africa’s apartheid regime. In effect, your position empties academic conscience and activism of any substance, and turns them into slogans and colorful parades. Your position prevents UC from leading any effort to advocate social change or confront human rights violations. What’s next?!

6. Another intellectual dishonesty committed in this statement is the description of the two bills it addresses as being voted on by “student organizations.” In fact, the two bills were presented for a vote by the student government bodies at UC Berkeley and UC San Diego. Your dismissive language makes it possible to infer that the scope of this vote was limited to a fraternity or a student group on each campus, when in UC Berkeley alone more than 40 registered student organizations officially endorsed the bill you oppose, and the student senate had passed by 16 to 4 votes before being vetoed by the student president. Your statement implicitly serves to belittle the significance of this.

7. Your statement argues that “[the] isolation of Israel among all the countries in the world greatly disturbs us and is of grave concern to members of the Jewish community.” I am astonished that you would repeat this discredited line. I expect to read this in a propaganda email, an oratory performance by the Israeli Consul General or the Director General of Hillel, or droves of pro-Israel students finding no better argument in the face of documented Israeli atrocities than waive the anti-Semitism card and play the victim in front of their 20-year old student senators who can be swayed by emotions. What makes isolating Israel for its illegal actions any different than isolating Sudan or South Africa, or makes the concern of pro-Israel supporters these bills. I wish your statement had afforded the same amount of respect and allusion to the “members of the Jewish community,” including prominent UC faculty, who fully supported these bills. I refer you to the sections “Endorsements”, “Letters of Support,” “Video Reel,” and “SB118 – Veto Rebuttal” of the website www.caldivestfromapartheid.com, and to Pages 8 and 9 of April 13th issue of The Daily Californian.

8. In addition to my criticism of the rationale, your statement totally and inappropriately ignores the statement signed by 86 UC faculty members, along with 28 more California colleagues in support of the divestment resolution at UC Berkeley. I hope that you will receive a more articulate and scholarly critique than mine to your position from them, unless they choose to ignore your statement in return.

9. Finally, I should note the following: Last week UC Berkeley Chancellor Birgeneau issued a statement about the divestment bill at UCB. Many people who disagree with his established position appreciated the measured and balanced language he used, which reflected his feelings of responsibility and leadership of the entire campus, not only a vocal fraction of it. While many of those same people took issue with the title of his statement, which made an equivocal reference to “disputed territories in the Middle East,” it seemed not the time to engage in partisan or semantic rhetoric, and most everyone moved on. Unfortunately, your statement does not reflect inclusive leadership, but unabashed bias. This makes me sad and, if I were younger and still one of your other-than-privileged students, almost angry.

I hope that this message will meet your eyes, and urge you to reconsider your position as President of all UC.

Mohammad Talaat, PhD, PE
Assistant Professor, Cairo University, Egypt (on leave)

UC Berkeley Alum
PS. Not surprisingly, I am not the only UC Alum who feels “almost angry,” about this statement enough to critique it. This letter owes some credit to Yaman Salahi’s posting. (http://www.yamansalahi.com/2010/05/11/current-events/the-yudof-doctrine-no-divestment-from-israel-unt-genocide/)

From: “President’s Office” <President@ucop.edu>
Date: May 10, 2010 5:28:38 PM PDT
To: Subject: Message from President Yudof - UC Statement on Divestment

Thank you for your e-mail regarding the recent bills regarding divestment by the University from companies doing business in Israel put forward by the student governments on several UC campuses. I appreciate your taking the time to write and express your views. I have received close to 10,000 messages regarding this issue, so I hope you will understand the necessity of my sending this same response to all. Attached for your information is a statement the Chairman and Vice Chair of the University of California’s Board of Regents and I have issued regarding the question of divestment.

With best wishes, I am,
Sincerely yours,
Mark G. Yudof
President
University of California

University of California
Statement on Divestment
Russell Gould, Chairman, Board of Regents
Sherry L. Lansing, Vice Chair, Board of Regents
Mark G. Yudof, President of the University

Recently, there have been two bills put forward for a vote before student organizations within the University of California that call on the University to divest from companies doing business with Israel. Understandably, these bills have received considerable attention from the public and the media.

The overarching question of the University of California divesting from any company is a complex one and any action considered must conform to State and federal laws, as well as to the University’s fiduciary responsibilities as a public entity to protect the security of its pension and endowment funds. In 2005, the Regents stated that a policy of divestment from a foreign govern-
Most Residents Not Notified of Trader Joe’s Liquor License Application

Eric Dynamic
Mon May 17 12:11:00 -0700 2010

This is a map showing area residents who did not receive their notice (mailed April 14th) of Trader Joe’s application for their liquor license as required by law.

Here for your amusement and horror is a map showing area residents who did not receive their notice (mailed April 14th) of Trader Joe’s application for their liquor license as required by law. I polled almost every single residence within the notification area to collect signatures from everyone willing to state that they did for certain not receive any such notice. Only a third of people were home and only half of those who answered could state for certain whether they had or hadn’t received the notice, and not all of those who knew they didn’t get the notice were willing to sign the poll. And yet I managed to collect 28 signatures. In fact, I did not find anyone who said they had gotten the notice in their mail.

The locations of people who signed my list as stating for a fact that they did not receive the notice are shown in red. The notification area as defined by law is shown in green. The cyan circle is the outer boundary of the area 500 feet from “just the front door” of the premises, still containing a majority of those who did not receive notices, showing that even if Trader Joe’s pretends that they “misunderstood the legal definition of the notification area”, they apparently made no particular effort to inform anyone.

I received one of the only two notices known to have been received by anyone (apparently due to a mistake on Trader Joe’s part!) Had I not received the notice, there was an extreme likelihood that nobody would ever have known that Trader Joe’s had ignored and aborted their legal requirements to obtain their liquor license -- including the posting of a public notice, which is posted (unlawfully) where you can read it if you’re willing to stand in an active traffic lane to do so!

The lesson? We need Citizens to return to the “perpetual vigilance” through which we protect our democracy and society lest the careless, the heedless and the lawless catch us napping.

 Eric Dynamic
 Berkeley

Our Marines: Ridden Hard & Put Away Wet

Jane Stillwater  jствуilde.blogspot.com
Sun May 16 18:49:00 -0700 2010

Now here’s a touchy subject -- recently there’s been spate of suicides by Marines who have just returned home from Iraq and Afghanistan. But here’s the really touchy part: These suicides have all taken place on stateside Marine bases. One Marine recently escaped from a hospital at Camp Lejeune, got hold of a gun somehow and shot himself right there on the base. And another Marine at Quantico jumped in front of a train.

However, the Marine high command at these bases is fully aware of this problem and is doing something about it. According to one official Marine publication, “Suicide is the second leading cause of death in the Marine Corps. Even one death by suicide is too many. It is a tragic and preventable loss, causing untold grief to loved ones and units,
and is of highest concern to the public, legislators, the Commandant, and all Marines. In addition, suicide and suicidal behavior at all levels can take a tremendous toll on the readiness and resources of the unit involved. For all these reasons, suicide awareness, prevention, and intervention must be of highest priority to all Marines, and especially Marine leaders.” Returning troops at the major stateside Marine bases are now being routinely shown training films and PowerPoint presentations regarding how to deal with suicidal tenancies -- but still. You gotta be pretty damn desperate to jump in front of a train. How many more of our Marines are that desperate? And if so, how did they get that way?

Here’s my personal opinion, based on time spent in Iraq embedded with the Marines. I may be wrong about this, but here it is. “American Marines compose the finest fighting force EVER. Forget about Romans and Spartans. Our guys are the best.” So what happened? Why all the suicides? “Because our Marines are being stretched far too thin. American Marines are being asked to defend the interests of an international corporate structure that has its octopus-like tentacles spread out all over the entire globe. That’s far too much territory to expect even our fabulous Marines to defend.”

But what inflames me even more is that the international corporate structures that our Marines are so gallantly defending aren’t even American corporations! Perhaps one day long ago they USED to be American corporations -- but that was back in the days before outsourcing.

Our Marines are being asked to stick their fingers in [dams] all over the world so that wealthy international corporations all over the world can reap the profits. It’s not even Americans who are reaping the profits any more. No wonder our Marines are so stretched. They are daily and constantly fighting the never-ending battles of Endless War so that men who owe NO allegiance to America -- or American workers or American Marines either -- can make grossly disproportional profits off of others’ pain.

Our Marines are being ridden hard and put away wet so that corporations who don’t even pay taxes in America can still have their billionaire bottom lines protected.

And our Marines do this, day after day, year after year, serving hard time in places like Iraq and Afghanistan and Kenya. And WHY do they keep doing it? Because they are Marines -- the best fighting force EVER. And our Marines’ abilities are not only being wasted by being spread too thin throughout the world to the point that when (not if) we will someday need them here at home, there may well be too few of them left to defend America proper and it will be too late.

The international corporations benefit from our Marines’ presence. And the Marine Corps pays the price. And, apparently, individual Marines are paying an even greater price. This fractured practice of using and misusing our Marines has just got to stop.

PS: According to the Jacksonville Daily News, “Camp Lejeune Marines...in the aftermath of the death of a colleague who shot himself during a police chase aboard base Monday said instead of the needed psychiatric treatment they sought they were given a cocktail of antidepressants and sent back to work.” Yes, nine long years of constant war does have a tendency to grind our troops down. Even World War II didn’t last that long.

And we may have unearted just the tip of the iceberg here. According to Jacksonville’s www.jdnews.com, “A total of 48,086 mental health related visits for all Naval Hospital clinics aboard Camp Lejeune were recorded in fiscal year 2009. In fiscal year 2010, there have been 26,609 mental health related visits through March 31, said Lt.j.g. Tony Skrypek, department head for TRI-CARE Operations at Naval Hospital.”

Also, according to Salon magazine, PTSDs may still not be getting properly treated at Camp Lejeune -- despite all the recent PowerPoint presentations going on. “Internal documents and e-mails show that Navy officials unfavorably doctored a psychiatrist’s performance record after he blew the whistle on what he said was dangerously inept management of care for Marines suffering combat stress at Camp Lejeune, N.C.”

PSS: And here’s a quote from my usually reliable Marine Mom source: “I’ve heard several Marines say that Afghanistan is the ‘Worst place on earth’. So instead of sending our Marines out to fight in the countryside over there, let’s start sending out the Afghan Army and Afghan police troops that we have been training for approximately 10 years -- and leave the U.S. troops back on base.”

Marine Mom also sent me this vid about the recent Nashville flood disaster: “Shouldn’t some of our money have gone to help Nashville -- instead of pouring billions into Afghanistan?”

PPPS: The Marines aren’t the only ones being ridden hard and put away wet. The American people are too. While corporate lobbyist are happily siphoning America’s wealth off in order to protect their own interests, we could have used all that money on preventive infrastructure measures back here at home, so that the Nashville flood could have been prevented -- not to mention the Ohio flood and Katrina.

**Measure C-3rd grade math doesn’t add up for this bond measure**

*By Justin Lee*

*Mon May 17 14:42:00 -0700 2010*

After getting the pro-Measure C flyer (I use the pools and would gladly pay for them if it’s presented correctly) I came up with this:

- there are 45000 households
- each household would pay on average 70 dollars according to flyer literature.

- 45,000 households times 70 times 30 years=94,500,000 million dollars TOTAL for principle and the bond “loan”
- The renovations are slated to cost about 25 million for all 4 pools. That’s to fix them
- The pool maintenance is slated to be just under a million a year (that’s the city’s numbers)
- At worst that’s 30,000,000 over 30 years for running the pools. A million a year seems reasonable.
- 30 mill + 25 mill=55 million total maintenance for 30 years plus 25 for renovation capital costs.
- Why is the City paying 40 million in INTEREST payments. Who gets that?
- We are paying @1.3 million in interest a year!

Now, the proper way to float this bond is ask for 25 million in bonds to the building costs as we need that now. Like a new roof, the city needs up front construction funds.

-Next tax households in perpetuity for the maintenance.
- Why are we bonding 30 million in salaries and maintenance costs. What happens after 30 years? Another bond measure to borrow. This is called rolling debt.
- The pool looks like it is costing near 40 million a year.
- Why is the City paying 40 million in interest for running the pools. A million a year seems reasonable.

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Now, the proper way to float this bond is ask for 25 million in bonds to the building costs as we need that now. Like a new roof, the city needs up front construction funds.

-Next tax households in perpetuity for the maintenance.
- Why are we bonding 30 million in salaries and maintenance costs. What happens after 30 years? Another bond measure to borrow. This is called rolling debt.
- The pool looks like it is costing near double the real costs because the politicians think that debt and bonds and credit are free. But that 40 million could be used for libraries and other things. The costs of running these facilities are doubling because the city has to go to the piggy trough and beg corrupt banks for a loan when it’s not a capital improvement cost it’s an ONGOING expense. This is flat out cowardice on the mayor and board’s part.
-Where did the bid for 25 million come from? A home pool averages $60,000 to build-heated and all. Berkeley pools are not Olympic pools, so where does $5 million a pool come from? Renovations to pools and houses seem really, really steep to me.

-If pool are so integral to the fabric of the City, then it’s time to ask that the cost of running pools comes as a tax in perpetuity. Making it part of a 30 year bond measure does not make this cheaper. In the end it costs us near double because we are borrowing instead of taxing. Berkeley has proven to be quite generous when the taxes are used for the intended purpose.

What I fear is that the City will get 100 million in bond money upfront to plug up holes in the City’s 11 million annual deficit(pension obligations, entitlements and salaries) and it will renege on much of the pool-allocated money in the near future and ask for more. It’s a kick-the-can-down-the-alley approach. I see Mayor Bates and the Council praying the big bond check carries the city far enough into the future where there is a Goldilocks economy and higher revenues. Counting on that and fighting a debt burden with more debt burden sounds like a strategy right out of Greece’s playbook.

-Justin Lee

**Berkeley Iceland - A Plan for Creative Reuse**

*By Tom Killilea  
Mon May 17 15:40:00 -0700 2010*

Imagine Berkeley Iceland reopened with new skating facilities, expanded community spaces, and a new café. All filled with kids of all ages. Envision the Berkeley Iceland building widened with a new community housing development designed to enhance the landmark deco look and respect the neighborhood’s character. This is the plan which is the basis of an offer made in recent months to purchase Berkeley Iceland and create a lasting legacy much as as the original design did for over 65 years. This plan provides the vision for a sustainable mixed use complex which the entire Berkeley community can support.

It is a vision which addresses many City of Berkeley needs and the goals of many in the community:

- Restoration of a cherished and needed community recreation center based on the historic Berkeley Iceland rink.
- Creative reuse of a landmark which provides housing in an elegant design.
- Expanded facilities for larger community events and meetings.
- Extensive use of green technologies to reduce the energy requirements and carbon footprint of the entire site.

The concept was designed by Harrison Fraker, an award winning architect, former dean of UC’s College of Environmental Design, and Berkeley Iceland supporter. Working with a well known San Francisco developer who is experienced in creative reuse of landmark structures, a plan was created which was the basis for an offer to purchase Berkeley Iceland.

Under the concept plan, there would be two primary developments on the site - renovation and upgrade of the rink, and extension of the North and South wings for two-level housing structures. The new community housing will be made up of two-story one bedroom units grouped in mews with 20 foot central courtyards. Multiple mews sections will be built into the expanded sections to provide scores of new rentals. The overall design will be no higher than the current wings, maintain the facade of the historic structure, and provide the tenants with privacy. A really cool, livable housing development which maintains the character of the neighborhood.

Berkeley Iceland will be restored with a new, energy efficient ice chiller designed specifically for the rink. Heat produced making the ice surface will be recycled for heating needs in the development, including the new locker rooms. The front of the site will be redesigned to create larger common area by expanding the warm area closer to the ice surface and opening up the lobby area so the magnificent view of the arena is no longer hidden. This will give Berkeley a new option for holding major events and meetings. With new energy saving windows, skaters will experience skating in natural light, further reducing the energy needs of the restored community center.

In addition to the use of recycled heat and natural lighting, the substantial roof area will be covered with photo-voltaic panels. By one estimate, the roof space could provide more than 80% of the energy needs of the community center. With environmentally sound construction practices, recycling of materials from the development, and reuse of an existing building, the entire project has the goal of a zero carbon footprint from construction to operation.

This is an opportunity for realizing a real win for the community. The owners would get a fair price for the property. Berkeley would get needed housing units in a creatively designed, low profile development that reflects the landmark structure and fits in with the neighborhood. Berkeley also regains a missing piece of its character, Berkeley Iceland, restored and improved where the community can once again gather in a healthy and active recreation facility in support of the City’s goal to create a healthy community for all ages, kids through adults. Combine these with the green initiatives, this plan is a tribute to Berkeley that would be a model for the world on the creative preservation of historic community treasure. I hope that the Mayor, City Council, and members of our community will get behind this plan and encourage a future that benefits all of Berkeley.

Full disclosure, some members of SBI have been working with one of the parties though SBI itself is NOT involved in the offers or decisions regarding possible offers. We continue to work to the goal of reopening a revitalized community center based around the historic ice rink and will work with anyone to gain that core goal.

**The Boy Scouts: A Pact With the Devil**

*by Harry Brill  
Thu May 13 22:32:00 -0700 2010*

Both the wireless corporations and the federal government have hidden from the public the substantial number of studies that reveal a cause and effect relationship between cell phone sites -- towers, antennas, and other equipment -- and their adverse health effects, including cancer. In fact, in some instances, discomforting symptoms appear shortly after exposure as well as in the long run. Nor is the public warned that children are especially vulnerable, with twice the leukemia rates for those residing near cell towers compared to children who live further away. Nevertheless, despite the corporate denial of the harm done, a growing number of communities have been catching on.

An El Cerrito community is attempting to prevent a 77 foot tower from being installed in a boy scout camp that is located next to a residential neighborhood and a beautiful park heavily used by children and adults. The community’s problem is that it is battling two goliaths; the Mt. Diablo Silverado Council of the Boy Scouts of America and T-Mobile. T-Mobile, which is a giant German based multinational corporation, that offered the Council $2200 per month for the right to build the tower. The Mt. Diablo
Council, which is an umbrella organization serving over 22,000 youth in several east bay counties, agreed to the deal. 

From the perspective of the community, it is a pact made in hell. The Boy Scout facility, Camp Herm, would be funded at the expense of community residents. The life span of many residents would be threatened, family life could be disrupted, and property values would decline along with the quality of life. For Mt. Diablo Silverado Council and T-Mobile, it is business without morality.

Those who have been involved in this bitter struggle have learned firsthand how the highly moralistic rhetoric of the boy scout decision makers is light years ahead of its deeds. The Club claims its mission is to prepare young people to make “ethical and moral choices over their lifetimes”. Scouts are expected “to HELP other people at all times”. But in reality, its decision to allow the tower will instead HURT other people at all times.

In fact, the Mt. Diablo Council signed the contract with T-Mobile without adequately consulting and meeting with the community. The community has asked for meetings for the purpose of exploring alternatives to the tower that would serve the interests of both the Scouts and community. Although the task of persuading the scouts may be difficult, many contracts are rescinded without legal challenges. But the Mt. Diablo Council has refused to meet and discuss the issues with those who will be impacted. So the real and awful lesson the boy scouts have learned so far is that the commitment to be respectful is worth suspending if the price is right.

The Scouts have claimed that the research doesn’t prove that there is any serious threat to residents. Yet believe it or not, T-Mobile is aware of the health risks. The company had some years earlier retained a highly rated independent research institute to evaluate the possible impact of electromagnetic emissions to electromagnetic field with frequencies that already knows from the research it commissioned that electromagnetic admissions is carcinogenic. Before it is too late, the Mt. Diablo Council should instead reflect a very different kind of ethic for the young people it serves. It should cease saying one thing and practicing another. In short, the Council should rescind its decision to sell its soul to the devil.

Response to Prof. Kondolf on BRT

By Roy Nakadegawa
Thu May 13 23:03:00 -0700 2010

Matt Kondolf, a professor who teaches environmental sciences, wrote an opinion piece in a recent Daily Planet which shows that, though he may be an expert on hydrology and river restoration, he obviously does not have transportation expertise. Prof. Kondolf makes numerous distorted claims and facts.

He states that the successful BRT systems of South America are grade separated from traffic.

This is not true. I have visited Curitiba and several other BRTs in Brazil, examined their system and spoken with their staff, and I can assure you that they are not grade separated. Curitiba’s renown BRT and integrated land development have increased transit use and helped promote overall prosperity. Along with increase in income, automobile ownership has increased in Curitiba to about the highest per capita in Brazil, but transit ridership has also increased.

Kondolf also claims that BART already serves the natural market for BRT. This is also not true. BART is primarily for longer distance travel, and BRT would be for more local travel. Can you conveniently get from Berkeley to the various hospitals i.e. “Pill Hill” or Kaiser using BART, or to many local businesses, schools and parks? BART serves a very limited portion of these local destinations. The proposed BRT route serves the greatest number of these destinations within a half mile of any transit line in the East Bay. That is why the BRT is estimated to carry over 40,000 trips per day.

Kondolf claims that the DEIR concluded that the proposed BRT might increase net transit ridership by only about 1.5%. This percentage is probably comparing the increase in transit ridership of BRT to AC’s entire system. His saying we should not build BRT because it would increase AC entire transit ridership only 1.5% is like saying we should not insulate houses in Berkeley because it would reduce energy used in heating in the entire East Bay by only 1.5%. The relevant comparison regarding the BRT is not to the entire AC’s ridership, but a comparison of the no-build alternative to the BRT Alternatives. The purported figures Kondolf used referred to Table (p3-28) of the DEIR, actually shows a considerable increase of 50-76%, whereas, there is no mention of the numbers Kondolf stated.

The current 1R express bus provides poor service because it is often delayed by traffic. Though it should operate at 12 minute intervals, you often see two 1R buses entering downtown Berkeley in tandem or a few minutes apart, so riders often need wait over 20 minutes to use the 1R.

Though the 1R has signal priority, the bus is often unable to clear the intersection in the short time signal time the priority provides before the light changes because it is in among a queued line of vehicles. As traffic increases, this problem will worsen.

Regards to greenhouse gas emissions, the DEIR Kondolf cites (P4-152) only shows the fuel and BTU consumption which translating to emissions per bus mile. It did not consider the additional passengers the various alternatives will carry or the overall future land use pattern that is promoted by BRT. APTA’s recent climate change recommendations, the FTA’s Climate Change Report of April, 2010, and the ICFI’s report “Reducing GHG Emissions with Transit” all consider these land use effects and all conclude BRT reduces GHG emissions.

Most people do not know that heavily used commuter bus lines, like Greyhound intercity buses have very low GHG emissions.
per passenger mile, as low as heavy rail like BART or LRT according to the “Transportation Energy Book” published by US Dept. of Energy. Because the BRT would attract and increase in riders per bus, the BRT will also lower emissions per passenger mile over current operation. Also with higher ridership and speed, the cost per passenger mile would also decrease, allowing AC Transit to provide more transit service with the limited funds it has for operation.

Roy Nakadegawa P.E.

_Lived in Berkeley over 60 years, served as a publicly elected AC Transit and BART Director 32 years, a life member of Institute of Transportation Engineers, served 20 years on Committees of TRB (A branch of Academy of Sciences), served on an oversight committee overseeing 4 Transit Cooperative Research Publication and have traveled extensively examining various modes of transit including Curitiba, Brazil’s renowned BRT as well as several other BRTs from 5 trips to Japan, 6 trips to Europe._

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**Point Molate Extension on Richmond Council Agenda Tuesday**

_Councilmember Tom Butt

Sun May 16 21:27:00 -0700 2010_

This coming Tuesday, May 18, 2010, may be the most important date for the future of Point Molate since November 9, 2004 (See _Point Molate is a Go_, November 10, 2004). The City Council will vote on an agenda item placed by Nat Bates to extend the Upstream Point Molate Land Development Agreement (LDA) another two months from May 20 to July 20.

The 5-year LDA initially expired on January 25, 2010, but was extended the first time until March 20, 2010. I did not vote for the first extension, but I both agendized and voted for two subsequent extensions, first to April 20 and then to May 20, because Upstream Point Molate had responded favorably to a number of issues I had with the LDA.

That response seems to have lost momentum, and I am not inclined to continue to support the LDA. There remain three stalwart supporters, Nat Bates, Jim Rogers and Ludmyrna Lopez. Maria Viramontes supported the first extension but voted against the next two. It appears that she is now the deciding vote on a fourth extension. Her vote will either terminate the LDA or extend it until July.

Even if the LDA is terminated, there remains the issue of a “tolling agreement,” whereby the second amendment to the LDA provides for an extension of the closing date in case of a legal challenge. A legal challenge in the form of a lawsuit brought by Citizens for East Shore Parks is the catalyst that may automatically extend the LDA whether the Richmond City Council wants to or not. In a counterintuitive irony, it may be a host of high profile environmental organizations, including the Sierra Club, that end up keeping the casino project alive because of their avarice for millions of dollars in settlement dollars to eventually purchase the North Richmond Shoreline. There are legal disagreements among several aparties as to whether the CESP lawsuit triggers the tolling agreement.

There are other subplots that may play out at next Tuesday’s Richmond City Council meeting. Upstream Point Molate, LLC, continues to maintain that the LDA constitutes an exclusive right for the sale of Point Molate, but the California attorney general disagrees. Mayor McLaughlin is testing legally dangerous waters by agendizing a discussion of alternate futures for Point Molate (DISCUSS the rights of the city to explore various development alternatives (apart from the Upstream proposal) for the Point Molate site and direct staff, in light of continuing controversy and legal complications that could well defeat the Upstream proposal, or entangle the city in litigation for years to come, to receive ideas and suggestions for alternative plans so that the city may weigh the relative costs and benefits and responsibly rise from this economic downturn - Mayor’s Office (Mayor McLaughlin 620-6503).

In any event, May 18 promises to be an exciting meeting.

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**White BHS Jazz on 4th St. Fundraiser**

_By Steve Logan

Mon May 17 20:58:00 -0700 2010_

The pros brought to bring in the crowds and supposedly to help a diverse and open music program at Berkeley High School were fabulous. The Jazz Mafia, Zakiya Hooker (John Lee Hooker’s daughter) and her blues band, and a wonderful samba band “Fito Reinoso” made for a great day of music.

Fourth St. is well known for pricey, trendy upper-mid.class airs, and the businesses did well... See more today.

Who owns these stores? There was a lot of money coming out of folks’ pockets, and most people enjoyed the thought of aiding the music program. Well, the B.H.S. Jazz was great, but I had to STRUGGLE to spot ANY person of color.

I saw a super drummer, rotated in during the final Ensemble performance, who proceeded to steal the whole show with his amazing abilities. WHAT’S HAPPENING?

I know music and arts programs are the first to go in public schools when dollars are tight. It was plain to see pigment-deprived people SOMEHOW manage to still pursue Jazz. They spoke of trips to compete with other Jazz bands, and boasted of the Ivy League Colleges their members were headed to. Hmmm, seems if funds are tight, the funds available should be used to ensure the well of talent the B.H.S. Jazz Program draws from is more inclusive of its deserving and obviously missing pigment-enriched population.

I’m certain all the young musicians are hardworking, and deserve their well earned recognition, but I felt deceived. I purchased raffle tickets; food and beverages were readily available. I listened to mostly people of color-Latino and Black pros, who may have thought twice about donating their time, had they known of this “Elephant In The Living Room”. If they WERE paid, by who?

Yes, I got spectacular pictures today, but I don’t much feel like posting them right now. Oh, there WAS a female saxophonist. Some people will be angry at my words, and suggest Black Musicians have abandoned Jazz, to pursue Hip Hop and Rap. THIS IS A LIE! Blues is well known to be an African American music style, born the day slavery ended, no longer just a soothing remedy to ease bondage.

Influences of Creole, Cuban, Caribbean and European can be traced, of course, but its origin can’t be denied. Jazz is refined Blues, and then we have Gospel, Rock, Soul, Pop etc. None of which would exist as we know it today without The Blues.

To imply young people of color are disinterested in Jazz is an ignorant and poor explanation for their absence in the B.H.S.Jazz Program, and just because they have additional and NEW forms of expression doesn’t excuse anything, and actually, only underlines the creative potential available. People will say “why is it always about race?”. Well, living in Berkeley, including having been bused in the 6th grade, taught me our world has many folks of color, who are a large part of our community. Their
contributions are precious, and we must ensure opportunities to participate in Jazz at B.H.S are readily available.

I had fun today, but when I got home, and started thinking, I got this sickening feeling, and felt ashamed of being a Berkeleyan, participating in this bullshit fund raizer for an obviously privileged, exclusive group that just happened to also make a lot of money for what I suspect to be primarily White, yes, I said it, White owned businesses.

It makes me want to puke, watching them perform genius compositions by the likes of Charles Mingus, an African American musical phenomenon, who underwent electroshock treatments, and died isolated and misunderstood.

We need to fix this. I will continue to express my opinions of what I saw. We, the Berkeley Community, must not allow such blatant discrimination to go on in our public school s ystem. Shame on you.

BRT, Activism, Densification, and Quality of Life

By Joseph Stubbs
Mon May 17 22:05:00 -0700 2010

The relationship between the recently defeated Bus Rapid Transit proposal (in Berkeley) and densification of our neighborhoods has ramifications which will continue to come up again and again, and it is vitally important that we look at these issues.

Everybody knows that the more people you can deposit into a given space, the more revenue stream can be generated from that space. That revenue goes to three places. First it goes to the owner of the property, who is often also the developer. Second it goes to the bank which gave the developer or owner a loan to build/buy the property and is also collecting interest on that loan. Third it goes to the city which hosts the property, in the form of property taxes, permit fees, etc. So if a city is fiscally distressed, then encouraging new and higher density development is one thing they can do to try and help their situation.

The problem comes in when we start to consider how higher density living situations affect the quality of life for people living in them. Although Smart Growth models focus on how to make such things work as efficiently as they can, they cannot ameliorate the fact that with people’s earning ability (or self-sufficiency quotient) held as an unchanging variable, increasing density in an already dense urban environment decreases quality of life proportionately. The specific reasons for this can be found within common wisdom, but also in specific studies. Some references would include: Quality of Life in a City: The Effect of Population Density, a Nederland study by Victoria Cramer et al, and In Growth We Trust: Sprawl, Smart Growth and Rapid Population Growth by Edwin Stennett. One example of an impact, explored by French sociologist Emile Durkheim, is an inverse relationship between population density and personal freedom. This applies most to those living directly in high density buildings and can bee seen consistently in regulations which reduce one’s freedoms in the commons to the lowest common denominator of what is acceptable to all. There are numerous other factors as well which kick in for all as our personal spaces close in on each other.

These are opposing motivators (revenue stream issues and quality of life issues) and they set up the likelihood of a conflict of incentivization between communities of people living in neighborhoods and the city governments who are supposed to be looking out for their interests. If a community is particularly atomized, then little can be done to resist densification from going forward. But if a neighborhood has some cohesiveness in the form of neighborhood associations or other groups, then it will tend to resist densification, sometimes effectively.

It is important to realize that regional planning associations, such as ABAG, formulate their recommendations on how much we should expect to grow on population and growth predictions which are regional in nature. Such recommendations do not always take into account the particular local conditions which define the nature of a particular community, and likewise do not necessarily take into account specific factors which have different impacts on different localities. In Berkeley, for example, much public notice has gone into the fact that although regional population has increased in the last decades, Berkeley’s population has remained relatively constant. Comparison with a commuter city on the Bay Area margin, such as Antioch, would reveal an entirely different situation, based on different factors which exist there. This is not to say that Berkeley government today employs a policy that resists densification, but it should suggest that the density growth in a particular locality can be regulated according to what a city deems its reasonable carrying capacity to be.

Another potential problem introduces itself when higher powers recommend that we increase our density based on regional projections. Since development interest, which includes the University of California Berkeley, is largely based on principles of expansion, it is easy to conceal responsibility for a motivation to increase density on recommendations or so called “mandates” which come to us from regional planning bodies. This can conceal the degree to which an actual “need” for densification may be based more on the desires of local stakeholders as distinct from needs which really do reflect the public interest as a whole. This potential confusion is just complicated enough to rightly baffle average people who live in affected neighborhoods when it comes to establishing policy. But when a specific project threatens to intrude on their way of life, people will generally get the message. In addition to serving as intentional or unintended fronts for these stakeholders, the problem with Smart Growth ideologues is that they just can’t wait to impose their new high density models on communities, even before such a thing may be actually needed. This then causes the problem that densification occurs faster than it otherwise would have under the principle that ‘if you build it, they will come.’ You create the infrastructure receptacle for increased density, and end up creating the density you are claiming to mitigate.

The recent struggle around Bus Rapid Transit in Berkeley is an example of this principle in action. The principle is well illustrated in the fact that the “need” for such a BRT system in Berkeley has been promoted, not based on current demand for bus service, but on projected future demand for bus service. This is one important reason that BRT with dedicated lanes on Telegraph was able to be defeated at this point in time, even though it was quite a battle. But it is extremely important to realize that all the people who have fought so hard against this, and under a shadow of ideological rhetoric and elite consensus which was driving this project, have been fighting for more than issues revolving around bus service and traffic congestion. These people, knowing or not, have been defending our very quality of life based on the stone cold reality of what densification means for us. The BRT full build proposal carried within itself triggers for allowing new developmental incentives which were more enormous than most people realize. Suffice it to say here that the demeanor of Telegraph would have been incentivized towards dramatic changes in the coming decades: much taller, denser and with less protection for historic resources. The umbrella term under which all of these changes are officially founded is the Major Transportation Corridor, an important plan-
The US Army is working hard to give Afghanistan an army of its own, a police force of its own, and facilities for the Army and police to work and live out of. If we are successful, Afghanistan will someday be able to police its own borders and towns, and to protect its own government and country. This would be a good thing for Afghanistan, but it would not really change this country - Afghanistan would always need more police and more soldiers and more US money to pay for them. Real change will come when the reasons this country needs a bigger police force and a bigger army are corrected.

Afghanistan is a very old country. Its history is long - more than 3000 years. But Afghanistan has not grown as a country for a very long time. Many other countries have invaded it, and many countries have kept it weak. The fighting amongst the Afghan tribes has also kept the country weak and cut off from the World. In many ways, life in Afghanistan today is much like life in Europe before 1500 a.d., before the Renaissance Era.

To be successful in today’s world, the country of Afghanistan must become a member of the world community of nations in a way that it has never been able to. When Afghanistan is strong enough to trade its goods and services in the world economy, when Afghanistan can send its students abroad to study, when Afghanistan can participate in the international debates then will Afghanistan be strong enough to take care of its borders and government. One of the ways in which the people of Afghanistan could become so strong is by learning English. Our language is the language of business, of international education, of the internet. By giving these people the tools to learn English, you can help them become members of the world community.

What I would ask of you is this:

1. Find the books in your homes that you read when you were younger, even the one-word-per-picture books. Find the books you learned to read with. Find the books that your family is done with. Please do not buy new books. New books in a mud and straw hut do not stay new for long.

2. Package the books in Post Office flat-rate shipping boxes. Books that don’t fit these standard boxes should stay in California. Shipping in non-standard boxes will significantly increase the cost of this program.

3. Please add notes, pictures, letters that you would like me to share with the children of Afghanistan. Please do not put addresses or phone numbers in your letters. Let them know how you see the world, how you feel about school, what you do on weekends, what you do at church or Scouts. Share the ideas that make you “American.”

4. Send the books to me at this address:
   Don Davis
   USACE Area Office
   Camp Stone
   APOAE-09354

When the books arrive, we will get them to kids and schools in the rural communities throughout the Harat, Farah, Ghor, and Badghis Provinces where we are working. Real kids will have real books from which they can begin to piece together the English language. These kids may get to study English in their schools and homes, they will use English on the internet, and they will conduct business in English as adults. Every child we help to become a successful adult with hope for the future is one less angry adult we will have to fight in the years to come. We can make America stronger by sharing our language with these people.

Lt. Colonel Donald Karl Davis is a graduate of Berkeley High School who is in Afghanistan with the US Army Engineer Corps. He is the Officer in Charge of the Harat Area Office. This letter was originally addressed to Los Altos Girl Scouts who had sent cookies to the troops there.

Letters to The Editor

Sun May 16 22:33:00 -0700 2010

Home Services Crucial;
Gulf Disaster;
A 50th Anniversary at the Newman Center;
Don’t be Fooled by PG&E;
Clean Up, BP; Gulf Disaster;
Oil Takeover;
Tea Party;
Greed and Oil;
End Political Parties;
BRT Proponents Have Their Facts Wrong;
Gestapo Epithets;
Action Alert: Sleep-Out Protesting Schwarzenegger’s Deadly Cuts;
Radical Republicans Doomed;
Zionism;
Local Likudnik Nutcases & Group Generalizations;
More about Israel;
Stop the Dirty Energy Proposition;
PG&E Smart Meters
Home Services Crucial
As part of his budget plan, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed eliminating In-Home Supportive Services, the state’s fastest growing social services program, which pays caregivers to help the disabled and the frail elderly. Nearly half a million disabled Californians get subsidized home care.

Without the services, many current clients would be forced to move to skilled-nursing centers that accept Medi-Cal patients. At an average expense of $55,000 a year, nursing homes cost five times as much per person as an In-Home Supportive Services client. The number of skilled-nursing center beds has dwindled through the years as the service’s success has grown at helping the elderly continue living independently.

I was thinking about California being on the brink and going bankrupt. They can’t go on robbing the poor and helping the rich, and get away with it. And that’s exactly what this California economy has been doing for years. California kept borrowing money and selling bonds, then borrowing more money and all that kind of stuff.

Well, people will trust you so long, and then they quit trusting your ability to ever pay it back. So if you keep living on borrowed money, there comes a day when you have to pay it back when those bonds begin to come due. So we’ve been robbing the poor.

Well that’s what happened to California. It’s been going on for years and now California is $20 billion in debt and going up

TED RUDOW III, MA

Gulf Disaster
What a heartbreak for the gulf coast region to have yet another man made disaster hit gain. I ask you all to respond to this catastrophe with urgent courage and both face and tell the truths that business as usual is not working and more of the same kind of energy extraction coupled with the too big to fail apparatus built to support this ongoing madness is leaving in it’s wake death, destruction and misery.

Please think about the definition of insanity which is doing the same thing over and over again but expecting a different outcome.

Tzenia Bell

A 50th Anniversary at the Newman Center
To state that at 10 a.m. mass this past Sunday, May 16th at Newman Hall, “the joint was jumping” is hardly an appropriate way to describe the normally reverent atmosphere of this Holy Spirit chapel. But this was no ordinary Sunday! No indeed, it was a celebration of Father Al Moser’s 50th anniversary as a Paulist priest. Not surprisingly, the church was jam-packed, attesting to the popularity of this gentle, unassuming man.

As he walked down the aisle, followed by several clergy members, there was a five minute ovation followed by thunderous applause. Father Al appeared overcome as he stood at the altar, looking out at the huge crowd, and observing the large number of past and present clergy, seated to his right. Mastering his astonishment, he introduced his fellow priests, including Father Bernard Campbell, pastor and a student minister.

He then introduced relatives who had come out from Dayton, Ohio for this memorable occasion. Mass was then celebrated with stirring music provided by the choir under the direction of Colleen Lenord, Music and Liturgy Director.

A very modest man, Al felt called upon to give a brief summary of his life before coming to Newman. So we learned that from 1943 to 1945, he served with the U.S. Army in the Infantry Division. Next, on a G.I. bill, he earned a degree in English from Xavier University in 1950. He then went to Fordham University. He later studied Latin and Theology at St. Paul’s College in Washington, D.C. and was ordained by Cardinal Spellman.

Following Mass, there was a joyous reception in the upstairs Court Yard, with balloons, small children, refreshments and long lines of people waiting to offer their congratulations to the guest of honor who was obviously still dazed at so much attention.

In 1982, Father Al was sent to Newman Hall and has since spent more than half his priesthood in Berkeley. A familiar figure to people entering the church, he greets parishioners with a smile and warm handshake. How lucky we at Newman and Berkeley are to have this dear, dear man!

Dorothy Snodgrass

Don’t be Fooled by PG&E
Please don’t be fooled by PG&E’s Prop 16 ads calling it a “right to vote” act. PG&E funded this initiative to amend the State Constitution for the benefit of their monopoly? Their motivation is not altruistic. Consider why they are spending $35 million of our ratepayer money to fund it.

PG&E is falling behind in meeting state adopted goals for clean energy, and they want to stop competitors from doing a better job. To really appreciate how egregious this misuse of our initiative process is, read the letter to PG&E’s CEO from eight of our legislators asking them to stop promoting Prop 16 in the public interest (http://nopp16.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/05-Steinberg_a_Darbee.pdf).

Linda Phillips Blue

Clean Up, BP
I expect for BP all others involved in the Gulf Oil Spill to be held accountable for every dime of clean-up and necessary protection to the environment IF IT TAKES EVERY PENNY THEY HAVE OR EVER WILL MAKE! These off-shore rigs are like 3 Mile Island, a disaster just waiting to happen. It should NEVER be allowed to happen again off our shores. I’m tired of huge corporations doing whatever they want with no regulating. NO MORE DEEP WATER DRILLING!!

Barry Wolfe

Oil Takeover
Regarding the devastating oil take-over of the Gulf of Mexico and probably the Atlantic coastal waters, I have read comments made by many intelligent, aware, concerned Americans. In my attempt to write my own comment, I realized that those to whom these comments are addressed ARE NOT LISTENING.

Therefore, what we are most likely leading up to in this country of educated, aware, intelligent and sincerely concerned individuals [being threatened by the greed of corporate profit-driven GREED]...is REVOLUTION. Yes, revolution, as we cannot and will not allow this insanity to continue indefinitely.

If you continue to NOT LISTEN to us, [we who are paying your way with our blood, sweat and tears], there will, sooner or later, be a REVOLT.

And know this: That your illicit wealth and power will not protect you from the devastation that your illicit decisions and practices would eventually wreak - if we did not revolt against your insanity.

Caroline Attri

Tea Party
Letters from Tea Party patriots are all
pretty much the same. Most letters from Tea partiers sound like Glen Beck, Fox News and Rush Limbaugh regurgitation. They use the same worn out sound bites. The Tea Party movement has a disconnect with reality or they don’t stray far from Fox News.

Case in point: The U.S. economy is on the verge of collapse, going down the tubes. Just the opposite is the truth. Business is picking up, Obama’s stimulus plan is working, GM has already paid its Bailout money back five years early and last month saw a major jump in job numbers.

Tea Party activists throw in the obligatory “loss of liberties” to prove their upside-down worldview. What loss of liberties are they talking about? Tea Partiers can still write their irreconcilable tripe in any newspaper in America.

Glen Beck, Rush Limbaugh and Sarah Palin are still making scads of money and spewing out their nonsensical drivel. I continually pushed the limits and still have the same liberties I had 20 years ago.

Tea Party regulars talk about legislative gridlock: They should know, being a wing of the GOP, the perennial party of gridlock and obstruction.

And these Jonny-come-latelys’ rant “we want our country back”. What, so they can give the country back to the Bush-Cheney crowd. I’m sorry, but what a joke these Tea partiers are.

Ron Lowe

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Greed and Oil

COME ON! What is it going to take to make you see that this greed is shortsighted and misguided! We need to get off oil dependency and onto environmentally safe sources of energy. It is corporate greed that keeps this from happening. Don’t the people who work in these companies have children? If they do, what kind of life do they want for them? What kind of future? ????

Arlene Shmaef

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End Political Parties

I am ready for the end of political parties in California, aren’t you? I don’t have to REGISTER AND VOTE to know that our state is in good hands, with NO pesky independent candidates ON the ballot. PROP 14 will let us choose amongst the two most well-funded candidates in the fall. They have my interests at heart, and yours too, right?

And why should LAURA WELLS be running FOR GOVERNOR? She’s not an insider! She’s not a millionaire corporate executive, or a movie star, either. She’s a GREEN PARTY member, running in this June’s PRIMARY ELECTION. Her thinking makes her different from other candidates. If you go to laurawells.org you may be shocked by what she’s talking about and who has endorsed her.

Leslie Dinkin

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BRT Proponents Have Their Facts Wrong

Maybe Mark Twain didn’t make the famous comment about lies (“lies, damned lies, and statistics”) but he should have. AC Transit has used statistics and omission of relevant details to obfuscate the facts about their BRT proposal, apparently confusing some well-meaning environmentally-friendly citizens. So I suggest that Mr. Nakadegawa (author of a recent Berkeley Daily Planet Opinion piece) and other BRT proponents forget statistics and look at the raw numbers in the BRT Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

On the very first page of the DEIR, the Abstract, it states that the difference in transit trips per day between the most successful BRT build alternative and the “no-build” alternative is 9,320 transit trips per day. This number is repeated in the chart on pages 3-28. You may argue with the methodology of the people who created this projection if you like but this, like it or not, was their projection.

Leave percentages aside and look at these numbers (all from the DEIR):

- 2025 transit trips per day WITHOUT BRT: 659,800
- 2025 transit trips per day WITH BRT: 670,100
- 9,320 additional transit trips per day with BRT

$250 million in construction costs.

Regarding energy savings, on page 4-152 the Draft EIR states that “The energy impacts of the Build Alternatives as compared to the No-Build Alternative would be negligible.”

The DEIR has the following to say about auto and bus emissions: “The increase in bus emissions would be offset by the decrease in emissions from fewer automobiles in the corridor under the Build Alternatives.” (p. 4-135). According to the chart on p. 4-131, levels of pollutants in the East Bay in 2025 will be virtually identical whether or not BRT is built.

To Mr. Nakadegawa and other BRT proponents I ask this question: Are you serious in your contention that this is a cost-effecti-
subsidized housing unit until I begin to rot. Then my neighbors will call for help when the smell interrupts their neighborhood harmony.

Maggie Dee

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Radical Republicans Doomed

“One fifth of the people are against everything all the time” - Robert Kennedy. Republicans of 2010 have put a new spin on this statement. “All” 41 Republicans are against all of President Obama’s domestic proposals all the time with an end game of bringing about Obama’s failure. Doesn’t that mean that America will fail?

Well, it’s not going to happen! Much like President Clinton put Republicans in their place, Obama will do even better and skuttle the Republicans within an inch of their life.

Americans will bury Republicans at the polls if they keep up their “do nothing” thing. America is not a “do nothing” nation. This GOP strategy flies in the face of everything that America stands for.

Who are today’s radicals - The John Boehners’ (R-OH) and Mitch McGonnells’ (R-KY) and Republican naysayers.

Ron Lowe

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Zionism

ms. o’malley, how much i’ve enjoyed seeing your personal failure.

as your reach becomes ever smaller, your anti-zionism grows. how very interesting.

the fact is, the majority of the jewish people, americans in general and most of congress supports israel right to exist as a jewish state with defensible borders.

you live in a bubble, surrounded and supported by a few hundred berkeley nuts. your blind and unfair criticism of israel puts you in the company of the worlds most criminal inhabitants. you can be sure that if the jihadists grown in power with the help of an ira

inhabitants. you can be sure that if the jihad

in the company of the worlds most criminal

blind and unfair criticism of israel puts you

ported by a few hundred berkeley nuts. your

jewish state with defensible borders.

Michael P. Hardesty

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More about Israel

Having read the Daily Planet for years; having closely followed this Middle Eastern discussion; having heard your words over and over, I can only come to one conclusion about you Becky O’Malley.

You are uninformed, reactionary, prejudiced, and slanderous.

The same words you use for respected members of our Jewish community, such as Jim Sinkinson, are words that aptly describe you.

Over the years you published pure junk in your biased newspaper about Israel and the Palestinians from the likes of Berkeley Marxist Mark Sapir, Iranians, Indians, and others with built-in hatred of all that is Jewish or Zionist. In your editorial about FLAME you actually have the temerity to say “An honest look at what the government of Israel is doing”?! What do you think they are doing Becky? How about trying to protect their 5 1/2 million Jews, and 1 1/2 million well-off Palestinian Arabs (yes, Israel is a democracy) from the genocidal wishes of Hamas, Hizbollah, Syria, Iran, and others intent on wiping them from the map.

You talk about evidence for why your publication went broke. You should be us-

ing your precious time instead for evaluating the obvious evidence for Israel’s defensive behavior. It’s everywhere. I do not know one Israel anywhere, or for that matter any Jew, who doesn’t pine for peace in the Middle East. Peace has never been about “settlements”. This is a side issue, a mere distraction, subterfuge. It wasn’t an issue before 1967 when there was no so-called “occupied territory” and it isn’t an issue now. The land for peace tactic hasn’t worked. In fact, it has backfired each time. Just look at Gaza or at southern Lebanon, at the offer to give back the territories in exchange for peace in 1967 which was summarily rejected, and then followed by another Arab-initiated war a few years later.

You want hard facts Becky? Face it, Arabs do not want an Israel in their midst. The Palestinian charter says no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with Israel, no peace with Israel. Israel doesn’t show up on their maps, in their textbooks, or in their dialogue. And your writings over the years have made it clear that you don’t want an Israel too. You do nothing but pick on Israel over and over again, disproportionately and obsessively. That is the only explanation for your heartless and despicable behavior.

You have no idea what Israel is or why it exists. Read up Becky O’Malley. Here’s four books you can start with: Alan Dershowitz: The Case for Israel; Daniel Gerdis: Saving Israel; George Gilder: The Israel Test; Daniel Senor: Start Up Nation.

Barry E. Gustin, MD, MPH, MBA, MA

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Stop the Dirty Energy Proposition

As a resident of Oakland, CA, I am disgusted and saddened that Texas oil giants have succeeded in placing a dirty energy measure on our state ballot. The tragedy unfolding in the Gulf makes it clearer than ever just how costly our dangerous addiction to dirty fossil fuels really is.

Clean energy has been a bright spot in the economy and this deceptive initiative will kill investments and jobs. Not to mention that our dirty air is killing us - the nation’s 10 smoggiest counties are all in California. Following this Gulf oil spill disaster, does California really want to let Texas oil companies destroy our clean energy and clean air laws? I know I don’t.

Thank you for listening,

Devan Williams

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Local Likudnik Nutcases & Group Generalizations

Jonathan Wornick’s letter is pathetic. If the BDP is so irrelevant and has few readers then why does he waste his time writing to it?

What does he have against proper capitalization?

How can there be a “Jewish” state where 25% of the population is Non-Jewish as in Israel? Imagine a Christian or Gentile State here where only 1.58% are Jewish. Your putdown of Sinkinson was awesome. But the Jewish community as an entity isn’t. There are in fact a good many people of the Spitzer mindset here but also a good many (Jews) who don’t share that worldview.

Where I disagree with the BDP is that I believe collective praise of a group is as racist as collective blame. It’s the same mentality of tribal collectivism and though you don’t intend it it comes across as very patronizing and condescending. No group as such has either a good or bad reputation. It all boils down to the individual members and that’s always a mixed bag. This goes contrary to the selective PC condemnation of (some) racism but so what.

Michael P. Hardesty

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Jonathan Wornick is Councilmember Gordon Wozniak’s appointee to the City of Berkeley Peace and Justice Commission.

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Barry E. Gustin, MD, MPH, MBA, MA

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Devan Williams

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As a resident of Oakland, CA, I am disgusted and saddened that Texas oil giants have succeeded in placing a dirty energy measure on our state ballot. The tragedy unfolding in the Gulf makes it clearer than ever just how costly our dangerous addiction to dirty fossil fuels really is.

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Thank you for listening,

Devan Williams

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PG&E Smart Meters

PG&E smart meters may be smart for PG&E, but not for the public.

I feel the same way about PG&E smart meters as I do about electronic voting machines. I do not trust them. Although I live near my polling location I vote by paper absentee ballot. The law and adequately protective software has not kept up with the ever changing technology world and the even more “creative” criminal element that is always a few steps ahead of the law and protections for people.

It is clear that there is ample evidence to indicate that as these meters now stand they are far from fair and accurate. The meter attached to my home has been a stable of reliability for generations, which also allow individuals to audit their own meter and bills for accuracy. It is clearly not farfetched to consider that PG&E could very easily “game” the electronic system to cheat every customer out of just a bit more money by fudging. You know “creatively raise everyone’s rates” just enough to avoid detection. They only have to cheat everyone out of a few cents each month to make millions upon millions and this could so easily go undiscovered.

Nor is it impossible to believe that criminal geeks could enter the system to mess with anyone targeted. I am very much against changing to smart meters until there is much more done to provide guarantees of accuracy and a totally secure system. And a way of course for independent auditors to verify that no cheating is going on.

I do not trust PG&E, the PUC’s ability to protect the public or smart meters on the market today. I urge a halt to the smart meter program. Expedience is not always a good thing. Doing it right is more important. I also have more trust in meter readers who have served utility companies just fine for generations...why take another category of American workers and put them in the unemployment lines just so PG&E can turn an even higher profit?

Carol Gesbeck DeWitt

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Columnists

First Person: Lifestyles of the Mentally Ill

By Jack Bragen

Thu May 13 23:05:00 -0700 2010

Americans are taught to think of mentally ill people as freaks or misfits. Usage of the word, “psychotic,” as a noun to designate a mentally ill person, is widespread. You may not realize that such a usage is hurtful and insulting to people who have to deal with these illnesses on a day-to-day basis. The word “psychotic” in correct English is an adjective that describes some of the symptoms mentally ill people must endure.

The symptoms of a major mental illness, as you might have guessed, are no stroll on the beach. Being medicated is the somewhat lesser of the two evils, the alternative being an uncontrolled disease that sweeps away reason and any type of normality. Medications can reduce the symptoms of a major mental illness so that we can then function in society, (even if forced to be on the fringes of society). In the absence of medication, the symptoms of the illness can induce anastronomical level of suffering and can cause death due to either excessive stress on the body, or because of an incorrect action due to suicidal impulses or due to being delusional.

If mentally ill people seem to behave in a bizarre manner, it may be because of dealing with a major malfunction in the brain. The phenomenon of severe mental illness defies many people’s common sense. When someone has two arms, two legs, eyes, a nose and a mouth, people often expect that they should behave normally. The idea of a brain malfunction causing bizarre, suicidal, or strange behavior goes against how people often perceive people, including themselves. Most people take sane, safe and normal behavior for granted. This expectation contributes to the perception that a mentally ill person is an abnormal person when one is encountered.

The mentally ill man or woman must deal with several types of adversity. Most of society seems to have a negative view of those with mental illness, and this contributes to adverse treatment. Many people believe mentally ill persons lack intelligence. Many people may believe mentally ill persons do not experience pain, suffering and other emotions the same as they. These two perceptions aren’t accurate. The erroneous belief that the mentally ill don’t experience pain often leads to cruel treatment toward the mentally ill by members of the general public or by some caregivers.

Many in the public believe that persons with a mental illness are sick and depraved people. The poor grooming and appearance of many mentally ill people could foster this misconception. (When someone is struggling just to make it through the day, grooming sometimes falls by the wayside.)

While these illnesses can cause some afflicted people to break some laws while in a state of delusion or disorientation, most needn’t be regarded with fear or perceived as criminals. Having a criminal mind is a different category of sickness than the one I am discussing in this paper.

Aside from our “bad rap” with the public, there are several other types of adversity that a mentally ill person must deal with. The medical and legal establishments mandate that mentally ill people be medicated. Other forms of treatment are not being explored, and this may be in part because of the powerful lobby of the drug companies. When mentally ill people go off medication, the result is usually disastrous. This convinces many people that medication is the one and only solution to these illnesses. If some type of mental training were introduced, it would have to be done at the onset of the illness to have a chance of working. However, this hasn’t been tried, so far as I have heard. Thus, mentally ill people are stuck being medicated for the rest of our lives.

Whether or not an alternative treatment would work doesn’t alter the fact that the side effects of these medications are hard to endure. Some of the anti-psychotic medications induce physical suffering and at the same time block the capacity for transcendent functioning. It is only transcendence that could hypothetically ease such suffering and make the life of a mentally ill person tolerable.

Side effects of the medications include, but are not limited to: physical restlessness; stiffness in the body; depression; lethargy; weight gain; involuntary and irreversible spasms of the mouth and upper body; diabetes; dry mouth; “drugged” feeling; and sometimes death. The existence of these side effects may explain to you why you have seen people displaying some of the above characteristics. You may have learned to automatically avoid such a person.

Much suffering arises due to the side effects I have listed above. Medication side effects are one reason why it is sometimes hard to get a psychiatric patient to cooperate with their medication regime. Also known as “noncompliance” the non-cooperation with doctors is also caused by a lack of insight about having a psychiatric illness. The insight can only come to the patient when they are in recovery and can then think with some amount of clarity.

Denial of one’s condition is a major reason why many psychiatric consumers get repeated hospitalizations and never make
significant progress in their lives. It requires a lot of ego strength to acknowledge having an imperfection like schizophrenia or bipolar, and this type of strength is not always the most common.

Another challenge in life for the mentally ill person is the likelihood of being unemployable. While there are people with major mental illnesses who work and who hold high level professional employment, there are also those who find work to be nearly impracticable. Their mental condition in combination with the hindering effects of medications and some other factors, such as possible PTSD, and the possibility of having a poor work history due to failed work attempts, add up to the improbability of working.

Without being able to hold a job, the mental health consumer must rely on public benefits and on the generosity of parents. Numerous mentally ill people for this reason live in comparative poverty.

People with mental illness are more likely to have additional health risks. Smoking and obesity are very common for the mental health consumer, and so are the related medical conditions. The medication we must take slows the metabolism, increases appetite, and often produces an amount of lethargy that makes exercise improbable. It is not uncommon for people starting these medications to gain a hundred pounds or more in the first year of treatment. For any other condition besides mental illness being treated, such as cancer, a treatment that causes this type of weight gain would be considered by the medical establishment to be absolutely unacceptable.

Smoking is very common among mentally ill people, especially those who suffer from a psychotic type disorder. There is evidence that nicotine helps the brains of schizophrenic people function better. It is harder for mentally ill people to quit smoking than for those not afflicted.

Yet, mentally ill people are unlikely to get coronary bypass surgery when needed. Instead, the person with major mental illness has the tendency to become deceased. The lifespan of the person with a major mental illness is about twenty years less than the average lifespan in the U.S.

Numerous persons with mental illnesses never, in their adult lives, learn to think with a good amount of clarity. It is only by thinking with this clarity that people can make the right decisions in life, or can formulate plans to achieve a goal. Mental clarity is also good for handling challenging situations that periodically arise in life. By never reaching clarity, a mentally ill person might never see their way to a substantial adaptation to life. I’m using the word “adaptation” here as a replacement for the word, “recovery.” These illnesses never really go away; it is always necessary to keep on top of symptoms to prevent a relapse. So, in the absence of recovery, there is adaptation, something that happens when the illness no longer dictates the life conditions for the mentally ill person.

Also, when someone has clear thinking, it becomes possible to have power over one’s behavior. A person is no longer necessarily subject to any impulses that arise. One can decide how they want to behave, and can implement that decision.

Clear and organized thought isn’t exactly the trademark of a schizophrenic person. However, clear thinking can be learned through deliberate mental exercises. The schizophrenic person needs to start by developing a system whereby they can identify and negate their delusions, while on medication. Yet the same rule still applies to a psychiatric consumer who has done mental exercises; medication and other treatment are still necessary.

Many mentally ill persons whom I know frequently feel alone and often suffer from bouts of intense anxiety. Many mentally ill people don’t know what to do to fill up their time, and this can be a source of agitation.

The mentally ill are often denied many of the finer things in life that the average individual may take for granted. And this deprivation seems to be totally unfair.

Mentally ill people often get a number of thoughts and feelings that are negative or disorganized, and that cannot be controlled via willpower. Some times, the afflicted persons actions are beyond their control.

We often have numerous sources of suffering on our plate; and this can create hopelessness. And yet most of us, but not all, somehow find a way to keep going.

**Blogbeat: Burritos per Barrel**

*By Thomas Lord*

*Mon May 17 09:00:00 -0700 2010*

I want to talk about the World Wide Web but, first, some talk about money.

Big numbers are hard to wrap your head around, especially with dollar signs attached. Consider, for example, $500,000,000. That is: $500 million. How much money is that?

Well, let’s talk about money and oil and big numbers. And energy. And Berkeley. And the web. Oh, and that mess in the Gulf of Mexico.

Mostly, though, let’s talk about the World Wide Web.

$500 million works out to roughly one meal a week for a year at Chez Panisse (wine included), for every single person living in Berkeley. I based my math on a population figure (2000 census) at [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org) and on a discussion of Chez Panisse prices at local blog [www.berkeley-side.com](http://www.berkeley-side.com).

In burritos, based on a menu linked from [www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com), it works out to a free burrito for every Berkeleyan, every day, for about 3 years.

As widely reported, BP - our friends having some trouble in the Gulf of Mexico these days - said on 13 May that they’d spent $450 million so far on the response. By today, I’m sure they’re past the $500 million mark. The information comes from a filing BP made to the SEC. The filing was very widely reported and is easy to find with any decent web search engine.

There is an interesting coincidence about that number: $500 million. Some might remember that in 2007 BP selected the University of California and Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory to “lead an unprecedented $500 million research effort to develop new sources of energy and reduce the impact of energy consumption on the environment.”

If you’d like to see the press release, visit [berkeley.edu/news](http://berkeley.edu/news) and search for “BP 500” or similar terms.

Critical to winning that grant from BP was of course the former director of Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory, Steven Chu - who is currently the United States Secretary of Energy. (See [wikipedia.org](http://wikipedia.org)).

Mr. Chu (as widely reported) has recently sent a team of five experts to consult with BP about the response to the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. Among these is Professor of Civil Engineering George Cooper, from the University of California at Berkeley and a senior petroleum engineer at Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. You can find out about his expertise in drilling by searching for his name at [berkeley.edu](http://berkeley.edu). Among other things, he has worked on developing theories about how to do deep drilling on Mars. (To be clear, he also appears to my lay eyes to have done a heck of a lot of serious work about drilling here on Earth.)

Another Berkeley connection is Professor Robert B. Bea, another engineer at Cal and (among other things) an expert in “Risk Assessment and Management of Engineered Infrastructure Systems”. You might have
seen his rather damning assessment on the 16 May edition of 60 minutes (search www.cbsnews.com). The LA Times reports that he is also advising the federal administration (search www.latimes.com). Professor Bea had a hand in analyzing the Challenger space shuttle disaster.

And, well, so what?

Remember, this piece is mostly about the web. So let me turn away from oil and the Gulf and $500 million for a moment. Many sources (say, cbs5.com) have reported in some detail about a recent house fire in North Berkeley. Today also brings other sad news that a Berkeley man was shot in Richmond.

The web is awash in news local to Berkeley, if you know where to look.

And yet:

A few weeks ago, a fellow was shot in front of my South Berkeley apartment - and I can find no record of this on the World Wide Web. A bit after that, on our quiet residential street, a speeding car struck three or four other vehicles before overturning and, subsequently, a passenger was taken to the hospital and, allegedly, according to anonymous sources on the street, a drunk driving arrest was made. I happened not to be present for either event and neither is recorded on the Web.

And today there was a significant house fire on Acton St. but no reporter in sight and I don’t expect that house fire to receive the press or Web attention of the one in North Berkeley.

Consulting the local blogs for news of our city what do I find? I find tired rehearsals of the burning question of whether or not Becky O’Malley is an anti-semit. I find endlessly repeated reports about the virtues or sins of our school lunch programs and edible gardens. There are theater reviews, restaurant reviews, celebrity chef interviews, author interviews, thin-on-facts opinion-pieces, countless lovely photographs.... but not one word about a serious house fire, a man being shot, and a speeding car losing control and overturning.

The Gulf of Mexico is, quite literally and also figuratively, on fire. We can trace Berkeley Connections, in what passes for on-line news, with exquisite detail - I’ve barely scratched the surface here. And yet, there is so much that locally matters - that demands a public account - that happens all about entirely out of public view. You know, like: someone got shot. Someone not on North Side had a serious house fire.

And so, dear readers, I’d like your help in an experiment. Will you? I ask two things of you:

First, if you know of good sources of online local news information (for Berkeley and the surrounding areas) by gosh, please tip me off to them. I’ll do what I can to publicize those. I give my email address below.

Second, if you can, please become a bit of a citizen reporter, at least for your block or stretch of road. Become a blogger, if you like, but if you can just at least take pictures, interview folks, and alert people like myself and the Berkeley Daily Planet to news that will otherwise be lost.

Meanwhile, I’ll continue this experiment of drawing a column based on “local news found on the web” but - and I’m sure you’ll agree - if all I can find facts for is the number of burritos per oil spill it won’t be a very interesting column. So do please be in touch.

My email address is “lord@emf.net".

The Public Eye: What Caused the BP Oil Leak? Magical Thinking.

Bob Burnett
Mon May 17 12:08:00 -0700 2010

Over the past twenty months the USA has experienced two cataclysmic disasters, the 2008 near meltdown of the financial system and the recent Gulf Coast ecological disaster resulting from a deep-sea oil leak. While both events resulted from failed oversight, they have a deeper genesis: magical thinking.

Magical thinking is best thought of as pre-rational reasoning. The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget called it preoperational because it does not apply adult rules of logic.

Several types of magical thinking are prevalent in American culture and influence political decisions. The most common is the belief that science can solve all problems. While an ancient belief - in previous generations scientist were sometimes regarded as magicians - it gained wide credence after World War II. Deployment of nuclear reactors was justified by the widespread belief that the terrible problem of spent fuel would eventually be solved by new scientific discoveries. Sixty years later, the problem of nuclear waste persists.

The collapse of the British Petroleum/Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico illustrates a variety of this form of magical thinking: if they can build it, it must be safe. (This same belief caused New Yorkers to regard the World Trade Center as indestructible.) In fact the drilling rig lacked an operational blowout preventer. Given the frequency of accidents on offshore oilrigs - in just the Gulf of Mexico, there were 39 incidents in the first five months of 2009 -- reasonable oversight would have insisted on a state-of-the-art fully functional blowout preventer rather than blind faith.

2008’s financial disaster was precipitated by another form of magical thinking: the worldwide financial marketplace is self-correcting, the belief that whatever kinds of economic problems occurred the market would fix them without government involvement. (A variation of this belief predicted the market would provide healthcare for all Americans.) For thirty years, the Chicago School of Economics promoted Wall Street deregulation by insisting that markets were inherently self-regulating and, no matter how severe the setback, markets would quickly return to equilibrium. This conservative theory touted “efficiency,” “productivity,” and “trickle-down equity” as the inevitable byproducts of laissez-faire capitalism. The result was a savage increase in monopoly capitalism, savage inequality, and the loss of eight million jobs.

Blind faith in science and belief the market will solve all our problems derive from a core magical belief: what is good for capitalism is good for America. It’s easy to poke holes in this belief - by for example, noting that unbridled capitalism utilizes slave labor and condones obscene pollution - but it has an ironclad grip on the American psyche. (A famous twentieth century bestseller, “>The Man Nobody Knows portrayed Jesus as the founder of modern business.) Logically, this is an example of the Fallacy of Accident, a generalization that ignores obvious exceptions.

Magical thinking would be of only academic interest if it did not have such a profound affect on public policy. Naive faith in science and the “self-correcting” marketplace led to deregulation and, ultimately, horrendous disasters. Now America is facing difficult choices about issues such as deficit reduction and energy. Widespread use of magical thinking could preclude wise decisions.

Most Americans are worried about the deficit. But they also want their taxes to be reduced. When asked the best way to both reduce the deficit and cut taxes, they typically answer reduce wasteful government programs. Magical thinking believes this is plausible and uses miniscule examples of ill-conceived Federal programs to support an
unwarranted generalization: all government programs are wasteful.

But they're not. Roughly 46 percent of budget goes to military-related spending that most Americans don't want to reduce. Another 39 percent goes to Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid programs that most Americans support. That leaves approximately 15 percent of expenditures that could theoretically be reduced. But this includes items like the interest on the debt and homeland security, programs that Americans support once they understand the details. As was true in the meltdown of the financial system and the BP oil leak, magical thinking will not allow the US to both reduce the deficit and taxes. The solution to the deficit problem is to raise taxes for corporations and the rich.

Similarly, most Americans are worried about our reliance on foreign oil imports. But so far they haven't been willing to make the difficult choices that will solve the problem. Writing in the January issue of FOREIGN POLICY Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger note the problem of magical thinking, the widespread belief that "energy efficiency pays for itself, solar and wind power are already nearly cost competitive with fossil fuels, and both can quickly and cheaply reduce emissions." This form of magical thinking makes it easy for us to avoid both fossil-fuel taxes and major investment in new energy technology.

The root cause of the 2008 meltdown of the financial system and the BP oil leak was magical thinking. As America faces difficult choices on deficit reduction and energy policy, shouldn't our elected officials act like rational adults?

Bob Burnett is a Berkeley writer. He can be reached at bobburnett@comcast.net

Senior Power: Current Awareness: “What's the CSL?”

By Helen Rippi Wheeler
Mon May 17 21:48:00 -0700 2010

How’s your current awareness? If you’re aged in California, you should know about the CSL. Alas, too many people have never heard of it.

1. CSL stands for [one of these]
   California Senior Legislature
   Consejo de Leyes de Seguro Social
   Council on Social Legislation
   [2] TRUE? FALSE? The California Commission on Aging was recently requested to develop a forum through which older Californians could develop their legislative priorities.
   3. The CSL is: check any that apply:
      Nonpartisan Volunteer
      Elected Made up of persons 50 years of age and older
      Funded by taxes Established by state law

   The California Assembly’s standing Committee on Aging and Long-Term Care’s primary jurisdiction consists of the Area Agencies on Aging, California Department of Aging, Older Americans Act, Older Californians Act, California Senior Legislature and State Commission on Aging, as well as long-term care services, senior citizens advocacy activities, and services for seniors in residential and day settings

   In 1980, the State Legislature requested the Commission on Aging to develop a forum through which older Californians could develop their legislative priorities. The California Senior Legislature (CSL) was established the following year. It is a nonpartisan, volunteer organization of 120 elected members who generate bill proposals on senior issues. CSL receives no state, general, or federal funds. Its operating funds come from State Income Tax donations.

   As established by state law, the mission of the CSL is to help preserve and enhance the quality of life for older Californians and their families. CSL objectives include identifying priority senior concerns, developing legislative proposals in response to those concerns, and advocating for their inclusion in legislative proposals of the State Legislature.

   The California Senior Legislature will celebrate 30 years of service to older Californians at its 2010 Annual Legislative Session in Sacramento October 26 - 28. In the past, sessions have been televised on the California Channel.

   Forty Senior Senators and 80 Senior Assembly Members are elected by their peers (persons 60 years of age and older) to represent seniors throughout the State. There are 5 different ways that the local (county) Area Agencies on Aging can manage these elections. The Commission on Aging permits them to make that choice, contending that “Each area is different and their resources vary in nature so they have to adapt to what works for them.”

   The CSL is “a shell of its former self” declares a colleague, and I agree. The so-called choice does not appear to be an election by one’s peers. In Alameda County this year, the Advisory Commission on Aging, whose members are appointed, determined that the election be by secret votes by AAA Commissioners (appointees) and held during the regular Advisory Commission on Aging meeting on May 10th. If the general public or any organizations had wanted to show support for any of the candidates, they could have done so by a letter of support before April 21st.

   The CSL has met in Sacramento each October to convene a model legislative session in the chambers and hearing rooms of the State Capitol. Members participate in hearing testimony, debating issues, and voting to approve or disapprove up to 120 legislative proposals. Senior Legislators seek State lawmakers to author at least 10 of the Session’s priority proposals. Then they work throughout the year to ensure adoption of these measures. Those currently active in the Legislature include:

   AJR 34: Hearing aid availability and cost.
   My CSL source doubts that this will go further. “There are many opponents. It sounds great but the medical professions object because it references over the counter hearing aids. ... Last year it was picked up by a legislator but dropped eventually.”
   AB 2051: Disaster emergency transportation for disabled and seniors.
   AB 2051 Proposal AP25 “was a good one but if the program requires funding from the State, then it’s not going to go...”
   SCR 74: Senior volunteer month.
   “...Proposal Honoring Senior Volunteers in May is almost a done deal.”
   AJR 32: Gender discrimination.
   “AJR 32 SFP1 ... looks very much like it’s on neutral ground so it may pass but I do not know how the Governor will feel.”

   A sidelight: In 2004, Senior Senator Jo Anna Kim-Selby proposed what came to be known as the “grab bar” bill. It would have required the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) regarding installation of grab bars and non-skid flooring or mats in hotel bathrooms. It passed both houses and was sent to Governor Schwarzenegger, who returned it, unsigned. So watch your step.

   FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:
   The “City of Berkeley OLDER ADULT RESOURCE GUIDE 2009” is available at the North Berkeley Senior Center (corner MLK and Hearst, (510)981-5190). Request your free copy at the front desk... after you sign in. Attendance statistics are vital to a
senior center’s survival!

The Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists [1606 Bonita Ave., 94709-2022. (510) 841-4824] is hosting the Berkeley Cache, a Berkeley Disaster Preparedness Neighbor Network, on Thursday, May 20 at 7 P.M. “BFUU seeks to be a ‘sanctuary’ during times of crisis or emergency.” This is especially needed in these times of curtailment of senior center functions (During a 2002 fire, tenants from a neighboring senior and disabled persons’ apartment house were evacuated to BFUU’s building).

I recently received an email from a Berkeley Daily Planet reader in New Zealand! More Senior Power columns FEEDBACK would be appreciated. Please let me know what you think of this column, as well as what you would like to read about in it... problems, topics you want addressed or discussed. For example, ageism, caregivers, new books, elder abuse, events calendar, health, HIPPIA, hospice, housing, in-home care, interviews, Lavender seniors, legal resources, local senior celebrities, Q&A, Section 8, Spanish language version, status of women, transportation. It would be helpful if you would include your age, city of residence or employment, and other characteristics.

Helen Rippier Wheeler can be reached at pen136@dslextreme.com

No email attachments; use “Senior Power” for subject.

Reader’s Recommendation: Anzu Restaurant

By Dorothy Snodgrass
Thu May 13 23:22.00 -0700 2010

Dedicated to my pursuit of discovering low cost restaurants, I’ve now extending that search to international restaurants. Accordingly, I hereby highly recommend Anzu, specializing in Japanese cuisine. This small but very attractive restaurant is located at 2433 Shattuck Avenue (across from the Toyota dealer if you have trouble spotting it).

On entering, patrons are warmly greeted by a gracious hostess, who seats you and promptly pours a cup of tea. Though it’s a long, narrow room, tables are discreetly separated by screens, assuring you and your friends privacy. The menu is enticing. Served on Bento plates, one has two choices -- beef teriyaki or chicken teriyaki, and absolutely delicious tempura.

With this comes a delicious soup, small salad and fruit. All for just $6.95! I ask, can you beat that for a bargain?

Dorothy Snodgrass

Wild Neighbors: Ghosts of the Alaka’i

By Joe Eaton
Thu May 13 09:30.00 -0700 2010

Ron Sullivan

Crossroads in the Alaka’i Swamp, Kaua‘i.

One last Kaua‘i column and I’ll have gotten it out of my system.

Early on in our visit we spent a day in the Alaka‘i Swamp, in the highlands of western Kaua‘i. Not strictly a swamp in hydrological terms, it’s more of a bog where rainwater has collected above an impermeable layer of lava. It even has bog plants like the carnivorous sundew, the same species that grows in the Arctic tundra, probably transported to the island on the plumage of a migrating Pacific golden plover. There are patches of stunted ‘ohi’a trees, similar to the pygmy forests of the Mendocino coast.

This is one of the last remnants of the old Hawai‘i. Most of the plants are native, despite the incursion of kahili ginger: canoeloquality koa trees; ancient ‘ohi’a that have fallen over but refused to die, upholstered with ferns, vines, and lilies; lobelia relatives with arcuate flowers. In the absence of grazing mammals, some have dropped their defenses, resulting in stingless nettles, clawless catbriers, and mintless mints.

That’s true of the birds—the real draw for us—as well. We saw and heard plenty of exotics, including incongruous northern cardinals, white-rumped shamas, and Japanese white-eyes. But in the Alakai they were outnumbered by natives, mostly Hawai‘ian honeycreepers or drepanids—“dreps” for short. Drepanids are one of the great exemplars of how evolution works in an island setting. “They make Darwin’s finches look sick!” said a tour guide on the Big Island a few years ago.

From a common ancestor something like a North American goldfinch or housefinch, the honeycreepers diversified into at least 51 species, each with its own anatomical and behavioral specializations. The drepanid tool kit includes long curved bills for probing flowers, crossed mandibles for prying open buds, heavy parrotlike bills for crushing seeds.

Unfortunately, most of these remarkable birds have gone extinct:

- a first wave when the Polynesians cleared the lowland forests for agriculture, then, within the last century, a second driven by mosquito-borne diseases like avian malaria. By the time the government got around to conferring endangered status on some of the survivors, they had been reduced to remnant populations at altitudes too high for mosquitoes. Other groups of birds, like the native thrushes related to the Townsend’s solitaire and the extraordinary o’os, met the same fate. With reduced numbers, they were vulnerable to environmental catastrophes. Several Kaua‘i species have not been seen since Hurricane Iniki.

A few are hanging on in the Alaka‘i. Knowing our chances of finding these birds on our own were virtually nil, we hired a local guide, David Kuhn, to take us there. Access involved a tortuous dirt road that our rental PT Cruiser could never have managed, then a hike along a boardwalk trail. Kuhn, a sound recordist who captures the voices of humpback whales as well as songbirds soundhawaiian.com, took us to the junction of the Alaka‘i Swamp and Pihea trails, then down a side path to an opening in the forest. One by one, the birds checked in.

We were visited by Kaua‘i ‘elepaio, active and personable Old World flycatchers that reminded us strongly of wrens with their cocked tails and loud chatter. A pair of crimson ‘apapane flew by, and a scarlet i‘wi stopped to nectar at one of those curved lobelioid blossoms, its long orange bill a perfect fit for the shape of the flower. Then came a bright yellow male ‘amianiau, a small, short-billed bird something like a Wilson’s warbler, and a greenish Kaua‘i ‘amakihi with a longer, more curved beak. The ‘elepaio, ‘amianiau, and ‘amakihi were
endemic Kaua‘i species; the ‘elepaio and ‘amakihī have close relatives on other islands, but the ‘anianiau is truly one of a kind.

Another target eluded us, though. We may have heard the upslurred chirp of the ‘ake‘e, a goldfinch-like bird with a black mask, but none ever showed itself. Kuhn said the species had been getting harder to find lately, which sounded ominous. He staked out a couple of spots they were known to frequent, but no ‘ake‘e. Two other birds, a honeycreeper and a thrush, would have required a serious slog into the depths of the Alaka‘i.

We couldn’t complain, though, about the best day’s birding we’d had in years. It was a privilege to see as much as we saw—a window into a vanishing world.

The birds of the Alaka‘i are still in grave jeopardy. Although the place is mosquito-free for now, global warming is expected to expand the insects’ habitable zone. Some native songbirds may be evolving resistance to the malaria pathogen, but others may not be able to adapt fast enough.

I picked up a two-CD set of Hawai‘ian bird calls in preparation for the trip. It includes the only recordings of a Kaua‘i ‘o‘o, a lone male in the Alaka‘i, singing his heart out. It seems inevitable that some of the species we saw there will sooner or later join him in the chorus of ghosts.

**Arts & Entertainment**

**Opera Club Double Bill at Hillside Club on Saturday**

*Tue May 18 09:44:00 -0700 2010*

Verismo Opera, Northern California’s mobile opera theater, will be back in Berkeley with the double bill of *Suor Angelica* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* next Saturday, *May 22, at 7:30 pm* at the Berkeley Hillside Club, 2286 Cedar.

Berkeley soprano Eliza O’Malley, who will sing the title role, says that “*Suor Angelica* is one of the few operas that have multiple roles for women and consequently gets to show more female personality types than most operas. In fact all of the characters are women. Some docile, some rebellious, some passionate, some flatfooted, some wretchedly mean etc... It’s popular with small companies and universities for this reason. It’s a wonderful opportunity to cast women singers. Usually about 90% of people at any given opera audition are women.”

The lead in *Cavelleria Rusticana* will be sung by Verismo’s company founder, Fred Winthrop, veteran of both the U.S. Air Force and the San Francisco Opera chorus, as well as of lead roles in many opera productions in the Bay Area.

The conductor is Corey Wilkins, with musical accompaniment by the Dolanc String Quartet.

General Admission is $17 with special rates of $12 for seniors, students and Hillside Club members.

The company’s last Hillside club appearance with *La Traviata* played to a full house, so it might wise to call 510-845-1350 or 707-864-5508 for advance tickets, or to buy them from *Brown Paper Tickets* online at www.brownpapertickets.com/event/111179 or by phone around the clock at 800-838-3006.

**If You’re Gonna Veg With the Tube, Watch the Good Stuff**

*By John A. McMullen II*  
*Sat May 15 17:45:00 -0700 2010*

Lots of folks don’t watch TV. It’s a waste of time. But if you are tempted by this addictive diversion, let me alert you that we are living in a Golden Age of Phil Farnsworth’s one-eyed monster.

I owe my friend some money from ten years ago so every year I give him a grand. This last year he said, “Hey, I haven’t bought you a Xmas or Birthday present in a couple of years. I wish you to take the money you give me and this year buy yourself a big-screen TV. There’s a special on at Costco. This HD-TV the only item I’ve ever bought that I haven’t had a trace of ‘buyers remorse’ about.”

So, help me, I did. 50” inches of pure, high-definition joy. E and I used to go to a movie once a week. Now we pick and choose. Cable is more expensive and it eats my time, but I can work out on my cross-trainer while I view, which works out well.

These disclaimers having been proclaimed, let me direct you to “the good stuff” if you’re looking for diversion and are willing the risk of acquiring the jones. The big night of the week seems to be Tuesday (see below).

Besides, if you don’t invest a little time to catch up on pop culture, how will you know what everybody’s buzzing about, and you’ll never get the answers on trivia quizzes.

**NOTE:** The dirty secret is that you can watch full episodes of most of these shows on your computer for free (links below).

**GLEE**—a unique and wacky sitcom musical that brings Broadway musical theatre stars to TV. A high school glee club with out-of-this-world voices from “teenagers” who are going through all the typical hormonal crises of sex and popularity; lots of competition with each other, other glee clubs, and the cheerleading squad led by Jane Lynch, the wackiest and most popular character actor out there. The series won the 2010 Golden Globe Award for Best Television Series-Musical or Comedy, and received three additional nominations for Best Actress (Lea Michele: veteran of child stardom on Broadway: *Les Miz, Ragtime, Fiddler*, with a drama desk award for *Spring’s Awakening*), Best Actor (Matthew Morrison: star of Broadway’s *Footloose, Rocky Horror, Hairspray*, and a Tony nomination for *Light in the Piazza*), and Best Supporting Actress (Jane Lynch). Its first season also earned a Peabody Award. Kristin Chenoweth—the first Glinda from *Wicked* who just opened on Broadway in *Promises, Promises* is a repeat guest. You don’t have to follow every week—you can just drop in to check out the gay, paraplegic, overweight, pregnant, and football-playing candid characters all with daunting musical theatre talent—the perfect antidote to *American Idol*.  
**FOX Tues 9 pm**

Watch full episodes at http://www.fox.com/glee/

**PARENTHOOD**—Familiar stars such as Peter Krause from *Six Feet Under*, Lauren Graham from *Gilmore Girls*, Craig T. Nelson from *Coach*, and Bonnie Bedeli lead Braverman clan in braving the storm of any extended family. Set right here in Berkeley, they deal with multi-racial families, Asperger’s, gifted children, overachieving, and the sex drives of teenager with parents who knew what they did at that age. It’s charming; catch one and relax.  
**NBC Tues 9 pm**

Watch full episodes at http://www.nbc.com/parenthood/video/categories/season-1/1205879/

**JUSTIFIED**—If you watched *Deadwood*, the show about the way the West really was which was noted for its nineteenth century eloquence and liberal profanity, you will recognize Timothy Olyphant who played the Sheriff. Here he’s a US Marshall who is transferred back to his hometown in Harlan County Kentucky. I’m from Appalachia, and the upsurge in rural crime (meth, terrorism, gangs, with not a mention of bootlegging) rang true to me; it’s hairy in the hinterland these days. If I were being snappy and witty, I’d call if Mayberry RFD meets *Deadwood,*
but it really brings you a trip to a world you don’t get elsewhere. FX (different from FOX) Tue 10 pm

LAW & ORDER: Criminal Intent—with Jeff Goldblum, who took over for the intriguing and unappreciated character Vincent D’Onofrio created. Goldblum is a movie star, and on TV, he just shines. Worth tuning in just to see his charming antics and acting talent. USA Tue 10 pm

IN PLAIN SIGHT—Another off-the-beaten-path US Marshall drama, character-driven by Mary McCormack whose banter with her egg-head partner is worthy of your time. They run the Witness Protection in Albuquerque NM, and have a great supporting cast including Lesley Ann Warren as her alcoholic mom, with lots of well-known stars appearing as witnesses-on-the-run. USA Wed 10 pm (also shown at 7 pm)
Watch full episodes at http://www.usanet-work.com/series/inplainsight/video/fulllep/

UNITED STATES OF TARA—There are two Cable “dramedies” about women who are in deep over their head. Nice change from the white guy always being the one on the short end of the stick. Toni Collette is an Academy Award-nominated Australian actress best known for her roles in The Sixth Sense and Little Miss Sunshine. She plays the multiple roles of the multiple-personality afflicted Tara, and her transformations are a tour de force performance. John Corbett from Northern Exposure, Sex in the City, and My Fat Greek Wedding plays her long-suffering husband. As in most of all these recommendations, the supporting cast never fails. Toni Collette won the 2009 Primetime Emmy Award and 2010 Golden Globe Award for Best Lead Actress in a Comedy Series for her role, while the opening title sequence also won an Emmy. It’s the brain-child of Diablo Cody who wrote Juno.

Watch a one-minute cut of episodes at http://www.sho.com/site/tara/video.do

NURSE JACKIE—After 30 years are a waitress taking any part she could, Edie Falco hit the big-time as Tony Soprano’s wife Carmella, and it was only a matter of time before she got her own show. An addicted ER RN with a gorgeous husband and two kids, she works in a downtown NYC small hospital and has an erstwhile, self-serving and increasingly complicated affair with a pharmacist. It’s set at the just-closed real-life St. Vincent’s Hospital in Greenwich Village (I used to go there for care when I was trying to be an actor). SHOWTIME Mon 10 pm
Watch samples (this is Special Pay Cable, so nothing for free) at http://www.sho.com/site/nursejackie/video.do

TRUE BLOOD—Ever notice that TV staples are Doctors & Nurses, Cops, and Lawyers? It’s because their jobs are life and death. Well, now there are others who have power over life and death. Gory good fun in Bayou Country led by the youngest Oscar-winner Anna Paquin as now-famous. In the first season, it won a Golden Globe and an Emmy. From Charlaire Harris’s popular Southern Vampire Mystery books, its creator is Alan Ball of Six Feet Under fame. It’s gotten complicated lately, bringing in Maenads and Werewolves. I’d recommend NetFlicking the first season over a long weekend with some good red wine. HBO Sun 9 pm, starting up again on June 13. You can get “a taste” of a mini-sode at http://www.hbo.com/true-blood?cmpid=ABC210

SONS OF ANARCHY—about a California MC gang who protects a small town ironically named Charming from the vagaries of outside crime in exchange for a place to live and do their business-the all-American small entrepreneurial endeavor of automatic weapons. It’s part Hamlet, part “The Scottish Play,” and an interesting look inside living outside the law in an organized fashion. The clannish ties give an insight into what life must have been like back in the day. Trips they take the Oakland and San Leandro will draw you in, with Beauty and the Beast and Hellboy star Ron Perlman, Married with Children’s Katey Sagal in an exceptional continuing performance as the Queen, and the charismatic Charles Hunnam as Jax, the heir-apparent with doubts. If you’re not a small(er) screen aficionado, you probably don’t know that a lot of new shows run about 13 episodes twice a year and take lots of good time to produce their good work. Thus, this one is on break now, so you have time to catch up on the Legend of Sam Crowe FX in September 2010.


THREE MORE I LOVE...

FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS—hooked on it; for my money the best drama on TV, spawned from the movie with Billy Bob Thornton, from the novel by Buzz Bissinger, Texas football teenagers and the Coach’s family, but it’s thrilling to watch these great young actors love, drink, and catch the game-winning pass. New season starts on NBC this Friday (imagine that) 8pm
Watch full episodes at http://www.nbc.com/friday-night-lights/video/

TWO AND HALF MEN—Still the top sit-com. Like the great old actor quipped on his death-bed when ask if facing mortality was difficult, “Dying is easy; comedy is hard.” Rumor that star Charlie Sheen is retiring. Reruns at 7 pm weekdays at Channel 44 KBCWD, new episodes NBC Mon 9 pm
Watch clips at http://www.cbs.com/video/?showname=primetime/two_and_a_half_men/video

BIG LOVE—I love it when I get sucked into a story the point where I’m seeing craziness through another person’s eyes and buying it as normal. About a fictional fundamentalist Mormon family that practices polygamy secretly while integrating as civic exemplars. Bill Pullman, Jeannie Tripplehorn, Chloe Sevigny (Emmy for best supporting actress), Ginnifer Goodwin, and Amanda Seyfried are all film actors who join to present this novel drama that plays out like a very long novel. The engrossing plots make it another recommended for NetFlicking to catch up. HBO, on break right now.

John A. McMullen II usually reviews theatre. Comments to EyeFromTheAisle@gmail.com

From Sidewalks to Art Studios

By Andrew David King
Tue May 18 08:55:00 -0700 2010

When Sean Chapin found himself addicted to drugs and homeless at the age of 25, he knew something had to change.

“I realized it was time to quit struggling and fight for my life and my community,” he said.

Now, the 41-year-old is a veteran of the urban art scene and a community activist who goes by the motto, “Lifestyle lived as an art.” Not only has Chapin been commissioned by companies and organizations, including CSU East Bay, to create “graffiti walls”–plywood structures adorned with spray-can art–for public viewing, but he also founded Off the Wall Outreach, a program through which he mentors local teens.

Last month, Chapin hosted an art workshop at Weekes Park Library in Hayward aimed at involving teens in productive art instead of vandalism, or “tagging,” and offering lessons in artistic techniques. Chapin’s ability to speak openly about his own struggles lent a positive air to the event and allows a special connection with the teens he mentors, some of which were present.

Blanca Marin, 19, who goes by the street
name “Maze,” met Chapin while working on a mural at the Hayward BART station several years ago. Marin, who was born in Ciudad Nezahualcoyotl, Mexico, and moved to Oakland when she was a toddler, became interested in urban art in the tenth grade.

“As first, I was trying to do immature and crazy stuff, like tagging in buses with markers,” she said. “Then I moved up to train tracks and the streets, with spray cans.”

When the consequences of street life took a toll on her fellow taggers, however, Marin reconsidered her priorities.

“She of my friends got in trouble with the Five-O, and that was when I realized I can’t be doing things like this anymore,” she said. “I just stopped doing all that, and decided to make more urban art instead of graffiti.”

Marin, who took classes in urban art at Berkeley City College, is quick to differentiate between the two. For Chapin, as well, the distinction is important—though both terms are used in reference to spray-can art, “graffiti” more often connotes simple vandalism, something both Chapin and Marin strive to move past.

Chapin’s Christian faith also plays a major role in his art-in the hip-hop world, he goes by the moniker Sac/Red, short for “Sean Andrew Chapman/Righteously Enduring Deliverance.” A strong believer in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth, Chapin’s goal is to prompt creative teens into developing in the capabilities of youth.

“Enthusiasm is sometimes really hard to come by with poor kids,” he said. “They’re over- influenced by TV and radio, and need mentors. But if you give kids a chance to express themselves, they’ll take them. I want to give them the opportunities they don’t have.”

If the teens at Chapin’s workshop are any indicator, he’s succeeding.

“I tried to look into other things, like nursing, but it wasn’t for me,” Marin said. “Art has been my life since I was a little girl.” She is currently working to save money to attend art school for animation.

At present, Chapin involved in a number of projects for urban youth, and aims to foster communication between local nonprofits and outreach groups by becoming a liaison between them.

To get involved with Off the Wall outreach or find out more about Chapin’s outreach programs, contact him directly at http://7thfloorenterprize.shutterfly.com.

Last Two Weeks of the Berkeley Arts Festival

By Bonnie Hughes
Mon May 17 22:30:00 -0700 2010

The Berkeley Arts Festival will run through the month of May at 2121 Allston Way in downtown Berkeley.

Listed below are the concerts scheduled for the last two weeks. For detailed descriptions go to www.berkeleyartsfestival.com and select the date on the calendar.

Unless otherwise noted starting time is 8 pm and suggested donation is $10--no one turned away.

Wednesday May 19, Multimedia Excursions with Dean Santomieri joined by Julie Oxendale.

Friday May 21, Noon--Pianist Jerry Kuderna’s Friday Lunch Concert
Friday May 21, John Hanes and Steve Adams

Tuesday May 25, Ted Lachrymose Brinkley’s Hornblower Cruise
Wednesday May 26, Sarah Wilson Quartet
Thursday, May 27, The D’Arms Boone Experience
Friday May 28, Noon Pianist Jerry Kuderna’s Friday Lunch Concert
Friday May 28, Phillip Greenlief’s The Lost Trio
Sunday May 30,. 7 P.M Dan Plonsey and Daniel Popsicle
Monday May 31, Arnie Passman’s “Take Back Gandhi’s 9/11.”

BE SURE TO CHECK OUT www.berkeleyartsfestival.com for program information.

Arts & Events Listings

Classical Music-East Bay Through May 30

Mon May 17 15:30:00 -0700 2010

BERKELEY CITY CLUB

“Mozart Youth Camerata,” May 30, 7 p.m. George Cleve conducts an all-Mozart program. $12-$20. (415) 627-9141.

CATHEDRAL OF CHRIST THE LIGHT

“Choral Concert,” May 29, 8 p.m. CSU East Bay Singers, Baker University Chaf-
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Becky O’Malley: Can Warren Hellman Save Journalism?
Becky O’Malley: New Operating Instructions for This Publication
Raymond Barglow: School Governance at Berkeley High: Resource Allocation, School Plan, Test Scores (News Analysis)
Riya Bhattacharjee: Berkeley Today
PG&E Apologizes for Smart Meter Problems, but Some Aren’t Satisfied
New America Media, Interview by Sandip Roy: Life and Death on the Arizona Border
Berkeley Police Seek Four Suspects in Connection With Recent Robberies
Dan McMenamin, BCN: Lamp Switch Started House Fire
Hoeft-Edenfield Convicted of Second-Degree Murder for Stabbing UC Berkeley Student
UC Berkeley Hunger Strike Ends with Meeting
Dan O’Neill: Odd Bodkins: The Celestial Rock Pile
Mohammad Talaat, PhD, PE:

Open Letter to UC President Yudof Re: UC Statement on Divestment
Sent by Jonah Minkoff-Zern: Flashmob Invades Westin Hotel - Video Goes Viral
Eric Dynamic: Most Residents Not Notified of Trader Joe’s Liquor License Application
Jane Stillwater: Our Marines: Ridden Hard & Put Away Wet
Justin Lee: Measure C-3rd grade math doesn’t add up for this bond measure
Tom Killilea: Berkeley Iceland - A Plan for Creative Reuse
Harry Brill: The Boy Scouts: A Pact With the Devil
Roy Nakadegawa: Response to Prof. Kondolf on BRT
Tom Butt: Point Molate Extension on Richmond Council Agenda Tuesday
Steve Logan: White BHS Jazz on 4th St. Fundraiser
Joseph Stubbs: BRT, Activism, Densification, and Quality of Life
Lt. Colonel Donald Davis: Children in Afghanistan Need Used English
Letters to The Editor
Jack Bragen: First Person: Lifestyles of the Mentally Ill
Thomas Lord: Blogbeat: Burritos per Barrel
Bob Burnett: The Public Eye: What Caused the BP Oil Leak? Magical Thinking.
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